

The Informal Language Learning of Female Saudi Undergraduates

Submitted by

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Abstract

Informal language learning provides opportunities to assimilate languages under natural conditions by providing authentic language learning materials: this is especially true in cases of drip-feed English in a foreign language context where English is not spoken outside the classroom. However, to date, informal language learning has not been as thoroughly investigated as a formal learning strategy due to certain difficulties in quantifying its effects and in observing learners outside the classroom. In light of this, the present interpretive study aimed to explore whether, and to what extent, female Saudi BA English language students engaged in informal language learning, the types of activities involved, and the materials they used to do so. The study also explored participant perceptions of the impact of informal language learning on their language proficiency.

In order to fully interrogate the core research questions, this research design draws on a 'mini ethnographic' approach comprising two qualitative research methods (semi-structured interview and collected documents of examples of the activities used by the participants) for data collection. The study participant cohort consisted of eight female third- and fourth-year Saudi undergraduates, majoring in the English language. The ensuing data confirmed that these students employ various activities outside the classroom to learn English. In fact, the participants reported that the considerable time they maintained on informal language learning activities both assisted and supported their overall language learning and language development. In addition to social media, pop-songs, movies, other virtual materials such as TV programmes, were found to be the most commonly used informal language learning activities. The learning affordances arising from these activities were perceived to create numerous occasions and prospects to hone fluency and the accurate use of English. The participants specified a diversity of reasons for using informal language learning activities and materials: most notably, a sense of privacy and enhanced self-confidence in using the target language. Other factors included flexibility, portability, and the ubiquitous availability of tablets, mobile phones, and laptops, which offer greater learner privacy and control than the formal class setting.

Moreover, the findings indicated that the participants find these types of activities more interesting. The study additionally reflected on the main difficulty encountered by Arab learners in adopting informal language learning from their perspective: namely, the significant lack of face-to-face English language usage in the Saudi context.

The thesis concludes by offering practical recommendations for both language learners and TESOL teachers. The findings underscored learners' belief that their use of informal language learning can provide an authentic source of language input to contribute to the development of overall language proficiency. I argue that English language teachers should promote more 'natural' extramural situations to extend student learning affordances beyond the paradigms of the traditional classroom environment.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Nature of the Problem

English has been disseminated throughout the world and is used as a medium of global communication. It directly enhances and affects the educational systems of the various countries which have applied English as the university medium of instruction (EMI) (Clarke, 2007). Indeed, the Saudi educational system prescribes the teaching of English as a foreign language from primary level (Al-Seghayer, 2011). Thus, while English is not an official second language of Saudi Arabia, it nonetheless remains the only foreign language compulsorily taught in schools and universities (Deraney, 2015). The study of English in Saudi Arabia is prioritized as integral to the majority of regional professions and companies, and more particularly in terms of the Saudi contribution to the global economy. To this end, Saudi college students are expected to master a wide range of English skills. Yet, despite educational directives which stipulate that all students spend 13 years learning English at school, numerous studies, such as those of Al-Johani (2009) and Rajab (2013), have consistently found that most Saudi students complete their schooling with a poor level of English proficiency. While reasons for this tend to focus on the quality of teaching, the relevance of the curriculum, and the attitude of the learners, a further possible explanation is the lack of learner opportunities to use English in everyday “real” life. In this contrived environmental context, learners are unable to practice their language skills outside of the classroom; thereby limiting their exposure and/or chances to acquire the language in a more organic way. In light of this, there is a clear need to investigate informal language learning which may enhance opportunities to learn the language in such contexts by providing authentic materials for learners, especially in the context of recent advances in technology. In fact, such technology currently offers FL learners language affordances by creating access to a variety of authentic native-speaker materials and productions, such as songs, movies, the use of social media, and TV shows; all of which can significantly enhance learner contact with the foreign language (Paiva, 2010).

The use and effect of this informal language learning on learners' English outside the classroom merits exploration since it is likely to be a growing area for learners.

Thus, the present research seeks to investigate the various types of the informal language learning activities and the impact of informal language learning in the Saudi context from learners' perspectives.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

The motivation for conducting this study is grounded in my work as an EFL teacher in Saudi Arabia, where I teach two discrete groups of undergraduate learners: a compulsory preparatory English module for all learners in any major; and for BA English major learners. In both cases I observed that practicing their English outside the classroom and connecting with native English speakers proved to be an enormous challenge for the students. I also reflected on my own language learning experience when refining the study aims. I realized that I had mainly learnt English from informal language learning materials and activities, such as listening to pop songs. Moreover, I observed that students spent considerable time on their mobile phones and other portable devices, which could enhance the opportunities for informal language learning to take place. From my experience as a teacher, I also noted the students' enthusiasm for a Yahoo page I had devised in order to share and discuss module materials online. Indeed, they were so motivated by this that it boosted their language confidence and comfort in using it. This encouraged me to investigate and explore informal language learning; especially as this area had not been investigated in this precise context before. Indeed, it is evident that many Saudi learners now opt for informal language learning due to the perceived fun associated with FL learning technologies which is held to foster a more positive learning environment, unconscious assimilation of the foreign language, and to offer learners a choice of activities to meet their individual needs and styles (Richards, 2015). Informal language learning obtains to various activates which may suit different learning styles, such as communicating using social media, listening to songs, watching movies, and reading.

My personal rationale was also strongly influenced by my experiences as a teacher. Over the course of nine years of teaching at an HE Institution for Art and Science, I observed that although informal language learning can have a significant effect on enhancing language acquisition outside and inside the classroom, it remains a largely unexamined area of enquiry. My experiences inspired me to conduct this study as a means to explore why and how learners are motivated to learn informally and how learners reflect upon the language learning process. I also wanted to give learners a voice to explain and express themselves, and to share their personal stories and experiences with learning the English language.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it focuses on the effects of the informal language learning of English from the learner perspective. Furthermore, it investigates why learners use informal language learning and aims to elicit the motivation, strategies, and activities used to assimilate the target language. Since this field of study remains largely unexplored in the Saudi context, it is hoped that the present research will ultimately yield a deeper understanding of English language learner practice outside the classroom, the methods employed, and the various learning affordances and motivations available.

To date, there have been conspicuously few studies in this area. As Miralles-Lombardo, Miralles and Golding (2008) note, informal learning has not been examined to the same extent as formal learning due to its less manageable structures. Since informal learning inheres many different variables, is not managed by institutions, and is largely determined by the learner, I opted to question learners directly about their informal language learning experiences, the methods used, and the perceived benefits. A literature search unearthed only a few studies which examined certain aspects of informal learning in Saudi Arabia. Mahdi and El-Naim (2012) analyzed the effects of 'the informal use of computer-mediated communication on EFL learner interaction', while Chanchary and Islam (2011) published an interesting paper entitled 'Mobile Learning in Saudi Arabia: prospects and challenges'. However, there is a lack of studies which explicitly explore informal language learning from the learner perspective.

While this creates challenges for the present study, it also underscores its unique and innovative stance. In short, the present study fills an important gap in the research on language learning.

1.4 Study Purpose and Research Questions

Research shows that recent advances in technology have the potential to maximize language learning affordances and enable learners to practice English outside the classroom (MacDougal, 2013) and to access extensive data in the target language, such as series, movies, audio, websites, applications, social media, and reading. In light of this, the aim of this study is to investigate the informal language activities used by level six and eight undergraduate Saudi female English B.A. students in order to discern how and why they engage with such activities to advance their language capabilities, and to identify the benefits derived from the various methods. The following research questions have been developed to explore the topic:

- 1. What type of informal language learning activities do female undergraduates studying EFL at Alkhafji College engage in?**
- 2. How do these students engage in informal language learning activities, and which methods do they use?**
- 3. What language learning benefits do the students perceive from the informal learning activities?**

Research question one will focus on the specific and most popular activities students engage in, in order to know the types of activities they engaged in and to provide an overview, for further expanding in research number two; research question two will examine participants' methods of engagement with these activities (e.g. the use of annotation or translation), how they learn, by with methods in order to know the way of engagement with informal language learning and compare it to the literature of this area ; research question three will elicit the perceived benefits reported by participants in terms of their language proficiency, and the enhanced skills and fluency acquired through informal language learning.

1.5 Contribution to Knowledge

The main purpose of this study is to advance knowledge concerning the informal language learning practices of EFL female undergraduate learners majoring in English in Saudi Arabia. This study aims to contribute to a wider understanding of the importance of informal language learning, the various types of activities which learners undertake for language learning outside the classroom, and learner perspectives of the affordances offered by these aids. It is hoped this study may also contribute to the knowledge regarding learning methods and demonstrate the centrality of smartphones, apps, tablets, and other portable devices, to fostering the optimum atmosphere for learning: not only in bridging the gap between formal and informal learning, but also in their inherent flexibility and features. Additionally, and as further elucidated in the literature review chapter, there are a number of gaps in the literature on informal language learning in Saudi Arabia; particularly in the use of technology, and those aspects of language proficiency which informal language learning has been shown to improve.

By addressing the wide field of informal language learning, the learning affordances of relevant activities, and examining how they provides learners with language learning opportunities, this research redefines the boundaries of the literature in the Saudi context. The research also advances an understanding of how participants in the drip-feed context of SA engage with these activities. It is hoped this will bridge the current knowledge gap and provide a basis for future research; particularly in relation to the ongoing technological advances which offer learners opportunities to connect with authentic materials from the target language, various strategies learners use, and the recent growing interest in the field of language affordances. Alwehaibi (2013) asserts that, 'In Saudi Arabia, this technology has not been exploited much for educational purposes' (p.937).

Building on its potential to boost learners' language proficiency, this study may encourage curriculum designers to graft successful informal activities onto the established formal curriculum. Finding appropriate ways to integrate these activities into the formal

classroom based on an understanding of the impact of these activities on the learning process would arguably improve current curriculum design.

1.6 Organization of Thesis

The present thesis is comprised of six chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two presents a contextualized description of the study which highlights the relevant cultural, geographical, educational, economic, religious, and political issues. **Chapter Three** provides a comprehensive literature review which surveys and analyzes the literature relevant to this topic and relates it to the current study. Drawing from the field of informal language learning, the literature will provide the theoretical framework underpinning this study. **Chapter Four** outlines the research methodology and provides an account of the research approach in terms of methodological considerations, ethical considerations, participants, context of the study, and all data collection instruments and tools. **Chapter Five** presents and explicates the research findings and overall outcomes of the study and discusses the significant theoretical points raised by the findings in relation to the research questions. Finally, **Chapter Six** summarizes the main findings and their implications, offers a range of recommendations and suggestions for further research, and concludes with a personal reflection on the overall EdD experience.

Chapter Two: Context

2.1 Saudi Arabia

In order to contextualize this research, this chapter presents a detailed introduction to the education system, Ministry of Education, Higher Education Policy, and English language teaching structures of Saudi Arabia, along with the English Departments of a Saudi university.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (SA) was established in 1932 by King Abdula-Aziz Bin Saud. It is situated in the south-western region of Asia and with a land mass of approximately 80% of the Arabian Peninsula (2,149,790 sq. km, Ministry of Culture and Information, 2013), is the largest of the Arab countries. According to the Central Department of Statistics and Information (2013), the overall 2013 population was approaching 30 million; a figure which also included almost 10 million foreign expatriates from various countries. SA citizens are comprised of a number of different ethnic groups: the 90% majority is Arab, while the remaining 10% are of Asian and African origin (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015).

Saudi Arabia is composed of 13 administrative provinces, the most significant being the central, eastern, southern, western, and northern. The capital city of Riyadh is located in the centre of the country. Jeddah and Dammam are the two other largest urban centres among the further 5,000 cities and villages in the State. Saudi Arabia is one of the wealthiest countries in the world due to its petroleum deposits. The economy is greatly dependent on the oil industry, which generates around 80% of the country's annual income. According to OPEC (2015), SA has the second-largest proven petroleum reserves after Venezuela, equating to approximately 25% of global reserves. As a result of the affluence generated by the oil industry, the country has developed rapidly and become a dominant economic and political player in the region.

Since the culture of SA comprises a unique combination of Islam and people of Bedouin heritage and Arabic roots, its inherent conservatism has been enriched by the blending

of the tenets of the Islamic faith with the traditions of the various Saudi peoples. These people originate from numerous diverse tribes; each of which has traditions which distinguish them from others of the same locality (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015).

Arabic is the official language of SA, while Islam is the official religion of the country. The majority of citizens are Muslims who adhere to strong religious values. As the birthplace of both Mohammed and the Prophet of Islam, and a site of holy pilgrimage, in particular, Almasjed Alharam in Mecca and Almasjid Alnabawi in Medina, the Islamic religion exert a tremendous influence on its culture. In addition, all government functions and policies are predicated on Islamic principles, meaning that the entire Saudi legal framework is based on Islam. Islamic Law governs all areas including the educational system. Not surprisingly then, Islamic subjects constitute a large proportion of the curriculum at all educational levels (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). However, the Saudi government particularly prioritizes education and allocates a generous proportion of the country's annual budget to education provision (Aljabre, 2012).

2.2 The Ministry of Education and the Education System in Saudi Arabia

Prior to 1925 SA education mainly took place in mosques since students predominantly attended classes in order to study Arabic and study the Qur'an. Alrashidi and Phan (2015) note that King Abdul-Aziz established the Directorate of Education prior to the unification of the country and the declaration of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. In fact, with the 1925 establishment of the Directorate of Education schools started to spring up throughout the country and the first public male-only schools were established in SA in 1930 (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). The first school for females in Saudi Arabia was founded in Riyadh at the considerably later date of 1960 (Alamri, 2011).

Ur Rahman, and Alhaisoni (2013) claim that "Education was out of reach for most of the Saudi people till the midst of 20th century, but soon after the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1953 and the General Presidency of Female Education in 1959 which later merged into one ministry, the educational scenario became vibrant in Saudi Arabia". Today all educational stages or levels in Saudi Arabia (primary, intermediate and

secondary school), are available free of charge to both Saudi and non-Saudi students. However, higher education is free only to Saudi citizens: foreign students are required to pay fees to pursue higher education.

As Saudi Arabia follows Islam in all matters relating to State affairs, the country has established the right of women to study and work. “According to the Qur'an, Islam strongly believes in mandatory education for both men and women. A woman needs to be educated in order to achieve perfection. Additionally, The Qur'an states that women have the right to work, and may work in commerce, industry, and agriculture as long as their work does not harm themselves, nor their family” (Baki, 2004: 2). Nonetheless Sedgwick (2001) observes that “education in Saudi Arabia is segregated by sex” in order to accommodate the Saudi culture and social norms. As the female education system necessitates a single sex education policy, the education system in many Arabic countries segregates students on the basis of gender at both school and university level (Fryer and Levitt, 2010).

The education system in Saudi Arabia is currently overseen by the Ministry of Education (MoE). This office was established in 1952 (Sedgwick, 2001) when it took over the responsibility of managing public education from the Directorate of Education. The public SA education system includes pre-school, primary school (1st - 6th grade) between 6 to 12 years old, intermediate school (7th- 9th grade) between 13 to 16, secondary school (10th - 12th grade), and higher education in universities and other third level community colleges (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). The number of schools under the supervision of the Ministry of Education has risen significantly; from 3,098 in 1970 to 34,784 in 2013, with a correspondingly increase in students number, from 536,000 in 1970 to 5,274,205 (male: 2,644,157; female: 2,630,048) in the same period (Ministry of Education, 2014; Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). The Ministry of Education has a sweeping portfolio which Alquraini (2010: p.120) has summarized as responsibility for “establishing new schools and maintaining old schools, providing and developing curricula, establishing training programs to in-service teachers, and offering adult education literacy”.

Originally, two separate ministries oversaw education in SA: namely, the Ministry of Education which was responsible for schools; and the Ministry of Higher Education, which was established in 1975 with particular responsibility for universities and colleges (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). In 2015, the latter ministry was absorbed into the Ministry of Education which now also manages higher education throughout Saudi Arabia. At present, there are 25 public universities and eight private universities operating in Saudi Arabia (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). All the universities, whether public or private, are linked to the Ministry of Education at the administrative level.

2.3 Higher Education Policy

The higher education system in SA consists of four-year bachelor programmes in Arts, Humanities or Social Sciences and five/six-year bachelor programmes in Medicine or Engineering. All undergraduate courses incorporate an initial preparatory academic year. In order to gain admittance to university, Saudi students must attain an entry percentage specific to their discipline which is derived from a combination of high school leaving exam results and the results of the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education test (QIYAS). The QIYAS examines mathematics, science, Arabic and English which students must study at high school if they wish to pursue higher education. The Higher Committee for Educational Policy specifies the following tertiary level educational aims (ur Rahman, and Alhaisoni, 2013):

2. To have the student understand Islam in a correct and comprehensive manner.
3. To plant and spread the Islamic creed, and to furnish the student with the values, teachings, and ideals, of Islam.
4. To equip him/her with various skills and knowledge, and to develop his conduct in constructive directions.
5. To develop the society economically, socially, and culturally, and to prepare the individual to become a useful member in the building of his community.

2.4 English Language Teaching in Saudi Arabia

The English language occupies a unique position in SA education as it is the only foreign language which is studied in school as a compulsory subject.

However, Al-Seghayer (2014) claims that the teaching of English as a foreign language is not a recent phenomenon. On the contrary, it was actually instantiated into the Saudi Arabian educational system in 1928, directly following the establishment of the Directorate of Education in 1923. Thus, while English as a taught subject in schools was actually established in 1950s to meet the needs of the international oil market, English had been spoken throughout Arab society as far back as the 1930s: this, in turn, had given rise to its use in other Arab contexts (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). In fact, Many Arabs working in the oil business developed fluent English at that time due of the high degree of interaction with English native speaking colleagues.

As recently as 2010, English was only taught at intermediate level and above as certain educators feared that contact with the language at a younger age would adversely impact student ability to learn their first language (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). However, in 2010 compulsory English language studies were extended to primary school from the age of 10. This effectively means that learners commence their English education at the 4th grade of the primary school instead of starting in the elementary school. At primary levels (4th-6th grade), students receive two mandatory 45-minute English classes per week, while at intermediate and secondary levels, this is doubled to four mandatory classes of the same duration per week. Ur Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013. p.113) have summarized the Ministry of Education's general objectives and goals of the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Saudi Arabian schools as follows:

- To enable students to acquire basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- To develop student awareness of the importance of English as a means of international communication
- To develop positive student attitudes towards learning English
- To enable students to acquire the necessary linguistic competence required in various life situations
- To enable students to acquire the necessary linguistic competence required in different professions.

- To develop student awareness of the cultural, economic, religious, and social issues of his society and prepare him to participate in their solutions
- To develop student linguistic competence to present and explain Islamic concepts and issues in the future, and to participate in spreading Islam
- To enable student to benefit linguistically from English speaking nations, in order to enhance international co-operation and help to develop better mutual understandings and respect of the cultural diversity of different nations
- To provide students with the linguistic competence and arrogate global scientific and technological knowledge in order to advance the progress of his nation.

Nonetheless, scholars including Fareh (2010) and Khan (2011) note that despite the concerted efforts of the Saudi government to elevate English language teaching and learning, Saudi learners' still have difficulty in attaining the desired levels of English proficiency. Recently, both the Ministry of Education and those working in the field of education have focused on the less than satisfactory achievements of learners of English in both schools and universities, and researchers such as Rajab (2013) have sought to identify the main reasons for the low proficiency level of students of English. Their findings have identified a number of contributing factors, including a lack of adequate teacher training, reliance on traditional teaching methods and teacher-centred instruction largely based on grammar-translation approach, poor student motivation, the use of the L1 (Arabic) as the language of instruction, overdependence on memorization as a learning technique, and restricted opportunities to speak English outside the Saudi classroom due to its status to be a foreign language.

Kachru (1985, cited in Al-Asmari and Khan, 2014) characterizes English according to how it is communicated around the world. In his analysis of the dissemination of English, he offers a model which consists of an inner, outer, and expanding circle, each of which represents a specific group of countries where the use of English is similar. The inner circle consists of countries which use English as a native language, such as the UK, USA, Canada and Australia. Fiji, Hong Kong, India, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Singapore are among countries that fall within the outer circle as English is a second official language in these territories.

Countries within the expanding circle, such as Brazil, Egypt, France, North and South Korea, Indonesia, Japan and Saudi Arabia, are those in which English is deemed a foreign language (Al-Asmari and Khan, 2014):

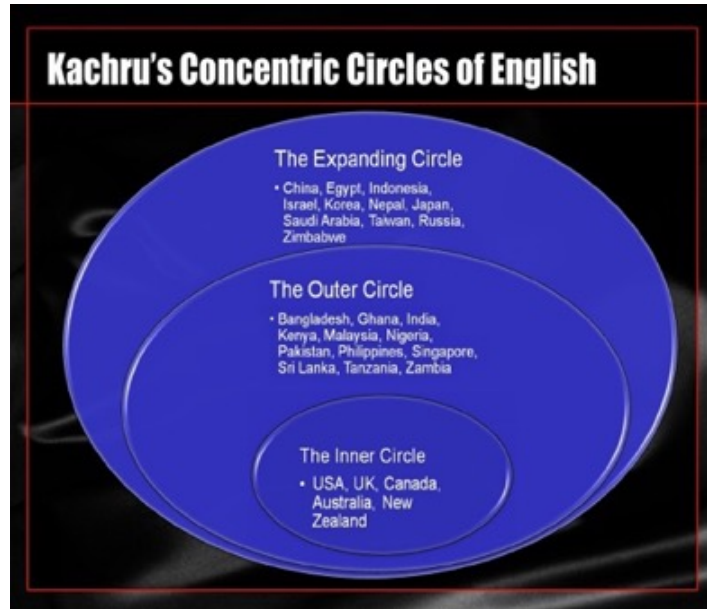


Figure 1: Kachru's Three Concentric Circles

2.5 The Study Location

As previously stated, the research for this study was undertaken at Al-Khafji city.



Figure 2: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Although Al-Khafji is a relatively small city of just 120,000 inhabitants, it is one of the most important and wealthiest in Saudi Arabia due to its vast volume of oil fields. Established in 1956, these continue to be of immense value to the national Saudi oil industry, and several prominent international oil companies, such as Aramco and the Al-Khafji joint operation, are based there. Aramco is an American company which was founded in Saudi Arabia in 1933, and managed and held by US interests and citizens until 1988.

The study was conducted in this city college, wherein all the students, regardless of nationality, are eligible to study at any Saudi public university free from fees or charges. The college currently offers the six major disciplines of English Language, Mathematics, Islamic Studies, Arabic Language, Chemistry, and Biology. All programmes except English are taught through the medium of Arabic and all the students attending the college are native Arabic speakers. However, all university departments stipulate that enrolled students study English in their preparatory year. Students are required to study all modules prescribed by their particular school curricula with no choice of elective modules.

The modules are divided into 8 levels; from level 1 onwards. Following satisfactory completion of all 8 levels students graduate in Art or Science depending on their major. Students may not take modules from different level as they need to progress from level to another. Since they must pass level 1 in order to register for level 2, students can attain two different subject levels depending on their overall university progress. Moreover, students are not required to register or to study the whole set of the courses of each level, as this depends on several factors, such as passing the prerequisite scoring the required GPA, and registering within the number of hours allowed per students per week. For example, in 1st year, students register for 19 hours per week, and depending on their progress, may subsequently register for 12 to 19 hours per week.

All students must complete and achieve at least a 60% average pass grade in every element for progression to the next level. Of the 100% module assessment, assignments, projects, homework, and quizzes, have a combined weighting of 70%, with mid-term exams weighted at the remaining 30%. The following table illustrates that the students are scored between A to F using a GPA from 100:

Table 1: Grades division of the academic program for English Language Department in al Khafji collage

GPA	Grade
100 to 90	A+ and A
90 to 80	B+ and B
80 to 70	C+ and C
70 to 60	D+ and D
50 to 60	F (the students fail the module)

The scores can be compared to English system in which A to B+ represents Distinction B- and Cs Merit, and C- and Ds Pass. F is a Fail. Most students commence first year in English (equal to level 4) with IELTS score of 4.5 to 5. However, since they are in their third and fourth year, the present study participants boast a language level of between 5.5 to 6 IELTS.

Moreover, in order to best serve Saudi society, the college delivers training and a community service unit for college students and the general public to pursue a variety of different English courses and improve their IT skills. Self-development courses are also available. The college offers both a general English language course and a number of intensive courses in targeted skills, such as writing, reading, and speaking. The unit also offers a range of IT courses based on different software programs, such as Microsoft and Endnote. In 2012 the college also ran a three-month Cambridge International Certificate in IT Skills course to train the participants to use IT software. All participants who passed the regulation test were conferred with a certificate. The unit further offers a number of courses designed for young children. While the majority are free of charge, others incur fees depending on the requirements, duration, and costs of the course or programme. No one reported doing paid work which may be attributable to the fact that state colleges are free of charge in Saudi Arabia and the government grants all university learners a

monthly stipend of approximately 180Eur to offset their living expenses. The lack of pressure and free time which learners enjoy as a result of this government sponsorship enables them to focus all their energies on their academic studies and self-improvement.

2.6 The English Department

This study was conducted with the assistance of participants from the English Department in Al-Khafji College which was also established in 2002. It offers a range of modules to female students majoring in the English language. The university website delineates The Department mission as aiming to:

...develop and educate talented English language and literature graduates who exemplify professionalism, exhibit creativity and are capable of enriching the dialog between the Arab-Islamic culture and the cultures where English is the language of communication and literature.

To this end, the university has established the Department goals as follows:

- To enrich the debate between local culture and English culture through positive learning and teaching
- To prepare graduates who can successfully pursue their higher studies and research
- To serve the local community in the areas of teaching English and translation
- To produce highly qualified students who can adapt to new challenges and opportunities

All students attending university are free to select their own majors, but individuals must meet the requirements of their chosen field to be eligible for entry. For example, English Department entry requirements stipulate that candidates pass all English preparatory modules with at least a B+ grade average along with a departmental entry exam. However, the Al Khafji College English Department does not require students to pass a special English language test in order to be admitted into the department. The students need only pass the standard entrance exam administered by the Department.

While the majority of students in their first year of specialization of English hold an IELTS score between 4.5 and 5. Whereas, the fifth and sixth level participants of this study

(students in their third and fourth year) hold a higher IELTS score of between 5.5 and 6. As previously delineated, all modules in the English Department are mandatory and must be passed all in order to graduate (Figure.3). Each module entails a range of assignments and assessment criteria during the semester, depending on the specific subject and the lecturer. However, all modules are assessed by both monthly and final exams. The relevant instruments of assessment include assignments, exams, presentations, and projects research papers, short essay writing, and/or question and answer homework. Continuous assessment is the main method of evaluation with the following weighting schema utilized across all modules:

1. Attendance 10 %
2. Class Quizzes and participation 10%
3. Class tasks 10%
4. Midterm Exam 20%
5. Final Exam 50%

Lecturers use different teaching methods and materials, such as PowerPoint, seminars and traditional lectures which cannot be generalized as they obtain to specific requirements and parameters of the module. While the Direct method is largely used in the college, delivery nonetheless depends on the personal style of individual lecturers. Each module measures specific skills as outlined in the module objectives which are available for learners in the online module plan provided to the learners at the beginning of each year. For example, the module '**Listening Comprehension**' illustrated in Figure (3) below, sets out the following objectives:

1. To provide students with the skills to understand English at an intermediate level.
2. The provide a necessary foundation for subsequent listening/speaking courses.
3. To support the integration of listening skills with reading and structure competencies.

To this end the course employs the following teaching/learning methods:

1. Listening to audio-tapes and CDs.
2. Listening to audio material prepared/designed by the teacher.
3. Questions and discussions.
4. Student's presentations and note-taking.
5. Class Quizzes

The main textbooks used are:

Tanka J. and Baker, L. (2004). *Interactions II: Listening and Speaking*. New York, McGraw-Hill Contemporary.

Lynch, Tony. *Study Listening Audio CD SET: A Course in Listening to Lectures*. Cambridge, C.U.P.

Solozano, (2009). *Contemporary Topics 1*. New York, Pearson ESL.

As such, each module builds in a preferred text-book and two alternatives to enable students to source the required materials. The English language is the main medium of communication during lectures, all final exams are weighted at 50 marks, and combined monthly exams and the assignments at 50 marks. Students must accrue an overall grade of 60 marks to pass the module. The figure below lists all English Department modules undertaken by Alkhafji College students during the three-year course:

The Academic Program for English Language Department
Study Plan:
Year One- Preparatory

Year Two							
Level Three				Level Four			
Course Name	Course Code	Credit Hours	Pre-requisite	Course Name	Course Code	Credit Hours	Pre-requisite
Listening Comprehension	ENGL210N	2	General English	Listening /Speaking	ENGL211N	3	Listening Comprehension
Reading	ENGL220N	2	Reading	Non-Fictional Prose	ENGL221N	2	Reading
Composition(1)	ENGL230N	3	Writing	Composition (2)	ENGL231N	3	Composition
Grammatical Structure	ENGL240N	2	General English	Gram.Rules& Systems	ENGL241N	2	Grammatical Structure
Internet & Communications	COMP215 N	2	Computer Office Program	Intro.to Linguistics	ENGL250N	3	Reading
Social System in Islam	ISLM 272N	2	-	Eng.Lit.of the Renaissance	ENGL280N	3	Reading
Total	13			Islamic World Contemporary	HIST 216N	2	-
				Databases	COMP216 N	2	-
				Total	20		
Year Three							
Level Five				Level Six			
Course Name	Course Code	Credit Hours	Pre-requisite	Course Name	Course Code	Credit Hours	Pre-requisite
Arts of Speech	ENGL312N	3	Listening/ Speaking	Syntax & Morphology	ENGL352N	2	Intro.to Linguistics
Eng. Thought and Culture	ENGL322N	2	English Prose	Semantics and Pragmatics	ENGL353N	2	Intro.to Linguistics
Essay	ENGL332N	2	Composition (2)	Applied Linguistics	ENGL354N	3	Intro.to Linguistics
Translation Theory	ENGL370N	2	Intro.to Linguistics	Translating Text Types	ENGL371N	3	Translation Theory
Phonetics & Phonology	ENGL351N	3	Intro.to Linguistics	The Modern Novel	ENGL383N	2	The Rise of the Novel
Eng. Lit. of the 17th Century	ENGL381N	2	Eng. Lit.of the Renaissance	English Poetry from Romantics to Moderns	ENGL384N	2	17th Century Eng. Lit.
The Rise of the Novel	ENGL382N	2	Eng. Lit.of the Renaissance	Epistemology/ Aesthetic	ISLM 319N	2	-
Economic System in Islam	ISLM 273N	2	-	Modern&contemporary History of Arabian Gulf	HIST 341N	2	-
Islamic Civilization	HIST 331N	2	-	Total	18		
Total	20						
Year Four							
Level Seven				Level Eight			
Course Name	Course Code	Credit Hours	Pre-requisite	Course Name	Course Code	Credit Hours	Pre-requisite
Psycholinguistic	ENGL455N	2	Intro.to Linguistics	Discourse Analysis	ENGL459N	2	Intro.to Linguistics
*Sociolinguistics	ENGL456N	2	Intro.to Linguistics	Language & I.T.	ENGL460N	2	Intro.to Linguistics
*Language Planning	ENGL457N			*Consecutive Translation	ENGL473N	2	Translation Theory
*Language Variation	ENGL458N			*Machine Translation	ENGL474N		-
Creative Translation	ENGL472N	2	Translation Theory	*Translating Terminology	ENGL475N		-
Literary Criticism	ENGL485N	3	17th Century Eng. Lit.	Intro.to American Lit.	ENGL487N	2	17th Century Eng. Lit.
Modern Drama	ENGL486N	2	281N 17th Century Eng.Lit.	*The Short Story	ENGL488N	2	381N 17th Century Eng. Lit
Research Method &Design	ENGL495N	2	Intro.to Linguistics	*Children Lit.	ENGL489N	2	17th Century Eng. Lit

Political System in Islam	ISLM 274N	2	-	*Comparative Lit.	ENGL490N		
Total	15			Graduation Project	ENGL496N	2	Research Method &Design
				Total	12		

*Elective Course

Courses Description:

Listening Comprehension ENGL 210 N/Level Three:

Figure 3: List of modules in the English Department, Alkhafji College

2.7 Women in Saudi Arabia

Until recently, men dominated many aspects of life in Saudi Arabia. Saudi society is highly patriarchal, with males being observed as the head of the family, and for the most part, maintaining control over female family members. As male superiority is inscribed and perpetuated by Islamic beliefs and Arabic culture, Saudi women were traditionally subjected to restrictive laws which proscribed simple everyday activities, such as reserving a hotel room without the presence of a male family member. Saudi women are also unable to progress to undergraduate study without the express permission of a male family member.

In the past, the ascribed role of a Saudi Arabian woman was strictly delimited to that of a good wife and mother. In fact until the last year of this thesis, the life of Saudi women fell under the complete jurisdiction of a male guardian, such as a father, brother, or husband. In August 2019 King Salman, and his son, Prince Mohammed, introduced sweeping changes to emancipate the women of Saudi Arabia and endow them with equal rights to men and the autonomy of assume control of their lives without undue interference. To this end, King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz al Saud decreed that women be allowed to study, travel, and seek medical treatment, without a man's permission. Furthermore, since women in Saudi Arabia may now work for longer hours in order to support their families economically, highly educated working women are now becoming a normalized and widely accepted feature of Saudi society. The year 2017 also marks that the year in which King Salman repealed the illegality of female driving, thereby enabling Saudi women to drive a private car. Women may now also attend football matches which had also been formerly restricted to males.

One of the key factors leading to advances in any society is the free availability of education, and indeed this has had an incalculable impact on Saudi women and resulted in significant improvements in their social role. Yamani (2000, p. 49) asserts that “education has been one of the major vehicles for the transmission of external values and is bound to have an uneasy relationship with existing social and familial standards”. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s Saudi girls were educated privately, either within the

home or in the private schools established for the middle and upper classes of large cities such as Jeddah, Mecca, and Riyadh. Public education for girls in Saudi Arabia came into effect in the 1960s. Hamdan (2005) states that Dar Al-Hanan in Jeddah, the first modern girls' school in Saudi Arabia, was actually established in King Faisal's wife in 1956. The main propose of this school was to support orphans and other young girls and to supply them with sufficient education to earn a living within the established social boundaries and religious rules of accepted female conduct. Yet even within its initially limited focus of religion and the duties of a wife, education exerted a dynamic influence on Saudi women. Bahgat (1999) asserts that the status of women developed in spite of the many social and cultural barriers, and that, "certainly, education [has] played a pivotal role in promoting this change" (p. 134). The most significant change which education has brought about for Saudi women is that they now have the opportunity to work outside the home. In fact, female participation in all levels and aspects of the education system has arguably transformed the situation in Saudi Arabia. El-Sanabary (1994, p.145) states that:

On the private level it has increased women's negotiating power within the family. It has also given them greater mobility: hundreds of thousands of girls and women go out daily to either school or work...on the public level, education has made it possible for thousands of women to enter the labour force.

However, until very recent past, very few jobs were available for women due to the strict rules governing segregation of the genders in public: women could only take employment which entailed no direct contact with men (Renard, 2008). While Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's New Vision 2020-2030 (2018) stated that women are allowed to work as equal as men across all fields and professions, in reality, the situation is evolving and many women now apply for a wider range of work than in the past. A considerable volume of women now work in jobs with entail direct contact with men; such as doctors, accountants, and pharmacists. Women also work in oil companies, such as Aramco. This change in work opportunities for women in Saudi Arabia rests on a number of factors which include extended educational opportunities for women, workforce demands, and increased exposure to western norms. Thankfully, female emancipation in Saudi Arabia has made great strides in recent years; so much so, that Saudi women now actively participate in society in numerous ways which were previously denied to them. In 2002, for example, women were issued with independent identification cards which finally enabled them to

serve on the Saudi Council. They now comprise 30% of the total Saudi Shura Council membership.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature on formal, informal, and non-formal learning. In so doing, it considers the differences between them, introduces the primary concepts related to informal language learning, such as the distinctions between language learning and language acquisition, and outlines the different types of general informal learning. The chapter also elucidates the correlation between informal language learning and mobile learning and reviews studies which investigate the effect of the various learning affordances, tools, and activities on learner language development. Finally, the chapter addresses informal language learning in Saudi Arabia and identifies the main research gaps in this area.

3.1 Differentiating between Formal, Informal and Non-formal Learning

a. Informal Language Learning:

In order to appreciate the distinctions between formal, informal and non-formal learning, which are widely discussed throughout the literature, the meaning of each component must be examined. Starting with the informal learning, the literature draws upon several definitions of informal learning which share core characteristics but also diverge in a number of ways. The concept of adult informal learning, as first introduced by Knowles (1950, cited in Smith, 2002), refers to the education processes and knowledge gained from associational or club-life. While he did not formulate a precise definition of the term, Knowles clearly differentiated between formal and informal learning:

Formal programs are those sponsored for the most part by established educational institutions, such as universities, high schools, and trade schools. While many adults participate in the courses without working for credit, they are organized essentially for credit students...Informal classes, on the other hand, are generally fitted into more general programs of such organizations as the YMCA and YWCA, community centers, labor unions, industries and churches.

(Knowles, 1950, p. 23, cited in Smith, 2002, p. 3)

The term discussed in this section, namely, informal learning, has also been widely debated and has many distinct formulations. One early definition, proposed by Coombs and Ahmed (1974), describes it as the constant and unconscious result of taking part in everyday activities:

...the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment -at home, at work, at play; from the example and attitudes of family and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television. Generally, informal education is unorganized and often unsystematic; yet it accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning-including that of even a highly "schooled" person.

(Coombs and Ahmed, 1974, p. 8)

Many the scholars use the terms informal language learning and incidental learning to refer to the same thing. Marsick and Watkins (1990) distinguish between informal and incidental learning: two terms that are often used interchangeably but are actually quite different:

Informal learning, a category that includes incidental learning, may occur in institutions, but it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner. Incidental learning is defined as a by-product of some other activity, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interaction, sensing the organizational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning. Informal learning may be deliberately encouraged by an organization or it may take place despite an environment not highly conducive to learning. Incidental learning, on the other hand, almost always takes place although people are not always conscious of it.

(Marsick and Watkins, 1990, p. 12)

In general, The European Commission (2001) offers the most comprehensive definition of informal learning as:

[I]earning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or "incidental"/random).'

(European Commission, 2001. p. 32)

b. Formal Learning:

Formal learning refers to the traditional structured learning of schools or universities which follow prescribed curricula and may or may not limit student choices. The option to select what or how to learn is one of the principal differences between formal and informal learning, as the latter enables learners to choose and manage what they want to learn, where they want to learn, and how they want to learn:

...when a teacher has the authority to determine that people designated as requiring knowledge effectively learn a curriculum taken from a pre-established body of knowledge...whether in the form of age-graded and bureaucratic modern school systems or elders initiating youths into traditional bodies of knowledge.

(Livingstone, 2001, p. 3)

Kristensen (2004) expands Livingstone's definition above, describing adult formal learning as that 'typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning then is intentional from the learner's perspective' (p.11). Based on the above definitions, the main features of formal learning can be summarized as follows:

- managed by institutions, organizations and teachers
- takes place in schools, universities or other educational institutions
- governed by clear objectives and aims established by the institution or teachers
- learners are powerless to change such requirements
- continuous process whereby learners complete levels and advance to subsequent levels
- ends with certification that qualifies learners to be accepted for further studies or the labour market
- based on the intentional and conscious effort of the learner

Formal learning, as the term suggests, refers to learning that is organized and structured, which is to say:

...most closely associated with elementary and secondary education and most degree and certificate programs offered by colleges and universities. Other educational programs from cosmetology to the military also fall into this category. As previously stated, the learner has little responsibility in this form of learning. (Mocker and Spear, 1982 p. 5)

More particularly, in the context of adult education, Livingstone (2006) maintains that informal learning is 'anything people do to gain knowledge, skill, or understanding from learning about their health or hobbies, unpaid or paid work, or anything else that interests them outside of organized courses' (p. 211). Formal learning is not linked to learners' interests or hobbies as it is set by organisation, curriculum designer, and educators. Livingstone underscores personal interest as the main reason for extramural informal learning during learner free-time. While other definitions of informal learning do not provide an exhaustive list of informal learning characteristics, they generally link them to non-institutional or personal projects (Benson, 2011).

Based on these definitions of formal learning and informal learning, it is evident that while informal learning can be incidental, it is usually intentional although not necessarily structured (Marsick and Watkins, 1990). Since formal learning is invariably intentional, intentionality is the main difference between the two types of learning (Lin and Lee, 2014). Formal learning always comprises a set timetable, a curriculum, and a location, such as a school or classroom and a teacher. The goals and aims of formal learning are clearly stated and built on 'a course with traditional objectives that is offered in a traditional setting' (Mocker and Spear, 1982, p.5). Conversely, informal learning may be incidental, such as learning about values or culture or assimilating a language while living abroad; or it may entail an intentional self-learning process, such as learning a language by the use of internet in one's free time. Informal learning tends to be associated with personal learner interests whereas formal learning is most commonly yoked to mandatory education requirements.

c. non-formal learning:

Mocker and Spear (1982) define a third type of learning; that of non-formal learning, as 'a type of lifelong learning where the individual has some responsibility in the process, making decisions on what to learn but seeking help with the means to learning activity' (p. 5). Livingstone (2001, p. 2) similarly refers to non-formal learning as "when learners opt to acquire further knowledge or skill by studying voluntarily with a teacher who assists their self-determined interests, by using an organized curriculum, as is the case in many adult education courses and workshop". However, in considering the differences between informal learning and non-formal learning, it is stressed that the former comprises a type of unstructured learning which is usually ad hoc and concludes without formal recognition or academic accreditation.

In summary, the core characteristics of non-formal learning underscore its divergences from informal and formal learning. Non-formal learning is based on learner interests and desires and is distinguished from formal learning which culminates with certificates of achievement, such as a series of driving lessons which lead to a driving license. Moreover, non-formal learning usually has similar objectives and goals to those of formal learning; for example, learners enrolling in a tennis class must adhere to the specific goals and objectives of the course in order to improve their skills and make progress (Kyndt, Dochy and Nijs, 2009). In addition, and as with formal learning programs, non-formal learning usually involves a teacher or trainer, such as an instructor or a coach for tennis lessons or foreign language learning. Finally, both non-formal and formal learning take place with the full volition and consciousness of the learner, whereas informal learning can occur unintentionally (Radakovic and Antonijevic, 2013). Furthermore, while researchers such as Schugurensky (2000) maintain that all non-formal learning takes place outside formal settings, some non-formal learning clearly occurs in institutions, such as workshops in universities or school music classes. To avoid unnecessary misunderstandings then, I have excluded location as a differentiating feature for the purposes of this study.

Table 2 below, adapted from Eshach (2007, p. 174), indicates the main differences between formal, non-formal and informal learning. While originally applied to school children, the principles apply equally well to adults:

Table 2: Differences between formal, non-formal, and informal learning (Eshach, 2007)

Formal	Non-Formal	Informal
Usually at school	At institution, out of school	Everywhere
May be repressive	Usually supportive	Supportive
Structured	Structured	Unstructured
Usually prearranged	Usually prearranged	Spontaneous
Motivation is typically more extrinsic	Motivation may be extrinsic, but it is typically more intrinsic	Motivation is mainly intrinsic
Compulsory	Usually voluntary	Voluntary
Teacher-led	May be guided or teacher-led	Usually learner-led
Learning is evaluated	Learning is usually not evaluated (but it can be evaluated sometimes)	Learning is not evaluated
Sequential Can cost money	Typically non-sequential Usually costs money	Non-sequential Most of the time it is free

3.2 Types of Informal Learning

The types of informal learning described by researchers vary. While commentators refer to several strands and iterations, including self-directed learning, incidental learning, mentoring, and coaching, this section outlines the two main forms.

3.2.1 Self-directed Learning

With roots in the work of Tough (1971, cited in Hiemstra, 1994) and Houle (1961, cited in Hiemstra, 1994), self-directed learning has been defined as ‘the ultimate state of learner autonomy’ (Mocker and Spear, 1982. p.11).

Schugurensky (2000, p.3) defines self-directed learning as “learning projects” undertaken by individuals (alone or as part of a group) without the assistance of an “educator” (teacher, instructor, facilitator), but it can include the presence of a “resource person” who does not regard herself or himself as an “educator”. This definition holds self-directed learning to be a process whereby the learner assumes control of individualized learning in terms of objective, aims, instrument, time, and location. Lin and Lee (2014) concur that self-directed learning offers learners control by enabling them to choose what they want to study, the time that suits them, the management of fees, and the most cost-

effective location (Roberson, 2005). Moreover, since no formal instructors or teachers are involved in the process, the student can learn from friends, relatives, neighbours, and/or online contacts. In this way, self-directed learning is regarded as “both intentional and conscious. It is intentional because the individual has the purpose of learning something even before the learning process begins, and it is conscious in the sense that the individual is aware that she or he has learned something” (Schugurensky, 2000, p.3).

3.2.2 Incidental Learning

The theoretical origins of incidental learning can be traced back to Marsick and Watkins (1990) and Garrick (1998). Many scholars, such as Hiemstra (1994) and Roberson (2005) have demonstrated that features of incidental learning may be linked to adult learning. In fact, while incidental learning can take place in both formal and informal situations, it is deemed most effective within informal learning scenarios (Rogers, 1997; Kerka, 2000). Scholars have also linked incidental learning to the “acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operation” (Ellis, 1994, p.1). Thus, incidental learning can occur under several circumstances; such as while a learner discusses how to solve a problem with another learner, during observation of another person performing a task, or via social interaction (Kerka, 2000).

3.3 The Benefits of Informal Learning

The four main areas of benefit related to the application of informal learning are as follows:

- *Cost and time effectiveness*: Informal learning is generally less costly for learners. As many learners now have laptops and/or mobile phones, they can obtain information within a short timeframe without having to pay to register for programs or attend class at a specific time.
- *Personal learning environment*: Some learners are uncomfortable speaking in front of others or in face-to-face sessions. For these learners, informal learning offers the optimal learning opportunity to engage and communicate within a learning environment without the stress of physical interaction.

- *Wide availability of information:* Informal learning is beneficial for those wishing to improve their skills and knowledge within a specific area or subject, ranging from laptop technology to different types of science or learning languages. The Internet provides an environment for learners to interact with others from diverse backgrounds to share a massive amount of content.

Having reviewed the relevant literature on informal learning, the following working definition has been generated for the purposes of this study:

Informal learning is a type of learning wherein learners are free to choose what they want to learn or study according to their personal interests and may pursue this in any environment they choose, and where learning can occur incidentally or intentionally.

3.4 Informal Language Learning

Since this study focuses on the informal language learning practices of female Saudi undergraduate learners, the following section introduces the most important concepts related to informal language learning in relation to mobile learning and language acquisition as well as the differences between language learning and language acquisition. The various affordances of the learning tools and activities used by the learners are also outlined in the following section.

3.5 Informal Language Learning and Mobile Learning

Mobile and computing devices are now widely used on college campuses throughout the world. Indeed, the seemingly limitless types of new devices, such as notebook, computers, smartphones and tablets, has led to rapid advances in Internet capabilities that have changed the face of higher education (Kukulka-Hulme, 2006). Since the literature demonstrates a pronounced correlation between the terms *informal language learning* and *mobile learning*, this section will rehearse their connections and the significance of mobile learning within informal language learning.

Sharples, Arnedillo-Sánchez, Milrad and Vavoula (2009) trace mobile learning research to Kay's (1972) project on the Dynabook. This study proposed the need for a conceptual

portable educational device that could enable children to discover, create, and share active games and simulations. Sharples *et al.* (2009, p. 3) define mobile learning as “e-learning through mobile computational devices: Palms, Windows CE machines, even your digital cell phone”. In their definition of mobile learning, El-Hussein and Cronj (2010) additionally underscore the features of both the mobility of learners and the mobility of learning in explaining that, “mobile learning as an educational activity makes sense only when the technology in use is fully mobile and when the users of the technology are also mobile while they learn” (El-Hussein and Cronj, 2010, p.14). Due to their flexibility and the extensive array of language learning resources on offer, the now ubiquitous use of mobile devices has expanded opportunities for informal foreign language learning. Moreover, the use of Computer Assisted Learning (CAL) has significantly increased in recent years due to the on-campus proliferation of the Internet, email, multimedia technology, and intelligent teaching system technologies (Motiwalla, 2007). In fact, Cox (2013, cited in Song and Bonk, 2016) claims that students are using more learning technology outside school than in. Moreover, Jacob and Issac (2014) observe that the use of mobile devices for mobile learning is becoming increasingly popular amongst university students, and numerous studies have sought to explain why students seem to find informal learning activities involving mobile devices more motivating.

In their review of the literature on motivation and mobile learning, Jones *et al.* (2006, p.3) cite six factors affecting mobile learning in an informal setting in general (and informal language learning in specific), as follows:

1. ‘Learners often find their informal learning activities more motivating than learning in formal settings, such as schools, where they perceive there is less **freedom** to define tasks and relate activities to their own goals’. Informal language learning affords learners more freedom and control than is possible within a formal learning environment.
2. ‘Mobile devices give users a very strong sense of **control** and **ownership**.’ Research has highlighted this as a key motivator which gives learners a sense of privacy and enables them to search for any information they choose. Moreover, informal language learning via mobile devices offers learners the dual advantage

of control over the learning process in that they can choose what and how they want to study and the learning tools and apps most suitable for specific goals, such as improving their communication ability.

3. 'Mobile devices facilitate **communication** between learners, thus supporting collaborative activities.' They offer more opportunities for informal language learning as they increase the opportunity to interact outside the classroom and beyond the curriculum and enable students to communicate with native speakers, especially in a foreign language learning context.
4. 'Mobile devices are used by many people, especially the young, for entertainment purposes and are thus associated with enjoyment. As they are identified as **fun** devices.'
5. In the context of informal language learning, many people learn the language incidentally while they enjoy other activities, such as playing an online video game.
6. 'Mobile devices enable learners to locate resources and information in the **context** in which they are needed and used, enabling them to share this information with others.' Within the context of informal language learning then, learners can search for specific information according to their needs or interests, such as a grammatical rule they do not understand or the meaning of a word.
7. 'Portability means that mobile devices provide **continuity** between different settings whereby information or resources obtained or used in one context may easily be transferred to another.' Learners in schools can apply the knowledge they gain in the classroom to the real world and vice-versa so that the learning acquired from an informal language setting can be taken into the classroom.

3.6 Informal Language Learning and Language Acquisition

Since language acquisition is closely related to informal language learning, it is necessary to differentiate between these two terms. According to Moeller and Catalano:

Language scholars distinguish between the terms acquisition and learning: 'acquisition' refers to the process of learning first and second languages naturally, without formal instruction, whereas 'learning' is reserved for the formal study of second or foreign languages in classroom settings.

(Moeller and Catalano, 2015, p. 327)

Scholars largely associate the term *acquisition* with informal learning and the term *learning* with formal learning due to the conscious states of the process. They contend

that the acquisition of any language, whether first or second, is a largely, but not exclusively, subconscious and incidental process (see Saville-Troike, 2006), whereas other researchers, such as Stickler and Emke, consider informal language learning to have both intentional and non-intentional features:

...resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or 'incidental'/ random).

(Stickler and Emke, 2011, p.150)

However, as stated previously, one of the core divergences between informal learning and formal learning is the consciousness of the learning process. Since some types of informal learning occurs in an unconscious way, it is more likely to be linked to the term acquisition. Thus, we can consider acquisition as one feature of informal language learning. This claim has been widely discussed in the literature by scholars such as Krashen (1982). In emphasizing the difference between the learning and acquisition of other languages, he contrasted acquisition as a subconscious process with learning as a conscious process. Krashen has widely discussed language learning and the language acquisition in regard to second language. In his distinction Krashen stated "other ways of describing acquisition include implicit learning, informal learning, and natural learning. In non-technical language, acquisition is "picking-up" a language". Krashen (1982, p. 2), consequently proposed key theories in relation to language acquisition which continue to be main five hypotheses about second language acquisition.

This thesis is primarily interested in Krashen's input hypothesis which is directly linked to this research. The input hypothesis is one of five developed by Krashen 1970s and 1980s: namely, the input hypothesis; the acquisition-learning hypothesis; the monitor hypothesis; the natural order hypothesis; and the affective filter hypothesis. The input hypothesis states that "humans acquire language in only one way - by understanding messages or by receiving 'comprehensible input'". The input theories maintain that learner knowledge advances when they comprehend language input which is slightly beyond their linguistic competence level. Krashen called this level of input "i+1", wherein "i" is the learner's

current language level and "+1" is the next stage of language acquisition. Furthermore, Krashen proposed that such input occurs in natural settings through unconscious learner processes. This underscores another difference between acquisition and learning: both Krashen and Moeller and Catalano (2015) purport that acquisition happens organically without any instructions, whereas learning entails formal instruction.

While Krashen's input hypothesis highlights the differences between language learning and acquisition, Kuldass, Ismail, Hashim & Bakar (2013, 2) elaborate that "learning processes and outcomes can be conscious and unconscious". Thus, input can be considered a very useful and necessary part of language learning; especially in the foreign language context wherein little natural affordance is available to enhance unconscious inputs. Thus, input theories in this context are useful in that learners can avail of it within the use of authentic learners' materials. This is also related to the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985) which indicates that the outcome of what the student has learned, namely, the production aspects of the language such as speaking and writing, challenges learners and compels them to focus the conscious gap in his or her linguistic knowledge of the second language. The throughput hypothesis of the second language entails the three steps of noticing/triggering function, the hypothesis-testing function, and the reflective function. One of the main distinctions between Krashen's input and Swain's output hypotheses is the issue of subconscious and conscious language learning and acquisition. Krashen asserted that learning does not accord with the acquisition, while Swain implies learning and full conscious of the learners since they need to be aware of their mistakes in order to improve their language skills.

Castello (2015, p. 4) supported this view, stating that "learning a second language is distinguished from acquisition, with the latter being a subconscious process of gradual development of ability through use in natural communicative situations with other speakers". At this juncture, it is important to clarify the difference between the first and second language. The first language usually refers to the mother-tongue of the learner, whereas the second language is any other language acquired by the learner for education, work, and/or other purposes (Saville-Troike, 2006).

Based on the aforementioned definitions for acquisition and learning, *acquisition* is more closely associated with an informal process whereby learners acquire language through social interaction with parents, friends, or others outside the school setting, while *learning* is normally a school-based formal process. Thus, informal language could be linked to learning as the learners consciously intend to use out of class materials to learn the language on their own (Lightbown and Spada, 2001). However, as these two processes may be combined, it is clear that informal language acquisition does not invariably occur outside teaching institutions, nor formal language learning always derive from schools. Indeed, Bahrani *et al.* (2014, p.1717) observe that, “informal language learning can also occur in a class setting when the focus is not on the form of the language”. In instances when peer learner conversation is not strictly monitored or structured, for example, even the most traditional classroom environments can foster informal learning. In concurring with this view, Benson (2011) also concedes that formal and informal language settings can overlap. For this research study I opted to use the term “informal language learning” as I contend that incidental learning and the acquisition of language are features of informal language learning which may or may not occur in all situations.

3.7 The Affordances of Learning Tools

The globalized world of today offers learners in general, and language learners in particular, access to a vast array of resources on various platforms, including the Internet, social media and TV.

The term *affordance*, first coined by the psychologist Gibson in 1986, has latterly been used in the discourse of many fields, including language learning such resources are proving their efficacy in terms of meeting learners’ needs and play a key role in enhancing language learning outside the classroom. According to Palfreyman (2011):

Language learning beyond the classroom is often seen as a pursuit of target language resources, such as reading materials or native speakers, and these clearly have a role to play.

(Palfreyman, 2011, p. 17)

For Anderson (2015), however, the actual meaning of ‘affordance’ remains debatable and

is largely contingent upon the professional and/or academic context, the researcher's understanding of the concept, and the researcher's perception and/or application of the term.

In positing that affordance “refers to what is available to the person to do something with” (2000, cited in Menezes, 2011. p. 3), Van Lier's definition in the context of second language acquisition best aligns with the aims of the current study. Van Lier highlighted the significant features in his definition of affordance as “relations, possibility, opportunity, immediacy, and interaction to ‘what is available to the person to do something with’ in which ‘it is more accurately action in potential and it emerges as we interact with the physical and social world”. Van Lier (2004, p. 95) further comments that “language affordances, whether natural or cultural, direct or indirect are relations of possibility among language users”. For example, smart phones afford various language learning apps for learners, which can be used differently and afford different types of skills improvement tasks. Benson (2011) similarly asserts that affordances are a fundamental element in language learning.

Van Lier's (2004, p. 95) contention that “language affordances, whether natural or cultural, direct or indirect, are relations of possibility among language users” further implies that affordances refer to any tools or methods used for language learning. In an EFL context, such as the Saudi Arabian/ Arabic-speaking context of this study, it is difficult to find and use natural affordances for language learning.

In fact, Saudi Arabia is located in the expanding circle of Kachru's (1992) model circle (Figure.1, Chapter One), which minimizes affordances of the natural environment, especially within the drip-feed learning context used in SA. According to Menezes (2011), the affordances of English in a foreign environment are not, and can not, be the same for all learners. This means, that some learners have greater environmental opportunities to enhance language learning than others. It therefore follows that certain contexts offer more opportunities for learners to learn the language with fewer restrictions than others. For example, learners who have a family member to converse with in English can practice and enhance their language. In order to demonstrate this point, compare learning English

where it is spoken as a second language as it will presumably be many language affordances to learning English as a foreign language and there are far fewer language affordances. Residing in a context where English is routinely spoken is held to increase language learning. However, there are now many additional language affordances available for learners in other countries whereby they can access the cultural productions of the native speakers' countries, such as songs, movies, and TV shows (Menezes, 2011). Most of these aids offer affordances for learning language, especially for out-of-class learning or informal language learning. For example, when watching a movie, the video player options offered by new technology, such as pause or slow-motion, are affordances which can be used to create a learning activity, such as repeated listenings and focus on the meaning and repetition, to improve learners' listening and speaking skills.

The affordances of educational or learning tools offered by informal language learning for the learners, such as the affordances of different types of technology (i.e. smart phones, social media, blogs, TV, and so on), not only implicate the use of technology in order to learn but also the way in which a learning activity or task is performed (Richards, 2015). In addition, Lankshear and Knobel (1997, cited in Richards, 2015) and Jones and Hafner (2011, cited in Richards, 2015, p.2) maintain that the learning opportunities and affordances of the tools available out of the classroom can double the effect on language learning and prove even more helpful than expected as they are more likely to be "interactive, social, and multimodal".

As the increased and improved technology and Web 2.0 tools have improved student capacity to learn outside the classroom, research into the affordances of such valuable technologies is becoming ever more significant. One of the most recent studies on out-of-class activities and language learning was conducted by Lai, Zhu and Gong (2015), who examined informal language learning in general and its impact on language learning from the participants' perspective. The study uses a qualitative research design in order to investigate the issue and concludes that participants consider out of class learning activities to have a significant impact on their English language proficiency. The subjects of this study were 82 male and female EFL learners in their second year of junior high

school. Their average age was 14. Their English language proficiency ranged from A2 to B1 on the CEFR scale. A qualitative research design used a paper questionnaire with open-ended questions on the types and nature of the participants' out-of-class English language learning in addition to 23 Likert scale questions. In order to define the learning outcomes, both the participants' attitudes towards English and their English grades were also elicited by the use of single-item questions, as were participants' confidence when learning English. Finally, focus group interviews were conducted with 19 participants.

The findings of this study indicate that out-of-class learning was positively associated with good English grades, English language learning efficacy and enjoyment, and consisted of diverse elements which complement in class learning by balancing focus on meaning and focus on form. The study also found that parents and teachers were significant sources of influence on the quality of students' out-of-class learning. The following section therefore considers the affordances derived from various language learning activities, such as social interactions, using social media, reading, video games, and writing.

3.8 Social Interaction

3.8.1 Face-to-Face Interaction

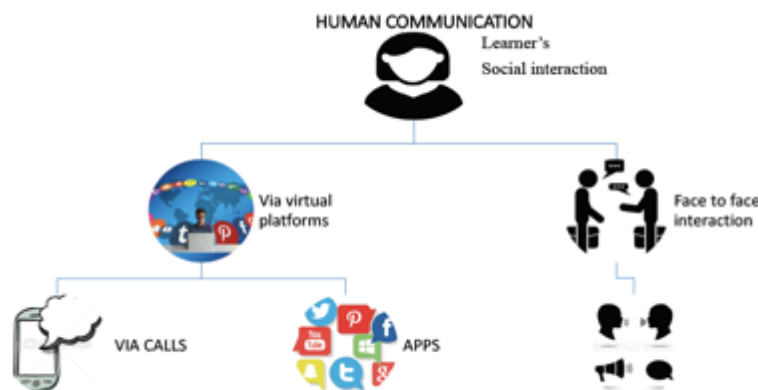


Figure 4: Types of human communication

Humans use several ways and means of communications, including face-to-face communication or the use of Internet applications (see Figure 3). The relationship

between social interaction and language learning and acquisition is one of the fundamental issues in foreign language research. This link can be interpreted through many theories such as the social network theory of Émile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tönnies in the 1980s. According to Palfreyman (2011, p.20), for instance, social network theory “represents people as living within networks of relationships. Through these networks, resources such as information or gifts are transferred between people, and people’s activities are facilitated or constrained by their social networks”. Thus, it follows that people are the main source of information and are responsible for transferring this information between themselves. This information both comprises and contains language. Language is thus one of the sources that people use to transfer information from one person to another. This can be linked back to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of communities of practice, which they propose as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2011. p. 1). Lave and Wenger later extended this concept, introducing the term ‘learning communities’ and linking this to the procedure of learning within adult learners in the informal learning tradition.

Chindgren (2005) highlights the two main features of these terms with regard to learning as the connection between knowledge and activity and the importance of relationships. With this understanding of learning, Lave and Wenger (1991) propose a new vision of learning as “a feature of practice which might be present in all sorts of activities, not just in clear cases of training and apprenticeship” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.18). Their proposal is directly linked to current study in that daily life presents people with a variety of opportunities to interact with each other and learn from those interactions, potentially leading to informal learning.

Furthermore, Lantolf’s (2000) work also emphasizes the importance of collaboration and interaction with other speakers in acquiring a second language. Lantolf (2000) extends Vygotsky’s earlier sociocultural theory, which elucidates “children’s learning and development and allows one to better understand children’s learning and the influence of both adults and peers on the learning process” (Bankovic´, 2015. p.1). In other words, this theory indicates that the culture and the environment in which children develop and grow

plays a crucial role in the learning process. Vygotsky's (1978, 1986, 1987) sociocultural theory also involves general human learning processes, with language learning as just one aspect of the human learning process. Lantolf extends Vygotsky's theory by focusing on how second language acquisition may be understood from the sociocultural perspective; more specifically, how second language learners acquire language when they interact with other speakers (Banković, 2015).

Many other researchers concur that social interaction exerts considerable influence on learners' progress in acquiring a language. In fact, Krashen's (1989) input hypothesis firmly underlines the centrality of social interaction in the learning of a language and purports that language acquisition as linked to learning, occurs when people interact in the target language environment and learners are immersed in rich comprehensible input in the target language, which takes place in both formal and informal learning contexts (Muho and Kurani, 2014). Such social interaction can occur face-to-face or via social media applications, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and so on.

With regard to social interaction, it is also clear that learners use different resources for social interaction in a foreign language, including family, friends and work colleagues. In research conducted in the United Arab Emirates, Palfreyman (2011) used a case study as methodology and interviews as a data collection technique to investigate the effect of social networks; specifically of using English with family and friends. He interviewed both the learners and members of their families within the network of learners' relationships. Five Emirati (local Gulf Arab) female learners aged 18 to 25 years and their parents participated in this study. The women were based at the Dubai campus of the English-medium Zayed University (ZU) and studying at different levels of language proficiency. Palfreyman's (2011) findings indicate that interaction with "significant others" is a vital factor in language learning outside the classroom. He concluded that families and friends are a valuable resource in terms of both out-of-class language learning and enhancement. While it was dependent on self-report data only, this study is significant in that it shows how target language resources, such as reading materials or native speakers, can be effectively accessed through learners' families and friendship networks.

Face-to-face social interaction in the foreign language setting (in the EFL drip-feed context) appears generally difficult. Bahrani and Sim (2012) argue that as it is not always easy to practice the target language or to interact socially in the target language in a foreign language setting learners should seek alternative methods of practicing the language outside the classroom setting to improve their skills. New technology, such as Web 2.0 tools, now provide learners with a variety of applications, sites, and blogs, which enable them to communicate with native or non-native speakers of English from all over the world and thus boost their language acquisition. Since it offers virtually unlimited learning affordances, the following section will discuss technology as a learning aid. Bahrani and Sim (2012, p. 142) conducted a study based on informal language learning theory. They contend that “language learning can occur outside the classroom setting incidentally through interaction with the native speakers or exposure to authentic language input through technology”. They thus hypothesized that language learning can happen outside the classroom setting unconsciously and incidentally through interaction with native speakers or exposure to authentic language input through technology: an idea which can be linked to Krashen’s comprehensible input hypothesis. The study aimed to investigate the effect of exposure on speaking proficiency and comprised two groups of participants: initially one hundred intermediate language learners, including both males and females, from Iran, as an EFL context; and one hundred intermediate language learners, including both males and females, from Malaysia, as an ESL context. The researchers then selected 30 participants from each context based on the results of a speaking proficiency pre-test. The participants were provided with two types of exposure: “audiovisual mass media as a source of language input in an EFL context and social interaction as a source of language input in an ESL context”. The study used mixed methods for data collection, involving three instruments. The first method used two sample IELTS speaking proficiency tests, which were used as a pre-test and a post-test. The second method adapted Askari’s (2006) various checklists tests to assess various components of speaking proficiency, such as fluency, accuracy, comprehension, communication, vocabulary, and accent. The third instrument was a self-reported sheet, which was used to collect data about the amount of time that participants spent exposed to social interaction or various audiovisual mass media programs, such as news, movies,

and different technologies, outside of the classroom contexts. The post-test results revealed a significant difference between EFL and ESL participant performance. The EFL participants outperformed the ESL participants in context. According to the results they perceived exposure to audiovisual mass media technology to have a greater impact than social interaction on speaking proficiency development. The results of this study therefore indicate that, while important, social interaction is not intrinsic to language learning, and that language learners in an EFL context should always seek alternative ways to learn the language learning when no social interaction is available.

However, since the kind of interaction and the time participants spent on social interaction is notoriously difficult to quantify, different results may be derived from direct observation.

3.9 Technology

Ground-breaking advances in technology and application in our everyday lives, both in and out of the classroom, have impacted on learning styles throughout the world. In addition, increased globalization has also facilitated learner communication with native and non-native English speakers as well as improving learner access to authentic materials and increasing opportunities to practice language skills outside the classroom, leading to better English proficiency. Moreover, familiarity with such technology makes it easier for young people to use it for informal language learning purposes. Kuure (2011) attests that due to the increasing availability of wireless networks for public use, the communicative affordances of various technologies have rapidly re-shaped the language learning and teaching landscape. In fact, both activities associated with desktop technologies, such as watching movies, listening to music or songs, and those with non-desktop technologies, such as TV and radio, offer learners immediate access to authentic materials in the target language whenever and wherever they want to learn the language; and especially in informal settings (Bahrani, Sim and Nekoueizadeh, 2014). The affordances of technology for language learning and the various types of technology available worldwide for language learning are therefore evaluated below.

3.9.1 Social Media Networks

As technology reshapes our social lives and social media enables us to communicate differently, learners no longer depend upon face-to-face interaction. Several studies have been conducted on the effect of social media interaction on the language acquisition and language learning of learners as the technology offers students multiple affordances for language learning and for social interaction. A variety of social media websites and applications which have recently emerged, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, blogs, Flickr, and microblogging, enable users to create collaborative workspaces. The use of social media in the field of education has significantly increased and has directly impacted on language learning through a variety of informal learning activities.

According to White (2009), while there is increasing evidence of the effect of social media on informal language learning and the learning process in general, the actual efficacy for learner outcomes remains open to question. Table 3 summarizes a number of the most recent studies on social media and informal English language learning:

Table 3: Studies on social media and language learning

Author and date	Aim of Study	Participants	Method	Findings
Kim, Park and Baek, 2011	To explore the use of micro-blogging in language learning for three different grade levels (elementary school, middle school and high school) of Korean (EFL) students through Twitter application.	45 students (3 groups of 15) male and female participants from different language levels.	The students' tweets were updated for three weeks. During that time, the participants posted a total of 355 tweets about anything. They were also encouraged to use various Twitter functions, such as reply, retweet, and direct message. Seven features identified for coding from the participants' tweets. (reporting personal facts, reporting general facts, reporting opinions, requesting personal information, requesting general information, requesting opinions, greetings). The patterns, purposes, and features of the students' Twitter use in EFL learning were analyzed based on the collected participant tweets in this project and compared to the other grade groups.	The use of Twitter stimulates EFL learners to increase their foreign language output and helps them maintain social interaction with other users using the target language regardless of grade level.
Ariana and Mirabela, 2014	to investigate the impact of computer and social media in improving students' knowledge of the English language, namely, vocabulary acquisition (focused on Facebook).	127 female and male undergraduate participants at intermediate and upper intermediate level in their first and second year.	Experimental research design, The 127 participants were randomly assigned to each group. Then, the research design of the study was tailored using a pre-test - post-test experiment and group framework to find out the influence of the Facebook instructional program on students' vocabulary achievements. The test consists of multiple-choice questions.	the differences between the two groups were not that significant. However, there was an improvement in both of the groups from pre-test to post-test scores.
Ayuni Akhiar, Mydin and Kasuma, 2017	To examine university students' perceptions on and attitudes towards the use of Instagram in English language writing.	101 male and female undergraduate students in Malaysia. All the participants from two levels: pre intermediate and upper intermediate.	Mixed methods research design, by the use of essay writing activity on Instagram entitled "The Most Valuable Gift". Completed a questionnaire with 20 closed-ended items, and five open-ended questions about using Instagram for English language learning. And focus group discussions. The closed- items were analyzed quantitatively using mean scores, while the open- ended items were analyzed both quantitatively (mean scores) and qualitatively (content analysis).	1-the findings show the participants hold highly positive perceptions of using Instagram for improving their writing skills. 2-Instagram could create a conducive learning environment and could boost students' motivation to learn English.

The above studies utilized a range of data collection methods: namely, discourse analysis research design; mixed methods; and experimental research design. The

discourse analysis research design enhances opportunities to understand the use of Twitter for English learning. Twitter is used as a tool which offers interesting language input and opportunities for learners to bridge the gap between language classrooms and the outside world. While the mixed method study of Ayuni AKhiar, Mydin and Kasuma (2017) enabled an examination of both students' perceptions and attitudes towards Instagram in improving their writing skills and enhancing overall learning, using both methods helps to generate a bigger picture and in-depth understanding of the use of Instagram in language learning, the experimental design of Ariana and Mirabela, (2014) involved measuring the precise impact of computer and social media, and particularly vocabulary, in enhancing the language proficiency of the learners. However, this study did not find significant differences between both groups: rather it concluded that both groups demonstrated improved language proficiency. The experimental data is a more accurate measurement of impact of computer and social media in improving students' knowledge of the English language; particularly in measuring the vocabulary size of the participants, since it involves a pre- and post-test.

Moreover, all the above studies found social media to be an effective language learning tool since it offers multiple types of learning affordances and provides varied contact with the target language, which, in turn, enhances language learning potential. It is also evident that studies on social media and its effect on language learning have increased recently, perhaps due to increased user demand for these apps.

In their review of social media and language learning, Derakhshan and Hasanabbasi (2015) indicated that social media is an effective language learning tool, as it is considered a good way for language communication for a number of reasons: firstly, it offers authentic target language materials; secondly, it offers an environment for students to learn from activities they enjoy; thirdly, it gives learners the privacy and control over what they view and/or follow; and finally, it offers various types of materials which appeal to different learner styles, such as videos, blogs and so on. Broadly speaking, social media technology is now held to be one of the most effective tools for encouraging learners to practice languages they have learned or wish to improve in a natural setting. To this end, I follow Derakhshan and Hasanabbasi's (2015) interpretation of the use of social media

by further probing any factors mentioned by them and comparing them to the responses of the current participants' interviews.

3.9.2 Television, Websites, and Apps

Since television, websites, and apps inhere significant learning tools for language learners, many EFL studies have explored the educational capacity of various technologies to enhance the language acquisition, learning, and skills of learners (Bahrani and Sim, 2012). This is particularly the case with the rapid development of technology which has rendered English-language movies and songs globally accessible by means of the Internet and apps. Websites and apps such as YouTube offer unlimited resources for language learning due to the ubiquitous availability of foreign language input and contact. The literature includes several studies which have looked at the effect of watching English TV, websites, videos, and programmes on learners' language learning and proficiency. Some of these focused on exploring the effect of the use of these tools on specific language skills, such as Sundqvist (2011), Richards (2015) and Birulés-Muntané and Soto-Faraco (2016), which will be discussed below.

One of the most recent studies on the effect of TV, websites, and apps used by language learners outside the classroom is Sundqvist's (2011) study of Swedish EFL students. The participants of this study consisted of 80 Swedish ninth grade (15/16 years old) EFL learners, comprising 36 boys and 44 girls. The researcher did not specify the participants' level. The research explored whether extramural English has an impact on students' oral proficiency and vocabulary and used mix methods in order to collect the data, as follows: five speaking tests to investigate learners' level of oral proficiency; a productive level test and a vocabulary level test to measure the vocabulary level of the participants; a questionnaire; two week-long language diaries; and a small number of student interviews (eight). The language diary of this study contained seven sets of extramural English activities: namely, reading books; reading newspapers/magazines; watching TV; watching films; surfing the Internet; playing video games; listening to music; and an open category for learners to add other language activities of their choice.

The researcher asked the participants to record information under each type of activity, including the time spent on the activity, the title of a book they had read, or the name of a movie they had watched. Based on the dataset, Sundqvist concluded that extramural English activities had a greater impact on the boys than the girls, particularly in relation to oral proficiency and vocabulary size, since the boys spent more time on productive extramural English activities than the girls. Thus, the precise type of extramural English activity is a significant factor.

In a similar vein, Richards (2015) reviewed out-of-class learning affordances and referred to the wealth of evidence which confirms the influence of out-of-class learning. He used northern European countries, such as Finland and Denmark, as illustrations, since it has been observed that young people in these countries demonstrate good listening skills and tend to be relatively fluent in English compared to their southern European peers in countries such as Portugal and Italy. He argues that such proficiency rests on the proliferation of English movies and programmes which are routinely broadcast in the original language with subtitles in northern European countries but often dubbed in southern European countries. This essentially means that young Danes and Finns benefit from maximum exposure to comprehensible input in English via this medium, while their Portuguese and Italian peers do not.

Birulés-Muntané and Soto-Faraco (2016) examined the effect of watching English-spoken films with subtitles on language acquisition via the use of quantitative data collection methods. To test the hypothesis that the perceptual learning of the sounds of a foreign language, especially English, leads to improved perception skills in non-English speakers, they applied quantitative data collection methods, including a pre-test and a post-test of 60 volunteer university students aged 21 to 28. The participants, who were all lower intermediate Spanish EFL students, were tasked to watch an episode of an English TV drama for one hour per day with English, Spanish, or no overlaid subtitles. Prior to this, the researchers conducted a pre-test to evaluate the participants' listening and vocabulary levels in English, along with a plot comprehension test. Following the experiment, they conducted a post-test to evaluate the same skills. The results of the listening skills tests revealed that after watching the English with English subtitles, the

participants' skills were more significantly improved than after watching the Spanish subtitled or no-subtitles versions. The vocabulary test detected no reliable distinctions between the subtitled conditions. Finally, the plot comprehension test revealed higher scores for the participants watching the drama with English and Spanish subtitles. The study concluded that exposure to the target language for one hour had a positive effect, suggesting that longer exposure times would have a more significant effect. For the purposes of the current study I will determine whether participants perceive the use of movie subtitles to have any direct impact on their learning practice by asking them relative questions during the interview.

All three studies mentioned above are directly linked to Krashen's input hypothesis since they rest on the assumption that extramural English activities provide learners with comprehensible input in English in any learning environment (second or foreign language). In other words, the movies, TV programmes, and application, provided the learners with authentic materials which offer comprehensible input. These studies demonstrated that such activities helped to improve learners' language competence by elevating their level through comprehensible materials.

Similar research, such as that of Donaghy (2014), investigates the benefits of the use of video as a tool for language learning outside the classroom. She argued that since the use of video as a tool for language learning by language teachers in the classroom has proven helpful, there may be advantages to its application in the context of informal learning as well. She therefore posited the main advantages of watching TV or video for learners of a foreign language are as follows:

1. Learning from films is motivating and enjoyable
2. Films provide authentic and varied language
3. Films give a visual context: i.e. 'the "visuality" of film makes it an invaluable language teaching tool, enabling learners to understand more as a result of interpreting the language in a full visual context'

4. Films provide variety and flexibility: i.e. 'Films can bring variety and flexibility to the language classroom by extending the range of teaching techniques and resources, helping students to develop all four communicative skills.

For example, a whole film or sequence can be used to practice listening and reading as well as to model speaking and writing.' (Donaghy, 2014, p. 2).

Scholars have also focused on the effect of mobile applications on language learning; especially with the advanced technology they provide. Mobile applications have afforded different types of language learning.

Teodorescu's (2015) study investigated the effectiveness of learning business English using mobile apps and different kind of facilities provided by mobile devices and tablets. Teodorescu also attempted to categorize the benefits of these activities as significant affordances for language learning. The methods used for data collection were self-reported data via the use of a questionnaire. The participants comprised 100 Romanian Economics students studying business English at an intermediate level. Male and females with an age range between 20 and 50 years old took part. Teodorescu's study concluded that the use of digital technologies had a particularly significant impact on improving participants' business English language knowledge. Teodorescu therefore proposes that the affordances of mobile language apps on language learning are: first, they offer content material which suits different student FL levels; second, they evaluate learner FL improvement and offer them feedback; third, they assist learning in both formal and informal settings; fourth, they minimize students anxiety about using mobile apps, freeing them to learn when and where they choose; and fifth, they enable learners to concentrate on improving particular skills through intensive authentic learning input.

3.9.3 Listening to Songs

The impact of listening to songs on learners' language development has also been widely examined by researchers. Toffoli and Sockett (2014) conducted a study to investigate the use of Online Informal Learning of English (OILE) and the various types of language activities in which EFL students participate via the Internet. All the participants were

registered on a non-specialist English course at a French university. The researchers specifically focused on student practices when listening to songs in English. Data was elicited via the use of mixed methods with the use of two data sources.

They first used a pre-test designed to identify the English-language music listened to by students whose only formal contact with English was a two hour per week language requirement over the 24 weeks of a French academic year; and second, a questionnaire survey of 227 undergraduate participants from the Humanities and Arts College. The participants were also asked to participate in a translation activity for the songs that they listened to in order to ascertain their level. The results confirmed that listening to music and songs in English, along with other informal online activities, enhanced student understanding of the target language. Toffoli and Sockett (2014) further purported that listening to songs can help to improve learner pronunciation, increase vocabulary size, and enhance cultural literacy.

Roussel, Rieussec, Nespoulous and Tricot (2008, cited in Toffoli and Sockett, 2014) classified the strategies used by language students while listening to songs into four distinct stages. Most learners used pause and rewind for the first listening, while at the second and third they listened in order to identify the words, and the fourth to comprehend their meaning in the context of the song. These control strategies were found to be of great significance in terms of overall comprehension. Thus, control strategies used by learners, whether when listening to music or watching a movie via the Internet, are deemed substantive affordances of informal language learning. Therefore, in the interview phase of the current study I will address the use of control to explore the participants use of these options when listening to songs or watching a movie.

Listening to songs has similar advantages to those of watching videos since doing so increases learners' comprehension of the target language due to exposure to intensive input (Krashen, 1989) of materials in the FL. It may also extend learners' target language vocabulary size and foster native-like pronunciation. Moreover, it can improve listening, which is one of the primary skills necessary for assimilating any language (Toffoli and Sockett, 2014). Several researchers, such as Lai, Zhu and Gong (2015), contend that songs improve the grammatical competence of learners by helping them to form

grammatically correct sentences. Almutairi and Shukri (2016) also found that SA learner enjoyment of listening to English songs motivated them to learn better English.

While the many advantages of using songs for language learning are clear, a number of researchers have cautioned against using them due to certain disadvantages. Toffoli and Sockett (2014, p. 195), for instance, argue that one of the main issues with listening to music is the difference between sung and spoken language; “for example, deformations of both syntax and phonology in songs, the choice of particular types of vocabulary, or the potential interference of specifically musical information: melody, rhythm, instrumentation, voice quality and so on”. Indeed, Toffoli and Sockett (2014) point out that English song lyrics are not always easy to follow, even for native speakers.

3.9.4 Video Games

Video games are now extensively used by people of different ages across the world, and the massive development in video games technology has not only changed the way video games look and are played but also their use as a tool for language learning. The language affordances of video games as a learning tool for the purposes of informal language learning have been widely discussed in the recent literature. Since video gamers can now play with others from around the world, it follows that they chat and debate with users of various nationalities and languages during the course of a game. Online computer games therefore offer a virtual extramural environment in which to learn and acquire language from both native English speakers and/or non-native speakers who speak English as their second language.

Kuure’s (2011) study on the value of video games in informal language learning using mediated discourse analysis involved a combination of ethnography and multimodal discourse analysis methods for the data collection. In order to do that Kuure collected different data, such as videos, participants’ personal audio-recordings, screen shots, computer logs, interviews, and discussion. In fact, his sole research subject, a 19-year-old Finnish man named Oskari, had studied English for nine years. Examining the methodological choices for this study, the researcher chose this method since it helps gain insight into the lives of the participants. This methodology also allows the researcher

to be an active participant in the research rather than have no role. According to Kuure (2011, p. 46), “it was encouraging to note that ‘Oskari’ was eager to participate in the research process and saw the researcher as a collaborative partner solving a joint problem rather than a distant collector of facts”.

The use of discourse analysis to analyze the results helps the researcher to make the participant more aware of exploring phenomena that may otherwise seemed inconsequential to them. Ethnography research also enables researchers to scrutinize the lives of people from different parts of the world and understand how they learn the language. In light of this, Kuure concluded that online computer games and activities offer significant affordances for language learning since they give rise to natural social relationships, enable learners to encounter a huge amount of vocabulary, and encourage players to participate in collaborative problem-solving and networking with peers. Kuure noted that the playing of video games provides learners with unlimited time for the kind of social interaction which is intrinsic to language acquisition. First of all, such games provide learners of English with an opportunity to practice their language outside the classroom with both native and non-native speakers of the target language; this is of great benefit to learners, especially those in a drip-feed context. Second, gaming can provide an appealing medium for learners who do not enjoy reading or engaging in other types of informal learning. Third, acquiring language via video games is regarded as a mainly subconscious process: learners acquire the language without attending to it since it is embedded in the conversation with other users. This is strongly linked to intrinsic motivation. Moreover, one of the advantages of video games is a capacity to boost learner vocabulary as the language enters the long-term memory of the learner due to constant iteration. According to Kuure (2011, p. 37), “players seem to orient to the situation-specific opportunities for language learning afforded by the game and employ these affordances creatively in organizing their own activities, for example, by recycling game vocabulary between themselves in interaction while playing”. Furthermore, video games afford learners the opportunity to practice language in real-life situations; thereby enabling them to hone their grammar and syntax. For example, *Overwatch* is a video game where gamers work in competitive groups.

In order to win, teams are obliged to think, speak, and plan, on a platform which attracts players from all over the world. Players use the medium of English to communicate with their team.

Online gaming affords rich input for language learning as they provide the participant with a wealth of the target language and the motivation to use this language. While playing a video game, learners must both communicate with each other and understand the context. In building on their previous engagement with such environment, learners are equipped to acquire new inputs. As Gee (2008, cited in Kuure, 2011, p. 37) points out, “video games allow language to be situated in real contexts of dialogue, experience, images and actions. Games, therefore, create a connection between affect and cognition, a feeling of active participation and ownership”. This suggests that placing language learners in a natural target language setting increases contact with that language and fosters better language acquisition. Moreover, according to Zhang *et al.* (2017), Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs), the main characteristic of which is ‘gamers’ purposeful interaction with peers and game-embedded narratives elicited by the game design’ (p. 95), are rapidly outstripping other types of commercial games in terms of global popularity.

Among the many strongly endorsed benefits of using online video game technology for informal language learning is the impact on student motivation and engagement with the FL (Rama, Black, van Es and Warschauer, 2012). However, Dooly (2009) points out that as of yet, this new technology has not received sufficient consideration of its long-term effects on learning.

3.9.5 Reading for Informal Purposes

Reading is acknowledged as a significant tool to support English learning and acquisition, especially in an EFL context. However, it is imperative to distinguish between *intensive* and *extensive* reading. Intensive reading refers to the thorough reading of short but linguistically complex passages in order to gain a full understanding of the text and achieve specific skills, such as finding pronoun referents, deducing the meaning of new words, or extracting the main idea from a text.

According to Park (2017, p.131), intensive reading “is a conventional reading approach that aims to support L2 learners in constructing detailed meaning from a reading text through close analysis and translation led by teacher in order to develop their linguistic knowledge”. Extensive reading, by contrast, is the reading of longer texts with the aim of achieving a general understanding of the material, with little concentration on individual words and sentences. Such reading, which is usually conducted outside the classroom using the students’ own choice of materials and therefore more akin to informal language reading, is also referred to as reading for pleasure, sustained silent reading, free voluntary reading or a book flood (Templer, 2012). For Park (2017, p.131), it is “a reading approach that aims to make covering large amounts of reading material enjoyable for language learners and intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading” (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 193-194).

Numerous hypotheses have been proposed in respect to reading and foreign language learning, mainly in relation to Krashen’s (1989, 3.6) input hypothesis, which posits that learners who receive comprehensible input, for example, while reading a text, acquire vocabulary and spelling more effectively. Krashen’s (ibid) hypothesis supports a strong relationship between learning and acquiring vocabulary and the act of reading. Moreover, subsequent studies conducted in the same area reaffirm this link and demonstrate the accuracy of his hypothesis, as will be further discussed in this review. In fact, a wide range of language skills and components, including vocabulary, have been found to improve through reading.

Reading offers opportunities for learners to practice, enhance, and develop their language skills. Several studies on second and foreign language acquisition through reading, such as those of Coady (1997) and Bell (1998, 2001), have explored how reading can advance the second/foreign language learning process; particularly in terms of achieving better understanding, acquiring knowledge, and increasing vocabulary size.

Cho and Krashen (1994) examined the effect of reading on the vocabulary size of learners’ target language acquisition.

The participants were four females; three of whom were adult Korean-speakers, and one an adult Spanish-speaker. They were asked to read a book called *The Sweet Valley Kids* (from a series of children's books written by Francine Pascal) for pleasure in their free time and to participate in a free reading program for several months. No specific amount of reading was requested and no limit for reading per day set. They were only asked to underline a new word when they encountered it for their first time. At the end of the reading, a vocabulary list was devised to assess their vocabulary acquisition. Cho and Krashen (ibid.) subsequently revealed a strong relationship between reading in the second language and improving learners' vocabulary size.

Ponniah and Priya (2014) also conducted an experimental study to investigate the impact of reading for pleasure on the acquisition and proficiency of all dimensions of language competence, including grammar and syntax, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and even the writing style, of learners of English. The participants were divided into two groups based on the kind of readers they were. Aesthetic readers fuse the "cognitive and affective elements of consciousness - sensations, images, feelings, ideas - into a personally lived-through poem or story" (Becker, 1999, p. 103), whereas efferent readers read to "take away" particular information. The participants, who were from India, were all in their first year of an engineering degree and at an advanced level of English following 12 years of school instruction. Two data collection methods were used: first, a questionnaire was given to the students to ensure that they were in the habit of reading in English and in order to divide them into aesthetic and efferent readers; and second, the participants sat a four-section test (pre-test and post-test), comprised of reading comprehension, vocabulary (cloze test), grammar with error correction, and written language competence. The study confirmed that reading improved the skillset of all the participants and that the subjects of both groups assimilated different aspects of the second language subconsciously as they received comprehensible input. Interestingly, the researchers attributed the fact that aesthetic readers acquired more language than the other cohort to the pleasure factor involved as this group had enjoyment as their goal (Ponniah and Priya, p. 21, 2014).

This indicates that those reading for pleasure and aesthetic readers acquire more English than others. In fact, most of the reading for pleasure was conducted out of school, in the learners' free time, where they could assume control of what they read.

In summary, it is evident that reading affords learners a valuable opportunity to enhance and improve their foreign language acquisition. Many benefits are associated with extensive reading in the target language, such as improving vocabulary size, writing ability, reading speed, and even spelling (Leung, 2002). One drawback of extensive reading is that it can be time-consuming, and learners can find it difficult to devote sufficient time to the practice of reading in the context of a hectic study or work schedule.

3.9.6 Writing in English

The activity of writing in English for the purposes of informal language learning can be undertaken through writing blogs, websites, and diary/journal writing. Barjesthe, Vaseghi and Gholamni (2011) conducted an experimental study to investigate the effect of diary writing on learner' writing ability on 44 male participants in the third-year of a mechanical engineering degree at a university in Iran. All students were at intermediate level in English. The data was collected via the use of a pre-test and post-test. The pre-test consisted of an expository writing test undertaken by both groups and independently marked by two raters. The experimental group was then given a treatment based on the rater feedback. At the end of the treatment, a similar writing test was applied as the post-test to evaluate the participants' development in writing, fluency, and grammatical accuracy. Only the experimental subjects were required to undertake the pre- and post-test questionnaires to measure any significant change in their attitudes towards writing. Both the papers and questionnaires were analyzed via the use of SPSS. Barjesthe, Vaseghi and Gholamni (2011) found significant improvement in terms of the participants' grammatical accuracy in the target language after diary writing. The study is directly linked to informal language learning as diary writing is deemed free writing, wherein students can write freely on any topic they choose, without the anxiety of being evaluated.

In the same way, blogging was also found to promote the learning of English writing. For instance, analysis including error counting and classification in a study carried out by Namouz, Misher-Tal and Sela (2017) indicated that learners who use personal blog writing improve their writing overall quality and commit fewer errors. The results further revealed that blogging enhanced lexis and improved the use of correct grammatical structures. The grading process also found that the quality of writing improved significantly as a result of the decrease of errors numbers. This helped to make the students more aware of their writing, improved recognition of mistakes, and enabled them to correct their errors and avoid repeating them. Although their study focused on formal language learning, this is a gap in the literature which this research hopes to address since writing is one of the informal language learning activities examined here. Moreover, the majority of their students reported a positive attitude towards using blogs as a means of improving writing skills. The aim of their study was to investigate the impact of blogging on EFL students' performance in expressive writing. The researchers therefore tasked the 22 Arab high-school participants with posting guided essays to personal blogs and commenting on each other's posts. They then analyzed all the blogs in terms of the student errors, which were categorized, counted, and recorded throughout a four-month period. A summative questionnaire was provided to the participants at the end of the study period to elicit their attitudes towards the process and the overall blogging experience.

To date, writing for informal language learning in Saudi Arabia has not been fully investigated. Moreover, there is little firm evidence that SA learners currently participate in any writing activities outside the classroom.

Having presented the different tools, methods, and affordances of informal language learning, the following section will discuss the relevant studies conducted in Saudi Arabia.

3.10 Informal Language Learning in Saudi Arabia

While a conspicuous dearth of studies has been conducted in Saudi Arabia in the area of informal language learning and acquisition of foreign language that occurs beyond the classroom in general, some relevant research is summarized in the Table 4 below:

Table 4: Saudi studies on informal language learning

Author and date	Aim of Study	Participants	Method	Findings	Limitation
Al-Shehri, 2011	To explore the effect of using mobile phones, by creating a Facebook page that asks participants to communicate and share materials on this page in an informal language learning context in order to create an effective language environment for learners in an EFL setting.	33 male EFL university students studying Bachelor of Education with a major in the English language. Participants have different levels of English language proficiency (between intermediate level to advanced).	Design-Based Research study using qualitative methods: focus group interviews, Facebook observation, analysis of students' feedback and reflection and one-time stimulated recall sessions with 5 participants for 16 weeks.	using mobile social networking media provided students with reality-based learning experiences that utilized their own knowledge and personal values about their context. Using Facebook was valuable in connecting in-class activities to the outside world.	It did not include different types of methods used by learners to learn the language.
Mahdi and El-Naim, 2012	To investigate the impact of the informal use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) on (EFL) learner's interaction.	50 EFL male undergraduate at pre intermediate level.	Mixed method consisting of homepage on Facebook, designed for the participants of this study. Data collection instruments consisted of a quantitative questionnaire and a semi- structured interview.	Participation improved their language. Showed better communication skills, better text comprehension, ability to correct their mistakes, negotiate meaning and build their confidence in using English.	The absence of females was one limitation of this study.
Alshabeb and Almaqrn, 2018	To explore university students' use of social media applications and their role in language learning, with a focus on how mobile devices can best be utilized.	102 Saudi students, both male and female, aged 18-28 years. The students were studying the English language and had different English proficiency levels; with 70% at intermediate and 30% at advance level of proficiency.	This was an exploratory survey in which both qualitative and quantitative tools were used: 1. A quantitative questionnaire for all the participants. 2. A semi-structured interview with 8 participants.	Saudi EFL learners showed positive attitudes toward the usage of social media applications via mobile devices in English classes. Also, there is an influence on learners' attitude from the use of social media applications in English classes, as the majority are willing to pursue the use of mobile devices both inside and outside classroom.	The study only focus on twitter, and instgram and ignore the other types of social media applications.

An examination of the methodology used in the studies above reveals that Al Shehri (2011) conducted a DBR study via the use of self-report data with 33 EFL university students over 16 weeks. In addition, Al-Shehri's (2011) study explored the materials which learners uploaded onto Facebook in terms of the content, comments, and the language used. This kind of observation offered insights into the materials the participants used in order to learn, and gave the researchers a clear idea of both their level and efficacy: whether they are advanced or appropriate to learning; whether participants really learn in this way; and how they communicate. In addition, Al-Shehri used a 6-week post-recall estimate technique in order to adjust his method. In fact, this study shed important light on the proper awareness of the data and the ability to observe.

Mahdi and El-Naim (2012) also used a mixed method study and developed a framework to analyze the use of computer interactions between the students, in which CMC is divided into synchronous and asynchronous modes. In synchronous communication, all participants are online at the same time, whereas asynchronous communication occurs within certain time constraints, as in email. CMC could occur in several forms, which include e-mail, chat, and blogs. As these forms can be both oral and written, the researchers used mixed method data derived from interviews and quantitative questionnaires. The study by Alshabeb and Almaqrn (2018) used mixed methods involving a quantitative questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as the optimum way to explore university students' use of social media applications and their role in language learning with a focus on how mobile devices can best be utilized. The questionnaire was used to collect general information, and the semi-structured interviews were used to develop a deeper understanding of the issue.

The above studies were not entirely conducted on informal learning context, however, as they were sometimes influenced by instructions from the researchers. In other words, researchers gave the participants certain prescribed instructions and tasks which do not align with informal language learning per se. There is therefore an evident need for further investigation in this area; especially to raise awareness of the importance of informal language learning and for local educators to fully comprehend its impact on learners' language acquisition and learning in light of Web 2.0 technology.

This would ideally inspire researchers to devise different ways and opportunities for informal English language learning and so improve overall language learning and acquisition. Furthermore, all the aforementioned studies focus on just one or two informal language learning activities, such as the use of Facebook, or mobile learning outside the classroom. As none of the studies examined the full scope of informal language learning, this study attempts to bridge the gap by being the first to examine the complete picture. It is therefore important to properly investigate the methods used to learn English beyond the classroom, and give voice to the learners to report their own methods of learning, especially as it obtains to the more recent research area.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter explored the concept and historical basis of informal learning and its relation to language learning. Since the literature clearly underlines the significant role of informal learning with regard to language learning, further exploration is warranted, especially as this relatively new area should incorporate the language acquisition and input hypothesis of Krashen and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory directly relevant to this study.

The literature reviewed above confirms that informal language learning activities can afford learners the required input to improve their language. Moreover, the inputs are provided by authentic materials which participants used in their daily learning activities, such as songs, and by socializing with others through the medium of English. Such findings emphasize the importance of informal language learning, particularly in light of recent technological advances, such as Web 2.0, which has dramatically extended the potential interactions and inputs of language learning.

This chapter also introduced definitions of the main terms and the differences and the similarities between them. In addition, the main activities and practices in regard to informal language learning were discussed along with the most current studies in the field. The literature review revealed the benefits of the use of informal language learning and how the basic skills, such as vocabulary, are usually improved via the use of informal language learning.

Furthermore, the review exposed the gaps in the literature with regard to informal language learning and the dearth of informal language learning studies in the TESOL domain in general, and in the context of Saudi Arabia in particular.

Many such lacunae were mentioned in this chapter; not least with regard to the types of informal learning activities undertaken by learners, how learners integrate with them, and the precise effects found. For example, the majority of previous studies focus on the use of such activities within formal settings and/or on vocabulary acquisition. Further research is necessary to shed light on informal language learning outcomes wherein learners are free to choose their preferred activities and to assess the ensuing impact on their language proficiency. Investigations into the impact of several activities in the target language, such as reading in an informal language learning setting, and their effect on language proficiency, especially in the context of FL learning and Arab countries, are urgently needed. It is hoped the current study will advance knowledge in this area. Moreover, this study will endeavour to elicit learners' perspectives of how learning in an informal setting helped to improve their language skills.

The reviewed literature on the topic of informal language learning in this chapter therefore constitutes the basis of the methodology which is described in the following chapter. The method of this study was mainly derived from two studies discussed in the literature review: namely, Kuure (2011) and Lai, Zhu and Gong (2015). Kuure investigated specific types of informal language activity by collecting different data, such as videos, personal audio-recordings of the participants, screen shots, computer logs, and interviews and discussion, to elicit deep and significant data. Lai, Zhu and Gong (2015) interrogated informal language learning and its impact on language learning from the participants' perspective. These studies influence the current study's methodology in two different respects: first, the researchers use qualitative data methods in order to understand the learners' perspective regarding the use of informal language learning; and second, the researchers' encouragement for other researchers to conduct similar studies in different contexts in order to consider the impact of out of class learning activities on learners' English language proficiency. This study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by bridging the gaps in this area and being the first to apply a short-term ethnographic or

mini-ethnography approach to determine whether learners of English in Saudi Arabia use informal language learning activities and integrate them into their learning. The study aims to capture self-report data which has been widely used for study on informal language learning, as reported in the literature (see Sundqvist, 2011; Palfreyman, 2011). According to Holbrook (2008, p. 2), "Self-reported measures are measures in which respondents are asked to report directly on their own behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, or intentions".

The primary aim of the current study is to explore whether learners attempt to learn language informally, and if so, the methods used. I also seek to elicit and describe learners' perceptions of how they acquire and improve their language skills outside the classroom using informal materials. The following three questions address the core issues:

1. What type of informal language learning activities do female undergraduates studying EFL at Alkhafji College engage in?
2. How do these students engage in informal language learning activities and which methods do they use?
3. What language learning benefits do the students perceive from the informal learning activities?

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Philosophical Assumptions

In order to address the above research questions, the current study employed an interpretive approach. The interpretative approach was deemed most appropriate in that it explicitly aims to gain a better understanding of social phenomena; that is, daily events, experiences, and social structures (Collis and Hussey, 2009). In addition, interpretivists believe that reality is formed through the understanding and values of participants together with the aims of the researcher, making interpretivist reality ultimately subjective. Thus, both ontological and epistemological perceptions of the interpretivist paradigm are “the understanding or meaning of phenomena shaped through participants and their views. They speak from meaning shaped by social interactions with others and form their own histories” (Creswell and Clark, 2011, p. 40). Based on this understanding, I adopted an inductive approach, whereby I attempted to build meaning from the subjects’ experiences by collecting their perceptions of informal language learning and extending it to include wider patterns through the use of qualitative methodology (Creswell and Clark, 2011).

Relativism is the core ontological position of interpretivists. Guba and Lincoln (1994) define relativism as “the view that reality is subjective and differs from person to person” (p. 110), which aligns with my contention that informal learning practices differ amongst participants. Interpretivism purports that reality is constructed by individuals and that there are as many realities as there are individuals. Interpretivist researchers consider multiple perceptions of reality based on how different individuals understand the world. According to Pring (2000), “reality [...] has to be the reality as defined by participants. Thus, there is talk of multiple realities’ (p. 42) and ‘we each inhabit subjective worlds of meaning through which we interpret the social world” (p. 96). The epistemology of the interpretive paradigm is subjective rather than objective due to the interaction between the researcher and participants.

Since the aim of the current study is to look at university-level students' informal language learning practices, I applied a mini-ethnographic methodological approach. Creswell (cited in Scotland, 2012) states that "interpretive methodology is directed at understanding phenomena from an individual's perspective, investigating interaction among individuals as well as the historical and cultural contexts which people inhabit". The application of this paradigm is commensurate with answering the 'how' and 'why' questions of the current study as it is predicated on direct observation and systematic interviewing. The purpose of a mini-ethnographic approach, then, is to achieve an in-depth understanding of the given phenomena in a real-life setting.

4.2 Research Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology used in the current study, the data collection process, and the data analysis method. The choice of the qualitative methods used to collect the data (semi-structured interviews, documents) is also elucidated, along with the data analysis process, participant details, philosophical assumptions, and relevant ethical considerations.

The primary aim of the current study was to explore whether learners attempt to learn language informally, and if so, the methods used. I also sought to understand and describe learners' perceptions of how they acquire and improve their language skills outside the classroom using informal materials. The following three questions address issues:

1. What type of informal language learning activities do female undergraduates studying EFL at Alkhafji College engage in?
2. How do these students engage in informal language learning activities and which methods do they use?
3. What language learning benefits do the students perceive from the informal learning activities?

I opted for a research design that would best enable me derive answers to the above. I conducted an interpretive exploratory study, applying a mini-ethnographic

approach. According to Yin (1994), the exploratory research design is the most appropriate design for studying a new phenomenon due to its flexibility, especially when the subject under investigation is not well known. Exploratory studies are particularly appropriate for research which interrogates a new area or field. The present study is qualitative in nature and involves working with “human lived experience” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 100) through a semi-structure interview method. As the study is based on students’ personal experiences, the participants were asked to give a direct verbal account of their experiences.

4.3 Research Design

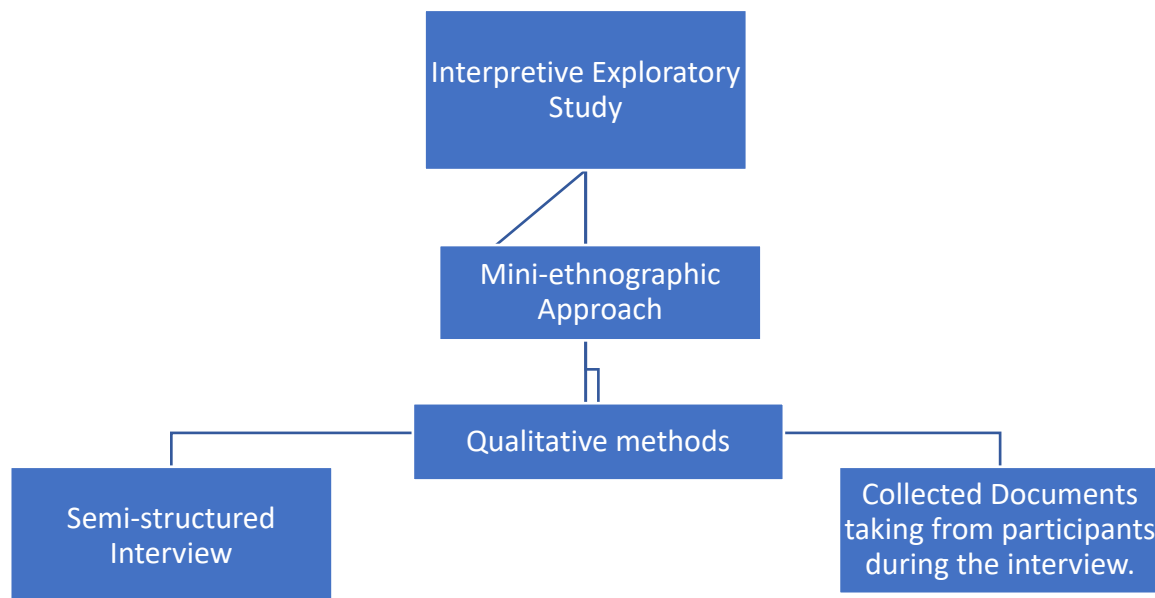


Figure 5: Research Design

The current study employed an exploratory research design. According to Kvale (2008), much qualitative research includes analysis of the experiences of individuals or groups. The present research therefore followed three analytical steps: collect the qualitative data; ensure the trustworthiness of the data; and interpret the data. I chose a qualitative research design since, from an interpretivist stance, it is a good fit for both the researcher and the research aims as it offers an in-depth exploration of female learners’ informal language learning and the effect they feel it has on their language progress.

An exploratory research design was deemed most appropriate design for studies on subjects which have not previously received significant research attention. Furthermore, its flexibility and informal structure enables researchers to recognize significant factors or variables in their study. According to Fusch and Ness (2017. p. 924), “Exploratory research designs are conducted to clarify ambiguity and discover potential such as new product developmentas well as ideas for later research.... Exploratory research can include interpretations of information gathered during investigations that consist of unstructured interviews, in-depth interviews, and direct observation of people, places, and phenomena”. A mini-ethnographic study was chosen as the most appropriate means to conduct this study. Watson-Gegeo (cited in Bensaid, 2015, p. 12) defines ethnography as “the study of people’s behavior in naturally occurring, ongoing settings, with a focus on the cultural interpretation of behavior”.

In short, ethnographic approaches explore real-life experiences and settings to gain an understanding of them. Specifically, a short-term ethnographic or mini-ethnography approach was chosen for the design of the current study for several reasons. The time available to conduct the current study was a mere three months, whereas traditional ethnographic research takes longer due to researcher requirements to learn the local language and/or familiarize themselves with the context of the culture or the group. In fact, attaining an in-depth understanding of a specific culture usually takes years. However, as I am already a member of this group of people and specific culture, I do not need to study the language or the context of the culture, which saved time in this research. In addition, my focus was on a ringfenced area: namely, the informal language practices of this group of participants. According to Fusch and Ness (2017. p.925), “A mini-ethnography, also known as a focused ethnography, is used when a field under investigation focuses on a specific or a narrow area of inquiry (particularly when time or monetary constraints are evident”. In general, research based on a mini-ethnography approach can be done in a week, a month, or up to a year, and it is usually focused on understanding the cultural issues related to the participants’ responses (Fusch and Ness, 2017.) To sum up, the timeframe is probably the main rationale for the use of the mini-ethnography approach (Storesund and McMurray, 2009). The data for mini-ethnography is usually collected more quickly than in traditional ethnographic research as the researcher is already familiar with the culture and context and due to time restrictions. In addition, I used a mini-ethnographic approach to conduct my study via the use of interviews and collected documents as data collection methods. According to

Hogan, Dolan and Donnelly (2009, p.38), there are a range of ethnographic data collection methods from which the researcher can choose depending on the research aim and questions: “Typical methods include interviews (structured or exploratory), observation (keeping diaries, writing field notes), collecting narratives, undertaking document and/or historical research, participation in the context (and accumulating first-hand, contextual information about the culture or population sample in question)”.

The application of qualitative interviews is an additional advantage of using qualitative methods in exploratory research. By devising open-ended and probing questions, participants feel free to express themselves in their own words rather than having to select from fixed responses (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey, 2005). While only semi-structured interviews were formally conducted in the current study, an open dialogue between the research participants also took place prior to the interviews in order to choose the participants.

4.4 The Mini-ethnographic Approach

To fully explore the research questions, a mini-ethnographic study was carried out in a Saudi College. Bensaid (2015) addresses the use of an ethnographic research in ESL, which also applies in an EFL environment. According to Bensaid (2015), ethnographic research studies have become more popular in language research and language acquisition. Moreover, Bensaid (2015, p. 12) extols the benefits of using an ethnographic approach in ESL or EFL contexts for “its flexible, creativity-invoking nature... [which] allows for a wide range of methodologies such as interviews, participant observation, videotaping, and even surveys to collect naturalistic data”.

In my research, I investigated the students’ informal practices in learning English in their free time. In the introduction to *Language in Education: Ethnolinguistic Essays*, Hymes (1996, p. xii) purports that:

Ethnographic inquiry is likely to show people doing the best they can with what they have to work with, given what is possible and reasonable for them to believe and do.... If one truly wants to know about a culture, a society, a way of life, one uses all there is to use. One does not refuse to know something because it is known in a

certain way. Just so with schools and the educational configurations of neighbourhoods and communities. If we truly want to know them, we will welcome and use every approach that can contribute.

The use of ethnography has many benefits in terms of instruction, such as informing formative assessments and enhancing teaching and learning. This can assist educators to not only differentiate between different levels of student ability but also offers detailed explications of the many external pressures which impact on learning and teaching processes. Thus, ethnography in ESL can extend beyond the individual student to incorporate institutional and societal issues (Bensaid, 2015). I chose a mini-ethnographic approach for several reasons: first, there is a dearth of studies in this area in Saudi Arabia using this method, especially regarding EFL at this level of education; and second, this method is arguably the most appropriate to address my questions, explore the relevant dimensions, and garner an in-depth understanding of the area. In addition, rather than building on derivative test results or questionnaire data, I intend to gather data from ordinary settings. A mini-ethnographic aligns with these aims.

This mini ethnographic research will be conducted at Alkhafji College for a number of practical reasons. I chose this setting because I teach English courses at this college. After I graduated with a BA, I trained as a teaching assistant and later became a lecturer. My insider position at the university has enabled me to access the participants for the interviews and data collection process and my acquaintance with the majority of the college Faculty members further expedited the overall participant recruitment process. As my research focused on the qualitative analysis of my participants' informal language learning practice, I considered myself to be an insider in this group because I am a native Arabic speaker who assimilated most of my English language informally.

In fact, my insider position enabled me to identify those students best suited to my study from the overall group of learners suggested by my colleagues, while the mini-ethnographic approach allowed me to understand how often, why, and in what ways students use informal learning along with the reasons underpinning the informal learning activities of the individual participants. As is the case across the majority of interpretive exploratory research, control of all the factors relating to the participants or the setting of

the study proved impossible. For example, I did not know the students personally and had no idea what responses they would give in the interview process.

4.4.1 Reflexivity in Ethnographic Research

Generally speaking, reflexivity in ethnographic research means that researchers reflect on the research process to measure the influence of their presence and the effect of their research techniques on the nature and range of the data collected. To do so, researchers must consider to what extent the participants were telling them what they prefer to hear; whether the researcher controlled the respondents to some extents; and whether the presentation of the data collection involved limiting the kind of data being collected. For ethnographic researchers, then, the issue of subjectivity is central to both the objects of research (participants) and the researcher herself (Berger, 2015).

According to Eriksson, Henttonen and Meriläinen (2012. p. 10): “A general goal of the mainstream ethnographic research is to describe a culture or subculture in as much detail as possible, including language, customs, and values (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This typically involves becoming a participant observer and socializing oneself into the culture under study”. In this context, reflexivity refers directly to the relation between the researcher and “the empirical field, questioning the notions of the realities we study, ways we generate knowledge, and ways we theorize” (Eriksson, Henttonen and Meriläinen, 2012,p. 11). In order to do this one of the main basic elements of the reflexivity is that the researcher must clearly position themselves in regard to the research objects of the study to help the audience to judge their knowledge claims regards the situated aspects of “their social selves, values and assumptions” (Maton, 2003, p. 54).

Salzman, (2002. p. 806) purported ethnographic research to be based in human “*intersubjectivity*”, in which there has been “a dialectical and constitutive relation of exchange and communication” (Scholte 1972:440).

This effectively means that reflexivity involves researcher awareness, assessment, and reassessment of their own “contribution/ influence/shaping of intersubjective research and the consequent research findings”. Along with assisting better research, Salzman

(2002) further claims that reflexively observing and considering researcher feelings, expectations, personality, and actions provided vital sources of additional rich data.

In order to use reflexivity Rosaldo (2000, p. 525) suggests that researchers should reposition themselves, as he claims that our position, culture and experiential can determine what we can know. Rosaldo claims, "Once we are repositioned, reflexivity can inform us as to why and how we now know more, understand better, and grasp more truly" Rosaldo (ibid). Salzman (2002) noted that Rosaldo's theory of repositioning rests on similar or identical experiences to those that we seek to understand. As he explains, "the "other" is largely unreachable unless one becomes the other through experience". In addition, reflexivity offers readers the crucial information which allows them to evaluate ethnographic reports, by foregrounding the role and the position of the researcher clearly therein. Salzman (2002) maintains that, "By being told the "position" of the researcher, we can see the angle and view from which the findings arose".

In order to do this and insure the use of reflexivity in my research I firstly, introduced and outlined my position clearly Chapter One. To reiterate: I am an insider to the culture, language, and to the context of the study, and an observer of the learners due to my position of an English teacher. This corresponds to Eriksson, Henttonen and Meriläinen's (2012) proposition that ethnography "typically involves becoming a participant observer and socializing oneself into the culture under study. Secondly, I passed through the same experience of the participants as I learned English through the use of the informal language learning. This helps me in repositioning myself as the participants of the study following Rosaldo (2000, p. 525). In addition, reflexivity is vital throughout all steps of the research process; from the initial formulation of a research question, through collection and analysis of data, and presenting the conclusions (Berger, 2015). For example, while conducting the interviews, I tried to be a self-reflective as possible in order to best identify the questions and content that I wished to emphasize and to raise awareness of my reactions to interviews, thoughts, emotions, and the reasons behind it.

Furthermore, self-reflection assisted the data analysis and reporting as it alerted me potential “unconscious editing’ based on my own sensitivities, and therefore enabled fuller engagement’ and more comprehensive analysis of the data (Berger, 2015, p.3).

4.5 Data Collection Method

The instruments used to collect the data for the current study comprised:

1. Semi-structured interview.
2. Collected documents.

4.5.1 Semi-structured Interview

I conducted individual semi-structured interviews in order to elicit rich and in-depth information about the topic. According to Mason (2017), interviews are one of the most commonly used qualitative research methods. Richards (2003) considers the qualitative interview a purposeful conversation; a type of professional dialogue. According to Mason (2017, p. 62), “‘qualitative interviewing’ usually refers to in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing”. In order to address the research questions above, I chose to conduct the qualitative interviewing according to Kvale’s (2008, p. 1) perception:

...through conversations we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences, feelings and hopes and the world they live in. In an interview conversation, the researcher asks about, and listens to, what people themselves tell about their lived world, about their dreams, fears and hopes, hears their views and opinions in their own words, and learns about their school and work situation, their family and social life.

The qualitative interview is particularly conducive to investigating how participants experience and understand their world in their own language (Kvale, 2008). Mason (2017, p. 62) summarized the main characteristics of qualitative semi-structured interviews as follows:

1. The interactional exchange of dialogue. Qualitative interviews may involve one-to-one interactions, larger group interviews or focus groups, which may take place face to face, over the telephone, or via the Internet.
2. A relatively informal style.

3. A thematic, topic-centred, biographical, or narrative approach.
4. Most qualitative interviews are designed to have a fluid and flexible structure and to allow researcher and interviewee(s) to develop unexpected themes.

Most qualitative research operates from the perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual, and therefore the job of the interviewer is to ensure that the relevant contexts are brought into focus so that situated knowledge can be produced. Mason's (2017, p. 63) rationale for conducting qualitative research aligns with my reasoning in this instance:

If you choose qualitative interviewing, it may be because your ontological position suggests that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which your research questions are designed to explore. Perhaps most importantly, you will be interested in their perceptions. This might, for example, constitute a 'humanistic' approach (Plummer, 2001), or you may be interested in the constitution of language.

Richards (2003) differentiates between directive and non-directive interviews. In the directive case, the interviewer follows an agenda and exerts more control over the process; the non-directive interview proceeds more organically and permits the interviewer to ask any question that comes to mind. I utilized both directive and non-directive techniques to both control the interview and to enable it to develop and progress as naturally as possible.

a. Research Participants

A total of 12 participants took part in the initial interview phase to allow for potential withdrawals and to optimize participant selection through proper acquaintance. Eight of the participants were ultimately chosen to participate in the semi-structured interview. The participants were female students from Alkhafji College for Literature and Science in Saudi Arabia; all level 8 and 6 English majors due to graduate with a BA after successfully completing level 8 level of the course. I chose students majoring in English for two reasons: first, I was familiar with the participants and the teachers in this major and can access them easily; and second, I assume that they have chosen to major in English because they enjoy the English language and therefore interact more with the language than students majoring in other subjects.

All participation was entirely voluntary. The participants were exclusively female because they were drawn from women-only college, and because cultural sensitivities limit my access to female students.

The participants were selected via the purposive sampling technique of homogeneous sampling: that is the participants clearly shared similar characteristics or backgrounds and were of a similar age and occupation (Nastasi, 1999).

As the aim of the current study is to access learners' use of informal language learning and gain detailed information about their practices, the primary selection criteria was knowledge and experience of informal learning. I took the following approach. First, I asked my college to compile a list of students known to use informal language learning. who I contacted to request volunteers. Second, I then asked my colleagues to nominate the 12 best participant candidates from an initial list of 20 potential volunteers. third, I conducted the initial interview with twelve participants to discuss their informal learning activities in terms of types, habits, duration, and so on, in order to determine the most suitable participants for the purposes of this study. Forth, I whittled the 12 down to the eight participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews. In short, as I first needed to identify suitable study participants. Fifth, I emailed the whole cohort of students through the medium of Arabic, inviting them to participate in a study on informal English learning outside the classroom. I explained that the study would entail three face-to-face interviews conducted in Arabic and asked those who were interested to email me back. I subsequently chose 12 students based on the recommendations of my colleagues who taught and knew them. Finally, I then arranged a mutually convenient time to have an initial 30-minute meeting with each of them to determine their eligibility and willingness to participate in the study.

This selection process was deemed most appropriate as it afforded the opportunity to choose volunteers who reported using informal language learning in most aspects of their lives through the widest range of activities. As shown below, each participant was anonymized by the assignment of a pseudonym:

Table 5: Participant details

Pseudonym	University Level
Sara	Third year
Fattmah	Third year
Dina	Fourth year
Hind	Fourth year
Amal	Third year
Assra	Third year
Huda	Fourth year
Hana	Fourth year

b. Student Interviews: Semi-structured

The use of qualitative research methodology enables the researcher to “investigate the quality of relationships, activities, situations or materials” (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003, p. 380). Thus, qualitative research explores the world according to the participants’ perceptions and examines the impact of people’s experiences (Dilshad and Latif, 2013). According to Dilshad and Latif (2013), “the use of interviews is highly desirable for obtaining information based on: i. emotions, feelings, experiences, ii. sensitive issues, and, iii. insider experience, privileged insights and experiences” (p. 191). Kvale (2008, p.7) suggests that the interview is:

...a conversation that has a structure and a purpose determined by the one party - the interviewer. It is a professional interaction, which goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge. The qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge... It is defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena.

Dörnyei (2007) likewise defines interviewing as the best “natural and socially acceptable” instrument for data collection since it can be used in different situations and for a variety of topics.

The present study employed semi-structured interviews to respond to core research questions concerning the use of informal language learning among female students and their motivations for using it. According to Datko (2005, p 142), the semi-structured interview “has its roots in the psychiatric or therapeutic interview, but unlike this approach, which is centred on in minimal control of the interviewer and mostly guided by the interviewee, the semi-structured interview introduces rather more control on the side of the interviewer”. Kvale (2008, p. 78) also elucidates the aims of the semi-structured interview:

A semi-structured life-world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects’ own perspective. This interview seeks to Epistemological issues of interviewing obtain descriptions of the interviewees’ lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. It comes close to an everyday conversation, but as a professional interview, it has a purpose and it involves a specific approach and technique; it is semi-structured - it is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire.

In order to address my research questions, I began by asking prompting and probing questions. Prompting questions stimulated and provoked the participants’ memories to elicit participant experiences of informal learning and the materials used to learn, while probing questions dug deeper and encouraged the participants to talk more freely about their feelings and opinions to help the researcher to collect richer research data. The medium of the Arabic mother-tongue of the participants was used to conduct the study for two reasons: first, because the aim of the study was to understand the students’ use of informal language learning and not to assess their English language proficiency; and second, because learners are more confident and comfortable to express themselves in their first language.

Semi-structured interviews are more flexible than any other style of interview. This gives the researcher more freedom when directing the interview and liberates the researcher from posing questions in a formal way. Thus, it, follows the flow of the interview in terms of what questions to ask, to prompt for more detail if necessary, and adjust questions to allow the participants to speak more freely and derive richer information (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Many scholars agree they are the best tool to use when the researcher has little prior information about the phenomenon under investigation and needs to gather

more details (Adhabi and Lash Anozie, 2017).

Semi-structured interviews help to give participants a voice (Wellington, 2015).

Moreover, it is conducive to investigating and examining the study topic in greater depth. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), semi-structured interviews encourage “depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee’s responses” (p. 88). I recorded each of the interviews, and translated the data into English for subsequent data analysis (Appendix 4).

c. Designing the Interviews: Procedure

For the purposes of the current study, the questions were prepared for both the initial and semi-structured interviews and a schedule arranged for conducting them. These questions and the schedules were given to my supervisor for approval, to check the clarity of the questions, and for further modification and/or revision. The interviews were conducted and completed within a three-month period, starting from April and finishing in June 2018.. As I found I needed to collect more data, I applied for new ethics permissions and undertook further research for an additional three months from April to June 2019.

In line with the aims of the current study, open-ended questions (prompting, probing) were used to investigate the learners’ experiences with informal learning and to enable them to express their feelings and thoughts regarding the topic. Semi-structured interviews also helped me to negotiate unexpected answers and to address issues in more depth.

d. Conducting the Interviews: Process

The methodology consisted of one initial interview and the three semi-structured interviews at two-month intervals. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants in the first phase. Since I subsequently wished to collect more documents and data from the participants, I applied for additional ethical approval to conduct further interviews. Having been granted the necessary permissions I conducted a further interview with the five available participants. Three of the five participants were interviewed once, and two of them interviewed twice to augment the original data.

This would be the outcome of the initial meeting to collect data on my participants regarding whether they used informal learning or not, which program or apps they used and how often they used them. Also, I wanted to learn about their understanding of what they were doing. I sought to determine whether they used these apps and programmes in English to learn, for pleasure, or for other reasons. The short interview allowed me to gather sufficient information on the twelve students to identify suitable participants for my study.

I began by giving all the students the information sheet and consent form translated into Arabic; instructing them to read it carefully, ask any questions, and then to sign it if they agreed to take part. Prior to the interview, I explained to each participant the aims of both the study and the interview and her role in the interview. I further explained the aim of this interview session and our roles, and their right to withdraw from the session at any point. The form also requested consent to record the semi-structured interview (Appendix 2 and 3).

First, I reserved a quiet meeting room near the English department, with easy access and a comfortable seating area for the women. I also offered them Saudi coffee and chocolate to create a friendly atmosphere and reduce any anxiety learners may have felt due to my role as a tutor in the same college. Second, I asked each student open questions and discussed their responses with them (Appendix 1). Each of the short interviews was conducted in Arabic to ensure the participants felt relaxed and free to express their thoughts and beliefs about their use of English outside the classroom. All but one of the participants opted to use the Arabic language throughout. This learner loved the English language so much she tried to use it whenever communicating with anyone who understood the language. Third, I familiarized them with the topic of the study, what informal learning means, and the activities it involves. Also, I tried to establish a good relationship with them so as to gain their trust and facilitate the interviews.

Each semi-structured individual interview lasted for about 60 minutes and took place at the Alkahfji College for Literature and Sciences in Alkahfji City. As previously outlined, I

chose this college as I am a Faculty member and wished to conduct the study there in the hope of making a positive contribution to the place to my workplace.

Each of the interviews was conducted face-to-face over a period of three months, starting in April and finishing in June [2018]. I informed the participants that interviews would be recorded on my cell-phone and assured them that the file would be saved and secured with a password. During the first round of interviews I interviewed each participant four times at two-weekly intervals.

During the initial interview, I sought to familiarize the participant with the topic and the questions I wanted to ask. I asked the students to reflect on the informal language learning practices they were involved in, and what they thought they learnt from these practices in advance of the next interview session. The second round of interviews took place a month later. As this coincided with the exam period, they were scheduled accordingly participant availability. The table below shows the number of interviews conducted with each participant:

Table 6: number of interviews conducted per participant

Pseudonym	Number of interviews
Sara	4
Fattmah	4
Dina	5
Hind	5
Amal	5
Assra	6
Huda	4
Hana	6

Throughout our conversations, I endeavoured to let the interview flow in a natural way and to be devoid of distractions. Issues of subjectivity and bias were also considered to establish the trustworthiness of the study.

I had been somewhat concerned that they would regard me Faculty member and be reluctant to engage with me. In fact, the majority was clearly comfortable and expressed themselves freely. Only two of the women were a little self-conscious at the beginning; either because I am a teacher or due to personality type.

Since all of the participants were at a high level (8 or 6), and their ELTS level is between (5.5 to 6) they will graduate before I return to work at the college. As I will not be teaching them again, this helped to relax the participants and enabled them open up and to chat with confidence.

4.5.2 Collected Documents

A number of captured images were used as a secondary data collection method. With their permission, these were collected from the learners during the semi-structured interview and featured the activities used out of class for the purpose of informal language learning, such as tweets, Instagram posts, and books that they had read. In the interview I asked the participants to show me anything they had done in regard to specific activity, and whether they were willing able to share them with me. Some of the participants were happy to share directly and some of them promised to bring and prepare data with them for next time of interview. For example, Hana provides a video record of an online video game with for her in my final interview with her.

Taking these documents into account as a source of data provided an overview of the subjects' real-life practices, enabled me to evaluate them from a different perspective, and lent greater detail and depth to the data. Moreover, these documents helped to illustrate the informal language learning of the participants. While this method is deemed extremely challenging in that the researcher needs be exercise caution when selecting the optimum materials in terms of time and data analysis, it also confers a richness and depth to the data.

Furthermore, as these documents needed to provide clear images and sufficient information about the interviewees' activities, I opted to carry out additional interviews in

order to capture richer data by encouraging the participants to describe in detail and reflect on the learning opportunities which these provided.

Collecting such data necessitated extended ethics permissions. However, reviewing the collected documents helped to better understand the learning practice and to evaluate what is really involved in framing questions for interviews. Also, it promoted a richer understanding of the kinds of language learning practices people engage with outside the classroom.

4.6 Preparing the Data for Analysis

This section presents the main steps in the data analysis process, including the data transcription.

a. Data Analysis

All interviews in the current study were recorded on my cell-phone. Transcripts were made of all the semi-structured interviews, and these were translated from Arabic into English for ethical and practical reasons. Table 7 provides a summary of the collected data from the interview:

Table 7: Summary of the Collected Data

Participant name	Tape of data	Word count of collected data
Hana	1. initial interview	1200
	2. semi-structured	5217
	3. semi-structured	2035
	4. semi-structured	1750
	5. semi-structured	2090
	6. semi-structured	1050
Assra	1. initial interview	1300
	2. semi-structured	2585
	3. semi-structured	2034
	4. semi-structured	1600
	5. semi-structured	1787

	6. semi-structured	1202
Dina	1. initial interview	1123
	2. semi-structured	3400
	3. semi-structured	1670
	4. semi-structured	1855
	5. semi-structured	1657
Hind	1. initial interview	1013
	2. semi-structured	2553
	3. semi-structured	1654
	4. semi-structured	1780
	5. semi-structured	1207
Amal	1. initial interview	2207
	2. semi-structured	2040
	3. semi-structured	1908
	4. semi-structured	1602
	5. semi-structured	1106
Sara	1. initial interview	905
	2. semi-structured	3317
	3. semi-structured	1206
	4. semi-structured	1003
Fattmah	1. initial interview	3334
	2. semi-structured	2215
	3. semi-structured	1800
	4. semi-structured	1233
Huda	1. initial interview	2558
	2. semi-structured	1890
	3. semi-structured	1050
	4 semi-structured	1033

I next applied thematic analysis to the semi-structured interviews. This approach is a widely used qualitative approach for analyzing interviews (Judger, 2016). According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is suitable to analyze, categorize, and present themes which relate to the collected data. It identifies significant details and addresses various topics and subjects via interpretation. The conceptual framework for the thematic analysis used during these interviews was inspired by the theoretical views of Creswell (2009), since the flexibility of this method can accommodate a range of research questions and data collection methods (Creswell 2009). Moreover, this method is usually easy to apply and delivers extensive data for analysis (Appendix 7).

b. Data Analysis Procedure

Several techniques can be used to analyze the qualitative data of a research study (Kawulich, 2004). The researcher should identify the method(s) best suited to the parameters of their study and capacity to gather the deep data needed. In order to do so, researchers must consider “a combination of factors, which include the research questions being asked, the theoretical foundation of the study, and the appropriateness of the technique for making sense of the data” (Kawulich, 2004, p.96). In order to analyze the current study data, I followed two procedures. First, I followed the six step paradigm devised by Creswell (2009) as follows:

Step one involves organizing and preparing the data for analysis. Kawulich (2004) states that data analysis is the process of summarizing large amounts of gathered data and trying to make sense of them. In order to do this, she suggests the researcher analyze the collected data as soon as possible. I therefore transcribed interviews on the same or following day. I also wrote up any annotations taken during the interview and arranged them in order. Following transcription, I doubled-checked for accuracy and sent it to the relevant interviewee to confirm and sign off.

Step two entailed reading or looking through all the data, reflecting on its overall meaning, focusing on general ideas among all the participants, annotating ideas, and developing a general sense of the information.

Step three involved coding all the data by reviewing all the transcripts and provisionally classifying them into specific category. In this step I adopted Strauss and Corbin's (1990) 'open coding' which involves a process of breaking down, testing, and categorizing the data.

Step four built on the coding process to create themes for analysis. This involved a description of people, places, or actions as a means to generate a small number of categories or themes. Themes were also used to represent the main findings and supported by quotes from the participant interview responses.

Step five offered a preview of how the description and the themes would be represented in a qualitative narrative.

Finally, **Step six** involved the interpretation of all the data collected in the study; explaining all the relationships between the collected data, making sense of it, considering what it reveals, and seeking connections between the new with the theories reviewed earlier in the literature review. Recommendations for future action or change based on these data were also indicated:

Table 8: Example of coding practice

Extract from Interview	Open code	Code	Theme
<p>Me: So you got some replies in English as well? Hind: Yes, when I talk about famous singer. I am a fan of, so I posted things about him, and they used to ask me: who is this? from where is this quote? from what movie? what is this movie? Me: And do you still communicate with them? Hind: Yes. But in elementary school, I used to have a lot of friends but now not as the past because I can't have more friends, I am busy. Me: Do you think that helped you in improving your English? Hind: Yes, that help me a lot, speaking with them. I always have friends that speak native English. Me: Where do you speak with them? Hind: On Twitter Me: Only Twitter? Hind: And Facebook. Me: And you are chatting in English? Hind: Yes. Me: That is good. And that helped you to gain what? Hind: Vocabulary instruction. Grammar. Everything. Me: Grammar? Hind: Yes, grammar. Copying what they are saying. Me: And do you think that's helpful? Hind: Yes. Me: Help you how? To communicate? Hind: Yes but listening communication. Listening is more important for me. I used to communicate with them and speaking, and I feel I am better in speaking than others.</p>	<p>1. Learning. 2. engaging 3. benefits.</p>	<p>1. copying the style. 2. Skills improvement 3. communication.</p>	<p>social media.</p>

Second, the data collected and analyzed in the current study were organized in two ways. First, they divided with regard to the study questions following transcription and thematic analysis. For example, the learning activities used by the learners in an informal learning setting, such as listening to songs and reading, were used as categories, with all the relative data, such as type of app used for listening to songs or technique used, considered as a subcategory of data under question number one. In addition, the themes were also used to cover all the data collected in relation to the study questions. For

example, the themes under question two involve how participants engage in the informal learning activities, such as translation as illustrated below:



Figure 6: demonstrates how participants engage in informal learning activities, such as listening to songs.

Finally, the data analysis used was organized and coded manually without the use any computer applications to ensure the data remained accessible and easy to use or find as needed.

4.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a condition of the validity and reliability of an interpretive exploratory research study and is used to test the study's findings. It involves establishing credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). According to Seale (1999), the "trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability" (p. 266). Furthermore, Bryman (2008) describes trustworthiness as the adoption of "a set of criteria advocated by some writers for assessing the quality of qualitative research" (p.700). Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered that criteria tools which ensure the applicability and consistency of the

research could help in providing a framework for quality assurance which fits the interpretivist paradigm of this study. In order to do this, all the data collection methods and approaches are fully outlined to assure readers of the credibility of all the data collections steps and methods used. Furthermore, all the information about the research aims and procedures was provided to the learners to ensure data value.

In addition, throughout the current study, I applied several additional techniques to safeguard the credibility and validity of the findings and disclosed detailed information on the topic, the participants, the methods, and processes used throughout. In addition, I used the member-checking technique which Harper and Cole (2012) recommend as “a quality control process by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility and validity of what has been recorded during a research interview” (p. 1). Such member-checking comprises two steps: first, sending a copy of the interview transcript to each participant for review. This step is important in order to ensure that participants have an opportunity to review what they said, and to add to or modify their earlier responses. The second step checks the interpretation of the interview with the participants. As this study involves understanding participant’s perceptions of their informal language learning experience, it was deemed crucial to engage the participant in member-checking in order to confirm that researcher’s interpretations of participant responses aligned with their intention. Thus, as Cohen (2000) explains, member-checking does not seek approval from participants, but rather seeks their agreement with the data and the findings.

Second, I also undertook triangulation and audit processes to confirm the confirmability and the dependability of the data. Korstjens and Moser (2018, p. 2) define confirmability as “the degree to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed by other researchers. Confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination, but clearly derived from the data”. In short, this ensures the findings truly reflect the participants’ responses without undue influence from the researcher, and that the researcher make no efforts to steer the participants into expressing thoughts to fit a certain situation. On the other hand, dependability refers to “the stability of findings over time. Dependability involves

participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by the data as received from participants of the study”(Korstjens and Moser, *ibid*).

In the current study, I followed triangulation and audit transparent trails to ensure as far as possible that the findings are the result of the experiences and the responses of the participants, rather than the opinions or assumptions of the researcher.

First, Methodological triangulation was employed in the current research. According to Cohen *et al.* (2007: 141) this is “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour”. Methodological triangulation is applied by the use of different methods for data collection such as semi-structured interviews and collected documents. Furthermore, links between the findings and the literature review were identified in order to detect similarities and differences. Since Shenton (2004. p.72) also claims that “the role of triangulation in promoting such confirmability must again be emphasized, in this context to reduce the effect of investigator bias” , this step decreased the possibility of subjective bias.

Second, to establish confirmability, and dependability I provided an audit trail, which entailed detailing all steps conducted in data analysis in order to provide a rationale for all the decisions made (Shenton, 2004). According to Akkerman, Admiraal, Brekelmans and Oost (2008), “conducting an audit is the major technique to ascertain if studies meet the criterion of trustworthiness”. This also helps in minimize bias as it demonstrates that the research study findings clearly align with participant responses. As Creswell & Miller (2000, p.128) elucidate, “in establishing an audit trail, researchers provide clear documentation of all research decisions and activities”. Shenton (*ibid*) concurs that a diagrammatic audit trail enables any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described. Thus, in the current study, the methods adopted and the reasons for favouring one approach with its benefits and weaknesses, are fully acknowledged within the research report. Furthermore, to promote confirmability and dependability, detailed information is provided through a complete set of notes on decisions made during the research process, sampling, research materials

adopted, emergence of the findings, and information about the data organization (Korstjens and Moser, *ibid*).

Finally, certain specific processes were applied to ensure the validity and credibility of the data. First, to enhance the trustworthiness of the overall study, I confirmed that each of the research questions was clearly written and explained to the participants. I also ensured the study design was suitable for the research question and applied purposeful sampling strategies suited to the study design. Finally, the data was collected, managed, and analyzed systematically, all rules adhered to and double-checked via the previous technique paradigms and the professional diligence of my supervisor.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were considered in adherence to standard research protocols (Wellington, 2015), and ethical approval for student participation sought and granted from The University of Exeter, Alkhafji College. In addition, a consent form translated into Arabic, was given to each student to explain the aims of the study and their part in it (Appendix 3). The students were asked to join the study only if they were interested, and were given an information sheet outlining their role, assuring their anonymity in the data collection and presentation. To that effect, and to maintain confidentiality, all data relating to or derived from the study was stored securely in a password-protected document on a password-protected computer. The information sheet reiterated that the anonymity and confidentiality of the participant data was assured by the use of assigned pseudonyms on both interview recordings and transcripts, and that I alone had access to the primary data on my password-protected computer (Appendices 5 and 6).

4.9 Limitations

One of the limitations of my study was the small sample size of just eight subjects. To offset this, I used purposeful sampling to ensure that each of the subjects was familiar with the topic of my study. While Hogan, Dolan and Donnelly (2009) assert that many researchers have criticized the ethnographical approach, claiming its findings cannot be

generalized due to the typically small sample size, this is highly questionable, given that is a feature common to most forms of qualitative studies:

'In response to such critics, this limitation is shared by all qualitative research, with qualitative researchers reasoning that the depth and richness of qualitative findings outweigh the constraints of trying to generalize across time and context, which, in any case, qualitative researchers would argue is not reliable, given the proposition that all research (quantitative or qualitative) is context-, researcher-, and temporally-specific'.

(Hogan, Dolan, and Donnelly, 2009, p. 59)

A further limitation was that the participants were exclusively female since I did not have access to male participants. Indeed, the fact that the findings may have been different if male participants had been included in the sample, merely underscores the need to conduct parallel research on male Saudi Arabian students. Furthermore, it is clear that collating information through self-report has limitations. Since this study involved the use of self-report data collection methods it was inevitably limited by the subjective bias of personal experiences. This can be compounded by the phenomenon of “social desirability”, whereby, even in unconscious ways, respondents tend to report experiences that are deemed more socially acceptable or preferable.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and a discussion on the data from the current study by addressing the core research questions:

1. What type of informal language learning activities do female undergraduates studying EFL at Alkhafji College engage in?
2. How do these students engage in informal language learning activities and which methods do they use?
3. What language learning benefits do the students perceive from the informal learning activities?

Firstly the data from semi-structured interviews and documents collected from the participants are presented. To this end, categorizations relating to the activity type are used for the first research question and thematic analysis used for the second and the third research questions in order to elucidate the findings. Secondly, this chapter discusses the main findings in order to answer the research questions in relation to the literature in this area.

5.2 Question 1: What type of informal language learning activities do female undergraduates studying EFL at Alkhafji College engage in?

In the following, the activities learners report using for informal language learning are categorized by type. The graph below illustrates learner activities according to popularity:

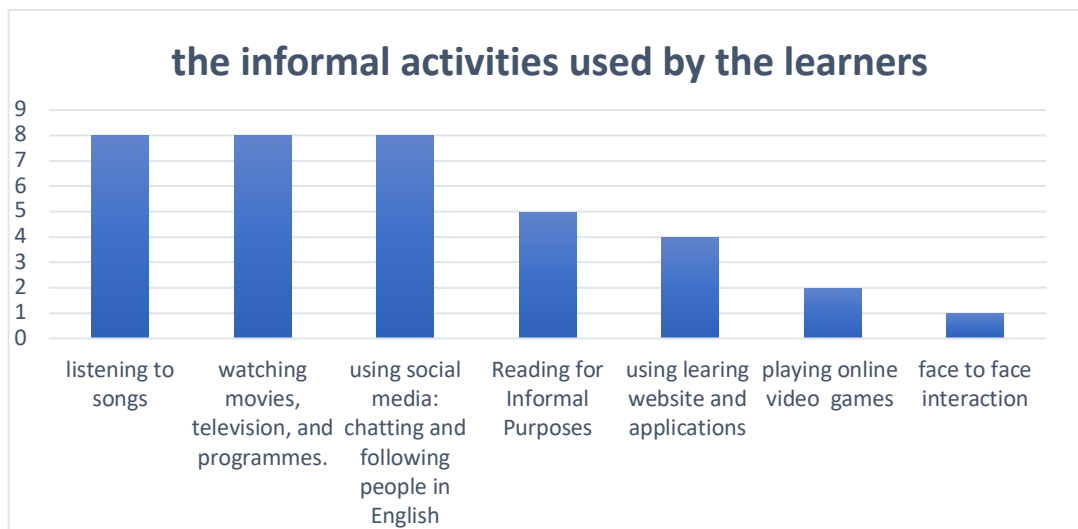


Figure 7: Summary of the main findings of the study

5.3 The Activities

5.3.1 Listening to Songs

The most common informal language learning aid used by all the participants in the current study was listening to English songs. Sara indicated that listening to songs is her main means of learning English:

'.... Songs...until now I have always listened to songs and sung with them sometimes... It was hard at the beginning, but when I got used to them, it became easier. By practicing them, reading the lyrics and listening to them more than one time they became easier for me.'

The following table below shows the sample extracts from interviews regarding the use of songs as an informal learning tool:

Table 9: Extracts from interviews: listening to songs

Pseudonym	Quote
1. Dina	<i>Yes, songs did improve my English a lot. The major impact on me was English from songs and movies.</i>
2. Assra	<i>From songs. Basically, from songs. I am trying to improve my English from songs because they are short, and you can listen to them as much as you want.</i>
3. Amal	<i>Listening to songs and watching series. I listen to the songs because I love songs, and I also want to learn.</i>
4. Sara	<i>When I entered the college, I felt that my language was not good enough to succeed in the English major and that I could not depend on the curriculum to improve my language, so I decided to improve it myself by listening to songs.</i>
5. Hind	<i>Songs. I read the translation of the song and I read the lyrics of every single song I listen to. Songs help me a lot.</i>
6. Fattah	<i>Songs especially. I mainly learn by listening to songs.</i>
7. Hana	<i>But the most important thing I have used to do this is English songs. I want to learn. I want to know what they are talking about, what the song is about.</i>
8. Huda	<i>I have improved my language basically from songs.</i>

5.3.2 Watching Movies and Television Programmes

The second most popular activity used by the learners in this current study for informal language learning was found to be watching movies, television programmes and YouTube. This was again reported by all eight participants. A number of them also maintained that watching such English programmes (movies, series, TV shows) had improved their English. As Fattah observed:

'...I have always watched a lot of movies, and when they talked, I tried to focus on the translation... Also, when I use the English script instead of the Arabic translation, I learn a lot. Many people have told me that the English language that I use is very informal; I use a lot of slang expressions because I have learned them from movies and series.'

Some participants indicated that family played a key role in their use of English programmes, encouraging them to learn and speak basic English. This had fostered future learning and an eventual enjoyment and appreciation of the English language. When asked about the types of movies or programmes she learns from, Fatima confirmed:

'Any movies on the TV. Also, YouTube helps a lot. It makes watching English videos, movies, and series easier.... I, for example, love to watch cooking tutorials on YouTube, so I have watched a lot of English videos on this, which is helping me to acquire a lot of vocabulary and terms.'

Huda stated that her love of English developed from her sisters as she watched English movies and programmes with them:

'Because all my sisters love English and they majored in English at university. They love English stuff, and I was influenced by them, such as watching English movies. So, I have learned from them...I love to watch English series, such as 'Friends'. I have watched them thousands of times, and I still watch them now.'

Dina also claimed that her experience with informal language learning was rooted in childhood since she loved to watch English kids' shows, which in turn, helped to improve her English fluency and comprehension and affected her tastes in terms of watching regular English movies and television programmes:

'Since my childhood I have watched Barney and Crazy Cars. I started to love these things. Then when I was in intermediate school, I started to watch a series called SuperNatural, which is still presented, and I love this series so much. I do not prefer

Arabic series or culture as I feel that western culture is better than ours, especially in series... the English content is always better. However, it does not mean I do not love the Arabic programmes, but I prefer the English ones. And then when I finished my high school, I decided to study English as my major.... Now I can't watch any Arabic movie. It's not that I cannot, but I do not like them. I just watch English ones.'

The table below presents sample extracts from interviews on the use of movies, series, and programmes as part of participants' informal language experience:

Table 10: Extracts from interviews: watching films and TV shows

Participant	Quote
1. Hana	<i>I have begun to get better, I think. I have noticed that I am actually good at English since I started to watch English movies...I love watching action movies more than any others.... I also watch thriller movies with some mysteries. I do not know why, but these types of movies attract me a lot.'</i>
2. Assar	<i>I watch series such as friends; the accent is easy to understand.</i>
3. Amal	<i>The most helpful thing for me is the movies and the series.</i>
4. Sara	<i>I learned language basically from movies. I love historical things such as 'The Duchess'.</i>
5. Hind	<i>I love the language because of movies. I am addicted to English movies.</i>

5.3.3 Using Social Media: Chatting and Following People in English

The participants stressed the limited opportunities for them to engage in face-to-face English interaction using English outside the classroom (5.2). Several indicated that they had set their phone to default to English in order to maximize contact with the language. They also used apps, such as Twitter, Instagram, and Path through the medium of English in order to follow and communicate with English speaking people. Both Assra and Hind respectively elaborated on their Twitter experiences. As Amal commented:

'About 70% of my tweets are in English...Most of the people I follow are English ... I only use Twitter in English.... all my tweets are in English.'

Moreover, the data shows that the participants also use social media to contact each other, and to chat with friends and classmates via WhatsApp. Hind confirmed:

'Yes, it is good. Actually, we have tried that, to speak English only. In my group for three or four days we only communicated in English.... It was all in English... sometimes now we do the same... speak only English, but not continuously.'

Also, five of the participants used different types of apps, such as Skype, which allow them to speak with native English speakers or people who speak English from all over the world. Amal explained her experience with a paid app called 'Voice of America', which is a special programme designed to help English learners all over the world to develop their English skills. This programme contains stories, lessons, and everyday news reports, which are specifically designed for learners with simple vocabulary and spoken at quite a slow speed to facilitate the learner's understanding. The app offers reading, listening, and videos to watch, along with opportunities to have online conversations with native speaker teachers:

'There is an application on the same website 'Voice of America' where you can talk with native speaker teachers, and it helps you to improve....They ask you questions and test your ability to answer and to make a conversation. They also test your accent.'

Hana recalled her experience of using apps and the effect of these apps on her language proficiency:

'Yes, that has helped me a lot, speaking with them. I have friends that are native English speakers... on Twitter....and Facebook.'

5.3.4 Extensive Reading for Informal Purposes

The participant responses revealed that although reading was one of the tools used for informal language learning, the activity was not undertaken to the same extent as songs and movies. However, learner reading need not necessarily be limited to novels, and five participants regularly read from apps and blogs. Some participants maintained that it is very hard to read in English, especially difficult topics which use complicated terminology and /or vocabulary. As Huda explained:

'I do not read books in English.... I have tried to read novels, but it is hard to fully comprehend the text, so I quit reading them...it is hard, especially the vocabulary they use.'

Hind echoed these sentiments:

'Novels are sometimes hard to read because they use heavy terminology sometimes, which is hard for FL learners, so this might be difficult for learners.'

However, Hind reported that she had found some tools which helped her overcome these difficulties, such as graded reader books. These are aimed at staged levels with a controlled vocabulary:

'And then I discovered something else... it was new for me - two type of books, which are parallel text books and graded books.... Parallel books are those books which have one page in Arabic and another in English, and graded reader books use simple English. Now I can read in English only, but sometimes I also use the parallel books..... I found out about them by chance when I was browsing in a library in a city ... It is really a great experience that makes reading easier for me... Each time I choose the level that suits me and find it easier than reading the usual books.'

It is evident that five of the participants preferred to read from blogs, short stories, or other texts, rather than from longer books. As Dina commented:

'Sometimes I read, but not always. For example, when I find something interesting for me, such as fashion or healthcare, I read blogs because I love these areas.'

Hana agreed that articles, blogs, and online websites are easier to access, have vocabulary that is easier to translate quickly, and are more enjoyable than books:

'I hate traditional reading. I like to read online... because it is easier to translate using the same device, more enjoyable for me, shorter and easier to read.'

Assra also reflected on her experiences of reading and expressed a preference for reading via a search engine than from a book:

'I have tried to read. I have bought some English books but not always. But when I search for anything on Google, I search in English to increase my opportunities to read in English, to improve my English language because I would not improve if I read in Arabic.'

The data demonstrated that the participants read not only to learn English, but also for pleasure, as this quote from Sara's interview makes clear:

'Like self-development or self-help.'

Moreover, when asked about the purpose of her reading, whether for informal language learning or for personal interest only, she clarified:

'No, I also read to improve my language, but it's like a secondary goal.'

In a similar way, Fatimah confirmed that she usually reads:

'... novels and short stories. I even read articles for fun.'

Learners evidently read for several reasons, including fun, self-development, and as a language learning tool. The data further shows that participants mainly read about topics which are of direct interest or relevance to them.

5.3.5 Using Learning Websites and Applications

Half of the participants in the current study indicated their use of learning apps or websites. In fact, just four learners were found to be motivated to learn using mobile learning apps technology. These learners downloaded special apps for specific learning purposes, such as the BBC app and the Bilingual ABA English app; both of which can be used for informal self-study. Since these apps are specifically designed for language learning purposes, they offer learners a wide range of tasks and activities. The BBC Learning English app includes several courses on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and is further streamed according to the learners' level of proficiency, from basic to advanced. Amal reported practicing via their '6-Minute English' series. This contains short videos on different topics, which are followed by several exercises on writing, grammar, pronunciation, and listening. Amal made greatest use of the vocabulary series:

'I use a lot of apps, such as the BBC app.... It is a good one. It offers six series about general topics, and each one has subtitles.... First, you listen. Then it gives you a list of vocabulary with the meaning and some exercises.'

Fattmah likewise stated that she used several beneficial apps which afforded different tasks and tested different skills:

'I have a lot... For example, I have one that contains some paragraphs, and after each one, there are some comprehension questions and vocabulary... For example, Bilingual ABA English. It contains different levels, and at each level there are many exercises, like vocabulary and grammar exercises....and you do not pass the level until you answer everything correctly. It even evaluates your pronunciation.'

Sara also discussed her experience of using a learning app called 'Short Story' to both read and listen to English short stories read by natives speakers, and has found it helpful in terms of improving her language proficiency:

'There are many websites, but I like to read stories, so I usually use a website called 'Read it' and another one called 'Short Story'.....Actually there are a lot I use. Many others contain broadcasts and true stories and hypothetical situations. Others contain stuff like scary stories and fictional stories.'

The above quotations confirm that learning apps attract students as they afford multiple opportunities to learn at any time or level they choose.

5.3.6 Playing Online Videos Games

Two of the participants reported a certain degree of experience with online gaming. One, in particular, had tried three video games, and asserted that she had learned a lot of new vocabulary through them. Hana confirmed that:

'I have one that's called Wolves....Online is a good way to practice English...Online games are now available as apps on mobile phones, and it has become easy to access games such as 'PUBG' and 'Fortnight', where you can play and talk with people from around the world and from different language backgrounds as we all talk in English.... I am, personally, addicted to playing this game now.'

Both games require live speech in order to cooperate with other team members in the fight for survival. Hana indicated that she spoke English a lot in this game because the other players lived in a range of countries. Amal also reported having a similar experience and indicated that she plays online games and speaks with her team in order to win the game:

'I usually play 'Fortnight'.... It is good because I speak a lot with my team.... so we have to speak English all the time.'

The affordance of online games is clearly shown in the speaking opportunities with the other players as they are obliged to communicate via the use of English, for speaking, practicing, and planning for their game.

5.3.7 Face-to-Face Interaction in English

When the participants were questioned about the obstacles they had encountered while learning English outside the classroom, seven out of eight of them referred to the lack of

face-to-face interaction in English. The participants reported that there was a shortage of fluent English speakers in Saudi Arabia and a lack of opportunities to communicate with native speakers as the table below demonstrates:

Table 11: Extracts from interviews: face-to-face interaction

Participant	Quote
1. Dina	<i>No, I do not speak English with anyone outside my home...no, my friends ... I only speak English with my older brother and sometimes father.</i>
2. Assra	<i>Face-to-face communication is difficult because we are in an Arabic speaking country, and like any other country, it is difficult to speak English here.</i>
3. Amal	<i>No, outside the class I just chat with my classmates sometimes.</i>
4. Sara	<i>Direct face to face communication in English is difficult.</i>
5. Hind	<i>With the people here, no. I have tried to speak with my friends sometimes in English, but they did not feel comfortable, so now I only speak with myself or record myself speaking English.</i>
6. Fattah	<i>No, because some people do not like the person who speaks English; they are considered to be kind of showy.</i>
7. Hana	<i>Yes, no one speaks English.</i>

Only Huda found face-to-face communication easy. A further three participants indicated that they had a degree of restricted face-to-face interaction. For example, Huda reported that her three sisters, who all taught English, routinely spoke English at home:

'Most of the time we speak English there. Of course, some Arabic words....so I am used to speaking English most of the time, even if I have to use Arabic sometimes I forget and use English instead..... We speak English in the home because I do not want to forget the language, and if I only use it in college or school, I will forget it.'

Fattah and Dina also enjoyed opportunities to speak English with their mother or brother at home, albeit to a lesser extent. In fact, Huda's unique situation enabled her to practice face-to-face English in a highly unusual and advantageous way. For example, Fattah stated that she sometimes spoke English with her mother and that as she considered her mother to be the main reason for her learning English, she tried to speak English with her as much as possible:

'My mother only because she is the reason that I love English. I try to say everything in English to her, even about my modules even though she is not familiar with them. I only try to speak in English.'

However, when questioned about face-to-face communication in English, five participants reported having no opportunities at all for this type of interaction outside the classroom.

As Amal complained:

'It's easy to watch movies or read a book in English here in SA, but face-to-face communication is very hard.'

Most of the participants reported similar experiences to Amal and felt that the lack of opportunities to practice speaking skills outside the classroom prevented them from improving in this area. In a similar way, Hana, in particular, revealed she had no one at all to speak English with outside the classroom and could only use English at university:

'College is the only way that I improve my speaking... But outside? No. No one speaks English.'

5.3.8 Discussion: Research Question One

As the findings presented above show, the most popular informal English learning activities were listening to English songs, watching English movies, and the use of social media. These echo similar to the findings in previous studies of out-of-class English language learning across different countries, such as that of Sundqvist (2011: 3.9.2). To reiterate: Sundqvist investigated the most popular extramural English activities out of a set of seven extramural English activities: namely, reading books; reading newspapers /magazines; watching TV; watching films; surfing the Internet; playing video games; listening to music; and an open category for learners to add other language activities of their choice. Table 12 below, taken from Sundqvist (2011, p.111), summarizes the main findings which found that listening to songs was the most popular activity among the participants, followed by video games. However, in my study, video games proved one of the least popular activities. The difference may be attributed to three main factors: first, Sundqvist's study comprised both male and female participants, and in this current study

had only female participants; second, the contexts of the studies are different; third, the nature of the learners may affect the outcomes:

Table 12: Sundqvist's study main findings (2011, p.111)

Table 1 Amount of time spent on the extramural English activities, in order of popularity

Activity	Hours/week (sample mean)
Listening to music	6.58
Playing video games	3.95
Watching TV	3.71
Watching films	2.85
Surfing the internet	.70
Other activities	.33
Reading books	.20
Reading newspapers/magazines	.02

In addition, Lai, Zhu and Gong (2015, 3.7) conducted a study which looked at out-of-class activities and language learning and informal language learning in general. The participants in their study were found to engage in several out-of-class learning activities, with watching English language movies and listening to songs in English being the most common and frequent.

The findings of Lai, Zhu and Gong (2015) are similar to this study as these activities are on the top list, these activities can be considered as a 'receptive activities. Only a few participants in in the current study mentioned that they were involved in a restricted number of language production activities, such as chatting with classmates or family members, exchanging emails with native speakers, and/or keeping English diaries. In other words, they were using activities that led them to exposure to the language less than those needed to produce the language. The participants also reported that they often took part in form-focused activities, such as studying grammar books and memorizing vocabulary lists. By contrast, all of the participants of in the current study mentioned memorizing vocabulary within several activities.

Both of the aforementioned studies demonstrated the same results as the current study: with listening to songs and watching movies at the top of the list, followed by other activities, such as using social media, browsing the Internet and reading. This may be explained by the availability of the Internet, which offers learners so many choices in terms of listening to any song they like in any language and watching whatever movie they like despite its original language.

In terms of face-to-face interaction, it is not surprising that all but one of the participants reported not engaging in this activity due to the fact that the study was conducted in an EFL context. However, the participants in the current study indicated that they use social media to make contact in English by writing chat or using apps for face to face communication. Moreover, other types of informal language learning activities are routinely used by some of the participants, such as using search engines, or writing in English. Assra, for instance, stated that she endeavours to use English when using a search engine on her devices as it compels her to read in English and thus gain more exposure to the target language.

On the other hand, a high number of the participants (n5) learn via extensive reading. Most of them indicated that they read materials in English that they find interesting, and the majority stated that they do not tend to read many books, but prefer digital reading, such as blogs, websites, Twitter, and so on. Thus, whatever the type of reading that may be done, the data revealed that most of the participants prefer to read from blogs, Twitter, and other digital platforms than traditional books. The findings revealed several reasons for this: first, many of the learners indicated that they get bored reading a whole book and prefer to read about their desired subject via the Internet, for example, short blogs or website posts, rather than reading long, complicated books; and second, some indicated that they had tried to read the usual books in the past but that their English language proficiency was not sufficient for the difficulty level. They preferred to improve their English in easier ways, such as listening to songs.

5.4 Conclusion: Research Question One

The learners in the current study appear to participate in different informal learning activities in order to learn English. Those activities are listening to English songs; watching English language movies, programmes and series; using different types of social media and apps in English; reading in English; and participating in online gaming through English.

The findings strongly highlight the lack of face-to-face communication and speaking activities available in English. These findings correspond with those of other studies, such as Alrashidi and Phan (2015), who reviewed the education context and English teaching and learning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and state that, “In addition to the challenges that (Saudi) students face in educational institutions, they lack the social target environment in which they can practice the English language” (p. 39). Khan (2011) and Rabab’ah (2005) both conducted research in Saudi Arabia investigating the learning problems and difficulties faced by Saudi learners of English in SA and concluded that communicating in the target language in a real situation is essential for successful learning. This underscores the importance of informal language learning for learners. Likewise, the participants of the current study confirmed that the use of social media, songs, and other types of social media activities enhances their opportunities for learning English while the lack of practice in the target language can adversely impact learners’ language improvement.

5.5 Introduction: Research Questions Two

The following section address the second research question of how participants engage in informal language learning activities by describing what is involved in each activity and what the students actually do. From each activity, several themes were generated to explain the techniques the participants report using. Certain themes can overlap or repeat across activities. Table 13 lists the activities and main themes in each activity:

Activity	Themes
1. Listening to songs	a. Translation. b. Imitation.
2. Watching movies and television programmes	a. Translation. b. Revision.
3. Using social media: chatting and following people in English	a. Communicating in English b. The Imitation Technique
4. Extensive Reading for Informal Purposes	a. Translation
5. Using learning websites, applications and general websites.	a. Using English within apps and websites. b. Revision.
6. Playing online video games	a. Using English for Oral Communication.
7. Face-to-face interaction in English	a. Using English to Communicate.

Table (13) Activities and main themes in each activity.

5.6 The Activities

5.6.1 Listening to Songs

Listening to songs is one of the three main informal language learning activities used by the participants. The learners engaged in this activity using two main techniques: the **translation technique**; and the **imitation techniques**.

a. Translation

The data shows that participants using this activity used translation as one of the main way of engaging within the songs in order to learn English. Dina reported her experience of listening to songs, explaining:

'It might be difficult in the beginning, but in time you get used to it, so it is easy now. It is becoming easier by practicing it.' In explaining the technique she uses, she said: *'I used to repeat the words ... and also sometimes I would read the lyrics and write them down again.... And also, if there were new words, I wrote them down and translated them and then saved them in my notebook... I still use this*

technique now... I immediately write them down in my notebook and translate them.

The above extract reveals that Dina started to use this technique as her notebook shows:

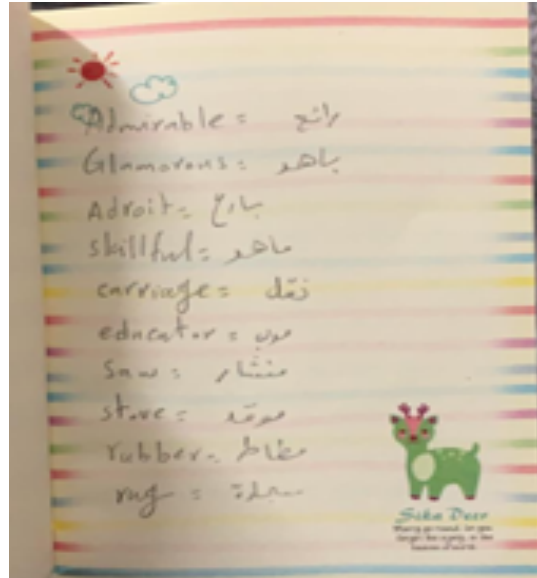


Figure 8: Photo of a list of vocabulary from Dina's notebook

Assra also engaged with songs by using translation, while Amal shared her experience of listening to songs in order to improve her English. Indeed, she unequivocally attested it to be the most effective tool for assisting her language learning:

'...because songs last for a short time and you listen to them more than once. So, I was writing the name of the song on Google and then printing out the lyrics, translating the new words and then memorizing them.'

She further elaborated:

'In the beginning, I translated the whole text into Arabic, but now I translate only the new words, and I repeat them with the song, singing with the singer in order to get to know them and memorize them.'

In similar way, Amal using translation technique while listening to songs and the use of the translation technique in order to improve her vocabulary learning:

'I always try to have new vocabulary and enlarge my vocabulary knowledge... I always write new words on my phone and try to translate them. I also try to find English synonyms for the new words and use them whenever I can, and I revise them regularly.'

Hana had used a similar technique of translation since childhood, she only uses it for songs:

'Only for songs. I used to have a notebook with English words in, and any word that I was interested in and wanted to learn, I wrote it down. I was doing this for a long time.'

Below is a sample from Hana's notebook, where she writes vocabulary from songs, such as 'Perfect' by Ed Sheeran, 'Rockabye' by Sean Paul and Anne-Marie, and 'Love Yourself' by Justin Bieber:

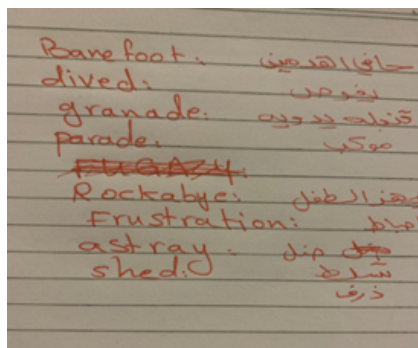


Figure 9: Copy of vocabulary list from Hana's personal notebook

Below is part of the lyric for 'Rockabye' from which most of the vocabulary on the note above is taken:

***A special bond of creation, ha
For all the single moms out there
Going through frustration
Clean Bandit, Sean-da-Paul, Anne-Marie
Sing, make them hear...***

Fattmah reports using similar techniques:

'I listen to them, and if there is something I cannot understand, I go to its translation in English, so I get more vocabulary.'

Amal has also applied this technique and memorizing the whole songs in order to learn:

'I used to translate the whole song and then read it in English more than one time until I memorized the song.'

Below is a screenshot of Amal's notes in her phone, where she saves the translation of the lyrics of the song 'Shape of You':



Figure 10: Screenshot of Amal's phone notes

b. The Imitation Technique

Two participants indicated that they imitate the style when listening to a song. From their interviews it was clear that 'imitating a style' involves copying or imitating the grammatical structure of the sentence. For instance, Dina stated by using this technique when she is listening to songs and in her daily life:

'I used to repeat the words and imitate what they were saying, and also sometimes I would read the lyrics and write them down again...I tried to copy the style of the sentence because it was the right one, and I used it every day in any sentence I wanted to say. I used to use different styles.'

She gave an example from a song 'Hello' by Adele, to demonstrate her point:

Hello, it's me
 I was wondering if after all these years you'd like to meet
 To go over everything
 They say that time's supposed to heal ya
 But I ain't done much healing

Hello, can you hear me
 I'm in California dreaming about who we used to be
 When we were younger and free
 I've forgotten how it felt before the world fell at our feet

There's such a difference between us
 And a million miles

Hello from the other side

Figure 11: Screenshot of Adele lyrics provided by Dina

Dina further explained:

'For example, the second line, I took a long time to use this style, such as 'I was wondering if you'd like to go somewhere' when I wanted to ask about someone wanting to go with us, like that. Also, I used to say, 'can you listen to me or hear me' when I was in college. And so on.... It seems to you a small thing'

Amal also used this techniques and similarly reported that:

'I used to listen to the songs and sing with them, trying to copy the way they pronounce the word in order to get the right way of saying it and to get a native like accent.'

5.6.2 Discussion: Listening to Songs

All eight participants in the current study indicated that they listen to songs in order to learn English. This had been anticipated as several prior researchers had referred to it. Toffoli and Sockett (2014, 3.9.3) found that listening to songs is popular as an informal learning activity among undergraduate learners. In the context of Saudi Arabia, the findings align with those of Almutairi and Shukri (2016, 3.9.3), who indicate that learners in SA like to listen to English songs and find this motivates them to learn English. However, their study focuses on formal language learning and assumes that listening to songs outside the formal classroom will be more difficult. Moreover, Toffoli and Sockett (2014) stress that English song lyrics are not always easy to follow, even for native speakers. The participants also found this to be the case, as they mentioned the need to translate them and write the lyrics down in order to fully comprehend the songs.

As Dina pointed out:

'I would read the lyrics and write them down again.... And also if there were new words, I wrote them down and translated them and then saved them in my notebook'.

In terms of the strategies learners use in order to learn via the translation technique, repetition, and imitation, the participants reported using similar techniques to those mentioned by Toffoli and Sockett (ibid) in the literature review. They refer to the availability of new technology which specializes in music, such as the iTunes application and the YouTube website, which enables non-native speakers to actively engage with their choice of songs. Moreover, they can listen to the songs as many times as they want, have access

to more facilities when they hear the songs, and can avail of numerous resources which facilitate their understanding of the lyrics. The easy access and the affordance of technology could account for the extensive use of songs by the participants of this current study as an activity for informal language learning; especially translating the lyrics. They can listen, read the lyrics, and translate at the same time as technology makes it easier to understand the meaning of the song and makes it clearer for the listener. Assra explained her system:

'So, I was writing the name of the song on Google and then printing out the lyrics, translating the new words and then memorizing them.'

Furthermore, the repetition of songs which is mentioned by participants in this activity such as Amal (p. 115& 116) links to the study of Milovanov, Pietilä, Tervaniemi and Esquef (2010) who reported that the comparative outcomes of a pronunciation test, a phonemic listening discrimination task, and a test of musical aptitude taken by young Finnish adults with higher musical aptitude, showed better pronunciation of English. Such findings indicate that this is as a result of the repeated exposure to language which occurs when they listen to a song. The authors make a strong link between the activity of listening to songs and the repetitive practice which they found improved the listening and pronunciation skills of the learners. The participants of the current study also linked these two practices together.

5.6.3 Watching Movies and Television Programmes

As demonstrated in Figure 4, watching movies, series, and other English language programmes was also mentioned by all the eight participants as an informal language learning activity: two themes emerged from this particular activity.

a. Translation

The subtitles of English movies or programmes play a crucial role in the participants' language improvement from their point of view. The learners in the current study engaged with subtitles in two different ways. The first group of participants used Arabic subtitles. Dina, for example, explained how she uses subtitles while watching movies:

'I started to watch with Arabic subtitle when I was in intermediate school. I was always watch[ing] MBC Action and MBC2 as they were all in English, so I

watched with the translation. Then I started to stop the subtitle sometimes, but not always. But now in the university I have stopped using the subtitles and watch everything without subtitles.'

The extracts below reveal how the participants reporting engaging with movies and using translation in order to learn English:

Table 14: Extracts from interviews: translation

Participant	Quote
Fattmah	<i>I was watching a lot of movies, and when they talked, I tried to focus on the subtitles.</i>
Hind	<i>I like to learn new words from movies when I read the subtitles.</i>
Huda	<i>I basically learn English from translation when I listen to a song or watch a movie.</i>
Dina	<i>I always focus on subtitles when I watch a movie.</i>
Assar	<i>I use subtitles and anything I do not know I pause and go to search the meaning.</i>
Amal	<i>I always memorize the new words after translating them.</i>
Hana	<i>I tried to speak after them, the new words, or sentences, and focus on its translation.</i>
Sara	<i>I tried to watch with English subtitles - but when I face a new word, I pause and translate it.</i>

In a similar way, Sara stated:

'I used to watch the American comedy 'Friends' in order to improve my English. I always watched this with subtitles....Now I can understand things without subtitles, such as when I listen to news or when watching a YouTube video, but I prefer to use subtitles.'

When asked how she uses movies with subtitles in learning English, Sara explained:

'I want to improve my language. I feel I still am not able to understand everything in English, so subtitles help me to get a complete comprehension of the movie or programme... I do not always write down new vocabulary, but I have a good memory, and also when I hear a word, it usually occurs again and again in the

same video in a different position, so I get it. Also, I focus on the pronunciation, the dialogue itself.... It helps me listen and read the meaning at the same time.'

Moreover, Hind further explained how she uses subtitles for her language improvement:

'I pause and translate the words when I feel it is important.... also I write them down and translate them as well... I have a notebook where I put all the new words together with the definition. And not only words from watching a video, but also new words from the books I have read.'

Furthermore, Hind explained the techniques she uses when watching something on one of her smart devices, such as her phone or iPad, which give her full control of what she has seen. She usually uses pause and repeat, and maintains these tools are useful in enabling her to record the new words, understand the missing parts, and fully comprehend the words. Hind's tip was to have fun and learn simultaneously:

'I always watch for fun, but I also want to learn English.'

Hind shared an example captured below on a YouTube Ted Talk, where at 1:58 minutes, when the speaker mentions the word 'intellectual', Hind admitted:

'I need to repeat this about 6 times to make sure I have heard the right word. Then I Google it and translate. For me this was the first time I heard such a word. I also tried to find other examples of the words on Google.'



Figure 12: captured from YouTube, as provided by Hind

The second group of participants watched English shows without subtitles. Amal reported that she had started to use a new technique with movies:

'I have recently started to quit the translation in movies.... When I do not understand something, I repeat it again and turn on the subtitles and then understand what they have said and turn it off again... I use this technique with many series, such as Game of Thrones... I want to understand things in English directly, without translation'

Amal also referred to another way of watching movies and series in English. She reported that while for some time she had watched English programmes or movies with Arabic translation, she had recently decided to watch without subtitles (or translation) in order to improve her English language. She reported that watching with subtitles was distracting as it was tempting to focus on the written translation and not on the spoken language and felt she could better focus on new words and on the correct pronunciation and attain a higher level of English that would allow her to understand what she was watching without subtitles. Amal indicated that she also tried this technique in order to examine her understanding of English without the use of subtitles. Furthermore, she wanted to improve her listening skills by focusing on the spoken language:

'I used to watch a programme about a lawyer and a court, and it was talking about persons in the USA and their problems. I started with this, as on YouTube there is usually no translation. So it was a good examination of my listening and language skills.... Sometimes I did not understand a word, so I repeated it again and again and tried to find out the word and memorize it.'

b. Revision

Just one participant, Fattmah, reported that she revises her grammar through watching videos on YouTube:

'I usually watch videos on grammar rules on YouTube, especially those which are hard to understand....I have found it easier to follow and more interesting than books. They give real examples and situations, so I know where to use them... Also, sometimes I get confused between two or more grammar rules, so I go to watch a video on that from time to time to revise this grammar rule.'

She went on to explain:

'I usually visit different websites, such as Go English videos.'

Fattmah further explained:

'YouTube videos present the grammar rules in a more simple way. I can even watch more than one video until I understand the rule'

Below is a screenshot she presented as an example of a grammar rule relating to the usage of the present perfect tense she had revised using these videos:



Figure 13: screenshot of a grammar lesson on YouTube by Fattmah

5.6.4 Discussion: Watching Movies and Television Programmes

To reiterate: all eight participants indicated that they watched different types of English videos, such as movies and series. Kuure (2011, 3.9.4) claims that the increasing availability of wireless networks for public use has fundamentally re-shaped language learning, and that activities which are linked to desktop technologies, such as watching movies and listening to music or songs, and those with non-desktop technologies, such as TV and radio, provide learners with immediate contact with authentic materials in the foreign language and with complete freedom to choose the time and the place they want to learn the language, especially in informal settings.

Furthermore, Richards (2015, 3.9.2) emphasizes the effectiveness of rich exposure to authentic materials with mother-language subtitles on learners' listening skills and their fluency in English, which also aligns with the present findings. Several participants in the current study attest that movies and subtitles provide them with rich language input, which helps them enhance their language proficiency, especially, in terms of vocabulary acquisition. In addition, watching movies provides them with opportunities to revise and

check their pronunciation and grammatical competence. In addition, Amal described a technique of stopping the translation and continuing to watch, which enables her to monitor her vocabulary and comprehension in English, making this a valuable tool in terms of providing learners with a kind of feedback on their comprehension in English.

Furthermore, Hind and Amal mentioned the control options and the techniques they have used, which are similar to those of Roussel, Rieussec, Nespoulous and Tricot (2008) (3.9.3) who classified the strategies used by learners while listening to songs into four distinct stages: first, learners use pause and rewind; second, and third, learners listen in order to identify the words; and fourth, they comprehend the meaning in the context of the song.

5.6.5 Using Social Media: Chatting and Following People in English

The findings confirmed that all eight participants use social media as a medium for informal language learning. The following themes emerged from the data:

a. Communicating in English

All the participants reported that they used apps in English at the outset simply because they liked English, and that over time they discovered that they could learn a lot from these apps and tried to make use of them to learn more. Furthermore, it is clear that apps are not used merely for fun, but rather to form an important bridge to the target language. Even when used casually for chatting, this could offer unlimited chances to gain exposure to use and practice the language, which in turn, helps overcome the obstacle of the lack of native speakers and first-hand English interaction in Saudi Arabia, which has been reported earlier in the literature and mentioned by the participants in research question one. Sara, for example, stated that she took every opportunity to chat or speak in English. Since she had few opportunities to do so in SA, she felt that her speaking skills were weak and needed further improvement:

'I was poor in English, but two years ago, I decided to improve my English. In the past, I wished that I could read a sentence and understand it at first glance, but I could not, because as an Arabic person we have the sentence the other way round, so I always translated the sentence and tried to understand it word by word. Then I think I won't do that unless I change all the details of my life to English. I decided to do everything in English to change my whole life to English to improve myself,

so I decided to switch my phone to English and to contact my friends in English, to write in English, and now by doing this, I can express myself in English.'

Fattmah, also tried to chat in English whenever she had the chance. In the sample provided by Fattmah below, her contribution is in white boxes, and the other person's in gray boxes. This is a very personal conversation between close friends about their feelings.



Figure 14: Screenshot of WhatsApp conversation

Another example of using English in social media was provided by Hind, who describes setting up an only English WhatsApp group with her classmate. In this example, the group were discussing a mutually convenient time to get together to prepare their presentations, choose a topic for the presentations, read, and organize. Hind's contributions are in white boxes, and her colleagues in gray boxes:



Figure 15: Screenshots of WhatsApp conversation

Furthermore, Huda mentioned that she chats with her sisters in English via mobile apps as in the example below.

Huda's contributions are in white boxes, and her sisters' in gray. The conversation concerns a misunderstanding between the sisters and care for each other's feelings:



Figure 16: Screenshot of WhatsApp conversation

Moreover, the participants use English in chatting, speaking and also in other types of apps.

Amal also provided an example of chat in English between her and one of her friends which took place on Twitter and concerned 'spoken poetry'. An excerpt from one poem entitled 'Repetition' by Phil Kaya is shown below. Amal's contribution is in white background boxes and her friend's in grey. Amal's friend, who loves English, is also from Saudi Arabia. Although they attend different colleges, they share English materials via the use of social media.

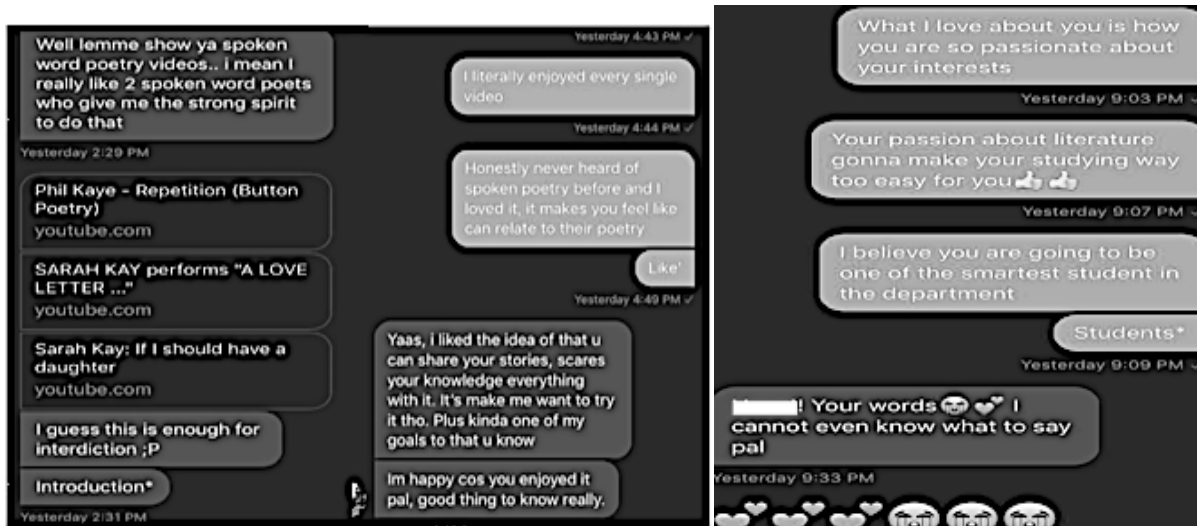


Figure 17: Screenshots of Twitter direct messages

And my mother taught me this trick if you repeat something over and over again is it meaning for example homework homework homework homework homework homework See nothing. our lives she said same way you watch the sunset too often and it just becomes 6 pm, you make the same mistake over and over and you stop Calling it a mistake if you just wake up wake up wake up wake up wake up wake up wake up one day you forget why. nothing is forever she said. my parents left each other when I was seven years old before the last argument they sent me after the neighbors house like some astronaut jettisoned from the shuttle when I came back there is no gravity in our home. I imagined it as it is an accident when I left they whisper each other I love you so many times over that, until they forgot what it meant family family family family

Figure 18: Example of 'spoken poetry - 'Repetition' by Phil Kaya

From the conversation above, it is evident that the participants use social media for sharing things they like; such as writing posts, discussing, and interacting in conversations in English. It is evident that establishing a group with mutual interests can promote learning since contact in the foreign language can be increased. Dina also explained that she uses apps in English. As she reflected:

'I sometimes use it in English; I use every application in English and in Arabic....Most of my tweets are in English....It's really helpful because I think it will open a window to another culture or another thing.'

This section confirms that the participants try to participate in different kinds of conversation in English with native and non-native speakers.

They want to use and be exposed to the language as much as possible. It also shows that participants use varying levels of English, and that the quality, kind, duration, and topics vary as those learners enjoy doing everything in English only. Thus, they use English to share things they like with friends, to have a friendly chat, to discuss academic topics, and to partake in small communities where they can pursue their interests in English

b. The Imitation Technique

This technique refers to the emulation of the styles and grammatical structure used by native speakers, including celebrities, in social apps, such as Twitter. In trying to imitate such styles by using the same formats. Hana, for example, mentioned that she uses this techniques within the social media:

'Grammar: copying what they were saying.'

In sharing the image below, Hana observed:

'I started to use 'you've' after this tweet and tried to familiarize myself with such a form, especially when I was writing something....Such as saying, 'I've tried to work hard'.'



Figure 19: Screenshots of Twitter tweets

Amal also used this techniques and reported:

'My writing improved significantly from following native speakers. I tried to imitate their styles in writing, and it improved my grammatical skills as well.'

5.6.6 Discussion: Social media

The participants in this activity use and engage social media differently and for purposes other than learning English.

Some of them communicate with their friends or members of their family via social media. Others use it to share things they like post a comment on a special occasion, or to talk about their feelings. They have also made friends as a result of using social media, such as in the case of Hana. This is in line with the findings of Kim, Park and Baek (2011, 3.9.1), who indicate that learners engage in social media for similar reasons, as the use of Twitter motivates EFL learners to increase their foreign language output and could help them maintain social interaction with other users in the target language regardless of their grade or level.

Furthermore, participants reported extensive use of social media. This aligns with the study of McClanahan (2014, p.23) who investigated and reviewed the reasons for the slow adoption of technology as an instructional tool in adult English as a Second Language education, since tablets, computers, the Internet, and mobile phones offer many chances for “authentic input and interaction and can contribute to ESL learners’ communicative ability”.

In relation to the first research question, the participants of the current study stated that they rarely get the opportunity to speak English in SA; explaining that they use English to communicate via social media in order to compensate for this. Thus, they use the language as a real tool of communication in a neutral setting, especially on social media, which offers many opportunities due to the widespread global use of English. One example of a popular social media app used by all of the participants is Twitter, which is perceived as an ideal tool for encouraging and facilitating English learning for many reasons. First, learners can easily access Twitter everywhere and anywhere; whenever they have access to the Internet. Thus by sending and receiving tweets from their tablets or mobile phones, they can have unlimited contact in the English language. In addition, they alone are responsible for the time spent on Twitter and have the power to decide how long to spend: this is a fundamental issue, especially for busy students. Second, Twitter offers the learners privacy in that they do not feel they are going to be evaluated by anyone and can write English freely without fear of being judged or criticized. Third, when learners use Twitter, they can communicate and integrate in a native environment while living in Saudi Arabia by following native speakers and communicating with them

via the use of this app. A similar conclusion was reached by Richards (2015, 3.9.2), who stated that, “Today, however, the Internet, technology and the media and the use of English in face to-face as well as virtual social networks provide greater opportunities for meaningful and authentic language use than are available in the classroom” (p. 2). Livingstone (2008) further elaborates on the affordance of social media platforms, stating that being friends with someone on social media networks allows individuals to communicate in many ways; for example, sending and receiving private and public messages, posting photos and commenting on them, sharing songs, discussing movie preferences, and so on, as in the case of Amal.

5.6.7 Extensive Reading for Informal Purposes

Five participants reported the use of extensive reading in order to learn English. The way in which participants engaged with this activity is presented below:

a. Translation

As discussed in respect of the first research question, reading in English was discussed by five participants (Sara, Hind, Fattmah, Amal and Huda). Hind reported that she found reading in English enjoyable in spite of the difficulties:

‘It was difficult to read English at the beginning, but now I am used to reading in English...’

As discussed under research question number one, Hind and Amal mentioned that they used graded readers, including ‘Jane Eyre’ and ‘Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde’. The books are set to different language levels ranging from IELTS 5 to 5.5. The graded readers used by the participants of the current study are the Oxford Graded Reader Series, comprising 7 levels. The publishers of graded Readers do not use standard English levels. Figure 19 therefore presents a variety of approximate equivalents for UK language level, CEFR Penguin, OUP and Macmillan:

UK language levels:	European CEFR levels:	Penguin Readers levels:	Oxford Bookworms levels:	Macmillan Readers
Starter / Beginner	pre-A1	Easystarts / Level 1	-----	Level 1 / 2
Elementary	A1	Level 2	Oxford Stage 1	Level 3
Pre-Intermediate	A2	Level 3	Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3	Level 4
Intermediate	B1	Level 4	Stage 2, Stage 3, Stage 4	Level 5
Upper Intermediate	B2	Level 5	Stage 4, Stage 5, Stage 6	Level 6
Advanced	C1	Level 6	Stage 6	-----
Mastery	C2	-----	-----	-----

Figure 20 : the Oxford Graded Reader level in compare with other levels (Waller, 2020, p. 1).

Both Amal and Hind indicated that they sometimes need to translate some of the vocabulary in graded readers but not as frequently as standard books. The participants used the ‘Google translate’ app in their phones in order to translate the words. Amal and Hind also reported that they might translate between four and six words in the whole graded reader, which they believe is much less than the 20 to 40 words of previous books. Moreover, both participants confirmed they spend about one to two hours weekly on reading this type of book and that it usually takes less than one month to finish the whole book:

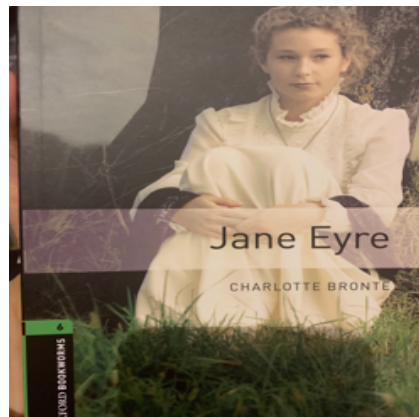


Figure 21: Example facia of an Oxford Graded Reader (Jane Eyre)

Another example of the use of translation within the activity of reading was mentioned by Hind, who uses the personal technique of buying parallel texts in Arabic and English and reading both in order to fully understand the text:

'I have tried to get myself used to reading in English. In the beginning, I used to have the same book in two versions, the Arabic version and the English version, and I read them both to make sure I understood the whole text...such as Macbeth and Robinson Crusoe. And then I discovered something else, it was new for me - two type of books, which are the parallel texts and the graded books....parallel books are those books which have one page in Arabic and another in English, and the graded reader books use simple English. Now I can read in English only, but sometimes I also use the parallel books.'

When asked whether she still used the same technique, she confirmed:

'Yes, I still prefer to use these types of books even though I am used to reading in English only now. But I prefer to have the Arabic text in front of me so if I do not understand something or if there is a new word, I can always check this quickly.... To helps me to understand the text better'

Sara also reads in English for fun and to learn English. When asked about her technique, she explained:

'I just translate the new words... I learned a lot of vocabulary from reading.'

Below are examples from one of Sara's reading books, illustrating words that she translated. The book is entitled 'Wonder' by R.J. Palacio:

him you read *Dragon Rider* when you were six, he was like, 'Wow, I have to meet this kid.'"

"Did you tell him anything else?" I said.

Mom smiled at me. Her smile kind of hugged me.

"I told him about all your surgeries, and how brave you are," she said.

"So he knows what I look like?" I asked.

"Well, we brought pictures from last summer in Montauk," Dad said. "We showed him pictures of the whole family. And that great shot of you holding that flounder on the boat!"

"You were there, too?" I have to admit I felt a little disappointed that he was a part of this.

"We both talked to him, yes," Dad said. "He's a really nice man."

"You would like him." Mom added

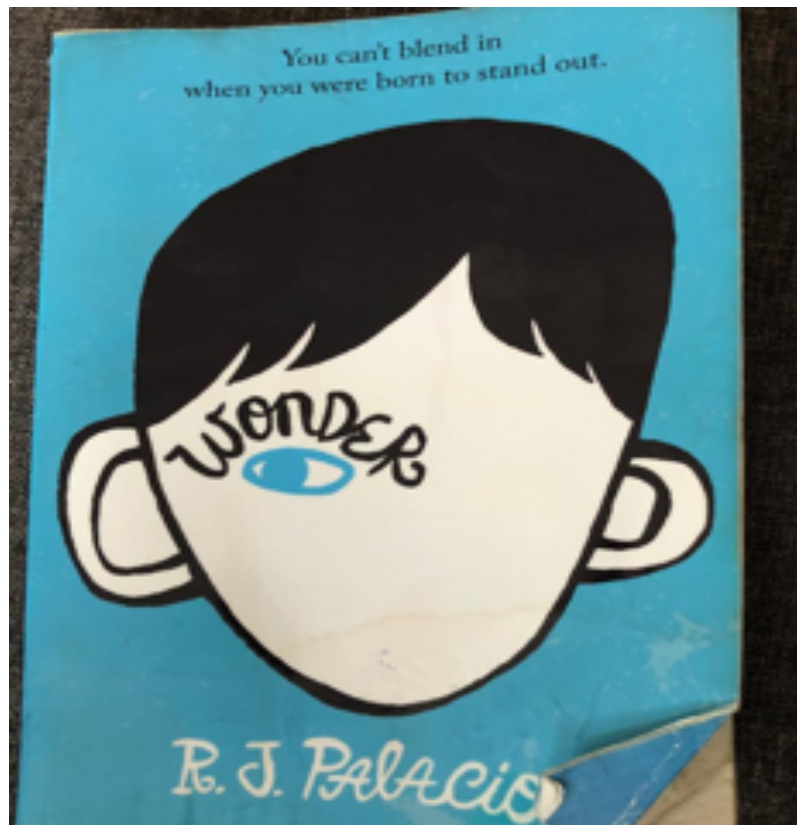


Figure 22: Example of book read by participant (Sara)

Additionally, when asked about the informal apps or websites she used for reading, Sara confirmed she usually uses these in order to learn English:

'There are many websites, but I like to read stories, so I usually use a website called Readit and another one called Short Story...Actually there are a lot I use. Many others, such as Broadcast and Hypothetical, contain stuff like scary stories, real stories and fictional stories.'

5.6.8 Discussion: Extensive Reading

All the participants of this study indicated that they find that English novels difficult to understand, particularly Huda and Hind. This flags concerns about reading activities among the learners in terms of what they should read and how. This is particularly relevant to the current study as only two participants mentioned (Hind and Amal) graded reading in the data. While 'graded readers are written at various levels within a controlled vocabulary' (Nation, 2014, p. 19), these learners indicated that graded reading was of great benefit to them in terms of an easier reading experience and in generating positive feelings regarding their experience with graded reading, which they learned about by chance.

All the participants cited the difficulty of the text as the reason that they could not read English books. In fact, it may be that the level of the books they chose was of a higher level than their current proficiency. According to Krashen's input hypothesis the optimum level of the input needs to be just beyond their current level, and this is not the case with the book they tried to read as (as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*) these books are between (7 to 7.5) IELTS score.

This also explained why some participants tend to use graded readers which were more understandable and provided them with the required inputs in natural way.

Furthermore, studies such as that of Albay (2017), which examined the benefits of graded reading, claim that graded readers are fundamental tools used for extensive reading since they are purposely designed to enable learners to practice reading skills and afford them an opportunity to enhance any known vocabulary.

5.6.9 Using Learning Websites, Applications, and General Websites

As mentioned in the first research question, the participants used different types of learning applications, websites, and search engines, as an informal learning activity. Below is an explanation of how the participants engage with this activity:

a. Using English within apps and websites:

Four of the participants (Assra, Hind, Amal, Fattmah) try to use English on websites or special learning apps. Assra uses search engines in English as she maintains this will increase her opportunities to be exposed to the target language. To this end, when she searches for specific things, she uses English, and then reads all the results of the search in English in order to find what she wants:

'But when I search for anything on Google, I search in English to increase my opportunities to read in English..... to improve my English language because I would not improve if I read in Arabic.'

Below is an example from Assra's search for materials in English:

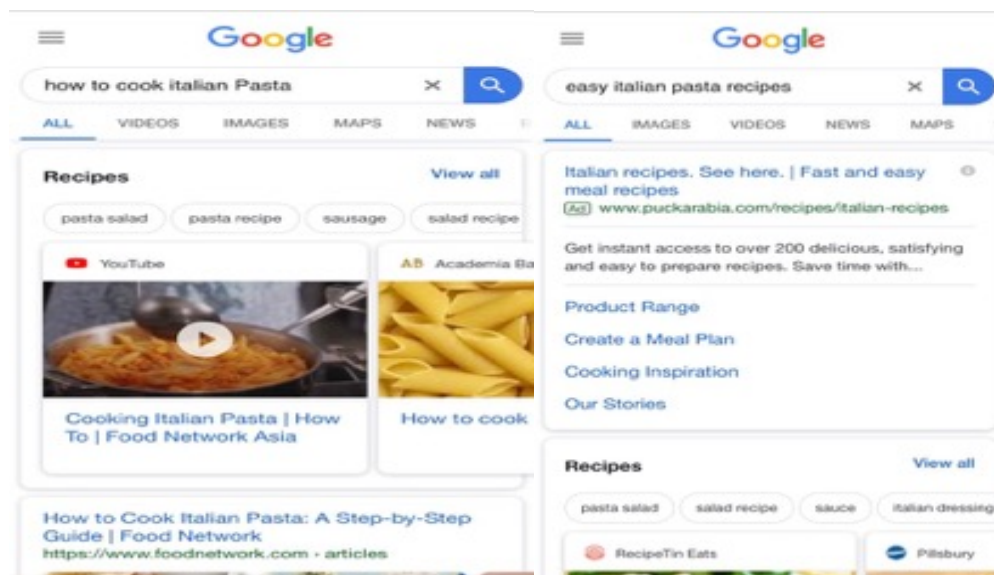


Figure 23: Example of the use of search engine in English

In the first and the second picture it appears that the search in English and the suggestions Google made helped Assra to reduce the results to something more specific from how to cook Italian pasta to easy Italian pasta recipes.

Furthermore, in the pictures below, the learners could follow the steps in English, from the ingredients to the cooking steps, which are all in English.

When asked whether she understood everything and what she usually did if she was faced with something new to her, she explained:

'I search in English now. Sometimes I face new vocabulary, or some steps are complicated, but usually there are pictures or a video explaining in English so I understand.... If there are no pictures, I use translation to understand.'

Explaining the strategies she uses when she meets new vocabulary in order to remember it for the future, Assra elaborated:

'I usually get to know them through repetition. I usually find them again in another recipe or video... something like that. Then I know the word, and I sometimes try to use it, especially in the beginning, then I know it.'

And when asked about an example from the documents below, she explained:

'...diced tomatoes'.... when I heard it first, I did not know what it meant, so I used the translator to get its meaning.'

The image shows a screenshot of a recipe page. On the left, under the heading 'Ingredients', there is a list of items: 2 pounds ground beef, 1 large onion, chopped, 2 garlic cloves, minced, 1 jar (24 ounces) spaghetti sauce, 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained, 1 can (4 ounces) mushroom stems and pieces, drained, 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning, 3 cups uncooked medium pasta shells, 3 plum tomatoes, sliced, 3/4 cup shredded provolone cheese, and 3/4 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella. On the right, under the heading 'Directions', there are three numbered steps: 1. In a large skillet, cook beef and onion over medium heat until no longer pink. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer. Drain. Stir in spaghetti sauce, diced tomatoes, mushrooms and Italian seasoning. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, 20 minutes. 2. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°. Cook pasta according to package directions; drain. Add to beef mixture and gently stir in tomatoes. 3. Transfer to an ungreased 13x9-in. baking dish. Sprinkle with cheeses. Bake 25-30 minutes or until bubbly and heated through. At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a navigation bar with 'Read Next' and '42 Perfect Penne Pasta Recipe' repeated twice.

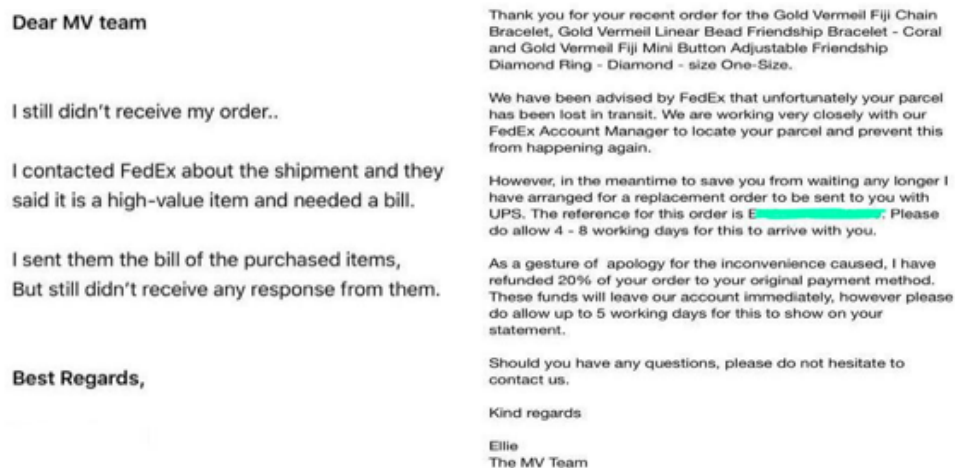
Figure 24: Example of the use of the search engine in English provided by Assra

The data also confirms some of the participants use English for online shopping; for searching for something, contacting, and reading the details about a given item in order to broaden their knowledge in the foreign language.

For instance, Hind thought that due to the lack of contact in English in SA, shopping online could offer her a real situation where she could use the language:

'I always use English for my online shopping, such as on Amazon, Forever, Outfitter, Hear and ASOS.... By using this I am able to practice English and learn how to communicate and how to deal with orders in real life.'

Below is an example of Hind's contact with customer services on a website regarding her order. The picture to the right is Hind and the picture to the left is the company reply:



The image shows an email conversation. On the left is the customer's message, and on the right is the company's reply. The customer's message is in black text, and the company's reply is in blue text. The company's reply includes a redacted area with a blue background and white text.

Dear MV team

I still didn't receive my order..

I contacted FedEx about the shipment and they said it is a high-value item and needed a bill.

I sent them the bill of the purchased items,
But still didn't receive any response from them.

Best Regards,

Thank you for your recent order for the Gold Vermeil Fiji Chain Bracelet, Gold Vermeil Linear Bead Friendship Bracelet - Coral and Gold Vermeil Fiji Mini Button Adjustable Friendship Diamond Ring - Diamond - size One-Size.

We have been advised by FedEx that unfortunately your parcel has been lost in transit. We are working very closely with our FedEx Account Manager to locate your parcel and prevent this from happening again.

However, in the meantime to save you from waiting any longer I have arranged for a replacement order to be sent to you with UPS. The reference for this order is E-XXXXXX. Please do allow 4 - 8 working days for this to arrive with you.

As a gesture of apology for the inconvenience caused, I have refunded 20% of your order to your original payment method. These funds will leave our account immediately, however please do allow up to 5 working days for this to show on your statement.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards

Ellie
The MV Team

Figure 25: Example of contacting the customer services in English provided by Hind

b. Revision

In addition, two of the participants are more motivated to learn and revise what they had learnt using mobile apps technology than the others. Amal and Fattmah do not passively use apps such as Twitter and Instagram, but also download special apps for learning purposes, such as the BBC Learning app and a Bilingual ABA English app for informal self-study. Those apps were designed especially for learning purposes and provide the learners with different tasks and activities. Also, Amal talked about her experience with the learning apps:

'Yes, I use a lot of apps, such as the BBC app...It is a good one; it offers six minutes series about general topics, and each one has subtitles....First you listen'

Amal observed that:

'A word like embellish; I did not know it meant exaggerate before'

Below are screenshots provided by Amal of the BBC learning app. First, she provided the transcript for the first practice she took and then two screenshots of the app itself showing what it looks like to listen to and watch something on the app. Also, Amal provided another screenshot of an exercise within the same app called 'learn with news'. She shared the exercise undertaken within this type of learning option:

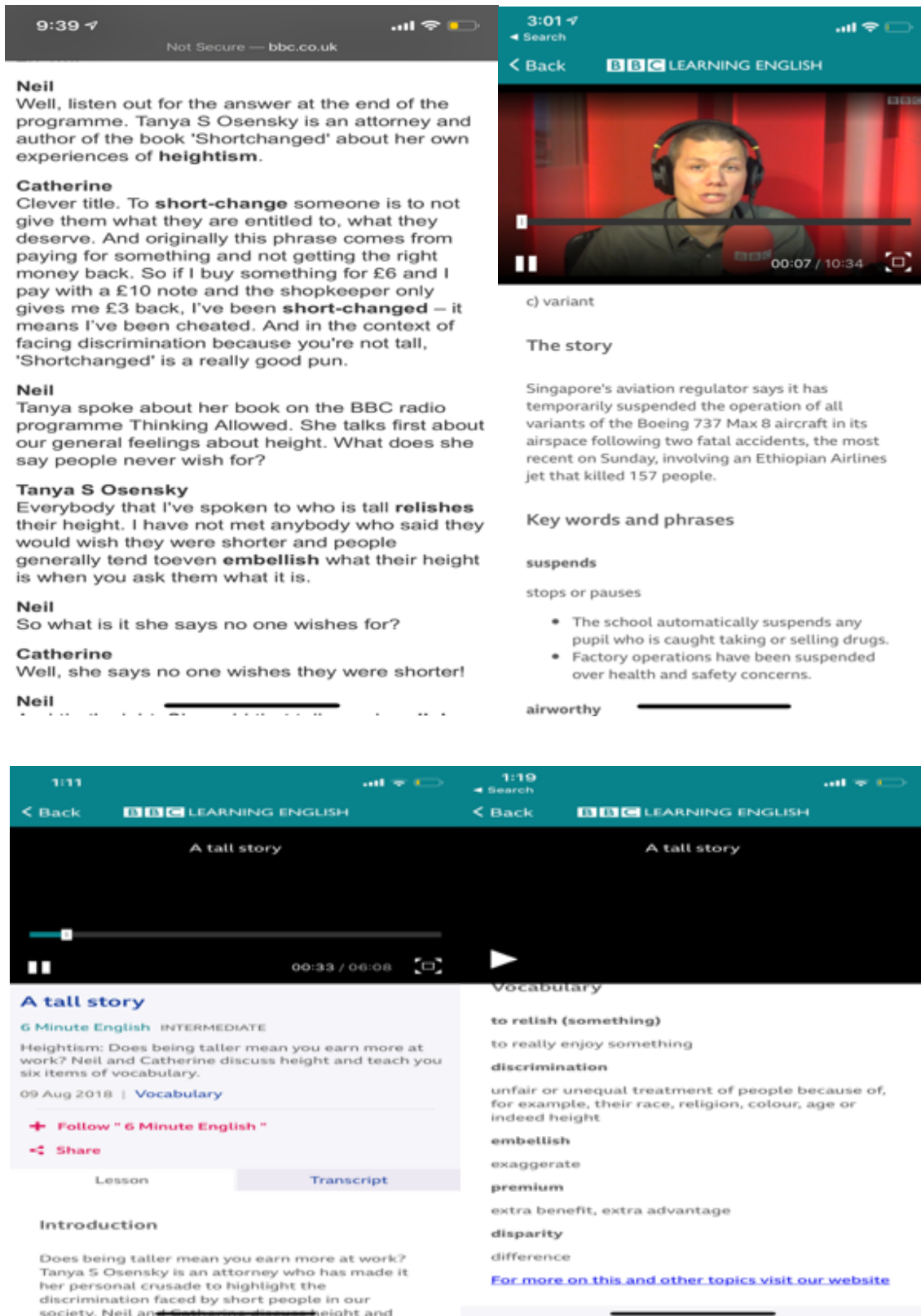


Figure 26: Examples of BBC Learning app

Amal also sought to improve her listening skills by focusing on the spoken language:

'So it was a good examination of my listening and language skills.... Sometimes I did not understand a word, so I repeated it again and again and tried to find out the word and memorize it.'

In a similar way, Fattmah stated that she uses several learning apps for informal language learning purposes:

'I have a lot....For example, I have one that contains some paragraphs, and after each one, there are some comprehension questions and vocabulary.'

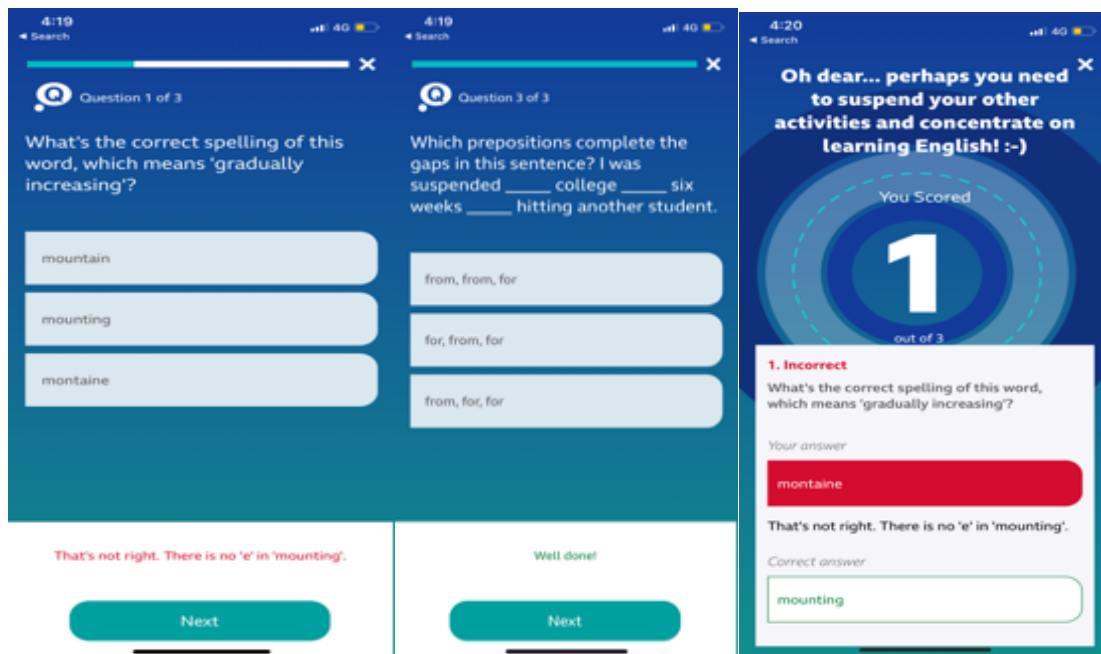


Figure 27: Examples of ABA English Learning app

When asked for the name and design of this app, she replied:

'ABA English.....It contains different levels, and at each level there are many exercises, like vocabulary, writing and grammar exercises.....and you do not pass the level until you answer everything correctly.'

Below are screenshots from this app which does an initial assessment to determine level and offers different videos with a story to watch and listen to. Thereafter there are speaking and writing tasks to complete. Following successful completion of these can advance to a higher level. Fattmah reported that she uses the app almost every night, usually for 30-60 minutes before she sleeps.

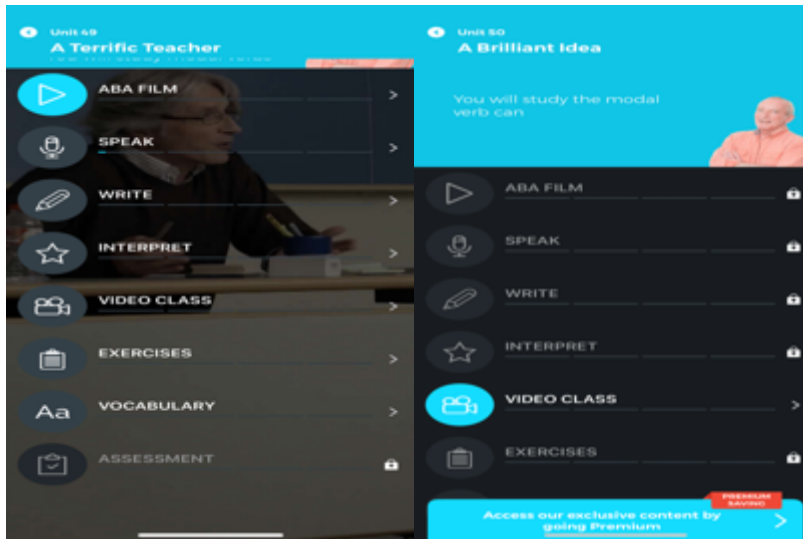


Figure 28: Examples of ABA English Learning app

5.6.10 Discussion: Using Learning Websites, Applications and General Websites

All four participants used different apps and engaged within the apps differently according to their needs. As mentioned earlier in the literature review chapter, mobile applications have afforded different types of language learning. In line with the previous studies, Teodorescu's (2015, 3.9.2) investigated the effectiveness of learning business English using mobile apps and different kind of facilities provided by mobile devices and tablets.

Teodorescu concluded that the affordances of mobile language apps on language learning as follows:

1. They offer content material which suits different student FL levels. This aligns with Fattmah's assertion that '*it contains different levels, and at each level there are many exercises*'
2. They evaluate learner FL improvement and offer feedback; This aligns with Fattmah's assertion that '*and you do not pass the level until you answer everything correctly*'
3. They assist learning in both formal and informal settings
4. They minimize students anxiety about using mobile apps,; thereby freeing them to learn when and where they choose .

5. They enable learners to concentrate on improving particular skills through intensive authentic learning input, such in the cases of Fattmah and Amal. Since Amal wants to improve her listening skills by focusing on the spoken language, *'it was a good examination of my listening and language skills'*.

5.6.11 Playing Online Video Games

Two participants, Hana and Amal, mentioned that they participate in online games. The ways they engage with this activity are outlined below:

a. Using English for Oral Communication

Both participants strive to communicate orally in English and found that online games enable them to practice verbal skills and make the communication with people in English easier. As Hana observed:

'Online games are now available as apps on mobile phones, and it has become easier to access apps such as 'PUBG' and 'Fortnight', where you can play and talk with people from around the world and from different language background, and we all talk in English.... I am personally addicted to playing this game now.'

When asked how conversations proceeded and how she engaged in this game, she explained:

'I always speak with my team in this game as we need to play in a group to plan and manage what we need to do in order to win... We speak more in this game than we use the written chatting. As we always need to plan so fast, it is hard to write sometimes, but before we start, we sometimes write... I could not share with you any conversation: it is always delayed after a game is finished...I can only show you the app.'

Hana purported that online gaming is becoming increasingly popular with female learners, especially the game 'PUBG', even though only Amal and Hana reported gaming in the current study. Amal claimed:

'Many of my friends have now started to play this game.... Not because they want to learn English but because it is fun.'

In elaborating on how she learnt English from these games, Hana said:

'Not only PUBG but also 'Call of Duty' and 'Fortnight'. All of them are online games, and you have to speak in English with other players as it is a multiplayer game. Also, the instructions for this game are all in English. When you play with people, you should be able to recognize and know all the weapons' names, the tools and the names of the places in this game. Generally, you have to do everything in English at all times of the game. You have to tell your friend if something happens or the other teams are close. When you ask about some medicine during the game to survive longer or want a specific weapon, it is all in English.'

Game length varied:

'It depends, but mainly between 15 to 45 minutes. Games like PUBG end when you die in the game.... Also, in the setting of the game, if you want to change the character you are playing with, choose a girl or a boy, change your costume, find out your level, this is all in English.'

Below is a screenshot for the game mentioned in the conversations:



Figure 29: Screenshot of online video game

Amal also mentioned that she most of the time engaging within this game in speaking:

'I usually play 'Fortnight'.... It is good because I speak a lot with my team.... so, we have to speak English all the time.'

5.6.12 Discussion: Playing Online Videos Games

Hana and Amal found this activity fun and beneficial to their English at the same time. They indicated that these games usually offer them the option of choosing who to play

with and the opportunity to speak. While they have the easier option to choose friends, they always choose to play with English speakers in order to communicate, express themselves, plan, and do everything in this game in English.

Video games seem to provide both participants with the opportunity to practice language in real-life situations. They believe that video game able them to practice their speaking in the target language in a natural setting. This is consistent with Zhang *et al.* (2017, 3.9.4), who suggest that when learners use video games for their personal interest and pleasure and connect with other players, they come to apply the linguistic structures acquired through these activities in many other non-gaming contexts. This can have a positive impact on their foreign language proficiency. The participants in this activity reported engaging in many different activites through English, such as playing to win, managing their times, and discussing game tactics and so on. Both participants reported spending considerable time on these activities kind of games and of speaking throughout.

5.6.13 Face-to-Face Interaction in English

As discussed previously, the participants explained that verbal communication in English is rare in SA. However, one participant, Huda, reported the opportunity to use English in her daily life, while Fattmah and Dina also indicated occasional opportunities to take part in face-to-face communication through English.

a. Using English to Communicate

Three participants reported using English at home with members of their family. When asked how often she talked with her mother in English, Fattmah explained:

'Not often. Sometimes I have tried to speak in English, and only my mother does this in the home, so I have tried to speak with her... about anything, my university, friends, modules, even about fashion, just to have a chance to talk in English.... Sometimes I feel I have a large vocabulary and grammatical information, but when it comes to speaking, I do not know. It needs you to think fast about everything, so I need to practice this.'

Huda reported more frequent opportunities to speak in English as she conversed with her sisters in English both with through English mobile apps in English and in their regular daily conversation at home:

'...especially when we are talking among other people, my parents, my uncles, grandfather, or mother, when we don't want anyone to understand what we are saying, we use English. I used to speak English with them all the time... Now I find it easier to express myself in English'

Finally, Dina reported some opportunities to speak in English:

'Yes, a lot. I am actually communicating with my brother... my big brother, only confidence in speaking improve a lot.'

5.6.14 Discussion: Face-to-Face Interaction in English

The three participants reported it was more difficult to develop this skill in the context of the traditional classroom, particularly in the FL context. Both Nunan and Carter (2001) and Celce-Murcia (2001) concur that speaking is not easy to master and may require additional training because it is a productive skill. It is the last skill to develop when learning a foreign language. In fact, the complex process of speaking rests on the simultaneous focus and combination of numerous components such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and syntax, semantics, and all other elements of a sentence.

The majority of the participants regard speaking as the most difficult skill to master due to a lack of practice (Table 11, Section: 5.1.7) as there are few opportunities to speak English in SA. For this reason, participants report engaging in any available chance for them for face-to-face communication in English. Bahrani and Sim (2012, 3.8.1) argue that since it can be difficult to practice the target language or to interact socially in the target language in a foreign language setting, learners should seek alternative methods of practicing the language outside the classroom setting to improve their skills.

It is noted here that recent technology such as Web 2.0 tools, provide learners with a variety of applications, sites, and blogs, which enable them to communicate with native or non-native speakers of English from all over the world to boost their language learning. Moreover, the widespread use of social media has enabled learners to increase their access to and interaction with English speakers.

5.7 Discussion for Research Question Two:

The data shows that the participants use a number of similler techniques; mainly imitation,

repetition, translation and annotation across various activities. In fact, the participants in the current study were found to apply the imitation technique to various activities, such as listening to songs and watching English movies, and imitating the styles or form of Twitter tweets.

Shen (2009) provides theoretical arguments and practical support for using English songs in teaching classes. His review focuses on the use of songs in the classroom, but he mentions similar techniques to those discussed here. He considers imitating and repetition to be the most helpful techniques in learning pronunciation. Thus, by listening to these songs repetitively, learners will in time correct their errors and achieve a more native-like pronunciation with a good level of listening skills. Moreover, Shen (2009) explains that the imitation technique can enhance the creative writing of students.

Following the singer or word in a movie and repeating a word over and over again can lead to improvement in the learner's confidence and ability to speak. Repeating words and sentences could help to improve students' oral expression by transferring the information about this word from short-term memory into long-term memory, which facilitates the process of memorizing for students, so that they can retain their English language and use this knowledge anytime (Shen, 2009).

The participants also appreciate using translation for language learning. However, the validity of using translation activities in the regular formal language class has been widely debated within the literature (Al-Amri and Abdul-Raof, 2014) and there is widespread belief that if learners use the translation technique when learning another language, then they will exclusively focus on meaning and ignore the other aspects of the language. Most of the participants in the current study use translation as the primary learning tool and felt they had learnt a lot using translation in terms of vocabulary and underlying skills, such as being able to recognize different aspects of speech and improve writing. Actually from the interview and the document shared, learners seem to be really motivated to advance in English through the use of authentic materials. They were eager to learn using the techniques they knew worked for them. The learners seemed to have had sound vocabulary knowledge which they attempted to apply to such activities as social media and video games in order to practice and improve their language skills.

Thus, translation as a technique helps them to overcome the obstacle of new words, especially in cases of self-learning. It is held that learners could use more recent and helpful techniques for learning new vocabulary if directed or advised by teachers to do so. Moreover, the findings of the current study support those of previous studies, such as Al-Amri and Abdul-Raof, (2014, p.16), who found that “The use of translation for language learning is interactive, learning- centred, and fosters creativity and autonomy. Translation is a communicative activity; thus, L2 learning-based translation can be employed purposefully in a communicative context. Hence, translation can develop the L2 learner’s language skills and competence in terms of the use of L2 and cultural awareness”.

Several researchers emphasize the importance of translation for language proficiency. For instance, Popovic (2001) maintains that translation significantly improves the writing skills, grammatical skills, cohesion system, association patterns, and idiomatic expressions of FL learners, while Ross (2000) purports that translation to be the fifth and the most essential social skill since it supports communication and comprehension. In fact, the translation technique was most commonly used in the current study for the purposes of vocabulary learning. Most of the participants reported the use of note-taking, where they write down the new word along with its translation in order to learn vocabulary. However, this entails the use of both a dictionary and notes, where learners can make use of their own vocabulary list in their own notes to help them study new words within any special category they want to add. Indeed, the use of dictionaries has dramatically changed; the participants in the current study indicated that they use the Google translate app, but a paper dictionary would offer more contact with vocabulary. The use of dictionary app can be classified as a cognitive strategy according to Goundar’s (2016) classifications of vocabulary learning strategies, which include guessing, using linguistic items, using dictionaries, and note-taking.

Even though the participants in this study believe that these techniques are good for them, they might not offer them enough contact with the new vocabulary to be learnt. There might be new and better methods for vocabulary learning, such as learning by the use of semantic field (the combination of a group of words with interrelated meanings and

belongs under a same concept) and making contact and links with the native language. However, making lists of vocabulary is an outdated approach, given what we now know about lexical fields and the way the brain stores associated words. The use of lexical field such as the use of hyponymy, antonymy and synonymy, to make links between words, word map, and words cards, are new devised to enhance learner performance (Gao and Xu, 2013). This has implications for the way learners are being taught since the use of translation might be due to the method of teaching in Saudi Arabia, which is mainly based on the Grammar-Translation method (Alharbi, 2015). There is no definitive answer regarding the amount of contact that is necessary in order to acquire new vocabulary. Rott (1999) claims that learners need at least six contacts with a word for to be acquired, whereas Waring and Takaki (2003) argue that eight exposures are needed for learners to chance identifying a word's form or meaning. Pigada and Schmitt (2006) have extended this number and consider ten contacts with new vocabulary necessary for vocabulary acquisition. Thus, considering the approaches that the participants used in this study, participants need greater contact with the new vocabulary, such as using it in sentences, in order for it to be completely assimilated. Also, repeating the songs, as this study shows, might help participants to retain the vocabulary they have learnt. Gu (2003) indicates that good learners will repeat the new vocabulary many times until they totally acquire the word. In any event, and as implied by Krashen (1989), learners can also acquire vocabulary subconsciously due to the intensive input they are exposed to while they engage with the informal learning activity.

5.8 Conclusion: Research Questions Two

The subjects clearly participate in informal language activities and integrate them into their learning in different ways. Some find listening to songs is enough for them to improve their language skills, whereas others translate texts or repeat the words and structures, in order to imitate the target language style. Moreover, some participants try to use English in engaging in their everyday activities to improve their proficiency in the target language; for example, using social media apps, chatting with friends through English, and watching English movies and programmes. This is particularly true of social media, which offers many opportunities due to the widespread global use of English, and chimes

with Kim, Park and Baek's (2011, 3.9.1) conclusion that Twitter use improves learners' output and enhances their relationships with other users.

5.9 Introduction: Research Question Three

This section presents the students' views on how each activity enables learning and the various benefits derived from informal learning activities, and interprets and discusses the data.

5.10 The Activities:

5.10.1 Listening to Songs

In general participants engaged in this activity, reported that listening to songs helped them to learn a considerable amount of their vocabulary rather than developing other aspects of their language. Dina reported her experience of listening to songs, explaining that songs helps her to improve her vocabulary learning:

'I have improved my language a lot, but I still need further improvement, so even now when I hear new words on the TV or YouTube, I immediately write them down in my notebook and translate them.'

Fattmah agreed:

'I listen to them,, so I get more vocabulary.'

In addition, Assra reported that listening to songs helps her in extend vocabulary size:

'...translating the new words and then memorizing them.'

Assra likewise perceived songs to have enhanced other aspects of her language learning:

'...and not only new vocabulary, but I also learned the correct pronunciation.'

She provided a specific example of how this technique had improved her performance in the classroom:

'I love a song called 'Ghost of You', and I used to listen to this song. Before this song I did not know the meaning of the word 'ghost', and last year in the writing exam the miss asked us to write something about a ghost, and many girls failed because they did not understand the meaning of the word ghost, so if I had not listened to this song and translated the word, I would also have failed.'

She added:

Also, this year in the composition quiz I used a part of a Sam Smith song, 'Lay Me Down'. Songs help me a lot inside the classroom and outside the classroom.'

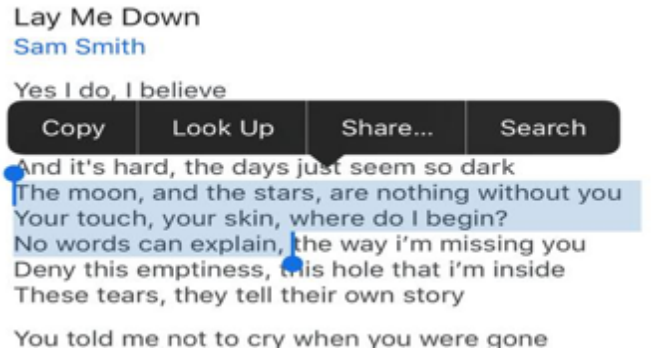


Figure 30: Screen shot of lyrics provided by Assra

Sara similarly reported that songs had helped her to develop her English language skills, particularly with regard to vocabulary acquisition:

'When I was listening to songs and printing out the lyrics to sing with the singer, I discovered that I was mispronounce[ing] these words and using them wrongly, and by listening to the song I learned the right way to pronounce and use the words.'

Amal indicated that she uses this activity not only for enhancing her vocabulary range then, but also for practicing her FL. Amal maintained that English songs have helped her to learn English and improve her language skills out of class thus improving her grammatical competence:

'I used to translate the whole song and then read it in English more than one time until I memorized the song. The goal was actually to memorize the song, but it also helped me to gain a lot of vocabulary and get the pronunciation correct and even the correct structure.'

She considers that translation has helped her to improve her grammatical competence since through listening to songs, she may commit certain English grammar patterns to memory. This, in turn, can enhance ability to use grammar correctly in everyday conversation. Dina, also, stated that listening to songs in her daily life has enhanced her speaking skills:

'... I found it very helpful... It's improved my speaking and my grammar as well.' She also believes that songs: *'it helps me to talk in the right form in English.....I used to listen to the songs and sing with them, trying to copy the way they*

pronounce the word in order to get the right way of saying it and to get a native like accent.'

In summary, the participants mainly considered speaking skills, vocabulary learning, and grammatical competence to be most improved through using this technique.

5.10.2 Discussion: Listening to Songs

All eight participants indicated that listening to songs had helped them to advance many aspects of their language skills. They felt they had extended their overall English vocabulary, assimilated correct pronunciation, improved their general linguistic competence, and enhanced their speaking skills, in consequence.

This finding is in line with previous studies. For example, Toffoli and Sockett (ibid) found that all the participants who responded to the questionnaire reported that listening to music and songs in English and other informal online activities were useful. They suggested that listening to songs is important in terms of improving the pronunciation of learners and enhancing vocabulary size. Lai, Zhu and Gong (2015, 3.7) similarly also reported that songs enhance learners' comprehension of the foreign language, increase vocabulary size in the target language, improve pronunciation skills due to listening to native pronunciation in songs, and also possibly improve the grammatical competence of learners.

The participants in the current study also indicated that they had learned additional vocabulary from listening to songs. As Amal previously reported:

'I always try to have new vocabulary and enlarge my vocabulary knowledge'.

In addition, the participants perceived improvements in their pronunciation and speaking skills as a result of listening to songs. Both Sara and Assra, felt they had:

'...learned the correct pronunciation'.

Clearly learners could not understand the songs from merely listening to them; they needed further effort to be able to follow them properly, such as repeating the song again, reading the lyrics, and translating the new words.

Amal, for example, reported that listening many times to the same songs helped her to remember the correct pronunciation of the vocabulary within the songs. Milovanov, Pietilä, Tervaniemi and Esquef (ibid) theorize that learners improve their language while engaging in this activity during the process of repetition. During this phase, participants observe the new vocabulary and how it is written, as well as the sound of the word and its correct pronunciation. This enhanced learning signifies that the learning affordance of listening to songs in English is more than a mere passive listening activity. The participants in the present study clearly maintain that repetition and imitation has improved their language skills. They described listening to the same song many times, translating it, writing it down, repeating it, and copying the style; all of which offer repetitive exposure to the right form of English many times. As Amal pointed out:

I used to translate the whole song and then read it in English more than one time until I memorized the song. The goal was actually to memorize the song. But it also helped me to gain a lot of vocabulary and get the pronunciation correct, and even the correct structure.'

In any event, vocabulary learning was the main benefit mentioned by almost all the participants, while others such as Amal, underscored the improvement of other language skills, particularly grammar and pronunciation. This may be directly linked to with Canale and Swain's 1980 model of communicative competence, which comprises the four competences of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic ability, discourse ability, and strategic ability. Participants purport that listening to songs provides them with the foremost communicative features of grammatical and sociolinguistic ability by exposing learners to the proper form and structure of the English language, and familiarizing them with the correct meaning and use of words and phrases. Indeed, three participants specifically cited that listening to repetitions of songs assists in improving pronunciation. This links to the study of Milovanov, Pietilä, Tervaniemi and Esquef (2010) which found that the process of repetition enabled participants to observe the new vocabulary and the way it is written, as well as the sound of the word and its correct pronunciation.

This also relates to the theories mentioned in the literature review such as Krashen's (1989, 1993) input hypothesis, which suggests that language acquisition occurs more readily when learners are exposed to a rich amount of comprehensible input.

The self-reported findings of this study support this theory from the learners' perspective, reveals a strong relationship between the act of listening to songs and acquiring and learning vocabulary. While it is not possible to judge the level of all of the songs which the learners listened to, from the songs typified in examples such as 'Rockabye', which one participant repeatedly listened to and translated, it is clear that they provide learners with considerable required input. As mentioned by Hana (section 5.4.1), below is part of the lyric for 'Rockabye' from which the participant mentioned that she learnt some vocabulary:

*A special bond of creation, ha
For all the single moms out there
Going through frustration
Clean Bandit, Sean-da-Paul, Anne-Marie
Sing, make them hear...*

This is particularly true in the case of study participants who boast a language level of between 5.5 to 6 IELTS level. As the song clearly contains some vocabulary which is new for these students, the inputs are little beyond them, as is deemed commensurate with comprehensible input for the language learners. Songs seem not only to provide the learner of the language with new vocabulary and/or grammatical input, but also the opportunity to practice this input.

5.10.3 Watching Movies and Television Programmes

As mentioned earlier, that watching movies, series, and other English language programmes, was highlighted by all the eight participants as an informal language learning activity.

All the participants attested that the use of Arabic subtitles helped them to gain more vocabulary, and several specified particular aspects of language improvement such as pronunciation or comprehension as shown in Table 14. (see section: 5.4.3). For example, Sara stated:

'I used to watch the American comedy 'Friends' in order to improve my English. I always watched this with subtitles.'

Sara reported the benefits of watching movies as improved her listening skills which helped to perfect her pronunciation:

'I want to improve my language. I feel I still am not able to understand everything in English, so subtitles help me to get a complete comprehension of the movie or programme... I do not always write down new vocabulary, but I have a good memory, and also when I hear a word, it usually occurs again and again in the same video in a different position, so I get it. Also, I focus on the pronunciation, the dialogue itself.... It helps me listen and read the meaning at the same time.'

Moreover, participants such as Hind found that subtitles helped improve their English language, especially in terms of extending vocabulary size. Hind explained:

'I gain many new vocabulary from moives.'

As mentioned in Research Question Two, Amal indicated that she watched without subtitles in order to examine her understanding of English. By doing this she tried to give herself a feedback or evaluation on her comprehension of English. As amal reports:

'I want to understand things in English directly, without translation.'

Amal reported other aspects of language improvement from movies, such as grammar:

'The most helpful thing for me is the movies and the series; it helps me a lot with language even if I do not study grammar. They are the most important for me.'

Participants in this activity and under this theme all agreed that their vocabulary had been enhanced by watching videos in English. However, they may also have unconsciously improved their listening skills and enhanced their grammatical competence as a consequence of the intensive input they gained from videos. Fattmah, for example, reported that she frequently revises her grammar and held that her grammatical competence has been improved by watching videos on YouTube:

'I usually watch videos on grammar rules on YouTube, especially those which are hard to understand.....have found it easier to follow and more interesting than books.. my English grammer has been improved, my vocabulary size and my prounciation.'

Fattmah indicated that she has watched different types of videos on different platforms, such as YouTube, and maintained she had derived numerous benefits; from gaining vocabulary and improving listening skills, to learning correct pronunciation and improving her grammatical competence.

5.10.4 Discussion: Watching Movies and Television Programmes

All eight participants reported that they watch different kinds of videos, which they find helpful in improving their language proficiency and skills. This echoes the study of Birulés-Muntané and Soto-Faraco (2016,3.9.2) which examined the effect of watching English-spoken films with subtitles on language acquisition. They found considerable improvement in learner listening skills and in their comprehension level when using English subtitles and suggested that longer exposure times would have even more significant effects.

All the participants in this activity cited the learning of vocabulary as the main benefit they derived from songs and movies. It is evident that movie can enhance and develop listening skills due to the exposure to language and the extensive input while they listen to and watch a movie or a programme. Furthermore, they could improve their grammatical competence without being fully conscious of this as a result of the input they gained from videos. This corresponds with the study of Sundqvist's (2011, 3.9.2) on the effect of TV, websites, and apps used by language learners outside the classroom.

The study found that that extramural English activities had a greater impact on oral proficiency and vocabulary size. Also, in regard to the improving of listening skill which participants believed it has improved also in line with Birulés-Muntané and Soto-Faraco (2016,3.9.2) examined the effect of watching English-spoken films with subtitles on language acquisition and find that the listening skills tests revealed that after watching the English with English subtitles, the participants' skills were more significantly improved than after watching the Spanish subtitled or no-subtitles versions.

As discussed in Chapter Three, movies can offer authentic material and provide learners with comprehensible input. Furthermore, as movies are built on context, visual and audio

aids assist learner understanding, even though they may encounter new vocabulary or structures. Krashen claims that new inputs just above learners' current level helps them to advance to a higher level of the language and assimilate the new level in more natural way without instructions. Moreover, as movies are set in naturalized settings, such as restaurants or supermarkets, they not only promote learning in an organic way and with correct structures, but also present the new vocabulary within contextualized scenarios which eases learning and recognition.

5.10.5 Using Social Media: Chatting and Following People in English

All eight participants maintained that engaging in social media inheres several language proficiency benefits. Sara found social media particularly helpful in pushing her to express herself in English:

'So, I decided to switch my phone to English and to contact my friends in English, to write in English, and now by doing this, I can express myself in English.'

Moreover, participants such as Hana, maintained that having a native English speaker friend to chat to and thereby practice the language on social media is important in order to improve her language; especially speaking skills which can be practiced with native speakers in a real-life situation. Hana referred to her use of English, mainly on Twitter and Facebook:

'Ninety percent of the time, sometimes in Arabic, because my followers are American. That is why I tweet in EnglishYes, that helps me a lot speaking with them. I have friends that speak native English... On Twitter...Twitter and Facebook.'

Dina reflected on the benefits of the social media like improving her paraphrasing skill:

'Also, when you tweet something, you usually take the idea from elsewhere and you paraphrase it. Then this helps to make this information fixed in your mind. Also, it helps to improve your paraphrasing skills.'

Participants also maintained their language skills would improve over time of using informal language learning. For example, Hana said:

'Yes, that helped [using Twitter] me a lot; speaking with them. I used to have friends that were native English speakers.'

When asked to be more specific, she explained:

'Grammar; copying what they were saying'

In a similar way, Amal said that social media apps had helped her to improve several of her language skills, such as grammar and writing:

'My writing improved significantly from following native speakers. I tried to imitate their styles in writing, and it improved my grammatical skills as well.'

The issue of privacy is another benefit of using English within social media for participants such as Amal and Huda. Amal pointed out that she mainly prefers to use English as she finds it much easier, and it seems to offer her more privacy:

'I have two reasons to use English on Twitter. My followers do not know English, especially my parents, so I can say whatever I want; this provides me with a kind of privacy. Also, I find it easier to express what I want to say in English rather than Arabic.'

Hind also reported that she likes to tweet in English because it affords her greater privacy:

'Yes, not all people will understand my tweets if I tweet in English. So when I write anything on my special area, sometimes I'm under pressure or not feeling good regarding something, so I write and post in English.'

Below are two examples from a conversation Hana had with a native speaker, who works as a teacher in his home country of Canada. In the first conversation, Hana wishes him happiness. This chat is private and contains personal data, but the participants were happy to share it:

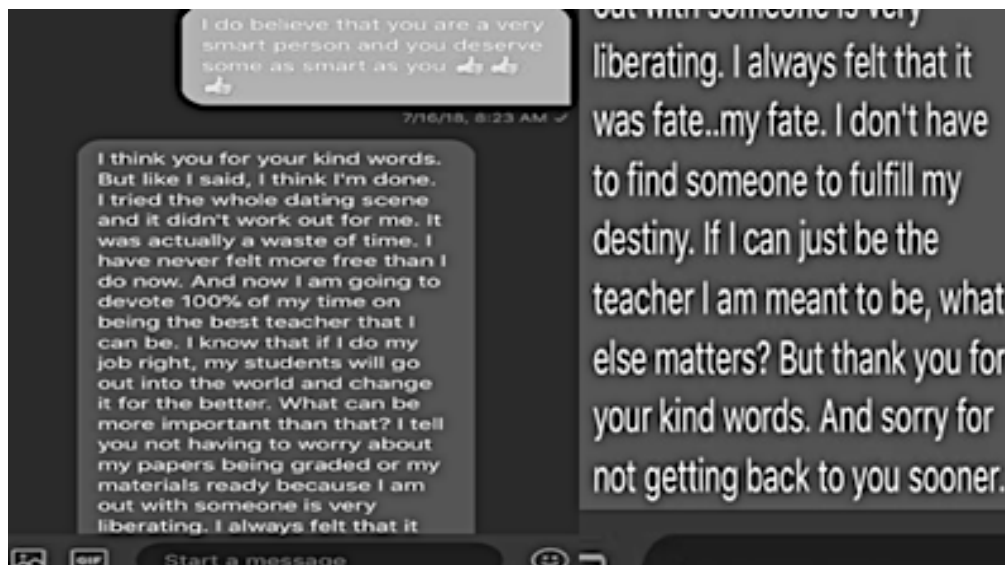
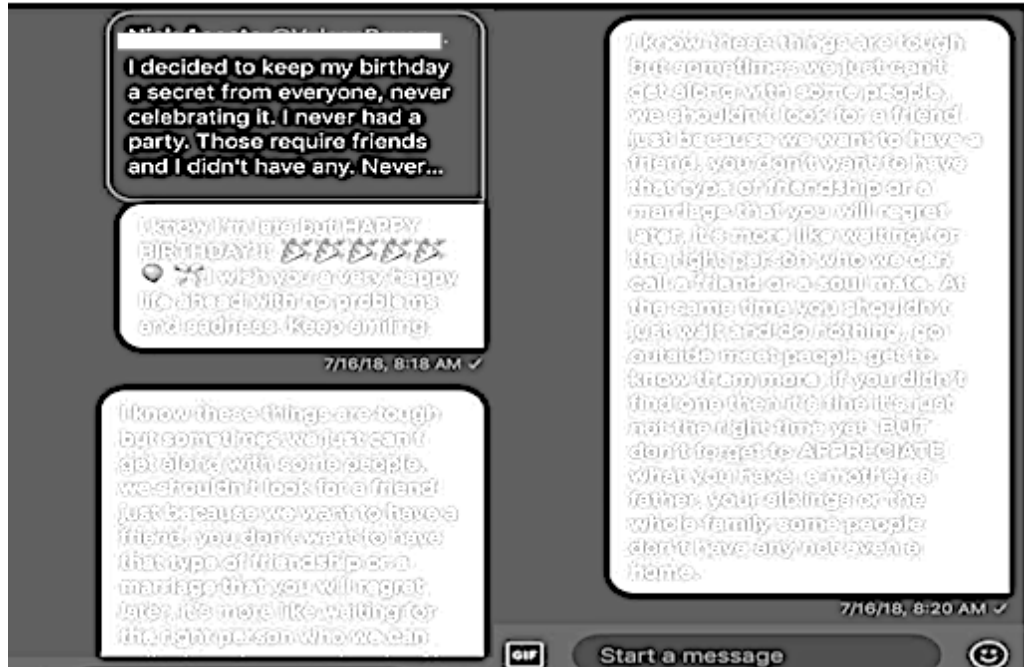


Figure 31: Screenshots of Twitter direct messages

Assra also provided the below example of the tweets posted on Twitter:



Figure 32: Screenshots of Twitter tweets

She reported that she had written this one on her 22nd birthday, as she decided to stop thinking any negative thoughts that would affect her and to make a new start:

'This was the year that changed me and changed the way I think the most. I discovered that I had wasted my effort and time thinking about nothing, just things that caused me to get bad and angry, such as political stuff, and many other things; stupid things that when I remembered, I feel ashamed of myself. And then that day I decided to change my life and not waste any time on useless things for me and on things that made me bad. I did not blame myself because what happens in the past is the cause of what I am now. But I know for sure now that if you always think about bad things, this will be bad for your health and might be dangerous.'

Actually, Assra indicated that 70% of her tweets were in English for two reasons: first, it helps her to practice and improve her English language skills, such as writing and thinking in English; and second, the perception of privacy she enjoys when she uses English. This is very interesting as these participants not only prefer to chat in English or tweet in order to improve their English but also want to enjoy the extra privacy afforded by the language. In short, they feel free to express anything they want while enjoying the security that the English language. For example, Assra mentioned (p.126) that she tweets in English on her birthday in order to manage the reception of her posts.

In addition, it emerged that participants also feel more confident when using the target language, especially when speaking. All of them maintained that the use of social media had made them more confident when using the language.

For example, Hind claimed that the use of social media had increased her confidence when using the target language, even in the classroom in front of other students or teachers:

'Yes. You know you need to be confident to speak English, so it helps me with that, especially when I need to do a presentation; it makes me more confident.'

Fattmah concurred that the use of social media in English had boosted her confidence:

'Yes, a lot, a lot.... confidence... because when I said something wrong, my friend would not judge me; she corrected me instead and helped me to say it the correct way, so I will be more confident when speaking with someone else.'

These extracts highlight that using social media helps learners feel more confident when using the target language.

5.10.6 Discussion: Social Media: Chatting and Following People in English

Since the fundamental aspect of language learning using technology is the interactive nature of language, McClanahan (2014, p. 23) links this to the main theories on language acquisition, such as Krashen's (1985; 1996, 3.6) language acquisition and learning models, as all these theories are built on the fundamental role of language input and 'communicative interaction'. According to Krashen's input hypothesis, learners acquire language when they understand messages; these messages include written messages which involve material read by learners in social media, on websites, and any other written text. Messages were easy for learners to understand, and many participants acquired new structures, as indicated by Hana and Amal.

The participants in the current study give similar reasons for using social media for informal language learning to those cited by Derakhshan and Hasanabbasi (2015, 3.8.1): namely: first, it offers authentic FL materials, as in the case of Hana, who follows native speakers' accounts; second, it offers learners the opportunity to learn while doing something they like; third, it provides learners with both privacy and control over what

they want to see and follow, as in the case of Amal and Hind; and fourth, it offers a variety of materials which suit different learner styles, as in the example of sharing poetry.

Three of the participants in the current study indicated that informal language learning has improved their personal confidence as a result of their language development. This means they felt more confident using the language everywhere, even in the classroom in front of their teacher and their classmates. This demonstrates that informal language learning is not only beneficial in terms of language learning and usage outside the classroom but also inside the classroom. In accordance with the present results, Farmer and Sweeney (1997, p. 294) concluded that, “the major reason for the learners’ widespread lack of confidence in using English is that opportunities for real communication are extremely limited”. By using affordances of informal learning, these opportunities are enhanced, and learner confidence is increased. A number of researchers have indicated that exposure to extensive language input (such as listening to spoken English) and that regular use of the language can improve learners’ confidence when using the target language (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide and Shimizu, 2004). Furthermore, informal language learning aids, such as listening to English songs or using apps in English, could offer learners exposure to the target language, which in turn will enhance their confidence when using the English language. Nazarova and Umurova (2016, p. 47) contend that:

‘Self-confidence is also very important in language learning. Research in language teaching has revealed that foreign language learners often seem passive and silent in language classrooms. In the age of globalization, however, there is an urgent need for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers to enhance their students’ confidence to help them take part more actively in classroom oral activities’.

They go on to explain that the best way to increase learners’ self-confidence and improve their speaking skills is through communication with native English speakers: by any means, and on any topic. However, there are few opportunities for learners to do so in an EFL context. The participants believe that social media networks have helped them to overcome this obstacle, and improved their confidence when using the FL. Nazarova and Umurova (2016) also argue that one way to increase learners’ confidence is to encourage them to use materials on familiar topics, such as audios for listening materials, video clips,

and printed texts/study books. They posit that using these materials can enhance the confidence of learners at any level, whether beginner, intermediate, or advanced, which yet again suggests the strong connection between informal language learning and learner confidence. This can explain the lower anxiety level of learners when they use social media and their ability to write more freely using the FL as there is no teacher or face-to-face contact. This is also connected to Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis which involves a number of 'affective variables' have a facilitative role in second language acquisition. Krashen summarized these variables, which include motivation; self-confidence; anxiety; and personality traits. Krashen claimed that learners with high level of those variables and a low level of anxiety are more likely to succeed in second language acquisition (Schütz, 2019). Also, it is connected to Akhlar, Mydin and Kasuma (2017: 3.9.1), who purported that social media can create a conducive learning environment and thus may be able to boost students' motivation to learn English. In other words, since learners enjoy using social media language learning outcomes will be better. In fact, the participants enjoy most of the informal learning activities, which might be why they are so motivated to learn.

The theme of privacy also emerged from participants reports regarding the use of social media for informal language learning, with Amal, Assra and Huda all specifically referring to this facet of the issue. While the remaining participants may not have explicitly alluded to privacy, their consistent use of social media for direct messaging on Twitter through the medium of English suggests they welcome the opportunity to create a security barrier to prevent their parents or others who follow them monitoring their activities. This is clearly linked to Krashen's affective filter theory as the anxiety level of the learners tends to lower when they use social media since the fear of being watched by teachers or peers disappears as the participants become more confident in their English writing skills and more open to talking on the online platforms.

5.10.7 Extensive Reading for Informal Purposes

As mentioned in Question Two, five of the participants reported that they read in English. Three of the participants reports several benefits from reading in English, while the other two mention general language improvements.

All the three participants perceived that the extensive reading activity has helped them to improve vocabulary learning (Sara, Fattmah and Hind) and writing (Fattmah). Thus, they read in order to emulate the style and to practice the correct way to build and write sentences. As Fattmah elucidated:

'It helps me in knowing how to write academic writing. Also, to use the correct grammar and structure. And, of course, a lot of vocabulary.'

Sara reads in English for fun and to learn English. When asked about the benefits, she explained:

'I learned a lot of vocabulary from reading.'

Hind also reports similar benefits reports,

'I have learned a lot of new vocabulary.'

Reflecting on her experiences of reading in general, Assra also found it increased her exposure to English:

'I search in English to increase my opportunities to read in English, to improve my English language because I would not improve if I read in Arabic.'

Furthermore, Hind mentioned the benefits of using the graded reader books.

'It is really a great experience that makes reading easier for me... Each time I choose the level that suits me and find it easier than reading the usual books.'

5.10.8 Discussion: Extensive Reading for Informal Purposes

All five participants felt that reading in English helps them in improving their English, especially in terms of vocabulary. The findings are directly in line with previous findings, such as those of Nation (2014, p. 20), who claims that "Reading helps language learning by providing the important learning condition of repetition. That is, through reading learners meet words, word groups and grammatical constructions several times and so have a good chance of learning them". Moreover, Fattmah and Sara, for instance, indicated that they derived considerable of vocabulary from reading. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies, such as those which have investigated the

improvement of language skills due to reading in a FL, specifically incidental vocabulary acquisition (Waring and Nation, 2004).

Indeed, according to Brown, Waring and Donkaewbua (2008, p. 136), “Incidental learning is the process of learning something without the intention of doing so. It is also learning one thing while intending to learn another”.

Furthermore, and in line with previous studies, such as Cho and Krashen (1994, 3.9.5), the current study shows a strong relationship between reading in the foreign language and learners’ vocabulary size. Horst, Cobb and Meara (1998) conducted a study of 34 EFL learners in order to investigate the effect of reading for pleasure on the vocabulary size of the learners. The subjects were exposed to 21,232 words of the simplified version of ‘The Mayor of Casterbridge’ by Thomas Hardy. The researchers applied two types of tests: multiple-choice test; and word association test. The participants attained 20% of multiple-choice and 16% on word association. The learner perception that vocabulary is not acquired through reading concurs with the findings of the current study (Waring and Nation, 2004).

All the three participants who mentioned the benefits of the informal language learning confirmed that reading had extended their vocabulary size. However, as stated earlier, this may simply their impression, and the current study did not conduct any evaluation of possible improvement from informal reading in English. In addition, related skills might improve as learners move from one graded reader level to another, but participants did not report any impact other than learning new vocabulary, which seems to be much more immediate to them. Only Fattmah alluded to other aspects of language proficiency and maintained her grammar had improved from reading. This resonates with previous studies discussed in the literature review, such as Ponniah and Priya (2014, 3.9.5), who found that reading for pleasure improves all dimensions of language competence, including grammar and syntax, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and even the writing style of the learners of a second language.

In addition, two participants mentioned the use of graded reader in Research Question Two. While “graded readers are written at various levels within a controlled vocabulary”

(Nation, 2014, p. 19), these learners indicated that such reading was of great benefit to them in terms of improving their language proficiency, and they hold positive attitudes as they have improved at understanding of the text. Albay (2017) explained that as a result of extensive exposure to certain grammatical structures and vocabulary in graded readers, learners become more aware of and able to use the language. Furthermore, Albay (2017) elaborated that graded readers can motivate learners to use the vocabulary and structures they have encountered in their reading in their daily life communication. However while Nation and Ming-Tzu (1999, p. 356) associate “gaining skills and fluency in reading, establishing previously learned vocabulary and grammar, learning new vocabulary and grammar” with graded readers, the participants in the current study did not mention such skills.

5.10.9 Using Learning Websites, Applications, and General Websites

As four participants mentioned the use of this activity in order to learn English, and similarly they report several benefits. Assra reported that the use of search engine in English help her in improving her English:

‘Yes, a huge difference. I really improved my language a lot within two years.’

Hind also asserted that the use of online shopping in English helped her to practice problem-solving in a real-life situation:

‘By using this I am able to practice English and learn how to communicate and how to deal with orders in real life.’

When was asked about the benefits derived from these websites and any perceived improvement Sara attested that apps improved her English in interesting and interactive ways so she did not feel bored. Moreover, the privacy of those apps is another benefit she associated with them. Sara summarized the benefits of using the above websites:

‘A lot, when I am listening to it, I just concentrate on listening...Vocabulary - a lot of vocabulary. Even some of it I already knew, but I did not know where to use it. So when I have heard the English stories, I use them in my life. Even when I have an exam or quiz, I remember them from the stories I heard, and I use them.’

Amal talked about her experience with the learning apps:

'Then it gives you a list of vocabulary with the meaning, and sometimes some of the exercises are offered....It helps a lot in gaining a lot of vocab and in revising what I already know. Even sometimes I know a word, but I do not know all of its usage, so it helps me to know the other usage of the words.'

Fattmah also, motioned several benefits of the using of the websites:

'It even evaluates your pronunciation. Everything is improved, but mostly vocabulary ...there is always new vocabulary for me, different grammar levels, test your pronunciation, never pass any level until you get everything right'.

The apps mentioned by the participants above provide participants with two main affordances for language learning: providing new input; and giving feedback. They enhance the participants' vocabulary size, correct pronunciation, providing new input, expose learners to the correct grammatical form, provide feedback on their current grammar level, and test the individual skills of all users.

5.10.10 Discussion: Using Learning Websites, Applications, and General Websites

All four participants held that mobile apps had had a positive impact on their language learning; particularly vocabulary improvements through listening, pronunciation, and grammar. Fattmah mentioned that she even practices writing with the app that she uses. Research on the use of mobile applications used in English language learning, such as Wu (2014), and Klimova (2019), could enhance and promote the development of all FL skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing).

For instance, Wu (2014) conducted a study exploring the impact of smartphone apps on the English vocabulary development of college students. In order to do so, the researcher designed a mobile application (Word Learning) containing 852 English words, along with their spelling, pronunciation, meaning in the Chinese language, synonym, antonym, part of speech, and use in a sentence. The 50 study participants were divided into an experimental group and a control group, and two tests (pre-test and post-test) were applied in order to measure the impact of the application on the learners' vocabulary development. The results of the study demonstrated that the experimental group

outperformed the control group significantly. In fact, Wu claimed that students who use a mobile app are able to retain 89 more words than learners who do not use such an app. The participants of the present study reported that vocabulary learning was the main learning outcome of mobile apps. This chimes with Teodorescu (2013, 3.9.2), who found that using apps enhances vocabulary learning, confidence, and even class participation. Indeed, the most important feature that apps offer learners is arguably the feedback feature. Fattmah, for example, mentioned this in relation to the app she uses (APA English):

'...you never pass any level until you get everything right'.

Furthermore, Teodorescu (2015, 3.9.2) also emphasized certain the advantages of mobile apps, including offering feedback.

5.10.11 Playing Online Video Games

Two participants engaged with online games. Hana and Amal perceived benefits derived are outlined below. Hana believed that that online games enable her to practice verbal skills. Hana indicated that she had improved her speaking skills, learnt numerous terms and boosted her vocabulary through online gaming:

'I learned a lot of vocabulary from online game... technical words, types of clothes.... Also speaking as we speak a lot in this game... so confidence in speaking, my confidence has improved a lot.'

Hana maintained that playing online games had improved her English fluency and confidence in English. She was unsure whether the game offered her accuracy as there is no feedback from other players, but she felt more confident since the other players were clearly able to understand her and communicate with her.

One of the main benefits of online gaming is that it requires real-time dialogue. The transcript below was taken from Hana's video recording the game she was playing. There were five speakers in this game, playing online together in one team.

The game is called "Pubg". Speaker one and Speaker 2 are Arabic native speakers. Speaker 3 and 5 are Indian native speakers, and speaker 4 is a native English speaker.

The medium of communication was exclusively English. The language level of this conversation reflects the participant's 5.5 IELTS level of English.

While this conversation does not seem to provide learners with any language input and is totally for entertainment, it nonetheless enhances fluency and affords the learners with an opportunity to practice the language:

Speaker 1: Do you have mic?
Speaker 2: Can you please open the mic?
Speaker 3: (write) Sorry, I do not have mic.
Speaker 4: Where are you from?
Speaker 1: I am from Kuwait.
Speaker 4: Alsalam Alikum.
Speaker 2: I have the worse gun ever. Someone help?
Speaker 1: What gun do you have?
Speaker 4: What gun do you have?
Speaker 1: I need AKM. Do you find AKM? Give it to me.
Speaker 1: What gun do you have?
Speaker 2: I found AKM. AKM but no pull it!! So I wait.
Speaker 2: Okay, I got supplied.
Speaker 1: AKM for you, number 4.
Speaker 1: Everyone follow number 3, so we can land in the same place.
Speaker 4: We are going to containers, ok?
Speaker 2: Did you find something? A gun or something?
Speaker 5: Yeah, JJA. I think he....
Speaker 2: I need Scop 4, if you have one?

Amal also thought online games were greatly beneficial in terms of language learning and language acquisition and felt that she could learn a lot if she played online games. She claimed that her younger sister had learnt most of her English from online games:

'I usually play 'Fortnight'.... It is good because I speak a lot with my team.... so, we have to speak English all the time.'

5.10.12 Discussion: Playing Online Videos Games

Hana and Amal found this activity both fun and beneficial to their English at the same time. They believed this significantly increases their vocabulary size and improves their fluency, thinking, problem-solving and speaking skills in English. This aligns with the findings of Kuure (2011,3.9.4) which demonstrated that online computer games and activities could offer significant affordances for language learning as they lead to natural social connections, offer learners the opportunity to learn substantive vocabulary, and motivate players to participate in collaborative problem-solving and networking with peers. Kuure further contends that using video games gives learners unlimited time and

a source of social interaction which provide significant input for language acquisition as it offers learners an opportunity to practice their language outside the classroom, especially in a FL context. Moreover, vocabulary assimilated through playing online games is more likely to enter the long-term memory of the learner as it is used and recycled during online games.

5.10.13 Face-to-Face Interaction in English

Although only one participant had the regular opportunity to communicate in English face-to-face, two others reported some opportunity to use it at home. All three concurred on the benefits of this as outlined below. Fattmah had very few opportunities to speak English in her home, she clearly appreciated the practice and considered it important in terms of improving her speaking skills and her confidence since:

'...confidence in speaking; it is the most important thing.'

Dina also reported similar benefits:

'...confidence in speaking improved a lot.'

Since Huda enjoyed the greatest opportunities to converse in English she indicated:

'I used to speak English with them all the time... Now I find it easier to express myself in English I have been improving a lot as I have used it for all my communication.'

Huda feels that her communication skills in English has been improved due to the opportunities she has for face-to-face conversation with her sisters.

5.10.14 Discussion: Face-to-Face Interaction in English

The three participants believed that informal language learning activities help them to improve their language skills, especially speaking, which they reported was more difficult to develop in the confines of the traditional classroom. The participants perceived that the use of English oral communication in their daily lives improved their target language proficiency. Participants who regularly interacted with family members or friends in English reported enhanced language skills; in particular, their fluency and confidence in

the foreign language, had improved significantly. This finding demonstrates that conversational communication boosts language learning and aligns with findings and conclusions of extant research, including that of Palfreyman (2011, 3.8.1), who maintained that social interaction plays a key role in language learning by enabling learners to improve outcomes and demonstrate better language proficiency. Palfreyman (2011) posited that interaction with others is a crucial factor in language learning outside the classroom and argues that families and friends are a valuable resource in terms of both out-of-class language learning and language improvement. This is evident in the cases of Huda, Dina and Fattmah, who use English with their family members. The three participants indicated that this practice advances their speaking skills, and builds confidence in the use of the target language.

The significance of oral communication was agreed by most of the participants, even though most of them indicated difficulties (Research Question One). This can be best understood from Byrne's (1986) preposition that "Oral communication is a two way process between the speaker and the listener and involves the productive skills of speaking and the receptive skills of understanding": a definition which underlines that speaking skills integrate all the other skills.

Thus, oral communication in English is arguably the predominant factor in language learning since it fosters improvement of all other elements. Indeed, Staab (1992, p. 7) goes so far as to claim that "oral language is important not only as a vital communication tool that empowers us in our daily lives but also as a valuable way to learn".

5.11 Conclusion: Research Question Three

The learners somewhat diverged in their perceptions and understandings of the benefits derived from informal language learning. This may be attributed to several factors: the precise activity they had used; individual aims to improve a specific skill or skillset; and/or the way they performed the activity, such as focusing on using translation. However, the participants generally concurred that the use of informal language learning had had a significant positive impact on their vocabulary size and their speaking skills. They also maintained that the use of informal language learning had boosted their EFL confidence.

Motivation is also key to the participants' informal language learning, since the main reason for engaging in certain activities, such as playing online games, listening to songs, and using social media apps, is actually fun. This is strongly related to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (3.6) which purports motivation is one of the elements. Krashen claimed that by increasing motivation, language learning and acquisition are also increased. According to Krashen, students with better motivation will always keen to search for and achieve more input. Additionally, they will be more open and eager to interact with native speakers in order to improve their language. Therefore, by engaging in informal language learning activities, students could be more motivated to learn as the low anxiety levels are maintained due to the absence of teachers or classmate, and also because leisure and entertainment activities are essentially pleasurable.

Whatever drives the use of individual informal language learning, however, the group as whole agreed that it clearly advances their learning. Both Assra and Sara, particularly emphasized that it had significantly improved their English in a short time. As an interviewer, I really sensed the participants' passion and motivation to improve their language skills through the use of informal language activities and to continue using them as they realized the positive impact on their own language development. Indeed, I had not anticipated such a great reliance on informal language learning from the participants and their obvious enthusiasm to learn the language and use the different affordances of language learning applications.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the main findings and considers their various implications. Recommendations based on the finding of the current study are also presented, as are suggestions for further research. The chapter and overall thesis concludes with a final personal reflection on the thesis journey.

6.1 Summary of Main Findings

From the findings of the current study, it is evident that female participants report using different types of materials and activities to learn the language in an informal context. Songs, movies, and all other virtual materials (programs, series, etc.) top the list in respect of the materials and activities used by the learners, and the affordance of such materials provide greater opportunity to learn the language from the learners' perception. Participants attest that the affordances of these materials help and support their language learning development. Learners reported improvements across several aspects of linguistic, communicative and pragmatic competence and had also advanced in their levels of both accuracy and fluency. This resonates with Canale and Swain's 1980 model of communicative competence (5.2.1).

Due to the flexibility, portability, and availability of tablets, mobile phones and laptops, which offer more privacy for students, and the significant improvement in Internet connection, participants reported a preference for informal language learning which gives them a level of autonomy not found in the formal class setting. The participants clearly regard such activities as more interesting and motivating. The added advantage of perceived privacy is mainly grounded in social media activities which make learners feel more comfortable: in short, they can avail of such English language apps without the external pressure of being monitored by their teachers, peers, or even parents. This also is directly linked to Krashen's affective filter theory (5.5.3.1) in which learner anxiety levels are held to play a critical role in learning a language.

Perhaps the most revealing data from the current study is the confirmation that all of the activities were conducted with explicit learner intention, such as learning from songs, movies, apps, reading, and chat with others as well as joining WhatsApp groups in order to communicate in English. This infers that the most common type of informal learning used by the learners of the current study is actually self-directed learning. However, video-gaming in English can be a mix of both self-directed learning and incidental learning since the activity is practiced mainly for enjoyment rather than language learning. Nonetheless, after trying video games, the participants found that they had acquired the language from playing, so it could be considered both. Moreover, within self-directed learning learners have the potential to exceed their learn intentions. For example, while listening to songs with an aim to learn vocabulary, they may inadvertently hone their pronunciation and develop better listening skills.

Learning out of class or informal language learning offers a great opportunity for learners to assimilate the language in more natural conditions by providing the participants with authentic materials to be used in language learning, especially in the EFL drip-feed contact of SA. The learning affordances of informal language learning offer numerous many opportunities to extend learner exposure to the target language. It also arguably yields more organic occasions or contexts for the learners to practice the language through the use of social media, learning applications, and other communications apps.

Furthermore, the significance of the informal language learning derived from findings is that it helps learners with flexibility and facilitating autonomous management of the place, mode, and manner, of learning. Thus, learners can study at home or even at school via their phones, laptops, or any other method of language learning. It could also help in creating an enjoyable and positive language use experience wherein learners do not feel they are being evaluated or monitored by a teacher. In addition, the use of informal language learning suits individuated learners' needs and interests by enabling them to choose which skill or skillset they wish to pursue or improve.

6.2 Implications

As the current study is both exploratory and interpretive in nature, it raises a number of implications, for teachers, learners, and curriculum designers. These, in turn, may alert them to the importance of informal language activities both in and out of the English classrooms.

As the data shows, the first important implication of this study is that the participants had difficulty in obtaining face-to-face communication opportunities in English; an important factor for language improvement. Thus, one practical implication is the need to increase learner exposure to the target language. Thus, the use of informal language learning provided them with an authentic source of language input that can contribute to developing the language proficiency of the learners; for example, their speaking proficiency, which can be hard to improve in an EFL context with the lack the social interaction.

The second important implication of this study arises from the findings regarding curriculum designers and teachers, and the English language grammar-translation pedagogy which is largely used in Saudi schools (Alharbi, 2015). Thus, curriculum designers and teachers should consider the application of more recent and effective methods which are backed up by relevant upskilling and training.

6.3 Recommendations

a. For Teachers

It is evident that teachers embody the most fundamental aspect of learning and motivated teachers can help even the weakest learners. Therefore, the findings of the current study underline the responsibilities and tasks of the teacher as discussed below:

1. Teachers should encourage students to learn English informally through out of class activities and not solely rely on formal learning activities. They should advise students of the possible ways to learn English in an informal setting.
2. Teachers also should try to absorb informal language learning activities and materials with learning into a formal setting and create opportunities to practice in the classroom.

This could be done by integrating more technology into learning materials, assignments, and homework and by increasing the use of social media in the materials used in the class.

3. Teachers should encourage learners to create informal learning groups in the area they are interested, such as creating a WhatsApp group.
4. It is clear that there is more than one option available to teachers in terms of integrating these informal language activities into the curriculum, such as showing short movies during lessons and matching this with similar tasks. As most learners enjoy watching movies, this has the potential to significantly boost learning and acquisition opportunities. In addition, they could recommend English movies and programmes for students to watch in their free time as a means of improving their English and stress that doing so fosters incidental language acquisition.
5. Teachers should consider involving movies and songs in their classroom as they considered as authentic material and provide the learners with natural input. Such natural inputs could promote the understanding of the language and forge connections between the more traditional classroom teaching, the real world, and the foreign language which is used in real-life situations outside the classroom (Gebhard, 1996; Mishan, 2004). Moreover, teachers and educators should improve the way they teach vocabulary and apply the most recent techniques and strategies. Semantic field theory can be used to assist students to learn vocabularies and may help to support and enhance the efficacy of vocabulary learning. Teachers can opt for various alternative methods in Saudi classes rather than adhering to traditional vocabulary pedagogies, such as word lists.

b. For Learners:

1. This investigation of language learning activities and their importance to language learners made the English learners aware of the effect of informal learning on language improvement.
2. There should be more dialogue between teachers and learners as learners make their teachers aware of their informal language learning activities in order to receive feedback and advice which might further enhance their language learning.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The current study highlights several issues on which further research would be beneficial. I believe that ethnography was the most suitable data collection method for the current study as it was conducted on a small group of participants and elicited a deeper understanding of how they perceived their informal learning activities and how this leads to learning. The data additionally indicated that vocabulary was the main area of benefit which learners associated with informal learning activities.

However, I would recommend further qualitative research on analyzing the language level of the activities and compare to the learners language level, along with ascertaining the actual affordances activities offer for learners in terms of developing fluency, accuracy, general confidence, or vocabulary as the data of the current study indicated that vocabulary was the main area of benefit learners associated with informal learning activities. A further quantitative study could investigate and examine all the language skills of the learners, before and after, exposure to an extensive amount of the informal language activities mentioned in this study to identify the various skills which could be improved to same degree as vocabulary.

The issue of privacy and language learning which arose from the data of the current study, and its effect on language learning in terms of lowering the anxiety level of the learners, especially in the context of SA, also merits further investigation. This could be undertaken via another ethnographic longitudinal study on a small group and could shed further light of how perceptions of privacy enhance communication in English, and any knock-on learning activities. If learner feelings, behaviours, and usage were recorded and observed over a period of time in relation to English communication online, the ensuing data could reveal the full effect of the use of social media and other types of informal learning activities on privacy and learner development.

6.5 Personal Reflection

Reflecting on my thesis journey, I can say it was a challenging yet empowering journey. I started my journey thinking about how learners in Saudi Arabia learn English; the methods they use, and how some of them attain a better level of English than others.

I also began to reflect on my own learning experience as an enthusiastic Saudi learner of the English language. In retrospect, I realized that I had mainly learnt English from informal language learning materials and activities, such as listening to pop songs. Therefore, the advance in technology and the ease with which authentic English language materials and activities can be accessed inspired me to investigate the topic in current times. A review of the extant literature revealed a distinct gap in the area of informal language learning research; particularly in the context of SA. This first investigation this area in Saudi Arabia was rendered both challenging and additionally significant and rewarding.

Conducting this Ed.D. thesis demanded intense focus on the aim, research questions, methodology, and data interpretation. I started my Ed.D. as a single professional woman. However, during the first year I got married and had my first child. I was really tired and many times I want to postpone everything until my baby got older, especially with little sleep and being away from home with no help from my family. But with my husband's encouragement and reminders of my dreams of the future, I was able to continue.

The study was also challenging in terms of the data collection and analysis stage. One aspect I realized from my interviews is the degree of formality of the interviews is not fixed and may change over the various interview phases. During the initial interviews, I felt that the exchanges were very formal and sensed that the participants were concerned when answering my questions. However, this formality grew less and less within subsequent interviews. For example, in the second interview the participants were more open to drinking the Arabic coffee, using their phones when they needed to answer a call, and showing me private photos and apps in their cellphones. This helped me to elicit richer information as participants felt more relaxed to express themselves, which is one of the values of the self-report research.

Additionally, self-report methods helped to yield information in situations where observational data are not usually available: in this study case most of the informal language learning done after college hours, in participants' own homes. Furthermore, using self-reports by asking people directly for information relating to a particular concept, or practice is significantly prevalent in asking about learning practice.

In addition, as mentioned earlier in Chapter Four, my position as interpretivist enhanced my conviction that reality is formed through the understanding and values of participants together with my aims which in turn address my ultimate subjectivity. Thus, both ontological and epistemological perceptions of the interpretivist paradigm are 'the understanding or meaning of phenomena shaped through participants and their views. They speak from meaning shaped by social interactions with others and form their own histories'.

In the data analysis stage I also faced the difficulty of organizing the themes which emerged from the interview as I needed to choose the most relevant and significant ones in order to devise my core study questions. In fact, observing how the students learnt from the informal language learning and the documents they offered during the interview sessions them was very interesting and helpful.

My findings generally align with my expectations. These, in turn, rested on my personal experiences as an EFL learner, a current EFL teacher, and my extensive interaction with EFL learners. However, there were a few surprises. For example, I had not foreseen such a great reliance on informal language learning by the learners and their obvious enthusiasm to learn the language and the consequential use of several language learning application and activities.

While this phase of enquiries has come to an end, my research journey into informal language learning will continue to move forward. It is my fervent hope that this thesis will also help to encourage other researchers, particularly in Saudi Arabia, to further investigate informal language learning.

In concluding this thesis, I feel personally and professionally empowered as I became much better informed about students' views and experiences of informal language learning: something I was unaware of at the outset, and am confident that present study advances knowledge in this field.

Appendix 1: Initial Interview

Initial Interview:

1. Do you use English outside the classroom?
2. When and where do you practice English outside the classroom?
3. Why do you use English outside the classroom?
4. What activities do you usually do in English outside the classroom?
5. What programs, movies, songs, apps do you usually use in English and why?
6. With whom do you practice English outside the classroom?

Appendix 2: Information Sheet

Title of Research Project:

Informal Language Learning of Female Saudi Students in Alkafji College

Dear students,

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before giving your consent to participate please read the information below and do not hesitate to ask any questions. The project is part of my thesis for my EDD degree at the University of Exeter. The present study aims to investigate the informal language learning of Saudi female students in higher education. It also aims to identify the reasons behind the use of informal methods when using a second language. The study will involve EFL students from Alkafji College. I would like you to take part in this research by having a face to face interview. The semi-structured interview will take around one hour and will be conducted three times. All the interviews will be conducted in a quiet area and will take place at a time and venue convenient to you. I am planning to conduct interviews with a number of students and would like you to agree to an interview if possible. In addition, all of the interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. If you wish, a copy of the transcribed interview can be provided for reading, commenting and amending.

If you agree to take part, your name will not be recorded, and the information will not be disclosed to other parties. Your responses to the questions will be used for the purposes of this project only. You can be assured that if you take part in the project you will remain anonymous. The collected data will be saved and stored in a document in a password-protected computer, and I will be the only one dealing with the data. I will retain the data for 5 years, and then it will be destroyed. I might use the data for different projects when needed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. If you decide to participate, I will provide you with a consent form.

I confirm that I have read and understood the content of this information sheet.

Signature:.....

Date:/.../.....

Thank you very much for taking part in this study.

XXXX

Ed.D. researcher

University of Exeter

Appendix 3: Consent Form



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Title of Research Project:

Informal Language Learning of Female Saudi Students in Alkhafji College

CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for my students to participate in this research project and if they do choose to participate, they may at any stage withdraw their participation and may also request that the data be destroyed;

they have the right to withhold permission for the publication of any information about them;

any information which they give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations;

if applicable, the information that they give may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymized form;

all information they give will be treated as confidential;

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve their anonymity

Informed consent:

If you have read and understood the information above, print and sign your name below.

Name of Teacher (Please print) Name of college

Teacher Signature Grade Level/Subject

Date

Further information and contact details: If you have concerns about the study please contact:

Researcher:

Email:

* when research takes place in a school, the right to withdraw from the research does NOT usually mean that pupils or students may withdraw from lessons in which the research takes place

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorized third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymized form.

Appendix 4: Student Interview

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself (name, age, education, family, activities or hobbies, travel, favourite TV shows, books, newspapers, magazines, websites, Apps, etc.?)
2. How and why did you choose your study field?
3. How accessible is English to you in Saudi Arabia?
4. Do you have any friends that you use English to communicate with?
5. Do you use English to speak with your friends, classmates or family members?
6. When and where do you use English in your everyday life and why?
7. Do you use a lot of media (Internet, TV, radio)? For what purposes? How accessible/easy is it for you? Do you use any for pleasure, school or other reasons? In what language?
8. What benefits do you feel you gain from using these technologies in English?
9. What motivated you to learn English outside class? Do you intend to do that in order to learn or for another reason? Please say what the reasons are.
 - a) How do you learn English outside the classroom?
 - b) With whom?
 - c) When?
 - d) What tips are recommended to you by your teacher?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

For the second, third and fourth time of the interview I will add

1. What is the activity(s) that you have use English in, outside the classroom?: (you can choose from the following or add your special activity) watching movies, watching news, reading for pleasure, reading newspaper, talking with friend outside class room, using mobile Apps (please provide the name of the app that you use for interaction), Listening to music, playing a video games,
2. Have you used English to speak with others? who and how?
Talking with friend outside classroom, talking with classmate outside the classroom, talking with family members, talking with native speakers...etc.
Via: internet, face to face, apps...etc.

3. what do you do in order to learn English? (for example talk with native English speakers, practice some word pronunciation of English, learned new words and try to use them in different places, watch English language TV shows, movies, songs in order to improve my English, find patterns in English, write the new words and its meaning, any other activity.

Appendix 5: Certificate of Ethical Approval #1



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: Informal Language Learning of Female Saudi Students in Alkhafji College

Researcher(s) name: Abeer Hamed Aldheferi


Supervisor(s): Dr Hania Salter-Dvorak Dr Susan Riley

This project has been approved for the period

From: 01/05/2018

To: 22/06/2018

Ethics Committee approval reference: D/17/18/42

Signature:  Date: 26/4/2018
(Professor Dongbo Zhang, Graduate School of Education Ethics Officer)



Appendix 6: Certificate of Ethical Approval #2



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: Informal Language Learning of Female Saudi Students in Alkhafji College

Researcher(s) name: Abeer Hamed Aldheferi

Supervisor(s): Hania Salter-Dvorak
Susan Riley

This project has been approved for the period

From: 28/03/2019

To: 20/09/2019

Ethics Committee approval reference: D1819-039

Signature:  Date: 28/03/2019
(Professor Dongbo Zhang, Graduate School of Education Ethics Officer)

Appendix 7: Example Extract from Interview

- Abeer: hello Hana, how are you?
- *Am fine, thanks, how are you?*
- Abeer: Fine, thanks. Okay. We have talked before, about the informal learning, which is the same topic we are talking about today. But first can you introduce yourself? Your name, and your hopes?
- *My name is Hana. I am twenty years old. I like novels and poetry*
- Abeer: Do you like to read?
- *Yes. Naturally on this course we read. That is why I love novels now. We also watch movies - scary movies - another hobby. Yes. That is it.*
- Abeer: So do you read out of class?
- *Actually I hate reading. But when I start reading novels on this course, they forced me to read.*
- Abeer: Do you read anything else or only the novels here in the college?
- *I only started to read when I started studying on this course. I mean novels on curriculum that I have here - not in class.*
- Abeer: So only in the university, but you don't like reading, in general?
- *I hate traditional reading. I like to read online... because it is easier to translate using the same device. More enjoyable for me; shorter and easier to read.*
- Abeer: So it is not your hobby?
- *No.*
- Abeer: What is your hobby? Only watching movies..?
- *Too many things, but not.... Drawing is the most important thing for me. I do like to do that, but not reading. But I can read. It's okay, but it's not my thing to do in my free time.*
- Abeer: What is the thing you do most in your free time?
- *Watch movies.*
- Abeer: Why did you choose to major in English?
- *I love English. Since I was in elementary school I been interested in English.*
- Abeer: So you decided to major in English?
- *I decided that I wanted to study English in elementary school.*
- Abeer: Okay. But did you want to be an English teacher or just study English?
- *No, not an English teacher... anything. I hate teaching!*
- Abeer: When did you feel you loved English and start to learn?
- *Actually I took a course to help me with letters I started in the elementary School - fifth grade. In my generation we started to study English in sixth grade, but I learned it before.*
- Abeer: Why did you take this course?

- *I really love it. Only the letters... I wasn't really good. Only the letters... these things.*
- Abeer: Who taught you them?
- *Me. Myself. I went to place called the Library or something like that.*
- Abeer: Do you learn with someone?
- *Yes, I went with my friends and we started to learn letters only... and started words after that...*
- Abeer: And then you started to take the course you mentioned?
- *Yes. I forget the name of that place, but it was only for the letters that I wanted to go.*
- Abeer: So it is not yourself, I mean you didn't buy a book and read it, and then you learned letters or you listen for letters in tv or something like that, you went to a special institute to learn?
- *I asked for that, and yes, they gave me letters, and I learned them before I went to the sixth grade. Before they gave me...*
- Abeer: You told your family "I love English. I want to learn"?
- *Yes. Then in elementary school I began to improve.*
- Abeer: But from childhood, you just found yourself liking English?
- *Yes.*
- Abeer: So what did you do in order to improve yourself?
- *At that time, nothing.*
- Abeer: Okay. Why do you like to listen? Do you see any English shows or listen to English songs?
- *I just love English.*
- Yeah. But what encourages you to love English?
- *Elementary school.*
- Abeer: Yes, I know. But you said you loved it and you started to learn letters, and you went to special institutes for learning...?
- *Yes, in primary. I don't know. I wanted to learn it. I really like it. It's something inside me.*
- Abeer: Okay. During this time, did you see any kid's TV show or songs in English?
- *No.*
- Abeer: Okay. Does anyone from your family help you?
- *No, never.*
- Abeer: Okay, so you've just loved English since childhood, but you did not learn it until later on?

- *Yes. Whenever someone spoke English in front of me, I wanted to speak English at that time. I wanted to speak English because I wanted to be like him or like her. I wanted to speak English fluently. And then I kept going in future.*
- *Abeer: And then after that, after you learned the letters, you started your primary school and then you started elementary school. At which level did you start to use informal language learning and study?*
- *In the last year of high school when I decided to major in English.*
- *Abeer: So what did you do? What did you start with? Was listening to music the first thing you did, or did you watch movies or anything?*
- *The most important thing I used to do this was English songs. I want to learn. I want to know what they are talking about; what the song is about.*
- *Abeer: Okay. How do you understand the words? Is it sometimes difficult?*
- *Yes and a bit confusing...I wanted to learn. I wanted to know what they are talking about; what the song is about. So I started to type the name of the song and then lyrics. Then I started to write these things to remember it. But I didn't keep doing that so much because I hate writing. It's boring...kinda boring...*
- *Abeer: You'd write out the lyrics?*
- *Yes, and then translate them to understand them. If I kept doing this for a long time, I thought I'd improve.*
- *Abeer: You mean writing the translation?*
- *Yes.*
- *Abeer: So when you write it and translate it you understand it. But when you write it do you hear the music one more time? Do you repeat it, or do you do anything like that?*
- *Yes, so I can sing the song.*
- *Abeer: So do you slow it down and repeat it again and again?*
- *No, just repeat it again and again...*
- *Abeer: Okay. To understand what they are saying by using your strategies...?*
- *Yes. As I google the songs, I read the lyrics and translate the new words, I just keep writing in order to follow them.*
- *Abeer: Yeah. I know. But sometimes with lyrics, they say them very fast, so you repeat it?*
- *I just stop.*
- *Abeer: Yeah. sorry. You said you used this technique.*
- *Yes, I stop and see how they are saying that.*
- *Abeer: Yeah. And does this help you to improve your English?*
- *Yes. It helps me to remember a whole song. It is not only one song or two songs - I listen to a lot.*

- Abeer: What do you feel like you get from this? Vocabulary? Pronunciation? Syntax? Grammar?
- *Pronunciation and vocabulary. Also maybe speaking. Yes, all the skills because I write, I listen, I sing it. And when I am listening, I catch the words. Then when you hear anybody like speaking in the future you just catch the words.*
- Abeer: Okay, good.
- *Yes and then, in the meanwhile, I also I started to watch interviews with the celebrities whose songs I liked.*
- Abeer: Okay, and are the interviews in English?
- Yes.
- Abeer: Are they translated?
- *No, not translated.*
- Abeer: You don't use subtitles? At the beginning?
- *(I think somebody knocked at the door ...) In the beginning I wasn't able to understand but it is okay now, because I've got a lot of vocabulary from the songs.*
- Abeer: So you started without subtitles?
- Yes, there's no translation for American interviews.
- Abeer: Really?
- *Yes. Sometimes [for] some of the videos. But for me... I watched too many interviews without subtitles.*
- Abeer: And how did you understand them?
- *Body language maybe. And as I said, my vocabulary, anything made me understand. But this comes after listening to songs...*
- Abeer: Yeah...Okay so you already got some information before. That is why when you start to see the interviews you understand?
- *Also I always focus on interview words so I can help myself to understand the most important things by acquiring the meaning of the words.*
- Abeer: Just from the interviews?
- *Yeah, from anything...*
- Abeer: You watched them on YouTube?
- *Yeah, on YouTube.*
- Abeer: So how do you focus on the words?
- *Well, I repeat them.*
- Abeer: And when you write the new vocab or what are you doing in new vocabulary, do you learn them?
- *Only for the songs. I remember that I used to take a book that has a word in English and any word that I am interested to learn I wrote it [but] I didn't keep doing this for a long time.*

- Abeer: So what about interviews?
- *I remember from listening to it again and again, and then I hear the same word in another interview.*
- Abeer: Okay, and then you remember it?
- Yes.
- Abeer: And do you translate it or anything?
- *Yes. I translate everything but sometimes I understand from context.*
- Abeer: So do you use the new words?
- *Actually I didn't speak a lot. I didn't know how to speak. I listened. Maybe listening is the only thing that helped me. Listen. Listen. Listen. And then try to translate it and sing it. And then you acquire the language.*
- What about the notebook you have? It is just a notebook you wrote new words in?
- Yes.
- Abeer: You said there is a word in it?
- Yes.
- Abeer: And then, you choose from these words?
- *Yes; anything I liked.*
- Abeer: Okay. You just do that for yourself to learn English?
- *Yes. I began to be better, I think. I noticed that I am actually good at English.*
- Abeer: Do you watch movies?
- *Yes, of course!*
- Abeer: Okay. With subtitles or without?
- *Without. Okay...it depends. But I prefer without.*
- Abeer: But when you first started watching the movies, you watched with the subtitles or without?
- *Maybe with...*
- Okay...
- *All I cared about was listening and understanding what they were talking about - not the translation. I wanted to know how they speak.*
- Abeer: And then?
- *I now watch movies on the internet without translation.*
- Yeah...
- *I could listen, I have begun to get better, I think. I have noticed that I am actually good at English since I started to watch English movies...I love watching action movies more than any others. I also watch thriller movies with some mysteries. I don't know why, but these types of movies attract me a lot.*
- Abeer: Okay, that's very good. And do you have any websites you use a lot in English?

- *Yes. Twitter. In the beginning, it was Facebook. But I am not using Facebook anymore... now I use Twitter.*
- Abeer: Okay. Do you tweet in English, or read in English, or do both?
- *Both.*
- Abeer: Are all your tweets in English or do you casually tweet in Arabic?
- *Sometimes in Arabic, but 90% of the time I tweet in English because my followers are American...*
- Abeer: Okay. And you follow English people. Why are your followers English and American?
- *Because I tweet in English.*
- Abeer: Yeah, okay. And what about your colleagues; your friends? Do they follow you?
- *Yeah. Of course they follow me.*
- Abeer: And they understand?
- *Not all of them. If they are not English majors, for instance. Only those who study with me English...*
- Abeer: Okay, do they reply to you?
- *Yes, sometimes...*
- Abeer: Americans or your friends?
- *Unusual for Americans...sometimes.*
- Abeer: So you get some replies in English as well?
- *Yes. When I met a fan of a musical I was also a fan of, I posted things about him and they used to ask me, who is this, what is this (12:42) from what movie, what is this movie...?*
- Abeer: And do you communicate?
- *Yes, I used to have a lot of friends. Now I can't have because I'm very busy...*
- Abeer: Do you think that helped you?
- *Yes. It helped me a lot speaking with them. I have friends that speak native English.*
- Abeer: Where do you speak with them?
- *On Twitter.*
- Abeer: Only Twitter?
- *In the past on Facebook...*
- Abeer: And you are chatting in English?
- *Yes.*
- Abeer: That's good. And what did that help you with? Did you gain vocabulary instruction or grammar, etc.?
- *Grammar. From copying what they are saying.*
- Abeer: And do you think that is helpful?

- *Yes. Listening and communication. Listening is more helpful. If I could communicate with them, I would be better in speaking.*
- Abeer: But you used to communicate with them?
- *In writing.*
- Abeer: Did this maybe help you to write in the correct way?
- *But writing is the last thing I actually learned actually. I am very slow in learning to write.*
- Abeer: Why?
- *I don't know. Speaking is the first thing I learned quickly and last is writing. The first thing I required is speaking. Then understanding and listening. Yes, these were the first maybe. The next thing is reading; then writing.*
- Abeer: Okay. Maybe because you read the lyrics?
- *I do listen a lot...*
- Abeer: But writing: you started to write to your native friend? You are chatting with them?
- *Yes. I meant writing in a proper professional way is the last thing.*
- Abeer: Okay. Do you write anything?
- *No. Do you mean poetry or...?*
- Abeer: Yeah, or short stories, or anything...
- *No.*
- Abeer: Okay, what applications do you use most?
- *Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat.*
- Abeer: You said you use Twitter in English. Do you also use YouTube and Snapchat in English?
- *Yes.*
- Abeer: Do you use anything like TED talks?
- *What?*
- Abeer: TED talks. Do you know TED? It is like YouTube for video. You don't use it?
- *No.*
- Abeer: Okay. So when you listen to music or watch movies, is your goal to learn English or to have fun?
- *No. Because I love that culture, I loved them. I am interested in everything.*
- Abeer: You love the lifestyle?
- *But I also **want to learn** English at the same time.*
- Abeer: But you love the lifestyle. That is why you want to learn...?
- *Yes.*
- Abeer: Do you prefer the American or the British lifestyle?
- *American.*

- Abeer: You look American. Yeah... [laughs]
- *Yeah. [laughs] And I wanted to learn English so bad...*
- Abeer: So to learn English you only have this goal?
- Yes.
- Abeer: You don't do it just for fun. You have a goal...?
- *The way I love the American culture helped me to reach my goal. That is how I want to live.*
- Abeer: Aha. Okay. Do you have anyone you communicate with in English here? A friend or family member?
- *No, no one.*
- Abeer: You can't communicate with anybody in English here. So how do you improve your speaking skills?
- *At school, college is the only way to improve my speaking. Do you mean in classes?*
- Abeer: No, outside.
- *No. No one speaks English at home...*
- Abeer: And your friends? You don't talk with them in English? You don't chat in English at all? Even though you are all in English majors...?
- *We don't.*
- Abeer: If you have a project or something, you don't discuss it in English?
- *Sometimes. But outside the class, if we have a project, we use our own language: Arabic.*
- Abeer: You don't use any apps like language exchanging and other apps for live speaking, for example?
- *My friend told me about an app where you can choose the country such as Canada, Australia, UK - where you speak with people from this country and then you have a list of people that want to chat. You send the voice message and then they reply to the voice message you can chat and speak...*
- Abeer: That is a good way...
- *Yeah.*
- *I didn't know about it. I would have used it if I'd known...*
- Abeer: It's not that popular, I think...
- *Yeah, I don't think it's popular here...*
- Abeer: Yes. Where do you use English in everyday life?
- *On social media.*
- Abeer: Only social media?
- Yes.
- Abeer: What other things do you like to do in English? Do you watch any anime, for example, in English?

- *I don't really like anime. I did watch one anime.*
- Abeer: I didn't like it either. [laughs] So you do that for pleasure and for learning English. What benefit do you feel you gain from technology such as social media?
- *The language. English.*
- Abeer: Why?
- *Because of the sources. I think the first source of English is the internet - then school...*
- Abeer: So you feel you learn English mainly from technology?
- *Yes. By myself. I taught myself because I wanted to...*
- Abeer: What about school? Was just more support? Not the main source?
- *In elementary school and high school it was the main thing.*
- Abeer: But do you think the school learning of English was helpful?
- *In college it is good, but in elementary school and high school I don't think so...*
- Abeer: You don't think so?
- *Yes. It is just basics, I think. Not very good - like, to become really good in English. They didn't actually improve my English.*
- Abeer: Aha! So you improved your English yourself?
- *Yes.*
- Abeer: Okay. So you decided to study English from outside because in school was not enough for you?
- *From the college.*
- Abeer: Okay. Do you feel like you would like to have native speaker friend?
- *Yes.*
- Abeer: Would you have liked your teachers to recommend some websites or tips to help you learn English?
- *Yes, actually we have homework like that...*
- Abeer: What is that?
- *Miss Manal told us to search about native speaker on the internet. I can chat or video or comment to that native speaker and ask about the way they teach and the communicative language speaking. Then I will need to do an interview with that person.*
- Abeer: So you are looking for teachers?
- *Teachers only, yes. Today I didn't find a teacher. I found a teacher who teaches online teaching, so he wasn't [suitable], so I'm still searching for teachers.*
- Abeer: She wants you to search for a teacher to teach you about communicative language teaching?
- *I know, yeah. But I am wondering how somebody could use this way of teaching because sometimes they don't use one skill. I mean, one way of teaching, one*

approach; they use many approaches depending on the subject or material, but you, if you know, for example...

- *Abeer: Okay, I will. So rather than this, do any of your teachers advise you to use informal learning?*
- *Miss Rania told us to use..., like to watch movies without subtitles and she said it would improve herself. Hmm... and somebody told us to listen to CNN and use Play-station or my phone.*
- *Abeer: Okay. What video games do you have? I mean, online video games?*
- *I have one called Wolves.... Online is a good way to practice English...Online games are now available as apps on mobile phones, and it has become easy to access games such as 'PUBG' and 'Fortnight', where you can play and talk with people from around the world and from different language backgrounds as we all talk in English.... I am personally addicted to playing this game now and one of my friends plays video games all day...*
- *Abeer: Really?*
- *On my mobile phone.*
- *Abeer: Right now?*
- *Yes, but my friend plays on Play-station. She plays video games all day.*
- *Where is she from?*
- *Here in Saudi Arabia.*
- *Abeer: No, I mean outside...*
- *I don't play all the time. I meant my friend just plays all the time.*
- *Abeer: Okay. Do you play online?*
- *Not all the time...Sometimes Wolves but it is a good way to improve your English and PUBG.*
- *Abeer: Yes. Do you speak English with people?*
- *Yes. Speaking and writing. In Wolves I don't speak.*
- *Abeer: You don't speak?*
- *We play all the time...*
- *Abeer: But when you play, I mean?*
- *I don't. I write only.*
- *Abeer: Why?*
- *I don't know...*
- *Abeer: Because they do speak...?*
- *Actually I don't have to play Play-station. It is not my preferred decision. When I'm bored I play just Wolves online just to hear them. I can hear them, but I don't want to speak sometimes...*
- *Abeer: Why?*
- *I don't know. I never thought about it. I just play it.*

- Abeer: Okay, but you don't participate?
- No.
- Abeer: But you feel it is helpful?
- Yes, of course.
- Abeer: Why? Do you gain anything?
- *I didn't play it for to acquire knowledge. I just play for entertainment...*
- Abeer: Okay.
- *I hadn't thought of that...*
- Abeer: Yeah, I know. I mean, sometimes you acquire without meaning to...
- Yes. *Speaking with someone...*
- Abeer: Do you acquire anything from that?
- *I can't give you an answer because I don't really remember...*
- Abeer: You can't remember...?
- *I don't usually play Play-station - just on my phone.*
- Abeer: Okay. But do you feel it is helpful?
- *I could ask someone who plays it if you would like to interview them?*
- Abeer: No, thank you. So do you play on your phone? Online games?
- Yes.
- Abeer: What?
- *PUBG.*
- Abeer: Aha. Ok. My brother is also addicted to this game. However, his English is really good.
- *Also I usually play 'Fortnights' It is good because I speak a lot with my team.... so we have to speak English all the time. That is very helpful. I guess that is what my friend usually says...*
- Abeer: Is she an English major?
- Yes.
- Abeer: What is her name?
- *Shimaa.*
- Abeer: I don't have her on my list...Okay, so what about PUBG?
- *We could have only one long interview about this...[laughs]*
- Abeer: Okay, so you play this game a lot?
- Yes. *[laughs]*
- Abeer: So we'll keep this for next time...
- Okay.
- Abeer: So, do any of your family love English too?
- *No. They don't love it. Now I am teaching them. I'm the eldest in the house.*
- Abeer: Oh, really?
- *Yes, I am teaching my sister now. She is interested in English.*

- Abeer: How old is she?
- *She is in elementary school.*
- Abeer: Do you have other brothers or sisters?
- *Yes. My brother - but he doesn't love English. I tried different ways to improve his English, but he does not. But he plays Play-station all the time...*
- Abeer: Online?
- *Online games.*
- Abeer: And does he like speaking as well, or like you, just listening?
- *He does communicate with American with his other friends, and he is interested.*
- Abeer: So he speaks English?
- *Yes. But not learning. He just learned in his own way from speaking with others...*
- Abeer: Oh, interesting. But what about your sister? Your younger sister? She is in elementary school and you teach her. Does she also try to learn English from songs and stuff?
- *Yes. But I also teach her. I am trying. They told her to do a presentation in English, so she came to me and practiced in front of me.*
- Abeer: Do you try to speak with her English to improve her?
- *No. She speaks. She presents in front of me.*
- Abeer: No, I mean everyday - to improve her English?
- *She doesn't know how to speak.*
- Abeer: But you can improve her English?
- *She understands everything but the speaking is so bad...but she understands.*
- Abeer: Hmm. Maybe if you tried to communicate with her maybe she would do better
- *Yes.*
- Abeer: But you told me your mother encourages you to learn?
- *Yes.*
- Abeer: Your mother - she doesn't know English, but she just tries to encourage you to learn English. It's good that you have somebody to encourage you...
- *Yes.*
- Abeer: So do you want to learn any other language?
- *Yeah, Spanish.*
- Abeer: Yeah, you told me about Spanish in our initial interview.
- *And I want to learn sign language*
- Abeer: Sign language? I think it's hard...
- *Yes, but it is okay.*
- Abeer: Spanish would be easier, I think. And it is good. I think it is a little bit similar to English and Arabic so it's easier.

- *I will think about that after I graduate, but now I am really busy. I want to try some applications. I don't know where I can find Spanish people.*
- Abeer: Try the application that your colleague uses. She told me about it - I will give you its name. I might use it in future in order to learn Spanish myself. I have tried some to learn German as I lived there. They don't use English, so you have to learn German and you find yourself forced to speak...
- *But I couldn't because I don't learn. I don't communicate with people so how can I learn if don't have time? If I have time I would use applications or staff to learn but I don't have time to learn - that is the problem. I just focus on English for now.*
- Abeer: Okay. So do you spend a lot of time on the internet?
- Yes.
- Abeer: How long? For example, how many hours per day?
- *I don't really count it. I watch YouTube videos, browsing the internet - anything.*
- Abeer: Three to five hours a day?
- *Maybe...*
- Abeer: And what about chatting and Twitter?
- *Twitter all the time - all day...*
- Abeer: What do you watch on YouTube?
- *I like reality programs, make up tutorials, fashion.*
- Abeer: Do you think it is helpful?
- *Yes, YouTube is so helpful because you feel like you are living with them. They make videos for like half an hour and all in English by native people.*
- Abeer: About what?
- *Anything. The kind that you like to watch and, of course, you are going to learn because you watch and you live the situation now - the culture; everything.*
- Abeer: But do you watch because you want to learn or because you're interested?
- *Interested.*
- Abeer: That's good. Hana, can you show me anything you wrote in English on Twitter?
- Yes.
- Abeer: Thank you...
- *I could show you... Do you want to see the conversation that I had with the teacher?*
- Abeer: Anything you want to show me is okay. I'd just like to have a photo. I will keep it. I will delete the names. I just want to use the pictures.
- *You don't need to delete it because it is a normal conversation...*
- Abeer: I mean I am not going to delete it; I am going to use it without the names.

- *This teacher, the one I asked: he is the communicative language teacher and he told me that he doesn't. It's a very long conversation, if you want to read?*
- Abeer: He or she?
- *He.*
- Abeer: Where is he from?
- *He wrote south - north America*
- Abeer: But was this an assignment or homework?
- *Yes, but it doesn't work because he doesn't use the communicative language...*
- Abeer: Can you show me your tweets?
- *The tweets?*
- Abeer: Yeah...?
- *Next time when we meet I will bring some tweets for you. For example, this was about someone who drew something, and I liked it.*
- Abeer: I can't see it. The light's reflecting on the screen. It's okay...
- *Do you want other tweets?*
- Abeer: Yes. It is okay. You only use Twitter now? You don't use Facebook or anything like Instagram?
- *No, I only post pictures.*
- Abeer: With English comments?
- *Yes.*
- Abeer: And does anybody reply to you?
- *On Twitter?*
- Abeer: No, on Instagram?
- *No, I don't communicate on Instagram.*
- Abeer: You don't. Why?
- *Just for post Yes, I post more. Twitter. I love Twitter.*
- Abeer: So most of your posts are on Twitter and you have friend majoring here that replies to you?
- *My friends in English: they reply to me in English. They also use English on Twitter and write in English to everyone...*
- Abeer: Why don't you use Arabic? Why do you use English?
- *I want to improve myself and they have the ability to write...*
- Abeer: And do you feel like you express yourself better in English?
- *Yes. I don't know. I think I could express myself, as you said, better in English more than Arabic, and also this is the only way to improve myself...*
- Abeer: Do you think you can speak aloud and do presentations in English in front of people or do you feel shy?
- *I did a lot of presentations.*
- *In English?*

- Yes.
- Abeer: You don't feel like you are going to lose your confidence if you say anything?
- *Even if I do, it doesn't show. I don't know why. I could manage. I could, but inside me...*
- Abeer: So you don't feel shy or unable to express yourself?
- *Sometimes when you are speaking in front of people in English it gives you more confidence so you can speak aloud. But sometimes when you don't use English at all and then you have a presentation you feel shy. That is why I feel a little bit nervous - a little bit; not very nervous.*
- Abeer: But you feel if you have more friends in English you are going to be better because you are used to speaking...
- *No, we don't speak.*
- Abeer: Yeah, I know but, I mean, if you have someone to speak English to do you feel you will be more confident to speak aloud?
- *Yes, but I actually don't speak.*
- Abeer: Yeah, because you're a little bit nervous or shy?
- *Yes. Because I only listen.*
- Abeer: You didn't practice it before?
- *I only practice it sometimes, but not speaking through a whole conversation is different...*
- Abeer: But you have speaking class, don't you?
- *We do.*
- Abeer: With whom?
- *Actually in the third level with Miss Rania. She gave the class last semester. Actually speech class was full of presentations and debating.*
- Abeer: With Miss Manal?
- *Yes. That was one of the most helpful classes we had. It's our basis in communication.*
- Abeer: And did you think it was good?
- *It was very good.*
- Abeer: And you were debating only?
- *We debated in English. Presentations too. Many things. And acting role play...*
- Abeer: You act as well?
- *Yes, I act.*
- Abeer: And you feel this helps you to improve yourself? But do you have role to play out of the class?
- *Like what?*
- Abeer: Like the acting show which took place last year: the play

- *No, I didn't participate.*
- Abeer: I mean, have you participated in any play without marks?
- *No, I didn't because I don't know. I didn't ask...I think this would be helpful as well because you practice English yourself.*
- Abeer: Okay, Hana. Do you have anything else you want to tell me about it? Do you use anything else to learn that you have not told me about?
- *No I don't think so...*
- Abeer: Thank you, Hana. Next time we meet I hope we have more time together and talk about your activities in detail. I would like you to focus on the types of informal language activities you used to do more. Think about them; when you did them; the way you used them. Just focus on how you did them, and why. These steps would be very helpful to me. And will you prepare the tweets to share with me. Thanks again and hope to see you soon.

Appendix 8: A list of documents (with some samples):

The data collected contains:

Privates chats on different application

Different types of Screen shots

Books covers

Movies and series name

Applications screen shots.

6:59



Tweet

Its killing me that I have a soul born to fly
but im still stuck in this miserable human
body

28/02/2018, 11:18 PM

||| View Tweet activity

1 Retweet 1 Like



[Redacted] · 28/02/2018

Replying to [Redacted]
Ah dear God!



Tweet your reply





[Redacted Name]
@simanon1



What I love about you is how you are so passionate about your interests

Yesterday 9:03 PM ✓

Your passion about literature gonna make your studying way too easy for you 👍👍

Yesterday 9:07 PM ✓

I believe you are going to be one of the smartest student in the department

Students*

Yesterday 9:09 PM ✓



!! Your words 😭💕 I cannot even know what to say pal

Yesterday 9:33 PM



💕💕💕💕😭😭😭



Start a message



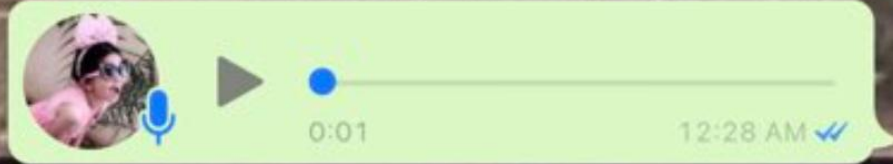
12:16 AM

جست ذس ون

12:16 AM

HAPPY BIRTHDAY officiallyyyyyy !!!

12:27 AM



1 UNREAD MESSAGE

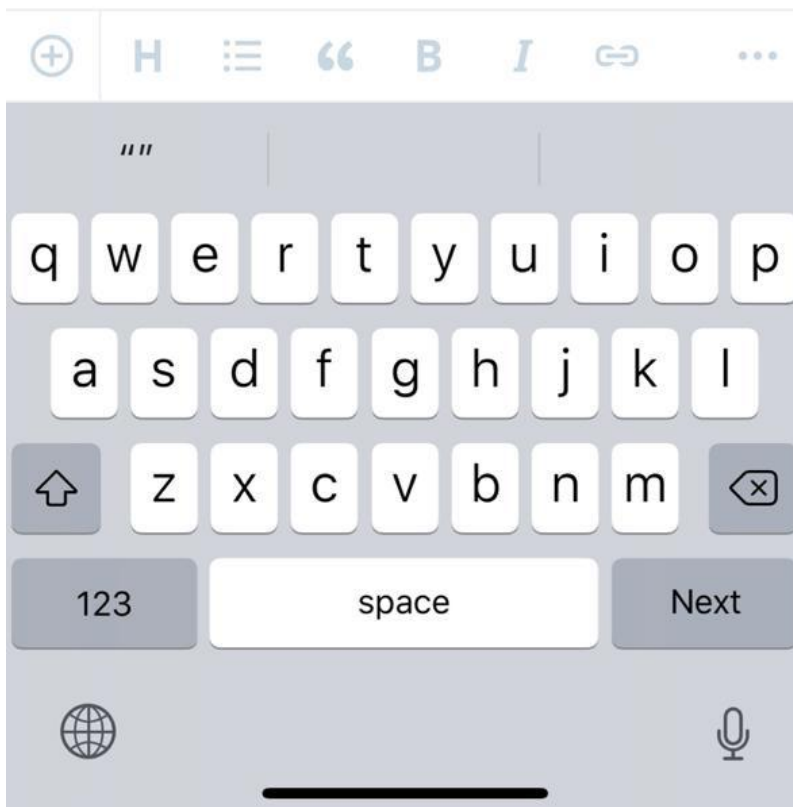
you already know that im not good with words and explaining my feelings but im so so so lucky to have you in my life! سعیده ان عندي صديقه اجلس معاها واسب العالم بلي and feel so better! It was so amazing blessed 3 years with you and waiting for the rest

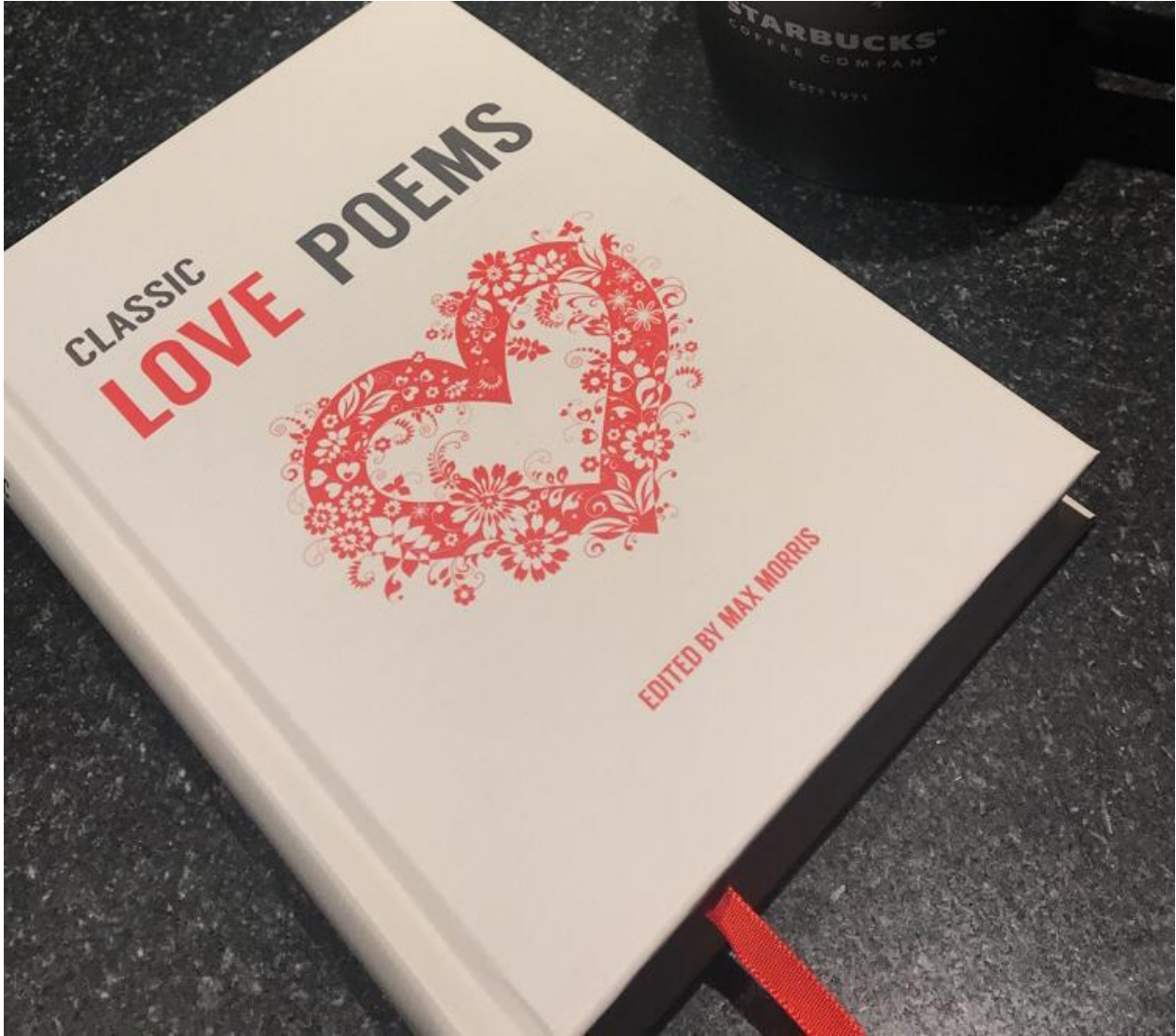
12:29 AM



Blue

I'm not anything anymore. I'm just a wave moving onwards and reaward in the same place.. if I am more than that I could be Tsunami breaks everything.. so I decided to be nothing. I'm a loser charmer strew glimmering over the gloom without tryna turn the lights on, that's why all my colors lost in the black.. so I decided to be blue to change my track.





I have 20 enough for coffee

I don't think I'm going either ways i think she's coming

12:38 PM

Neeveeer eennoouuggghhhh

12:38 PM

Neveeeeer neveeeeer

SHE IS COMINGGGGG

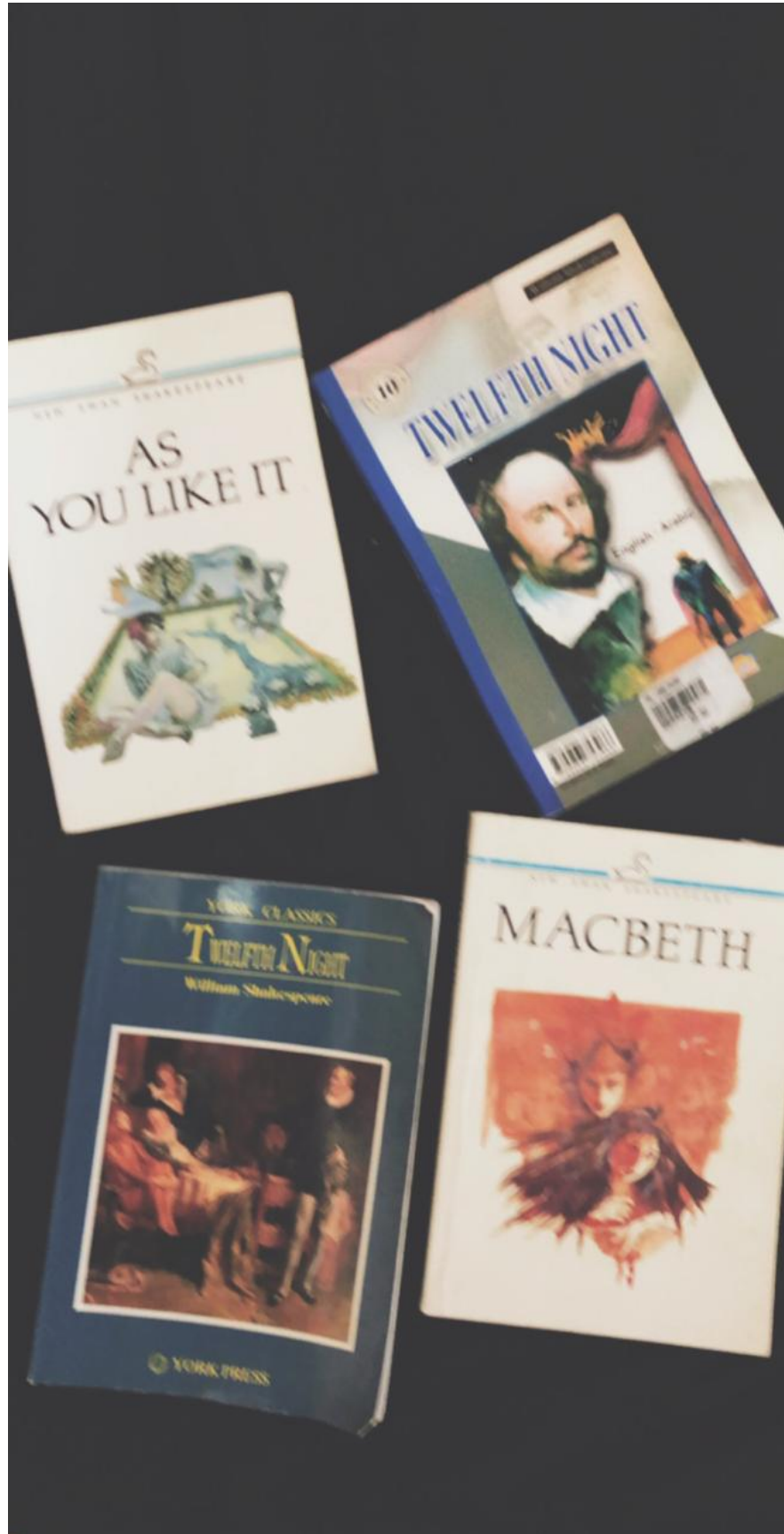
12:38 PM

SOOO WHHAATTT

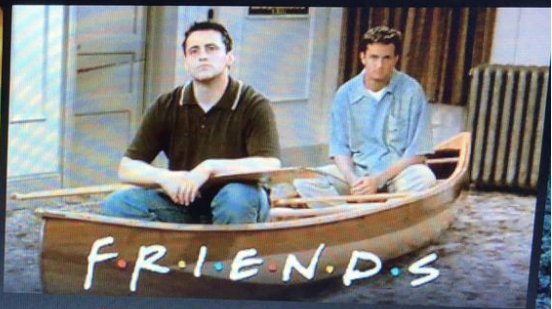
DONT LET IT CONTROL YOU

12:39 PM





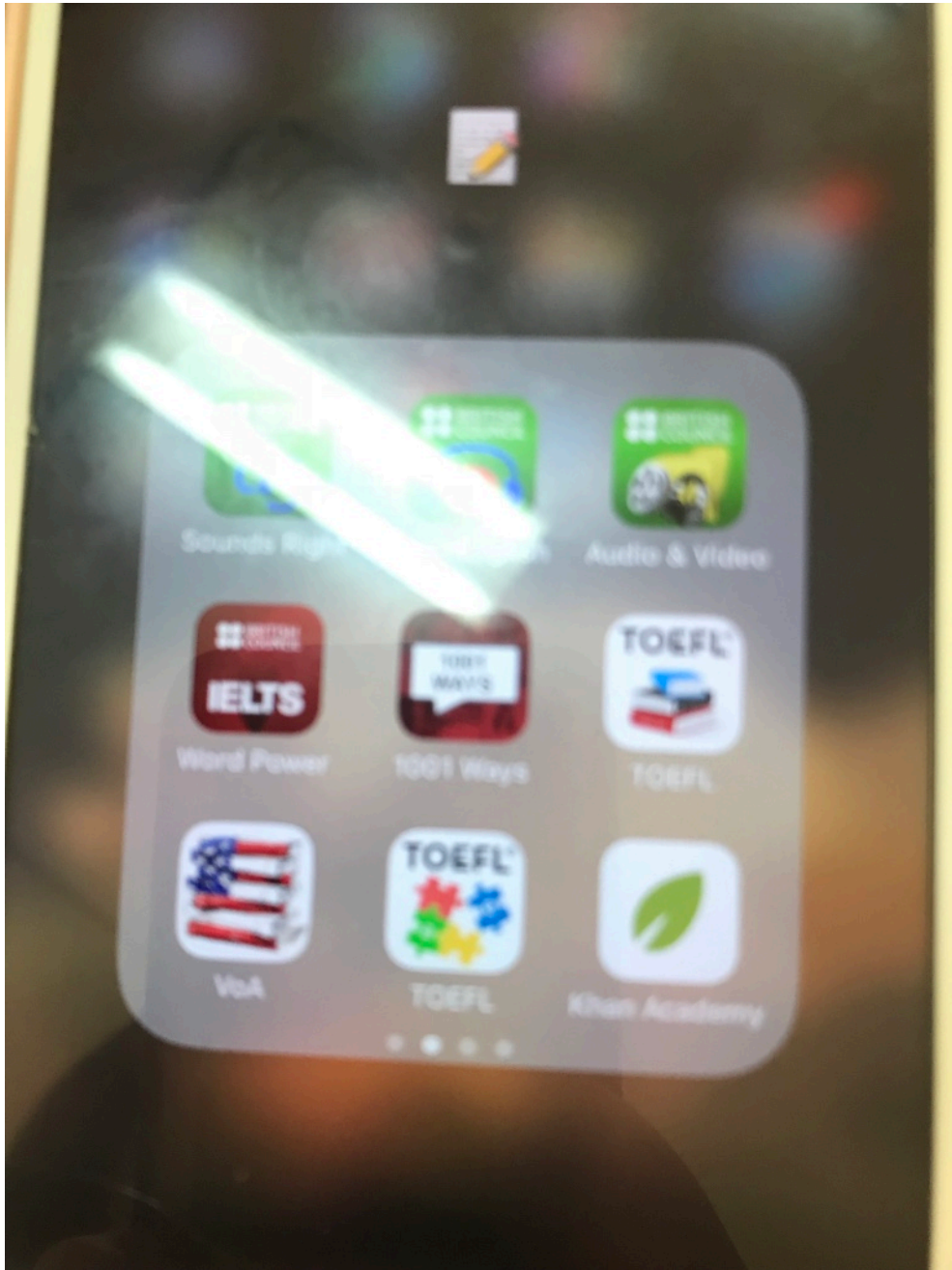
Continue Watching for Esraa

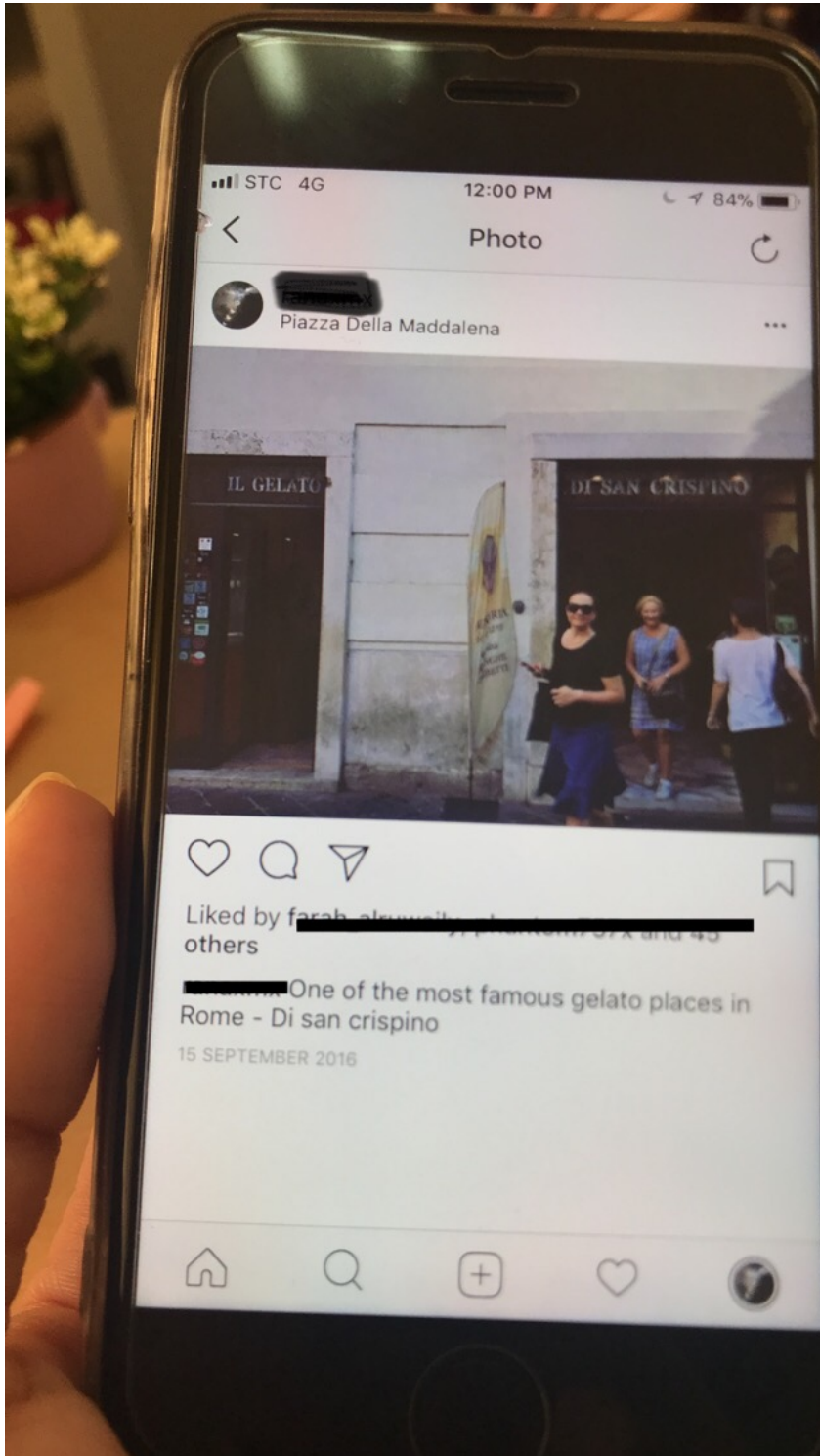


Trending Now









lay by your side lyrics



ALL

IMAGES

MAPS

NEWS

VIDEOS

SHO

Lay Me Down

Sam Smith

Yes I do, I believe

Copy

Look Up

Share...

Search

And it's hard, the days just seem so dark
The moon, and the stars, are nothing without you
Your touch, your skin, where do I begin?
No words can explain, the way i'm missing you
Deny this emptiness, this hole that i'm inside
These tears, they tell their own story

You told me not to cry when you were gone
But the feeling's overwhelming, it's much too strong
Can I lay by your side, next to you, you
And make sure you're alright
I'll take care of you,
And I don't want to be here if I can't be with you tonight

I'm reaching out to you
Can you hear my call
This hurt that I've been through
I'm missing...

▼ Show more

[Sam Smith – Lay Me Down Lyrics | Genius ...](#)<https://genius.com> > [Sam-smith-l...](#)

9:23

4G

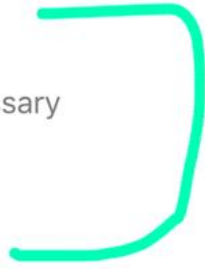
← Search or type URL



Recent Searches

VIEW ALL

- star
- sleeping is not necessary
- how to do not sleep
- اني ذكرتك بالزهراء مشتاقا
- lay by your side lyrics



What's Trending

- zero shah rukh khan box office
- kgf box office collection



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