HOST COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AND MASS MEDIA USE
AS A SAMPLE OF CHINESE ESL STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated Chinese ESL students’ use of host mass media and how such use enabled them to acquire host communication competence and acculturation from their perspective. It was grounded on Kim’s theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation and the uses and gratifications theory, and employed a phenomenography approach. Nine participants at a university in Ontario were involved in this study. Data obtained from media use logs, think-aloud protocols, and follow-up interviews provided a fairly far-reaching and detailed description of the participants’ uses, reasoning, and effects of using host mass media.

The analysis of data illustrated that these students used a variety of media as sources of information, language acquisition, culture learning, entertainment, and communication. Findings suggest that host mass media were the major influence on these students’ acquisition of host communication competence, perceptions of and acculturation to Canada. Their reliance on mass communication went into the later years of their acculturation process, and complemented their language and culture learning, which was somewhat limited through insufficient or reluctant participation in host interpersonal communication. Host communication competence was a primary factor that influenced their selection and use of host mass media, but it was not the only decisive factor relevant to their degree of acculturation. Individual characteristics, the social and cultural environment in Canada were also found to have significant impact on their acculturation process and outcomes. It is expected that the findings can assist colleges and universities in designing effective programs based on these students’ needs and characteristics, thus enabling them to achieve their academic and professional goals.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this study are to investigate Chinese ESL students’ use of the host mass media (media in a new cultural context); the intentions (purposes) they hold in mind when attending to certain media; and their perspectives of the influences of the host mass media on their acquisition of host (receiving society) communication competence and acculturation. I begin this introduction by telling the story of a former roommate, followed by a rationale for the present study and an outline of my research questions. Finally, I provide an overview of this dissertation.

The Story of a Roommate (or Me? Or Us?)

Niki, my former roommate from China, was a graduate student in science, and had been in Canada for almost a year. I had known her as a roommate in a university residence for eight months. In the first few weeks after my moving in, when she wanted to make a phone call in English, for example booking a seat, she would ask me to do it for her. She said she could hear her own voice trembling while on the phone in English. Later, I encouraged her to write down what she wanted to say, and I would proofread it for her.

After school, she spent most of her time on her course work. For a change, sometimes she would bring home some newspapers from school or the residence. Other times, she would put on her earphone, to listen to her MP3, watch on-line movies, or surf on the Internet.

I started our chat by asking what concerned her most at this stage of study. She said it was her English. Despite her English studies in China, she went through a rough
time before she felt comfortable with English. Not being confident in the use of language could make a small incident become a big concern. She found herself often frustrated when she had ideas and questions but hesitated to speak. She hesitated to speak because she was afraid she would be laughed at for having an accent and could not make herself understood.

I still remember when she told me that she heard some information about the “new policy on international students.” She worried that the “new policy” might affect her application for the Ph.D. program in the next year. So she decided to send an email to the coordinator of graduate studies to confirm if the information she heard was true. I proofread the text for her. A couple of days later, she came back from school with “not so good” news. The coordinator replied and invited her to his office for a talk. I told her this was a good opportunity because she could raise any questions or concerns about the situation. But Niki did not think this way. She told me she was not so sure how much she could understand in “face-to-face talk.” She preferred to respond by email. Anyway, we rehearsed her questions before the meeting. After the meeting, she told me: “It sounds like that information I heard is a rumour, but the coordinator also said some other things, like the budget, supervisor, funding from the government, and sponsor. I don’t know which is the most important. I didn’t get everything. I am not used to his speed and pronunciation.” I asked Niki: “Why didn’t you ask him to speak slowly?” She told me she did not want to leave the coordinator with a negative impression about her English language proficiency, because it might be “not good for my Ph.D. application in the future.”
On campus, besides classroom time, most of her lab mates were Chinese, and she used Chinese to make the most of her interpersonal communications. Off campus, she did not have any connections with local people. The opportunities to have a talk in English were limited to cashiers while doing grocery shopping every weekend. She said she knew that if she wanted to improve her spoken English, one of the best ways was to communicate with English speakers. As time went by, she did not make any Canadian friends. Most friends she made were Chinese. The only non-Chinese friend she had was from Cameroon. Most gatherings she attended were for and with other Chinese, because she was “not so sure what to wear, what to bring, and how to behave at a Canadian dinner party.”

However, little by little she felt that she became more acquainted with Canadian culture and acquired a better command of the English language. She said, in addition to her limited interpersonal communication with native English speakers, the use of newspapers, magazines, on-line movies, MP3 songs, and the Internet had helped her improve her English and had acquainted her with Canadian culture. The use of these host mass media helped her bypass the uncertainty and anxiety of face-to-face communication.

Acculturation to a new country is a complex and stressful process. It has been studied from different perspectives, such as social, cultural, linguistic, psychological, economic, educational, political, and environmental etc. (e.g., Selltiz & Cook, 1962). Taking a closer look at Niki’s experience, I found that as an international student in Canada, she viewed academic issues as the first priority, and expected high achievements, although her problems were not primarily academic. Based on my eight months of casual observations while we lived under one roof, I think Niki was only moderately
acculturated. Her English language ability was probably a more significant problem for her, because her inadequate language skills often had direct negative effects on her daily communications and activities.

Previous literature on immigrants and international students has shown unequivocally that capacity to communicate in the language of the host culture plays a crucial role in their successful acculturation to the host country (Fletcher & Stren, 1989; Hammer, Gudykunst & Wiseman, 1978; Mori, 2000; Searle & Ward, 1990; Sellitz, Christ, Havel & Cook, 1963; Tatar, 2005; Yeh & Inose, 2003). According to Richmond (1967), “language plays a most important part in this process. Just as in the case of the primary socialization of an infant, so in the case of immigrant acculturation….” (p. 138). Language is a major channel of information exchange, a primary vehicle for communication (Hamilton, Gibbons, Stroessner & Sherman, 1992), “a carrier of cultural meanings” (Lau, Lee & Chiu, 2004, p.77), and a means of facilitating ingroup cohesion (Giles & Coupland, 1991). Deficiency in the host language is likely to impede their academic, social and cultural adjustment (Feast, 2002; Keshishian, 2000; Zhang & Xu, 2007). Results from a survey study of 489 Asian-American students at the University of California suggest that host language competence is a strong predictor of acculturation to the mainstream culture (Kang, 2006).

Aside from language, Niki lacked general knowledge about the host culture (e.g., social, cultural, and behavioural norms and values) and interactive skills for dealing with some life events in the host cultural context. In a review related to psychological adjustment of sojourners, Church (1982) identified host cultural knowledge and learning as one of the main types of problems encountered by sojourners. Similarly, in a more
recent review on the factors that influence the adjustment of international students, Andrade (2006) found that underlying many of the problems experienced by international students was a lack of language proficiency and cultural knowledge. Furthermore, evidence suggested that some language problems “may actually be culturally based ways of seeing the world” (p. 143).

The third problem Niki encountered, in my point of view, was a lack of social contact with the host people and other groups. It appeared that she lived in a small isolated environment without much social support for her adjustment. It has been found that immigrants and international students who have more extensive and frequent interactions with host people and co-national people, and those who are more satisfied with these relationships, experience fewer problems in the acculturation process (e.g., Church, 1982; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).

Niki knew that if she wanted to continue her Ph.D. study in Canada, and to feel more confident in living in the new environment, she needed to improve her English language skills and to learn more about the host environment. She often found her limited, direct interpersonal encounters with local people to be stressful, and resorted to mass communication as an alternative. She tried to achieve her learning goals by using the host mass media. Niki’s experience was not unique. I could see myself, many of my friends, and our stories reflected in that experience.

**Rationale and Research Questions**

ESL students are viewed as assets both in terms of broadening the global and intercultural perspectives of domestic students and furthering research and application in all fields of study. However, ESL students face a host of unique challenges while
studying in Canada, a novel cultural milieu for most of them. Research suggests that it is through communication that one learns to adapt to a new cultural environment (Kim, 2001). The mass media of communication implicitly and explicitly convey some knowledge of the host country (Richmond, 1967). An individual may be able to develop more complete host communication competence by learning the communication codes and rules of the mainstream culture through participation in host mass communication processes (Kim, 2001; Stilling, 1997).

Although many scholars agree that there is a strong relationship between ESL students’ development of host communication competence and mass media use, most of the research has primarily focused on various interpersonal communication channels and their impact on the acquisition of communication competence. Only a limited number of studies have seriously tackled the relationship between ESL students’ development of host communication competence and the use of host mass media. Most existing studies are predominantly quantitative and cannot give us a detailed picture of a complex reality. There is a need for a body of qualitative work that would bring us the voices of these students which will help us more vividly see:

1. What host mass media do Chinese ESL students use in their everyday life?
2. How do Chinese ESL students use the host mass media?
3. What are their intentions (purposes) of using certain media?
4. What are the influences of the host mass media on Chinese ESL students’ acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation (if any)?

The research results can help inform effective information programs and curriculum materials in many subject areas that help ESL students understand more fully
the uses, functions, and impact of host mass media, with the ultimate goal of improving their communication competence and acculturative abilities in the host environment, thus taking an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation consists of ten chapters. Following this introductory chapter, I review related work of other researchers in the area of acculturation, theories in mass communication, the impact of traditional host mass media use on acculturation, the impact of Internet use on acculturation, and the impact of ethnic mass media use on acculturation. In Chapter 3, I present my theoretical framework, which builds upon Kim’s (2001) theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation and the uses and gratifications theory. In Chapter 4, I describe the research approach that I used to conduct this study, the participants involved, the three methods used to collect data, and the procedures for data analysis. The findings obtained from this study are presented in four chapters—Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8. They are organized around the four research questions and the theoretical framework. I describe nine participants’ use of the host mass media in Chapter 5, present the participants’ use of media as sources of information in Chapter 6, focus on their English language acquisition and culture learning through media in Chapter 7, and examine the factors that have been identified as affecting the participants’ development of communication competence and acculturation in Chapter 8. In Chapter 9, I analyze the themes arising from the data, and discuss some channels and factors that contribute to the participants’ communication competence and acculturation into the host society. I end my dissertation in Chapter 10 with conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future work.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

In the Introduction, I provided some background information on why I am interested in Chinese ESL students’ use of the host mass media and relate how the use of such media enable them to acquire host communication competence, and explained why this topic is worth investigating. In this chapter, five areas of literature related to the main topic of this study are reviewed: (a) acculturation; (b) two theories in mass communication, (c) the impact of traditional host mass media use on acculturation, (d) the impact of Internet use on acculturation, and (e) the impact of ethnic mass media use on acculturation.

Acculturation

In the past five decades, numerous studies have been conducted describing, interpreting, and assessing the acculturation process in varying ways and from diverse perspectives. However, as Ward and Kennedy (1999) pointed out, “many investigations have been undertaken in piecemeal fashion, making integration and synthesis of research findings difficult, if not impossible” (p. 660). A few scholars have conducted more systematic research on acculturation and have developed a number of theories and theoretical models to assess the process of acculturation. For examples, Hammer et al.’s (1978) dimensions of intercultural effectiveness, Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory, Berry’s (1980, 1997) model of acculturation and adaptation, Ward and associates’ (Ward, 1996; Ward & Kennedy, 1996; Ward & Searle, 1991) work on psychological and sociocultural adjustment; and Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, and Senecal’s
A limited number of studies have investigated the influences of media exposure in immigrants’ and international students’ acculturation, and found that the use of host mass media played a positive role in their acquisition of host culture, and that their perception of social reality was strongly influenced by their use of these media (e.g., Chaffee, Nass & Yang, 1990; Stilling, 1997; Yang, Wu, Zhu & Southwell, 2004). It has also been found that immigrants and international students tried to learn the host language and improve their language skills by using the host mass media (Won-Doornink, 1988). In the following sections, I will examine some relevant literature on the relationship between media exposure and acculturation in chronological order. But before the review, I will provide a brief introduction about two theories in mass communication, which are most frequently cited in the reviewed literature.

**Two Theories in Mass Communication**

There are over 600 theories (including models) and general scientific paradigms in mass communication. Cultivation theory and uses and gratifications theory are among the most frequently cited theories (Bryant & Miron, 2004).

*Cultivation Theory*

Gerbner and his colleagues developed cultivation theory more than three decades ago (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli & Shanahan, 2002). According to Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980), the central hypothesis of cultivation research is that viewing television gradually and subtly cultivates the audience’s perceptions of reality, thus leading to adoption of norms, values, images, behaviours, beliefs, ideologies,
and world views portrayed on TV. The underlying assumption is that repeated exposure to consistent media portrayals and themes will influence perceptions of these items in the direction that media portrays. Cultivation theory also maintains that the impact of television on its audience is not unidirectional, but a continual, dynamic, ongoing process of interaction among messages and contexts. As Gerbner (1998) stated,

> Our use of the term “cultivation” for television’s contribution to conceptions of social reality is not just another word for “effects.” Nor does it necessarily imply a one-way, monolithic process. The influences of a pervasive medium upon the composition and structure of the symbolic environment are subtle, complex, and intermingled with other influences. This perspective, therefore, assumes an interaction between the medium and its publics. (p. 180)

A typical cultivation study consists of three parts. The first is a content analysis that identifies the most recurrent, stable, and overarching patterns in TV content, emphasizing consistent images, themes, values, and portrayals. The second step is a cultural indicators analysis. This generally involves a survey that explores the extent to which TV watching contributes to a person’s beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of the real world. The final part is cultivation analysis. Its purpose is to compare and analyze the viewing patterns across light, medium, and heavy viewing groups, thus illuminating the general nature of the cultivation relationship (Gerbner et al., 2002; Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

One shortcoming of cultivation research is its problem with measurement. Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli (1978) assume that general TV exposure time is the best measure, because the world presented on TV is consistent across programs and over time. Constant exposure to these messages is related to a tendency to believe that TV reflects what actually exists in the real world. However, distrust of this assumption led some researchers to abandon the simple exposure measure.
For example, Hawkins and Pingree (1981) propose that a content-specific measure can serve as a better predictor of a cultivation effect. Potter and Chang (1990) suggest that a viewing dominance measure (or proportional measure) may be more useful in examining the role of TV in shaping how people perceive their social environment.

A second shortcoming of cultivation research is the oversimplicity of the model. Too often the cultivation hypothesis model simply asserts that TV exposure causes the cultivation effect. However, some studies have suggested that certain mediating variables, such as viewers’ motivation for watching TV might influence the cultivation effect (e.g., Perse, 1986).

The theory has spawned a large number of empirical studies testing its various components, and has received a great amount of supporting evidence across a wide variety of topics (Gerbner, 1998; Morgan & Shanahan, 1997; Raman & Harwood, 2008; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Davies & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2004). Much of the research focused on the influences of TV on an audience’s perceptions of social reality (e.g., Nabi & Sullivan, 2001; Shrum, 1995). In recent years, the theory has been extended to investigate the cultivation effects of exposure to other media forms (e.g., Lubbers, Scheepers & Vergeer, 2000). As will be elaborated below, the cultivation perspective has also provided a way to understand how consumption of host mass media may influence the acculturation of immigrants and sojourners into a host society.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The official birth of the uses and gratifications theory is considered to be in 1959 (Bryant & Miron, 2004). A rich literature can be found under the rubric of uses and gratifications research. According to the uses and gratifications tradition, individuals
actively seek out mass media experiences that can meet their cognitive, social, or emotional needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). A more detailed description of this theory will be presented in Chapter 3.

**The Impact of Traditional Host Mass Media Use on Acculturation**

Ryu (1976) proposed that when foreign students first entered a new country, a relatively large portion of them might not be able to establish close interpersonal relationships with the local people who would serve as neo-socialization agents for them. Thus, the host mass media would substitute in the role of neo-socialization agents for foreign students. To examine this hypothesis, he surveyed 80 foreign student couples (from 28 different countries) at the University of Oregon. Results indicated that the length of residency and English proficiency had a strong influence on the non-English speakers’ use of the host mass media. The host mass media, especially television, played a significant and positive role in the neo-socialization of foreigners from non-English speaking countries. They were more likely to watch TV to improve their language skills or to learn about the culture. A limitation of this study was that the questionnaire was to investigate foreign students and their families’ use of the host mass media. As the author argued, patterns of usage were related to English proficiency. It was very unlikely that a couple’s English proficiency was at the same level. But the author did not report if there was any difference between the students and their spouses in their patterns of usage.

Taking a communication approach, Kim (1977) studied the acculturation process of foreign immigrants through their communication patterns. The underlying assumption was that “the extent to which members of an ethnic group are acculturated will depend, at least partially, on the extent to which they participate in the communication channels of
the host society” (p. 66). The communication channels included interpersonal communication and mass communication. To provide an explanatory theory of the individual differences in communication patterns of the immigrants, four hundred randomly selected Korean immigrants in the Chicago area were surveyed to test nine propositions and a path model. Some of the most important findings from this study were: (1) Language competence, acculturation motivation, and accessibility to host communication channels (interpersonal interaction potential and mass media availability) are identified as major determinants of the immigrant’s communication patterns; (2) educational background, gender, length of stay in the host society, and age at the time of immigration are the most important factors in predicting the immigrant’s language competence, acculturation motivation, and accessibility to host communication channels; (3) language competence, acculturation motivation, interaction potential, and media availability do not affect one’s cognitive complexity directly, but are mediated by the communication experiences in the host society; and (4) the influence of interpersonal communication is stronger than that of mass media consumption in developing a complex and refined cognitive system in perceiving the host society. Specifically, host media use was found positively related to the extent of cultural knowledge and familiarity with the host society among this group of Korean immigrants. This study provided empirical support to the assumption in the context of foreign immigrant’s acculturation.

To construct a precise explanation of the communication patterns of Korean immigrants and the subsequent impact of these communication patterns on their level of information acquisition, Yum (1982) surveyed 401 randomly selected Korean immigrants in Hawaii for face-to-face interviews. Results revealed that English fluency, education,
occupational status, and length of residence in the United States determined the diversity of communication behaviour that the immigrants engaged in, especially the use of English language print media; and had direct effects on the amount of information they obtained. It appeared that Korean immigrants’ length of stay in the United States was related to their communication patterns, and information acquisition. I think the author should also have taken the quality of the stay into consideration. For example, if the immigrants were not actively involved in the acculturation process, and their life was limited within the ethnic communities, their length of stay might not contribute to a high level of communication diversity.

Under the rubric of the cultivation hypothesis, Stilling (1997) examined the effect of television, radio, and print media exposure on the acculturation level of Hispanic immigrants. A sample of 95 adult and adolescent Hispanic respondents was obtained through institutions associated with the Holy Roman Catholic Church in Louisiana, the United States. Results from this study showed that with sufficient proportion of time, television had the power to accelerate the rate of acculturation and to simulate the acculturating effect of a long duration of residence in the United States. In other words, immigrants who viewed a large quantity of host television programming acculturated more quickly than those who viewed less host programming. By using the three measures (total hours of television exposure, content-specific exposure, and proportional exposure) proposed by different scholars (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Hawkins & Pingree, 1981; Potter & Chang, 1990), this study examined acculturation in a more precise fashion than the cultivation studies done in the past. But it remains unclear whether the immigrants who
have already been Americanized were motivated to watch more of the host television in order to become more acculturated.

Reece and Palmgreen (2000) investigated the relationship between Asian-Indian graduates’ need for acculturation and their motives for viewing American television through the uses and gratifications theory. The methods used by the researchers included a survey instrument and follow-up in-depth interview. Ninety-nine Asian-Indian graduates at an American university completed the survey. Follow-up interviews were conducted with those 30 survey respondents who, according to the survey responses, watched the most American television. This study found a strong and significant relationship between need for acculturation and Indian students’ television viewing motivations in the United States. The data showed that many of these students sought valuable cultural information about the host society from news coverage, situation comedies, sports coverage, and movies on television. They found that television viewing could help them learn about American culture, learn how Americans think, see how Americans interact socially, help them adjust to American society, and improve their English. However, this study was restricted to Indian graduate students. The results, therefore, may not be generalizable to all international students, particularly those with less competence in English.

Drawing on the measures (genre-specific measure, viewing dominance measure) proposed by Potter and Chang (1990) in cultivation theory, Woo and Dominick (2003) explored the connection between levels of acculturation, daytime TV talk show viewing, and beliefs about social reality. Questionnaires were administered to 143 international students at a large South-eastern university in the United States to test three hypotheses.
It was expected that international students who were heavy viewers of daytime TV talk shows and who scored low on a measure of acculturation about the United States would (a) overestimate the frequency of certain undesirable behaviours in the United States; (b) have more negative attitudes toward human relationships in the United States; and (c) have more negative perceptions of human relationships in the United States. The results strongly supported the second and the third hypothesis, but provided limited support for the first hypothesis. However, it should be mentioned that the survey did not investigate these international students’ perceptions and attitudes before coming to the United States. It is possible that these students already held negative perceptions and attitudes toward the host people and society before coming to the United States. Daytime TV talk show viewing might have reinforced their negative perceptions and attitudes. Therefore, the results from this study could only offer general, but not conclusive associations between international students’ American television consumption and their estimates of the prevalence of socially undesirable behaviours in the United States.

Walker (1999) suggested that both the host and ethnic mass media use must be considered in investigating the media’s role in immigrant adaptation. A few studies have systematically examined ESL speakers’ use of both ethnic media and host media. Using Kim’s (1988) theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation as a framework, Shah (1991) examined the relationship between patterns of communication among Asian Indians and their level of cross-cultural adaptation. A secondary analysis of data from a sample of 222 Asian-Indians “influentials” in the U.S. indicates that use of the host communication channels (both interpersonal interaction and mass communication) contributes to cross-cultural adaptation, while the use of ethnic channels does not. It was
also found that the amount of interpersonal interaction with members of the host culture is a stronger predictor of cultural adaptation than the use of host mass communication channels. However, the regression coefficient for the use of U.S. publications (newspapers and magazines) for predicting cultural adaptation was significant, indicating the importance of such media use. These results, in general, lend support to Kim’s study in 1977. One limitation of this study is that it is a secondary analysis. Thus, the measures of communication and cross-cultural adaptation may not be ideal indicators of the process under study. For example, it did not include measures of the specific type of media content used by the respondents. Since specific kinds of media may have different effects on adaptation (Kim, 1977, 1988), the potential differences among the respondents could not be examined in this study.

Lee and Tse (1994) investigated how immigrants changed their media consumption when they moved across cultural boundaries, and whether media exposure related to their acculturation of the new social norms. A total of 938 respondents from four groups, including Hong Kong residents, long-time and new Hong Kong immigrants to Canada, and English-speaking Caucasian-Canadians responded to a questionnaire. Findings from this study revealed that immigrants did not increase their total media consumption time, and seemed to follow the same media consumption habits as when they were in their home country. Findings from this study also confirm that exposure to the host mass media relate significantly to immigrants’ adoption of the new social norms, and contribute to attitudinal and/or behavioural change. While this study illustrates the significant relationship between media exposure and immigrants’ adoption of certain
social norms, a richer set of dependent variables such as consumption habits, personal
needs and preferences may need to be incorporated to enrich our understanding.

By employing observation and interviews, Hwang and He (1999) investigated the
media use of Chinese immigrants in Silicon Valley in the United States from a uses and
gratifications perspective. In this study, 39 immigrant subjects, mostly professionals or
students with at least a college degree, had obviously different motives for using ethnic
media and host media. This study found that these Chinese immigrants used host media
primarily for learning language; acquiring professional, financial and legal information;
and acquaintance with the host culture and customs. Consistent with Kim’s (1988)
suggestion of the role of host media in acculturation, Chinese immigrants who used more
host media were generally better acculturated than those who only used ethnic media.
They used Chinese-language media largely for information and entertainment. One
problematic area of this study is the use of an observation method which was not
described in much detail. The observation was carried out from 6:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.
for seven consecutive days, presumably the best time for such a study. However, such a
time period may turn out to record only a concentrated and perhaps skewed part of the
subjects’ media use behaviour, not a full picture. In addition, the use of observation will
only be able to find out the subjects’ media use patterns. Observation of the subjects’ use
of a medium is not sufficient since it does not reveal the subjects’ internal thought
processes. Getting information about the participants’ thoughts while they are using a
medium would be more fruitful since this would reflect the “work” done in using the
medium.
In light of cultivation theory and Bandura’s (2002) social cognitive theory, Moon and Park (2007) investigated the effects of American and Korean mass media on the acculturation process of Korean immigrants living in the United States. A total of 191 respondents at one Korean church in Los Angeles’ Korea Town were involved in the survey study. The mass media they examined included: television, newspapers, and magazines. Structural equation modeling and hierarchical regression modeling were used to evaluate how exposure to these mass media was related to the acculturation process. Results from the two different analyses indicated that exposure to American mass media was a significant positive predictor of the acceptance of American cultural values and a significant negative predictor of the affinity for Korean cultural identity. Results from this study also showed that exposure to Korean mass media was not related to either the affinity for Korean cultural identity or acceptance of American cultural values. Based on their analyses, Moon and Park concluded that even though Korean immigrants were frequently exposed to both American and Korean mass media, they did not have bicultural tendencies. Instead, they tended to be Americanized because the program content of American mass media has strongly affected their formation of American images, values, portrayals, and ideologies. This conclusion thus offered support for previous studies arguing that host mass media can significantly affect immigrants’ cultural values. One limitation of this study is that: the respondents’ exposure to the Internet was not measured. Although television, newspapers, and magazines are important types of mass media, the Internet is a very popular and powerful type of mass media in the 21st century. Thus, it will be valuable to study if the respondents’ use of
Internet content (both from their home country and the host country) is likely to influence their acculturation process.

Utilizing cultivation theory as a framework, Raman and Harwood (2008) gauged the impact of exposure to media on the acculturation levels of a sample of Asian-Indian students in the United States. A total of 114 participants from different educational institutions completed a questionnaire. The average time they spent in the United States was two years and ten months. Preliminary analysis indicated that length of stay, age of participants, future plans, and gender were not significantly associated with acculturation levels. Results of further analyses suggested that consumption of Indian print media and Indian movies most strongly and inversely predicted acculturation levels. These ethnic media might be important means by which the participants maintain their ethnic culture, and hence might function as barriers to acculturation. In contrast, no forms of American media consumption were correlated with acculturation levels. The study also examined some important moderators of media’s acculturation effects. A number of the moderators were found to be strong predictors of acculturation levels, for example, increased intimacy with Americans was associated with higher levels of acculturation; higher levels of filial attachment were associated with lower levels of acculturation; and higher perceived reality of American television was associated with lower levels of acculturation. One limitation is that this study examined the participants’ consumption of five media and its impact on the acculturation levels by focusing on assessing time spent on different types of media, rather than attending to the effects of exposure to any specific types of programs, columns, or contents in any media. As the accumulating evidence suggests (e.g. Potter & Chang, 1990; Woo & Dominick, 2003), a measure of total time spent on a
medium is least effective in detecting a cultivation effect. A more detailed examination of different types of media content may help understand the issue more specifically.

The review of literature in this section shows that exposure to traditional host mass media such as television, newspapers, magazines, radio, and movies, performs an important role in immigrants’ and international students’ acculturation process, and facilitates their learning about and integration into the host society. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that host media can also shape and spread negative stereotypes of these people, and causes feelings of alienation towards the host society and fosters their social segregation (Keshishian, 2000; Lemish, 2000). For example, Keshishian’s (2000) qualitative study has provided an in-depth perspective on the ways that host media affect an international student’s life.

Taking an autobiographical approach, Keshishian (2000) examined the critical role communication and the mass media played in her acculturation process. Focusing on her own experience as an international student in New York since the late 1970s, the author concluded that language barrier, lack of familiarity with the dominant cultural elements in the host country, worries about immigration status, and homesickness impeded her acculturation, while both ethnic gatherings and interpersonal communication with her local friends facilitated the process. As for the impact the mass media could have on acculturation, the author argued that the mass media could play a contradictory role in an immigrant’s acculturation. On one hand, as social and cultural agents they could facilitate the process; on the other hand, they could impede it by personalizing international relations. For example, host media stereotypes could “affect the immigrant’s self-concept, slow down his or her acculturation, breed mistrust, cause poor intercultural
This qualitative study provided a vivid and closer picture of the acculturation process from an insider’s view. However, one should bear in mind that the author’s home country, Iran, has not had positive relations with the host country, the United States, for three decades. Moreover, there has been a constant tension between these two countries. Therefore, some of her experience could be unique to Iranians. As Ansari (1988) pointed out, “In a manner reminiscent of the experiences of the Japanese Americans in the 1940s, Iranians in the United States became scapegoats and suffered harassment and covert discrimination, mainly because of their national heritage” (p. 120). This unique situation suggests that some of her experiences may not be generalizable to other ethnic groups.

The Impact of Internet Use on Acculturation

The tradition of mass media research has accepted books, newspapers, magazines, radio, and television as its objects of study for social, political, economic, and educational reasons (Morris & Ogan, 1996). Since the last century, the Internet is perhaps the most rapidly developing new medium in history (Eighmey & McCord, 1998). Researchers have argued that the Internet is basically a mass medium with the ability to fulfill interpersonal and mediated needs (Morris & Ogan, 1996). Some of them argued that since the Internet has crossed the boundary between mass communication and interpersonal communication, it can satisfy multiple motives of human beings (e.g., Amiel & Sargent, 2004; Katz & Rice, 2002). With the development of and greater access to the Internet, it now is seen as an important communication device that is changing our media use behaviour (Berger, 2007). The Internet can give users complete freedom in
deciding which websites they will use. It contains a very high degree of media richness, and can meet information, cognition, entertainment, interaction, and escape needs (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Lin, 1999). To immigrants and international students, the Internet can provide equal access to both host communication and ethnic communication in an easy, fast, cheap, and convenient way.

A few researchers have studied immigrants’ and international students’ use of the Internet with traditional media, and compared their influences on acculturation. For example, Yang et al. (2004) explored the relationship between need for acculturation, acculturative motives, and media use (both host media and ethnic media) among Chinese students in the United States. Eighty-four Chinese students from a Midwest university participated in this survey study. Most of them were graduate-level students between 23 and 30 years old. Results indicated that generally these students used more of host media, and less of ethnic media after their arrival in the United States. It appeared that the students had strong feelings about wanting to adjust to, and fit in with the host cultural surroundings. Their need for acculturation was correlated with media use motives and actual consumption patterns. For example, American TV watching was viewed as a good way to get information about American culture, to adjust to American society, and to improve English. Of course, these findings did not suggest that Chinese students tended to use all American media content voraciously. Their use of Chinese-based Internet sites, for example, was higher than use of US-based Internet sites. Compared to American TV watching, the Internet use in this study was largely a way to find out ‘what’s going on’ in China, rather than to find out ‘what’s going on’ in the United States. While results from this study suggested changes in the types of media used by Chinese students before and
after their move to the United States, it did not investigate whether there were any differences between genres or different types of content.

Lee (2005) examined the relation between mass media usage patterns of Koreans and their degree of acculturation in the United States. The uses and gratifications theory was applied to explain why and how Koreans consumed American and Korean ethnic mass media to gratify their individual needs. A total of 206 respondents from four Korean churches and one Korean Student Association at the University of Kentucky returned the survey forms. Results from this research indicate that there are some positive relationships among English proficiency, consumption of the American media, and the degree of acculturation, but a significant negative relationship between acculturation and use of Korean media through the Internet. In addition, it is found that age and marital status were important factors relating to the respondents’ media consumption and degree of acculturation. One limitation of this study is the absence of an insightful explanation about the correlation among the two demographic variables, media consumption, and acculturation.

In a European context, Peeters and D’Haenens (2005) examined relationships between integration and media use (both host media and ethnic media) among ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. In this quantitative study, 408 Turks, 366 Moroccans, 388 Surinamese, 403 Antilleans, and 348 Chinese immigrants (all older than 13 years of age) were interviewed about their use of four kinds of media which included radio, television, print media, and the Internet. Results from factor analysis indicated that: (1) There was a positive correlation between integration and general media use, which means that the higher the degree of integration, the more often ethnic minorities used the host media.
However, watching television had a negative correlation with integration; (2) the integration of young people was better than that of their elders, at least among Turks and Moroccans, a finding that pointed to an evolution in the process of integration. However, this result did not apply to minorities of Surinamese and Antillean background whose level of integration was further advanced in every respect; (3) integration did not entail the loss of one’s own cultural identity but rather a deeper involvement in the other culture; (4) different kinds of host media were used for knowledge, norms and values of the host society, and for social contact with host people; (5) inadequate command of the host language was a major obstacle to the use of certain host media (e.g., reading newspapers); and (6) different kinds of ethnic media were used for information about religion, art, culture, and developments in their country of origin. As for Internet use, it appeared that the Internet offered a wide range of applications for all groups. They spent approximately five to eleven percent of their media time on the Internet. The most common activities on the Internet were the purposeful retrieval of information and emailing. They also used the Internet for random surfing, chatting, downloading MP3 files, obtaining news from news groups, and ordering goods. In addition, it has been noticed that less well integrated individuals in the Surinamese group used the Internet more often. Unlike most quantitative studies which were mainly concerned with social-demographic features such as age, gender, education, years of residence, and socio-economic status as possible determinants of media ownership and use, this quantitative study also examined culture-specific features such as ethnic cultural position, religion, and command of language, in relation to media use. It concluded that media use was determined by cultural as well as socio-demographic features. However, the authors’ way of presenting the data was
difficult to follow. Additionally, in the method section, the authors stated that 348 Chinese immigrants were involved in this study, but this group of respondents were completely left out of data analysis, results, discussion, and conclusions without any explanation.

Zhang (2007) conducted a survey study to examine acculturation by exploring the influential factors in immigrants’ mass communication activities. A total of 208 immigrants from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the United States returned the survey about their consumption of traditional mass media and the Internet (both host and ethnic media). Zhang found that the heaviest consumed media was the Internet. The second heaviest used media was television, followed by radio, newspaper, and magazine. Generally speaking, the average time the respondents spent on host media was longer than their counterparts in ethnic languages. The host media satisfied their needs of self-education (e.g., English language), and provided more information about the host society (e.g., information about new things, values, and models of behaviour), which they needed when they settled into the new society. They used the Internet, in particular, for obtaining news, self-education, entertainment and diversion, killing time, finding a basis for conversation and social interaction, and remaining connected to their home country. According to this study, psychological factors such as adaptive personality and acculturation motivation were the primary influential variables in predicting immigrants’ media use patterns. Individuals with stronger adaptive personality and acculturation motivation used more of the host mass media, and became more acculturated than others. One limitation of this study is that it was designed to investigate the respondents’ use of both host and ethnic media, but its results did not provide any prediction about ethnic
media use. Another limitation of this study is that the main aspect of media use patterns examined in this study is the time respondents are exposed to each type of media. It does not identify when and under what circumstance an individual immigrant uses certain media, or which column/channel/program he/she uses. More investigation into media use patterns will contribute to further understanding of the impact of media use on acculturation.

As Internet usage continues to climb at astounding rates worldwide (Wood & Smith, 2005), its impact on immigrants’ and international students’ communication and acculturation become more broad and profound (Fan, 2008). Some researchers began to examine the role of the Internet in the acculturation process separately. Ye (2005) conducted a survey and examined the relationship between acculturative stress among 115 East Asian international students and their use of the Internet. She found that generally, international students used more English-language Internet than native-language Internet. Their English proficiency is positively related to hours of English-language Internet use. In addition, results from Ye’s study confirm findings by other researchers that using host media can help strangers gain higher acceptance of the values and customs of the host culture (Sandhu & Asradadi, 1994). These findings suggest that the use of English-language Internet help the international students cope with acculturative stress. However, one limitation of this study is that it did not differentiate the types of Internet usage, such as reading news, and watching online TV programs.

Kong (2006) explored how the Internet use patterns influenced a group of Chinese students’ cultural adaptation patterns in the United States. A total of 34 doctoral students at Pennsylvania State University returned a questionnaire with both closed-ended and
open-ended answers. The closed-ended questions were designed to get concrete data relating to such items as the time spent on using the Internet. The open-ended questions were used to seek richer feedback from the students to see directly what kind of websites they used most often and which had the first priority. The results revealed that given the same access to host media and ethnic media, Chinese students spent more time on ethnic media than on host media on the Internet. This finding is different from the result of Ye’s (2005) study as reviewed above. The data from open-ended questions indicated that Chinese news ranked the highest in the first three websites visited each day and the most often surfed websites, followed by English news, information, email, and shopping. The data from closed-ended questions showed a strong positive correlation between host media use on the Internet and acculturation level, which suggested that the more host media was used on the Internet, the higher the acculturation level. In my view, this study has two limitations. First, the sample was small. It was a group of doctoral students and not representative of the general population of Chinese students in the United States. Second, although this study controlled variables such as gender and length of residency in the United States, which turned out to be unrelated to acculturation level, there are some other sociodemographic variables that may contribute to the students’ level of acculturation, such as age at which they arrived in the host country and education they received in the host country.

Using a focus group method and applying a uses and gratifications perspective, Fan (2008) conducted a qualitative study to examine the role of computer-mediated communication in the acculturation process of international students from three different cultures. A total of 27 international students from China (11), India (seven), and the
Republic of Korea (nine) participated in the study. All of them were enrolled in a large Midwestern university in the United States. They were asked to complete a brief questionnaire about their personal characteristics before attending a group discussion. Results of the focus group interviews suggest that computer, the Internet, and other computer-facilitated devices and services have become functional displacements to older media in their daily life in the U.S., and gratified a wide range of needs, such as information, learning, news, facilitating daily life, diversion, social network, and acculturation. Computer-mediated mass communication has promoted their behavioural, psychological, and sociocultural adaptation to the host society. The three groups of students displayed general similarities and only minor dissimilarities in terms of their media uses for acculturative gratifications. English language proficiency was found to be a major cause for these group differences. The Indian students consumed all kinds of media primarily in English with no concern about language, while Chinese and Korean students appeared to have more concerns for their English language proficiency. On the other hand, interpersonal communication was still acknowledged as the most important channel in their acculturation to the host environment. One interesting finding of this study was that the students tended to think that the pre-Internet-mediated mass media could have exerted stronger impacts on their cultural adaptation. It seems to me that this finding contradicts the finding that computer-mediated communication satisfied most of their general and acculturation needs, and they could still live satisfactorily if the older media would be totally inaccessible.

A brief review of recent literature on the role of the Internet in immigrants’ and international students’ acculturation process shows that the Internet can provide access to
both host media and ethnic media, has the power to enhance both ethnic communication and host communication, and can gratify a wide range of needs. Results from the reviewed studies also suggest that the more host media content was used on the Internet, the higher the acculturation level. Host language proficiency was found to be a major factor affecting the consumption of host media on the Internet. Although the results from Lee’s (2005) study show a significant negative relationship between acculturation and use of ethnic media through the Internet, the correlation from Kong’s (2006) study was not significant. Therefore, there is no agreement that the use of ethnic media on the Internet could be a hindrance to immigrants’ and international students’ acculturation to the host culture. Rather, it has been repeatedly reported across the studies that the ethnic media on the Internet can provide more opportunities for them to maintain their ethnic cultural links and cultural values.

In addition to the influence of the host mass media, ethnic mass media have been found to have a noticeable impact on immigrants’ and international students’ acculturation process as well. Although it is not a main focus of this study, I think it is necessary for me to provide an overview about their effects on acculturation, because some of the studies described in this chapter have investigated their roles in acculturation along with the host media.

**The Impact of Ethnic Mass Media Use on Acculturation**

A few researchers have examined the impact of ethnic mass media, such as radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet on immigrants’ and international students’ acculturation in the host society (e.g., Jeffres, 2000; Melkote & Liu, 2000; Shibutani, Kwan & Billigmeier, 1965; Viswanath & Arora, 2000). It appears that ethnic mass media
serve a double role in immigrants’ and international students’ acculturation, both as a means of learning “about the new society and about ways to adapt to it” and as a means of preserving “cultural heritage” and strengthening “the sense of intra-group solidarity.” (Elias & Lemish, 2008, p. 22).

Based on a content analysis of a selection of Chinese language media, and supplemented by interviews, Zhou and Cai (2002) explored the causes and consequences of Chinese ethnic media and its impact on the process of adaptation among Chinese immigrants in the United States. They found that ethnic media contributed to assimilation into the host society by providing a lot of information about the host society, “promoting and reinforcing the mobility goals of the immigrant community, and creating a cultural space in which immigrants can enrich their lives” (p. 439). According to Shibutani et al. (1965), one of the main functions of ethnic mass media is that they “greatly facilitate the development of consciousness of a kind” (p. 213) by maintaining ethnic ties. Results from Jeffres’s (2000) panel study of 13 different White ethnic groups in the United States suggested that ethnic media can help sustain ethnic identification in a multicultural context. Thus, ethnic media may serve as protections against some of the external pressures of acculturation (Kim, 2001; Subervi-Velez, 1986).

On the other hand, many of these studies have shown that ethnic media use is negatively related to the level of acculturation (e.g., slow down the acculturation process by maintaining traditional ties, and enhancing resistance to acculturation), whereas mainstream media use is positively related to it (e.g., Kim, 2001; Riggins, 1992). Therefore, the use of ethnic mass media “seems to push the acculturation process in two opposite directions” (Hwang & He, 1999, p.19).
Melkote and Liu (2000) conducted an online survey study to examine the role of Chinese ethnic Internet in the acculturation of Chinese students and scholars in the United States. A total of 460 completed questionnaires were analyzed. It was discovered that access to Chinese ethnic Internet promoted the subjects’ behaviour acculturation, but negatively related to American value acculturation. It was also found that the more the subjects used ethnic Internet, the more they respected their ethnic values and cultural traditions, and the more they were proud of their ethnic identity. The results of this study proposed a new model for the impact of Chinese ethnic Internet on Chinese students’ and scholars’ behaviour and value acculturation. However, this study ignored some other factors that might contribute to the subjects’ acculturation, e.g., the function of host-language Internet and the psychological characteristics of this uniquely coherent group of subjects.

**Chapter Summary**

Relevant literature on acculturation, theories in mass communication, the impact of traditional host mass media use on acculturation, the impact of Internet use on acculturation, and the impact of ethnic mass media use on acculturation have been reviewed in this chapter. According to the literature, the use of host mass media could facilitate immigrants’ and international students’ acculturation process (e.g., host language acquisition and social-cultural integration). It is obvious that those who used more of the host media were more highly acculturated to the host society than those who used less of the host media. Host language competence was found to play a central role in the use of host media, because it was a key to access the host media, and learn the host country’s social and cultural elements. Age, marital status, length of stay, education, and
occupational status were also found to have direct influence on their use of host mass media, the amount of information they obtained, and their degree of acculturation. However, there is a paucity of literature that relates the impact of host mass media use to acculturation in a Canadian context. In the following chapter, I present the theoretical framework I used to conduct this research.
CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents a theoretical framework for studying Chinese ESL students’
development of host communication competence through the use of host mass media. It
consists of four sections and begins with an introduction of the key concepts in this study.
Secondly, it briefly describes some theories relevant to intercultural communication and
adaptation. Thirdly, it discusses Kim’s (2001) theory—the fundamental theory behind
this research. Finally, it reviews the uses and gratifications theory and offers a rationale
for combining Kim’s theory with the uses and gratifications theory as a suitable
theoretical framework for this study.

Key Concepts

Acculturation

Expressed in various terms, such as assimilation, cross-cultural adaptation, cross-
cultural adjustment, international migration and resettlement, and interethnic/intergroup
relations, studies of acculturation have been enriched but fractionated by different
perspectives and foci.

Early in the 20th century, anthropologists used the term “acculturation” to refer to
cultural changes that emerge from intercultural contact (Castro, 2003). Redfield, Linton,
and Herskovits (1936) proposed the following definition: “Acculturation comprehends
those phenomena, which result when groups of individuals having different cultures
come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture
patterns of either or both groups” (p.149). The key words in this definition are
“individuals having different cultures,” “continuous first-hand contact,” and “subsequent changes…of either or both groups.”

In 1954, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) proposed a more specific definition:

Acculturation may be defined as cultural change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from noncultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modifications induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the process of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors. (p. 974)

The essential concepts in the SSRC definition are “cultural change” and “reactive/selective adaptation.” Although the term acculturation can mean anything one wants, I believe that the above two widely quoted definitions provide a sound basis for my study on the topic. In this study, acculturation refers to second culture acquisition and selective adaptation through continuous contact with other cultures.

Much of the research on acculturation in recent decades has been guided by two different sets of models: linear-bipolar models (e.g., Gordon, 1978) and bidimensional or multicultural models (e.g., Berry, 1980). Linear models assume that the acculturative process is a unidirectional course of cultural change eventually resulting in full assimilation. By contrast, bidimensional models suggest that acculturation is multifaceted, individuals can develop positive ties with both the referent ethnic group and the new or mainstream culture, and true assimilation may never occur. I adopt bidimensional perspectives.
One of the most widely used bidimensional models (theories) in acculturation was developed by John W. Berry. Focusing on the process of adaptation to an ethnically plural context, Berry (1980, 1997) argued that during the process of acculturation individuals and groups are confronted with two basic issues: (a) cultural maintenance of one’s own group, and (b) contact with other groups. The former involves the decision to maintain one’s cultural identity and patterns, the latter to engage in positive intergroup contact. Berry suggests that four possible attitudes or outcomes of adaptation—integration, marginalization, separation, and assimilation—can be derived from yes or no answers to the following two questions: (1) Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics? and (2) Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups? (see Figure 1 p. 36).

**Figure 1.** Four modes of acculturation based on orientation towards issue of cultural maintenance and intergroup contact. (Berry, Kim, Power, Young & Bujaki, 1989, p.187)

More specifically, integration is defined by positive answers to both questions. It implies that an individual values both cultural maintenance and intergroup relations in the larger society. Marginalization is defined by negative answers to both questions. It implies that an individual values neither cultural maintenance nor positive relations with
the larger society. A positive response to the first question and negative answer to the second question defines separation. It implies that an individual cherishes cultural maintenance but does not value positive relations with the larger society. A negative response to the first question and positive answer to the second question defines assimilation. It implies that an individual values intergroup relations in the larger society but is relatively unconcerned with cultural maintenance. Berry’s conceptual analysis of acculturation attitudes highlights the fact that in a multicultural society, acculturation proceeds in diverse ways and it is not necessary for new comers to give up their culture of origin in order to adapt to the new society.

Empirical research shows that integration is the most preferred outcome because it is a combination of positive relations with the larger society and maintenance of the ethnic identity and traditions (e.g., Berry, 1997; Phinney, Chavira & Williamson, 1992; Zagefka & Brown, 2002). Evidence suggests that the attitudes and characteristics of each acculturating group and their experiences with regard to the mainstream culture affect the acculturation outcomes (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder, 2001).

**Communication Competence**

“Communicative competence” is another term that is frequently used, though differently, by various researchers in discussions of second language research (e.g., Campbell & Wales, 1970; Canale & Swain, 1980; Chomsky, 1965; Hymes, 1972). According to Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence minimally includes three main competencies: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Both terms follow the original notions of competence employed by Chomsky (1965) and Hymes (1972). In order to comply with the terms and definitions in
Kim’s (2001) theory, I chose to use communication competence. This term has also been extensively used by many researchers studying intercultural communication (e.g., Collier, 1989; Cupach & Imahori, 1993; Koester, Wiseman & Sanders, 1993; Redmond, 2000; Wiseman, Hammer & Nishida, 1989; Zimmermann, 1995).

Scholars from communication (Kim, 2001), psychology (Zimmerman & Whitehurst, 1979), sociolinguistics (Hymes, 1972), education (Savignon, 1997), social work (Dickson, Hargie & Morrow, 1997), management (Penley, Alexander, Jernigan & Henwood, 1991), and marketing (Chairsrakeo & Speece, 2004) have studied communication competence. A burgeoning literature highlights competences that facilitate intercultural interaction (e.g., Chen & Starosta, 1996; Wiseman & Koester, 1993).

Despite the intuitive importance of communication competence, it is difficult to define exactly what constitutes communication competence (Wilson & Sabee, 2003). As Jablin and Sias (2001) noted, there are almost as many definitions of communication competence as there are researchers interested in the construct. For example, in Ruben’s (1975) words, communication competence is the ability of “sensing, making-sense-of, and acting toward the objects and people in one’s milieu. It is the process by which the individual informationally fits himself into (adapts to) his environment” (pp. 168-169). Communication competence, as such, represents the individual’s “mentation” (Dance & Larson, 1976) and operates largely on the unconscious level (Hample, 1987). Spitzberg (1988) defined communication competence as “the ability to interact well with others” (p. 68). He explains, “the term ‘well’ refers to accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness” (p. 68).
For Kim (2001), communication competence is “the overall capacity of the stranger to receive and process information appropriately and effectively (decoding) and to design plans to initiate messages or respond to others (encoding) in accordance with the host communication system” (p. 73). It comprises three key elements: (a) cognitive competence which includes knowledge of communication codes/rules, cultural understanding, and cognitive complexity; (b) affective competence which includes adaptation motivation, identity flexibility, and aesthetic/emotional coorientation; and (c) operational competence which includes technical skills, resourcefulness, and synchrony. In reality, these three components of communication competence are interrelated, and interactively facilitate strangers’ participation in host communication activities. The task of acquiring host communication competence is a lifelong task. Strangers can develop more complete host communication competence only through participation in host interpersonal and mass communication processes (Kim, 1988, 1991, 2001). As for my study, I would like to focus on the cognitive components of communication competence.

**Cognitive Components**

According to Kim (2001), knowledge of verbal and nonverbal codes, knowledge of the host culture, and cognitive complexity are the three interrelated cognitive components of host communication competence. One of the most salient factors for the intercultural adaptation of strangers is the knowledge of verbal codes—the host language. Language, as Bourdieu (1991) argued, is not only a means of communication, but also a form of embodied cultural capital (linguistic capital) that confers power and status. The language an individual uses tends to reiterate the respective position of that individual in a field or social space (Bourdieu, 1991). Every linguistic interaction, thus, is a
manifestation of the participants’ respective positions in the social structure, and tends to reproduce the social structure. Language empowers an individual to pursue his/her own interests and display his/her practical competence, and determines the status of an individual in a social structure. Therefore, the development of host language competence can bring power and status for strangers as well.

Host language competence can also enable strangers to access the accumulated records of the host culture and to learn to think in the way the native speakers think (Brown, 1991). Knowledge of the host language means not just linguistic knowledge, such as knowledge of phonetics, vocabulary, and syntax. It also entails pragmatic knowledge about the everyday use of language, including the many subtleties in the way the language is spoken and interpreted in various formal and informal social engagements. Accompanying the host language is the nonverbal knowledge of the host culture. Like language, many nonverbal codes are shaped by cultural conditions.

To achieve full knowledge of the host communication system, strangers need to acquire a general and deep understanding of the host culture. A deeper-level understanding of the host culture involves knowledge of its historical, political, economic, religious, and educational institutions as well as its values, ideologies, arts, sciences, technologies, attitudes, beliefs, and reciprocal role requirements. Cultural understanding helps strangers to share the native’s shared memory, to interpret the hidden, unspoken assumptions operating in the natives, and to see how and why the natives communicate in the ways they do (Sechrest, Fay & Zaidi, 1982).

Cognitive complexity here refers to an individual’s “cognitive schemas” or “structures of meaning” (Kelly, 1955). The development of cognitive complexity comes
along with knowledge of the host communication system and understanding of the host culture. While knowledge and understanding aspects of cognitive competence concern mainly the informational base of cognition, the concept of cognitive complexity attends to the structure (or pattern) of information processing.

In psychology, cognitive complexity has been recognized as “differentiation” and “integration.” Individuals with complex cognitive structures tend to differentiate or particularize (Billig, 1987) their perceptions and are skilful at combining different information “pieces” into a coherent and meaningful whole (Schroder, Driver & Streufert, 1967, 1975), and tend to know “how” they know what they know with regard to the host milieu.

It has been found that cognitive complexity is closely linked with increased competence in the host language and culture (Hogg, 1996), and positively associated with other indicators of cross-cultural adaptation (e.g., Coelho, 1958; Kim, 1977; Lindgren & Yu, 1975). Since the development of cognitive complexity in understanding the host culture and communication system is a cumulative process, as strangers gradually achieve cognitive complexity, they can better differentiate along more dimensions and categories between their original culture and the host culture. I am not going to address cognitive complexity as part of my research, but will focus on the other two cognitive components (knowledge of verbal and nonverbal codes and knowledge of the host culture) of communication competence.

*Mass Media*

Mass media, in a traditional sense, are means of communication that operate on a large scale, reaching and involving virtually a large and often widely dispersed audience
in a society to a greater or lesser degree (McQuail, 2000; Rogers, 1973). The most common mass media we use in a typical day (in no particular order) include: books, magazines, newspapers, billboards, radio, television, recordings (CD, MP3, DVD, etc.), movies, videos, and the Internet.

Most of our knowledge of the world comes to us either directly through the media, or through someone who uses them (Martin & Knight, 1997). The mass media have an influence on many aspects of our lives at home, school, work, etc. In respect to culture, “the mass media are the cultural industries—the channels of communication—that produce and distribute…. cultural products to large numbers of people” (Campbell, Martin & Fabos, 2004, p. 6). The mass media content has been considered as a ‘cultural’ indicator, and as reflection of social and cultural values and beliefs. They:

- constitute a primary source of definitions and images of social reality and the most ubiquitous expression of shared identity;
- are the largest focus of leisure time interest, providing the shared ‘cultural environment’ for most people and more so than any other single institution. (McQuail, 2000, p. 4)

While almost everyone uses the mass media to some degree, this experience varies from one person to another (Martin & Knight, 1997). Research findings indicate that the mass media can effectively change cognition (that is, increase knowledge) (Rogers, 1962). Immigrants have been found to prefer mass media over many other agents as sources of information and advice, because mass media not only offer immigrants the chance to improve general language skills and opportunity for social interaction, but also help reduce the embarrassing situations one has to go through (Kim, 1988).
Some Theories Relevant to Intercultural Communication and Adaptation

Great progress has been made in the theorization of intercultural communication and adaptation since the 1980s. Several theorists have integrated culture with communication processes. Philipsen (1987, 1992, 2002) has laid groundwork for the study of cultural communication. Cronen, Chen, and Pearce (1988) have examined the role of culture in the coordinated management of meaning.

Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) have identified five dimensions of cultural variability: (low-high) power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, (low-high) uncertainty avoidance, and long-and short-term orientation. Both ends of each dimension exist in all cultures, but one end tends to predominate in a culture. Members of cultures learn the predominate tendencies in their cultures to various degrees. These national culture differences influence communication in a culture across situations. For example, members of individualistic cultures tend to communicate in a direct way. In contrast, members of collectivistic cultures tend to communicate in an indirect way (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). A few theorists have drawn on Hofstede and Hofstede’s ideas to explain cross-cultural differences in communication. These theories include Ting-Toomey (1988) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi’s (1998) face-negotiation theory, and M. S. Kim’s (1995) conversational constraints theory.

There are also theories focusing on how communicators accommodate or adapt to each other. Communication accommodation theory (Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile & Ota, 1995), intercultural adaptation theory (Ellingsworth, 1988), and co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998) fit this category.
Several theories have been developed to explain different facets of intercultural communication competence (e.g., Gudykunst, 1993; Kim, 2001; Ting-Toomey, 1993). Gudykunst (1993) developed anxiety/uncertainty management theory (AUM) out of his work with uncertainty reduction in intercultural encounters. According to this theory, individuals must experience optimal levels of anxiety and uncertainty to communicate effectively in intercultural situations. Gudykunst claimed that anxiety and uncertainty are moderated by mindfulness, a state of active awareness, of forming new cognitive categories, and seeing things in new ways. The AUM theory is complex but logically consistent. It involves a large number of statements. Most of them are empirically testable (e.g., An increase in the amount of social support we receive in the host culture will produce a decrease in our anxiety). Some of them are not testable (e.g., An increase in our ability to describe host nationals’ behaviour will produce an increase in our ability to predict their behaviour accurately) because they rely heavily on mindfulness. The extent of mindfulness that leads to effective interactions depends on individuals’ biases and objectivity (Devine, Evett & Vasquez-Suson, 1996).

Ting-Toomey (1993) proposed identity negotiation theory. In this theory, intercultural communication competence is viewed as the “effective identity negotiation process between two interactants in a novel communication episode” (p. 73). Ting-Toomey argued that communication resourcefulness (i.e., “the knowledge and ability to apply cognitive, affective, and behavioural resources appropriately, effectively, and creatively in diverse interaction situations,” p. 74) helps to facilitate and promote the process of effective identity negotiation. The greater individuals’ communication resourcefulness, the more effective they are in identity negotiation. The more secure
individuals’ self-identifications are, the greater their identity coherence and global self-esteem, the more they are open to interacting with members of other cultures.

However, there are limitations both in Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey’s theories. They look at the issue from one perspective, focus on interpersonal and/or intergroup communication, and fail to address an individual’s participation in host mass communication processes. As communication and adaptation are multi-dimensional phenomena, a comprehensive and integrative theoretical approach is needed. Therefore, the present study uses Kim’s (2001) theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation to investigate Chinese ESL students’ use of host mass media and relate how the use of such media enables the students to adapt to Canadian culture.

Kim’s Theory of Communication and Cross-cultural Adaptation

In Kim’s (1988, 2001) point of view, although acculturation research has benefited from an extensive amount of information and insights from different perspectives across disciplines, it suffers from disconnectedness, making it difficult for individual investigators to gain a “big picture” about the accumulated knowledge. Using open-systems theory as an organizing framework, Kim (2001) developed an integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation built on a broad range of existing concepts, models, and research data across disciplines. It consists of three open-systems assumptions, three boundary conditions, 10 axioms, and 21 theorems. At the heart of the theory is the critical role of an individual’s ability to communicate in accordance with the host communication system and his or her psychological and social engagement with the host environment. According to Kim, an individual cannot fully develop host communication competence without participating in the social communication activities
which include interpersonal communication and mass communication activities. Grounded in an open-systems perspective (which sees each individual as an open, dynamic, and self-reflexive system that observes itself and renews itself as it continuously interacts with the environment to struggle for an internal equilibrium), Kim moves beyond the conventional linear-reductionist conceptions of adaptation and emphasizes its interactive, multifaceted, and evolving nature. It is by far the most broad-based theoretical account of cross-cultural adaptation, bringing together many conceptions and clarifying the interrelationships among them.

Cross-cultural adaptation and stranger are the two key terms in Kim’s theory. The term “cross-cultural adaptation” is defined as “the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments” (Kim, 2001, p. 31). Conceptualizing adaptation as a continuous developmental process of internal transformation, the theory views cross-cultural adaptation as a communication process between individuals and the environment. It broadly embraces other similar but narrower terms such as coping, assimilation, acculturation, integration, and adjustment. The term “stranger” is employed to represent a wide range of individuals who enter and resettle in a new cultural or subcultural environment. It is derived from Simmel’s (1950) early conception of the stranger as someone possessing the contradictory qualities of being both “near and far” (p. 402). This notion integrates other more specific terms such as immigrants, refugees, sojourners, and members of ethnic groups who cross subcultural boundaries within a society, as they commonly share the outsiders’ experiences at the beginning of their adaptation process.
(Kim, 2001). However, it is also regarded as a label with negative connotation—a non-mainstream group (Korne, Byram & Fleming, 2007). In order to comply with Kim’s theory and other researchers’ presentation of their studies, I kept their choice of using the term “stranger” as I described their respective works.

Kim’s (2001) theory addresses two central questions: (a) What is the essential nature of the adaptation process? and (b) why are some strangers more successful than others in the adaptation process? The first question is addressed in the form of a process model. The second question is addressed in the form of a structural model.

Kim’s Process Model

Cross-cultural adaptation involves both acculturation and deculturation, the ultimate possible outcome is assimilation. Grounded in the notion that human beings would refine, rearrange, revise, and evolve to meet the demands of a new, and unfamiliar host environment, Kim’s process model portrays the process of cross-cultural adaptation as a three-pronged stress-adaptation-growth dynamic. The stress-adaptation-growth dynamic does not develop in a smooth, steady, and linear direction, but rather in a dialectic, cyclic, and continual “draw-back-to-leap” pattern. While the state of stress can produce a state of imbalance, misfit, uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety, it can also serve as a powerful impetus that compels strangers to work out new ways to overcome the difficulties, to engage in the act of adaptation through continuous, active learning and responding in the new environment, to grow and move upward-downward-forward-backward, gradually in the direction of greater adaptation and growth (see Figure 2 p. 48).
Figure 2. The Stress-adaptation-growth dynamic: A process model. (Kim, 2001, p. 57)

Kim’s Structural Model

Building on the process model, Kim offers a multidimensional structural model to address the second theoretical aim (see Figure 3 p. 49). Six primary dimensions are identified to constitute the structure that may facilitate or impede the cross-cultural adaptation process. Specifically, host communication competence serves as the “engine” that pushes strangers along the adaptation process.
Dimension 1. Host communication competence. The key elements of host communication competence are grouped into three interrelated categories: (a) cognitive (b) affective, and (c) operational (more detailed elaboration in key concepts). Although these components do not develop at the same time and at the same pace, they are organically interdependent—development in one aspect facilitates development in the others, and the way strangers communicate with local people reflects the interplay of the strangers’ cognitive, affective, and operational capabilities. The task of acquiring host communication competence is a lifelong task. Strangers can develop more complete host communication competence only through participation in social communication in the host society, which includes interpersonal communication and mass communication (Kim, 1988, 1991, 2001).
Dimension 2. Host social communication. Strangers’ host social communication includes their participation in host interpersonal and mass communication activities. Host interpersonal communication refers to strangers’ interpersonal contact with local people. Interpersonal communication activities not only enable strangers to learn the standards of host verbal and nonverbal communication practices, vital information and insight into the mind-sets and behaviours of the local people, but also provide them with emotional support and points of reference for checking and validating their own thoughts and behaviours. Host mass communication facilitates the adaptation of strangers by exposing strangers to the larger host environment through mass media and serving as an important source of cultural and language learning, particularly during early phases of the adaptation process when strangers have limited scope for learning from local people. Strangers’ host social communication experiences are directly and reciprocally related to their host communication competence: their host social communication experiences are constrained by their host communication competence; every host social communication experience provides strangers an opportunity for learning.

Dimension 3. Ethnic social communication. Strangers’ ethnic interpersonal and mass communication activities include their interactions with coethnics and ethnic organizations. These ethnic communication systems facilitate their initial resettlement processes. Beyond the initial phase, ethnic communication serves the ethnicity-maintenance function, but is likely to impede strangers’ adaptation into the host culture in the long run, for example, it is negatively associated with host communication competence.
Dimension 4. Environment. The host environment provides a cultural and sociocultural context for strangers’ communication activities, and influences their adaptation process. Three environmental factors are identified: (a) host receptivity refers to the hosts’ openness, acceptance, and support toward strangers and willingness to provide an environment for strangers to partake in the local social communication processes, (b) host conformity pressure refers to the degree to which the hosts challenge strangers to change their original cultural practices and communication system, adopt and act in accordance with the hosts’ normative expectations, and (c) ethnic group strength refers to strangers’ ethnic group’s status and power in the host society, and its capacity to influence the host society at large.

Dimension 5. Predisposition. The strangers’ own internal conditions or predispositional conditions prior to their relocation in the new host environment also affect the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Three categories of conditions contribute to strangers’ predisposition: (a) preparedness for change, that is, their mental, emotional, and motivational readiness to manage the challenges of crossing cultures, including the understanding of the host culture and communication system; (b) ethnic proximity. The term ethnic proximity is employed here as a relational concept. It refers to the degree of the strangers’ overall similarity or difference of external ethnic characteristics (e.g., physical features, noticeable behaviours), and compatibility of internal ethnic characteristics (e.g., beliefs, cultural values and norms) relative to the mainstream ethnicity of the host environment, and (c) adaptive personality, that is, strangers’ enduring personality traits—openness, strength, and positivity that would help them
undergo stressful situations and maximize new learning, so as to facilitate their intercultural growth.

Dimension 6. Intercultural transformation. Through long-term, repeated, and continuous participation in host communication activities, strangers experience a series of internal changes. Three interrelated aspects of strangers’ intercultural transformation are identified as the key outcomes of cross-cultural adaptation: (a) functional fitness which links directly to the ability to communicate effectively in the host environment, (b) psychological health which relates closely to the strangers’ ability to communicate and their functional fitness in the host environment, and (c) intercultural identity which connects a stranger to more than one cultural group (e.g., original cultural group)—a developmental continuum transforms from a monocultural to an increasingly multifaceted character. These outcomes, in turn, help smooth the further development of their host communication competence and participation in host communication activities.

Emphasizing the centrality of communication, this multidimensional and multifaceted structural model reflects the dynamic and interactive relationships between an individual and the environment. Kim suggests that the dimensions of her theory influence both long-term and short-term adaptation processes.

In this study, I am going to focus on five of the theoretical constructs identified in Kim’s structural model: (a) host communication competence, (b) host social communication (specifically on host mass communication), (c) environment, (d) predisposition, and (e) intercultural transformation. These five constructs are chosen because they constitute the primary factors needed to examine Chinese ESL students’ use of host mass media and relate how the use of such media enables the students to adapt to
Canadian culture. The interrelationships identified in Kim’s structural model are specified in 21 theorems. The linkages between and among the above five constructs are articulated in the following 13 theorems:

Theorem 1. The greater the host communication competence, the greater the host interpersonal and mass communication.

Theorem 3. The greater the host communication competence, the greater the intercultural transformation (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity).

Theorem 5. The greater the host interpersonal and mass communication, the greater the intercultural transformation (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity).

Theorem 7. The greater the host receptivity and host conformity pressure, the greater the host communication competence.

Theorem 8. The greater the host receptivity and host conformity pressure, the greater the host interpersonal and mass communication.

Theorem 10. The greater the ethnic group strength, the lesser the host communication competence.

Theorem 11. The greater the ethnic group strength, the lesser the host interpersonal and mass communication.

Theorem 13. The greater the preparedness for change, the greater the host communication competence.

Theorem 14. The greater the preparedness for change, the greater the host interpersonal and mass communication.

Theorem 16. The greater the ethnic proximity, the greater the host communication competence.

Theorem 17. The greater the ethnic proximity, the greater the host interpersonal and mass communication.

Theorem 19. The greater the adaptive personality, the greater the host communication competence.

Theorem 20. The greater the adaptive personality, the greater the host interpersonal and mass communication. (Kim, 2001, pp. 91-92)

To be more specific, in Kim’s (2001) view, host communication competence is directly and reciprocally connected to participation in the mass communication activities of the host environment—mass communication experiences are positively associated with an individual’s development of host communication competence. In other words, every host mass communication event offers the individual an opportunity to develop host communication competence. Kim (2001) asserts the following:
1. Along with host interpersonal communications, the strangers’ mass communication activities are vital to their cultural/language learning, particularly during early phases of the adaptation process when they have less direct access to the natives.

2. Strangers’ participation in host mass communication processes complements the limited scope of cultural learning provided by interpersonal communication processes, though the adaptive function of a specific mass communication experience is likely to be weaker than that of a specific interpersonal communication experience. Through such participation, strangers learn about the broader range of host cultural elements—the culture’s aspirations, traditions, history, myths, art, work, play, and humour, as well as current issues and events.

3. In some situations, mass communications provide alternative, less stressful channels of communication through which strangers with inadequate communication competence can absorb some elements of the host culture. However, different people can use the same mass communications, the same media content for different purposes, and the same media content can gratify different needs for different people (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Basic needs, social situation, and people’s individual background, such as experience, interests, and education affect people’s ideas about what they want from media and which media best meet their needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). This is addressed by the uses and gratifications theory.

**Uses and Gratifications Theory**

The uses and gratifications theory is concerned with the way people use media—why do people use media and what do they use them for? (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch,
1999; McQuail, 1983). However, it does not mean that media effects on people are
denied altogether. The focus of inquiry has been shifted from media’s direct effects on
people to assessing how people use the media: “that is, what purposes or functions the
media serve for a body of active receivers” (Fisher, 1978, p. 159). In this sense, to
explain media effects, we must first consider individual differences (Rubin, 2002). The
key concept of the uses and gratifications perspective is that people are active elements in
the communication process; different media satisfy different needs; people select and use
different media or content to meet different needs (Hornik & Schlinger, 1981). It is
considered as one of the most appropriate perspectives for investigating why people
choose to be exposed to different media channels (LaRose, Mastro & Eastin, 2001).

The uses and gratifications theory focuses on:

(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3)
expectations of (4) the mass media or other resources, which lead to (5)
differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities),
resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly
unintended ones. (Katz et al., 1974, p. 20)

The uses and gratifications theory involves certain assumptions. In 1974, Katz et
al. drafted some basic assumptions. Since then, these assumptions have been revised to
reflect subsequent discoveries about media use (see Palmgreen, 1984; Palmgreen,
Wenner & Rosengren, 1985; Rubin, 1986, 1994, 2002), which provide a framework for
understanding the correlation between media and people. An updated version is based on
five assumptions:

1. Communication behaviour, including the selection and use of media, is goal-
directed, purposive, and motivated. People choose media or media content. That
behaviour is functional and has consequences for individuals and societies.
2. People initiate the selection and use of communication vehicles. Instead of
being used by the media, people select and use media to satisfy their felt needs
and desires (Katz, Gurevitch & Haas, 1973). Media audiences, then, are variably
active communicators. Media use may respond to needs, but also satisfies wants or interests such as seeking information to solve a personal dilemma.

3. A host of social and psychological factors guide, filter, or mediate communication behaviour. Our predispositions, the environment in which we live, and our interpersonal interactions shape our expectations about the media and media content. Communication behaviour responds to media and their messages as they are filtered through our personalities, social categories and relationships, potential for interpersonal interaction, and communication channel availability.

4. The media compete with other forms of communication—or, functional alternatives, such as interpersonal interactions for selection, attention, and use so that we can seek to gratify our needs or wants. There are definite relationships between personal and mediated channels in this process. How well the media satisfy our needs, motives, or desires varies among individuals based on their social and psychological circumstances.

5. People are typically more influential than the media in this process, but not always. Our own initiative mediates the patterns and consequences of media use. Through this process, media may affect individual characteristics or social, political, cultural, or economic structures of society and how people may come to rely on certain communication media (Rosengren, 1974; Rubin & Windahl, 1986). (Rubin, 2002, pp. 527-528)

Uses and gratifications theory sees media audiences as variably active (not universally, not equally active at all times) communicators, rather than passive recipients of messages. Rubin (1984, 2002) suggested that there were two orientations to media as ritualized and instrumental. Ritualized and instrumental orientations can tell us about the differences in audience media use activity, such as the amount and type of media use and about one’s attitudes and expectations about media. According to Rubin (2002),

Ritualized use is using a medium more habitually to consume time and for diversion. It entails greater exposure to and affinity with the medium. Ritualized use suggests utility but an otherwise less-active or less-goal-directed state. Instrumental use is seeking certain media content for informational reasons. It entails greater exposure to news and informational content and perceiving that content to be realistic. Instrumental use is active and purposive. It suggests utility, intention, selectivity, and involvement. (p. 535)

Rubin (2002) further argued that differences in orientations might lead to different media effects: “instrumental orientations may produce stronger attitudinal and behavioural
effects than ritualized orientations because instrumental orientations incorporate greater 
motivation to use and involvement with messages” (p. 536).

Since the 1970s, uses and gratifications researchers have developed different 
typologies of media uses and audience gratifications (e.g., Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979; 
Rubin, 1983). These typologies account for a variety of individual needs, and help to 
explain variations in media uses for different gratifications. For example, McQuail, 
Blumler and Brown (1972) formulated a typology by linking people’s background and 
social circumstances with the gratifications sought. This typology consists of diversion, 
personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance. Katz et al. (1973) identified 14 
needs associated with media use and classified them into five categories: (a) cognitive 
needs, (b) affective needs, (c) personal integrative needs, (d) social integrative needs, (e) 
escapist needs.

Since the basic goals of uses and gratifications theory are: (a) to explain how 
people use media to gratify their needs, (b) to understand motives for media behaviour, 
and (c) to identify the functions or consequences that stem from needs, motives and 
behaviour (Katz et al., 1974), it is very helpful in my study to identify what needs 
Chinese ESL students have to improve their host communication competence, how they 
use the mass media to meet those and other needs, and what consequences such media 
use may bring about.

Much of the criticism of uses and gratifications has been directed at its initial 
assumptions as well as the methodology of early research. Most of the criticisms have 
been addressed in the many studies of the past 25 to 30 years (Rubin, 2002).
To begin, many early studies have been criticized for lacking any common theoretical foundation for their conclusions, and the results simply provided a list of needs and values, “barely beyond a sort of charting and profiling activity” (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973, p. 514). Palmgreen’s (1984) integrated summary of its theoretical structure and others’ work over the last two decades helped to strengthen the theoretical foundations of uses and gratifications research.

Secondly, early uses and gratifications research portrayed media use as primarily active and rational whereby individuals control consumption according to conscious goals. Little attention was therefore afforded to the ways in which media may be consumed “mindlessly or ritualistically” (Littlejohn, 1989, p. 276). Now, uses and gratifications researchers regard audiences “to be variably—not universally—active” (Rubin, 2002, p. 534).

Thirdly, as noted earlier in this chapter, over the years, different researchers have tended to produce different typologies, which led some to argue that uses and gratifications research was compartmentalized (Anderson & Meyer, 1975). Katz et al. (1973) explained the differences by noting that:

The differences are due in part to the fact that investigators have focused on different levels of study (e.g., medium or content) and different materials (e.g., different programs or program types on, say, television) in different cultures (e.g., Finland, Israel, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Yugoslavia). (p. 512)

Another criticism of uses and gratifications theory claims that methodologically, some studies relied almost exclusively on self-report data and assumed that such measures could provide accurate data about media use (Anderson & Meyer, 1975). I agree to some extent that this is a disadvantage of uses and gratifications approach.
However, for this study, since the data will be collected by three qualitative methods (see below for detailed explanation) and analyzed in an open-ended way, it is expected that the findings will elicit valuable information on the relationship between ESL students’ development of host communication competence and mass media use, and a better understanding of the reality. In this way, some of the weak points will be balanced and improved.

**Chapter Summary**

In sum, Kim’s theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation and the uses and gratifications theory combined provide a theoretical framework for this study. Although these two theories have different focuses, both examine people’s use of mass media and the effects resulting from media use, and emphasize the importance of individual differences that people bring into the communication process. While Kim’s theory contributes to a comprehensive understanding of mass communication in the context of cross-cultural adaptation, the uses and gratifications theory provides a better explanation regarding the reasons people use a certain medium, people’s media behaviour, and the relationship between expected and obtained gratifications resulting from certain media use motivations (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). They are compatible and complement each other in this particular study.
Figure 4. A structural model adapted from Kim’s (2001) structural model.

Figure 4 presents the interrelationships among five of the constructs identified in Kim’s theory and its integration with the assumptions of the uses and gratifications theory.
CHAPTER 4

METHODS

This chapter describes the methods employed to conduct this study and is presented in four sections. Section one briefly introduces phenomenography as a research approach. Section two presents the criteria for selecting participants and the participants involved in the study. Section three describes the three methods used to collect data. Section four outlines the procedures for data analysis.

A Phenomenographic Study

Phenomenography is a qualitative approach designed to answer certain questions about thinking and learning (Marton, 1981, 1988). Marton (1997) defined phenomenography as follows:

“Phenomenography” is the empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which various phenomena in, and aspects of, the world around us are experienced, conceptualized, understood, perceived, and apprehended. (p. 95)

As a specialized method for studying how reality appears to people, and describing the different ways in which people conceptualize the world around them (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996), phenomenography has been used in educational research for decades (e.g., Asplund-Carlsson, Marton & Halasz, 1993; Johansson, Marton & Svensson, 1985).

This qualitative study seeks to investigate Chinese ESL students’ use and understanding of the host mass media, and relate how the use of such media enables the students to adapt to Canadian culture. It is essentially a thinking-and-learning process. I chose to use phenomenography to conduct my study for three reasons: (1) this kind of research aims at description, analysis and understanding of people’s experience of various aspects of the world (Marton, 1981), rather than description of the various aspects
of the world; (2) it is an appropriate tool for dealing with “both the conceptual and the experiential, as well with what is thought of as that which is lived”; and (3) it is also an appropriate tool for dealing with “what is culturally learned and with what are individually developed ways of relating ourselves to the world around us” (Marton, 1981, p. 181).

There are a variety of ways of collecting data, e.g., observations, written responses, and historical documents. However, the dominant method of investigation is usually an open, in-depth interview (Booth, 1997). The point is to have the participant reflect and express the experienced phenomenon as fully as possible (Marton, 1997).

During data analysis, different participants’ experiences of a given phenomenon are not seen as individual qualities, but considered as categories of description. That is to say, the data originating from different participants together make up undivided data to be analyzed. The researcher will examine the data, identify qualitatively distinct categories that describe different participants’ experiences of the given phenomenon. If the data cover multiple topics or multiple aspects of a given phenomenon, the analysis has to be carried out for each topic or phenomenon, one at a time. The researcher needs to reexamine the data and modify the categories until the categories seem to be consistent with the data. These categories are logically related to each other, and form hierarchies in relation to a given criterion. Such an ordered complex of categories of description is called “outcome space.” The categories of description and outcome space are the main results of a phenomenographic study (Marton, 1997).
Participants

Ideally, ten participants (five males and five females) were expected to be involved in this study to share their insights and experiences with using the host mass media. This number of participants would represent diverse disciplines and different degree programs to ensure some variety in the students’ interests and experiences, with a manageable data size from three sources (see Data Collection for details).

To be considered for the study, participants were required to meet the following two criteria: (a) were Chinese-speaking (ESL) students from a university community who had studied in Ontario for at least one year; and (b) had shown interest in the use of mass media. There were two main reasons for my choosing only Chinese participants: (a) A recently released study (“Enrolment Boom,” 2005) found that almost five of every ten international students were from Asia, with 44 per cent of those students from China, and (b) I am a Chinese-speaking student. I have advantaged access to this group of people (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Making use of my current member-based knowledge, I could conduct in-depth interviews to explore the four research questions.

I planned to use two methods to recruit potential participants for this study. The first method was to use the mailing list of the Chinese Students & Scholars Association at a university. It was expected to occur in two stages. An initial message (see Appendix A) that provided a brief overview of this study would be posted by myself on the mailing list. The initial message concluded by asking students who were interested in this study to contact me directly for more information. In response to an inquiry for more information, a Letter of Information (see Appendix B) would be sent to the inquirer directly. In the Letter of Information, I started by identifying myself, clearly stated the purpose of this
study, briefly described the procedures to be used in this study, and introduced the anticipated benefits to the participants from their involvement in the study. I also specified the research setting, what would be required of the participant, and the purpose of the procedures. They were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary. They were not obliged to answer any questions they found objectionable or which made them feel uncomfortable. They were free to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Should anyone wish to withdraw, the procedure would be stopped immediately. They might request the removal of all or part of the data collected from them up to that point. They would be thanked. Their questions or concerns would be addressed. There were no known physical, psychological, economic or social risks associated with participation in this study. There was no remuneration for participation. The contact information for any questions, concerns or complaints was provided at the end of the letter. Students who were interested in participating in this study could contact me directly according to the contact information listed in the letter. Should this method not provide enough participants, a snowball approach would be used.

This proposed study was approved by the General Research Ethics on November 9, 2007. Once I obtained ethics approval to conduct this study from the university, I posted the initial message on the mailing list as described. I waited for two weeks, but no one contacted me for further information or volunteered for this study. As a result, the snowball sampling method was used to recruit the expected participants in this study.

First of all, I approached 10 of my friends, colleagues, and roommates who met the two criteria for being my participants, gave each of them a copy of the Letter of Information either by email or in person, and asked if they were willing to participate in
this study. Five of them agreed to participate and data collection started in December 2007. I also asked this group of participants to use their insider knowledge to suggest some students in their network who possessed common traits that were of research interest. Some of them referred their friends or neighbours who might be willing to talk with me. By the end of February 2008, 10 participants were selected through snowball sampling. However, in March 2008, two students who signed the consent form, decided to withdraw from the study after 14 days of data collection. They did not provide any data relevant to this study. So I had to restart the snowball sampling procedure to identify others and spoke to them, then asked them if they would like to get involved in this study. Twenty-five contacts were made before the final sample of nine was complete. As a result, all the participants (six males and three females), who ranged in age from 25 to 45 were contacted and recruited through the snowball sampling method. They were from seven subject areas. It was expected that these participants could provide a variety of experiences, with a manageable data base from three sources. The snowball method of recruitment proved to be efficient and effective. All the participants were referred to as Chinese-speaking (ESL) students who were registered at a university in Ontario at the time of this study. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect the participant’s identity. Table 1 reports the background information about the participants.
Table 1 Background Information of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Year in Degree Program</th>
<th>Years in Canada</th>
<th>Immigration Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lan</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} year in M.S.</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>International student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} year in M.S.</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>International student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jian</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} year in Ph.D.</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>International student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} year in M.Ed.</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>International student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhen</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} year in Ph.D.</td>
<td>5.5 years</td>
<td>Immigrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wen</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chemical Engineering</td>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} year in Ph.D.</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Immigrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yong</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Geological Sciences &amp; Geological Engineering</td>
<td>7\textsuperscript{th} year in Ph.D.</td>
<td>6.5 years</td>
<td>Immigrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pang</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Mechanical &amp; Materials Engineering</td>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} year in B.Eng.</td>
<td>4.5 years</td>
<td>Immigrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tang</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>School of Business</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} year in B.Com.</td>
<td>7.5 years</td>
<td>Immigrant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All nine participants in this study had had experiences of using mass media in English before starting their degree program at the university. The mass media in English they used were mainly from the United States and Great Britain. Some of the mass media in English were from China. Although all the participants had used the Internet to search for Canadian universities in their application process, only four participants had ever used Canadian mass media other than application materials. These media included Canadian books, novels, and movies.
Previous studies suggest a positive relationship between language competence and the use of the host mass media. For example, in a study of Canadian immigrants, Richmond (1967) reported that “the readership of newspapers and magazines was very closely related to the fluency of the immigrants in either English or French” (pp. 138-139). Kim’s (1977) survey study of Korean immigrants in the United States showed that “the more competent an immigrant is in the host language, the greater will be his use of host mass media” (p. 69), and “the complexity with which an immigrant perceives the host society will be influenced by language competence…. mediated by interpersonal and mass communication experiences” (p. 70). I did not ask the participants’ TOEFL scores at the time they were accepted to the university, which is usually used as an indicator of the students’ English language competence, mainly because their length of stay in Canada ranged from one and a half years to seven and a half years. I had no way to measure their English competence levels objectively. Instead, the participants were asked to estimate their own English competence (e.g., “Are you conscious of your language capability while using the host mass media?” “Is language capability a factor in your choice of different media?” etc.). It was assumed that their subjective evaluation was probably as influential on their use of the host mass media as their actual command of the language.

**Data Collection**

Before the data collection, I fully disclosed the purposes and procedures of this study again, assured participants of absolute confidentiality and anonymity, made sure that there was sufficient time for the participants to discuss the procedures of this study and ask questions regarding all aspects of this study. Each participant was asked to sign a
Consent Form (see Appendix C) that indicated understanding of the study and consent to participate, and was offered a copy of this form to keep.

Based on the research questions and the kind of information I intended to seek from the participants, three methods of data collection were used: (a) media use log, (b) think aloud method, and (c) interview. The data for this study were collected over a five-month period from December 2007 through May 2008. It took 14 consecutive days (two weeks) to complete the media use log and think aloud data collection.

Each participant was asked to fill out a media use log sheet (see Appendix D) to record the media he or she had used throughout the two-week period. The media use log included six columns, and would allow the participants to record the following information: time and duration they used the media, the media type they chose to use, the specific title/column/channel/program/web page etc. they used, their reasons for using the media, their feelings and/or reactions to using the media, and what they have learned from the media. It was expected that the log data could provide a complete record of the participants’ media use experience, and could also enable me to find out the participants’ media use patterns. In addition, each participant was given a digital voice recorder and a think aloud instruction (see Appendix E). During certain periods, at their convenience over the 14 consecutive days, they were asked to follow a think aloud process.

The think aloud method requires the participants to engage in some task and express the thoughts going through their minds as they do so (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). Similar to other methods in collecting qualitative data, the think aloud method “seeks rich, in-depth data from small samples” (Fonteyn, Kuipers & Grobe, 1993, p. 432). In this study, the think aloud method was used by the participants to verbalize their thoughts and
reactions as they were using a host mass medium, for example, describing how a certain medium appeared to them, what they were thinking, what they were doing, and why they were using the medium. I hoped that this method could not only capture the actual behaviour of the participants, but more importantly, it could capture what was going on in their minds—their internal thought processes. For think aloud responses, a total average of approximately 15 minutes/day (from each participant) was ideally sought. All together 31.5 hours of think aloud data were expected from this method.

The completed media use log sheets and think aloud recordings were collected from the participants at the end of the two-week period of data collection for transcription and data analysis. In the end, 20 hours of think aloud data were generated from this method. However, the think aloud method did not work out as I expected. One participant, Wen, did not provide any think aloud data by the end of the two-week time. He explained that he did not feel comfortable talking into a digital recorder. During the process of data collection, some participants contacted me and told me that they found sometimes it was hard for them to speak out their thoughts and describe their reactions while using the mass media. The main reasons were: (1) the verbal protocols interfered with their activities which required a higher level of mental effort; for example, when they were trying to catch and understand the meaning of a news report on the radio, they just wanted to concentrate on the listening, and could not stop to talk; and (2) their verbal efforts interfered with their use of the mass media, especially when they were watching TV or listening to the radio with their friends or families. So they chose to record what they thought and what they did right after their use of the mass media. When I transcribed and analyzed the recordings, I found that most of the participants did the recording after
using the mass media, although some of them did not inform me of their change of method.

Once the transcripts of the think aloud data became available, I began to develop specific interview questions based on the analysis of the data collected from the log and think aloud approach, my research purposes, knowledge of my participants, and hunches about the phenomena I was studying which were informed by the theoretical framework and research literature in intercultural communication and adaptation. This method offered me flexibility in investigating any data that could not be captured in the log and think aloud approaches. It allowed for probing and determining when it was appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth, or even to pose questions about new areas of inquiry that were not originally anticipated (Gall et al., 1996). Nine interview guides (see Appendix F) were generated to tailor for the nine particular participants.

Each participant was interviewed once, by me. Each interview was conducted in my home, or at my office at the university in order to maintain a quiet and friendly environment, and lasted from 60 to 150 minutes. Background questions were asked at the beginning of the interviews. They were framed as questions that get the participants talking about familiar information about demographics, background, and the like; thus to develop a profile for each of them. I also asked some essential questions, e.g. the types of host mass media they usually used in their daily life; their purposes for using different media; and the average time they spent on the media per day, etc. Then, I asked the participants to elaborate some points they mentioned in the log and think aloud sessions. I also discussed with them their predispositional conditions, their feelings about the host environment, their host communication competence, and the influences of host mass
media on their acculturation. Unstructured questions also emerged from topics or ideas that arose from participants’ answers. The participants were given opportunities to freely provide any information concerning their experiences with using host mass media in the host society. I was open to following the leads of participants and probing into areas that arose during interview interactions.

All the interviews were conducted primarily in English. At the same time, the participants were allowed to code switch between English and Chinese during the interviews to accurately express their meanings. According to Rossman and Rallis (1998), an interview should be conducted in a language that feels most comfortable for both the participants and the interviewer. However, I chose to conduct interviews in English and all my participants agreed to be interviewed primarily in English. The reasons for me to choose English rather than Chinese were: (1) all the participants had lived and studied in Canada for at least one and a half years by the time of the interview and were expected to be bilingual; (2) the outcome of this study must be presented in English; (3) translating recordings in Chinese into English would pose other methodological challenges such as the need for back translation; and (4) it was possible that I might not be able to fully capture the subtle meanings of some specific terms and phrases to provide an accurate translation. In most cases, they were able to find a substitute to communicate their intended meanings in English. Chinese was only used in a few occasions. For example, when one of the participants, Pang, wanted to present his acculturation attitude, he was afraid that he could not make himself understood in English, so he switched to Chinese. After the data collection, I translated all the texts in Chinese into English and checked with the participants for accuracy.
To preserve the integrity of data gathered, all interviews were recorded by a
digital voice recorder with the permission of each participant. The recordings provided
me with a permanent record and allowed me to concentrate on the interviews (Kvale,
1996; Robson, 2002). All interviews were transcribed verbatim, resulting in 252 pages of
transcripts. Each participant in this study received a copy of his or her own transcripts
and translation of both think aloud and interview data by email attachment, and had a
chance to check the possible discrepancy between speech and text, deleted or amended
any passages he or she chose. Participants’ feedback helped me improve the quality of
transcripts and translation, thus increasing the accuracy of the collected data. I did not
edit the transcripts when I quoted the participants’ statement in the findings because by
doing so, I might distort what they said and imputed to them too much of my own
interpretation. “At the least, such changes alter the flavour of how people talk. Even
worse, changing the quotes may destroy the evocative messages that the responses give
off” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 272).

Log data, data obtained under concurrent think aloud conditions, coupled with
data obtained from retrospective thinking in a follow-up interview, provided a fairly
complete and detailed description of the participants’ uses, reasoning, and effects of using
host mass media (Fonteyn et al., 1993).

**Data Analysis**

As suggested in McMillan and Schumacher (1997), frequent interim analysis was
used throughout the process of data collection to serve two purposes: “(a) to make
decisions in data collection, and (b) to identify emerging topics and recurring patterns” (p.
507). In my analysis, I focused on the uses and effects as proposed by the uses and
gratifications approach. The findings were also examined with respect to the parameters identified in Kim’s (2001) theoretical framework.

Since the data were collected in two phases (on an ongoing basis)—phase one comprised of media use logs and think aloud protocols, and phase two follow-up interviews, I did an analysis of media use logs and think aloud transcripts. The initial review and analysis of these two sources of data enabled me to decide which areas should be investigated and examined in more detail in the follow-up interview (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For example, one of the participants, Yong, in his media use log, wrote his feelings after watching *Friends* (on DVD): “Funny and relax, but some content are still hard to be understood.” But he did not identify whether he did not understand the language or the content itself. When I read this, I jotted down a question and asked him if he could clarify this point by giving an example. Another participant, Amy, recorded in her think aloud data that when she read the local newspaper, she felt “it’s easier than BBC or CBC. I mean the understanding of each piece of news.” I thought this was an interesting experience and worthy of an in-depth investigation. So I prepared a series of questions for the interview.

By the end of the data collection, I had familiarized myself with the data by reading the media use log sheets, think aloud and interview transcripts several times. At the first stage of analysis, I used a computer to work directly with the three sources of data, selecting sentences and passages and coding by topic on screen by hand for later retrieval and categorization. The participants’ description of their use of host mass media was highlighted gray, the influences of host mass media on their acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation were highlighted bright green, and factors
affecting their host communication competence and acculturation were highlighted pink. This way of coding allowed me to access data and view the context by topic, and carry out the analysis for each topic one at a time (Morse & Richards, 2002).

When the topic coding was complete, the data were organized into three groups: (1) use of host mass media, (2) influences of host mass media on the acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation, and (3) factors affecting host communication competence and acculturation.

Then I began my second stage of analysis, a more detailed and fine-grained analysis, by constantly reading, and marking the media use logs and transcripts. When I re-examined the nine participants’ data, I tried to look both for similarities and differences among them, and identified qualitatively distinct categories that describe the ways in which different participants understand or experience the use of host mass media. In this process, categories of description were developed.

Take the second topic, influences of host mass media on the acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation as an example. In order to make the analysis more explicit and efficient, I created a table (see Appendix G) which included six columns (from the left to the right)—participant’s name, media type, source of data, category, relevant quotes, and my notes and analysis. The first participant’s data I selected to deal with were from Amy. I read through her log and transcripts very carefully, tried to identify what meaning or understanding was reflected at the word level, made excerpts from her log and transcripts, and then aimed at as deep an understanding as possible of what had been said, or what had been meant. For example, Amy expressed that she was astonished to see Western people’s openness about homosexuality. In her
think aloud data, there was a record of her feelings about watching an episode of TV series *Two and a Half Men*:

> You know in China, I have never seen the lesbian or gay. I am sure in China, we have gay or lesbian. Because in China usually they pretend they are the normal people. They have pain inside. They dare not to tell others. They have to pretend. They have to cover themselves. So sometimes they are very painful for them. But here in the Western country, seems everybody can do everything they like. In China, we have discrimination. I guess, why they protect themselves because they don’t like the people’s discrimination on them.

My notes for this quote were: Amy compared Chinese and Westerners’ attitudes towards homosexuality, and believed that the TV shows reflected the sexual freedom in Western society.

After I finished analyzing Amy’s data, I moved on to the next participant until I finished this level of analysis for all the nine participants. Then I broke the individual boundaries; compared each participant’s data with other participants’ data in relation to their respective contexts; looked for similarities and differences from the content of the data; grouped, summarized, and synthesized similar experiences, understandings, and acquisitions mentioned or implied by the participants; identified the critical attributes and features that distinguish the groups from one another. In this way, an initial set of categories was developed at this stage, which included: (1) media as sources of information, (2) language acquisition through media, and (3) culture learning.

With these initial categories in mind, I reexamined the media use log and transcripts to determine if the categories were sufficiently descriptive and indicative of the data. Each category was then refined and divided into subcategories as the data were analyzed. For example, the third category, culture learning was further divided into seven subcategories, which included: (1) Is there a Canadian culture? (2) cultural distance
between China and Canada, (3) educating children in Canada, (4) sex/relationships/social roles, (5) family values, (6) social customs, and (7) religious belief.

This third round review of the data also resulted in modification, addition, or deletion of the original set of categories of description across topics. For example, when I reread Yong’s interview transcripts, I found Yong mentioned that one of the main reasons he read sports news in newspapers was to find a common topic to communicate with his Canadian colleagues: “I learn many different games of hockey, hockey teams….I think this is because if you learn a little bit about this, you can talk and can communicate with your officemate.” This statement did not fall into any identified categories or subcategories in the second topic. So, as I re-examined other participants’ data, I tried to locate if other participants had expressed the similar idea. From Zhen’s interview transcripts, I found Zhen thought “talking about movie was a very good topic with people you’re not very familiar with,” and she felt she needed to “update some movies…. It’s a good vehicle to communicate.” Amy also expressed that keeping up to date with news helped her find common topics to share with others. As a result, I moved this part of data to the third topic, and included them as a factor affecting communication competence and acculturation.

This process of modification and data review continued until the modified categories and subcategories seemed to be consistent with the collected data, and the whole system of meanings was stabilized. Then I reapplied them to the data from which they originated, and tried to develop a deep understanding of what had been said or meant by the participants. From this step analysis, I found that these categories or subcategories were logically related to each other, and represented different ways of thinking and
learning. For example, both Yong and Pang read *The Bible* regularly, but they had different feelings and understandings. Yong thought: “Lots of words in *The Bible* like teaching…. My feeling is all these words are right. What *The Bible* said is like I can feel deeply from my heart.” Pang believed that *The Bible* was “the base of Western moral system,” and had “a great influence on the Western society.” *The Bible* also changed his “thinking about a lot of things,” and helped him “understand the society of Canada.” But he could not accept all the teachings, for example, “love your enemy.” Pang believed that “there’re love and hatred in this world…. it’s impossible that there’s no hatred, only love.” When I checked on what occasion they started reading *The Bible*, I found differences too. Yong started reading *The Bible* when he felt he “had no standard to follow” in his real life. At that time, *The Bible* “pointed out the right way” for him. It was “kind of like eternal standards,” made him feel “very peaceful, and comfortable.” Pang’s wife was a Christian. She often encouraged him to read *The Bible*. Pang would read *The Bible* when he was free or felt bored. To Pang, *Bible* reading was a way of learning the Western culture and improving his English. This comparison result indicates that using the same material in different contexts and for different purposes leads to different kinds of learning and understanding. Through examining the information within and between each category and subcategory, I came up with overall descriptions of the topic I was studying.

In the fifth round of review of the data, I concentrated on each individual participant again. I compared each category with other categories within and across topics, and tried to find out if there were any interrelationships between certain categories and topics. For example, one of my findings was: the type and amount of media the
participants selected to use were related to their level of English language proficiency, and acculturation attitude as well. To be more specific, according to Lan’s media use log and think aloud data, she only watched TV occasionally, either in a restaurant or at a friend’s place. In the interview data, she explained that she had no TV at home and had no plan to buy one, because she was not sure how much she could understand from watching and listening to the TV program. Her limited listening ability discouraged her from using TV as a medium either for information or for entertainment. She would rather rely on other mass media, for example, the Internet, as she was much more confident about her reading competence. Another reason she gave for not watching TV was her lack of interest in knowing what happened in Canada. She was only concerned about “kind of news will affect my life” such as the university’s policy on international students. This level of analysis explained individual differences in the use of the host mass media.

Using the categories derived from the three sources of data, and the logical relations found between the categories of description, an outcome space was established. The categories represent a collective experience of using the host mass media, and the outcome space shows how the categories are logically related to each other.

**Chapter Summary**

This phenomenographic study was designed to investigate Chinese ESL students’ use of the host mass media; the intention they hold in mind when attending to certain media; and the influences of the host mass media on their acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation. A snowball sampling approach was used to recruit the expected participants in this study. Parameters for selection included volunteer Chinese-speaking (ESL) students from a university community who had
studied in Ontario for at least one year, and had shown interest in the use of host mass media. To assure some variety in the students’ experiences, the final selection reflected differences in age, gender and academic subject areas. The participants were six male students and three female students from seven subject areas. Sources of data included media use logs, think aloud protocols, and follow-up interviews. In keeping with phenomenographic research method, interim analysis was used to analyse the media use logs and transcripts. I kept rereading and reexamining the data, searching for categories and subcategories, and developing an outcome space for the topic. In the following chapters, chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, I present the data that were collected and results from the initial analysis process.
CHAPTER 5
USE OF MEDIA

The findings of this study are presented in four chapters—Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8. They are organized around the four research questions and the theoretical framework elaborated in Chapter 3. In this chapter, I present nine participants’ use of the host mass media. First, I present eight types of media they commonly used, and the intention they held in mind when attending to each medium. These media are structured in a sequence from the most used medium to the least used medium. Secondly, I describe factors that affected the participants’ media choice (as indicated by themselves), which include language capability and lack of cultural background knowledge.

Data collected from three sources (log, think-aloud, interview) were quoted and interpreted throughout the findings and analysis. To facilitate tracking and better understanding of the data, I coded them as follows: LD represents log data; TD represents think-aloud data; and ID represents interview data. When I quoted, I attached this coding information after each participant’s name. Therefore, if it is log data from Jian, it is represented as “Jian LD”; if it is think-aloud data from Zhen, it is represented as “Zhen TD”; and if it is interview data from Yong, it is represented as “Yong ID”.

Amount of Media Use

The length of time participants spent on using the host mass media (excluding academic related purposes) differed substantially, from half an hour per day (Pang) to five or six hours per day (Jian). Amy said that she “used mass media all the time, except sleep.” The most frequently used medium was the Internet.
Internet

All the participants daily devoted a large amount of time to the use of the Internet because of its fast speed, low cost, rich information, high efficiency, multi-functions, and convenience. The common uses of the Internet included searching for multiple information, communication, entertainment, online reservations, online banking, online shopping, language and culture learning.

All the participants used the Internet to search for various kinds of information which included background knowledge about Canada (e.g., people, history, holidays, law, and immigration policy etc.), education, health, career, food (e.g., cooking, restaurants), travel, and readers’ feedback on different issues. All the participants used the Internet to access news and magazines about Canada, China, and international affairs (see more details in different themes). Seven participants (except Henry and Lan) had used the Internet for job searches and career information, either for part-time jobs on campus or full-time jobs off campus. They all had successful experiences in finding a position suitable to their own interests. Six participants (Amy, Henry, Jian, Wen, Yong, and Zhen) used the Internet to find travel information such as attractions, events, accommodation, shopping, and advice etc. Five participants used mapquest or googlemap to get directions. Three participants (Lan, Wen, and Yong) used the Internet to check weather.

All the participants used email as a tool to communicate either for academic purposes or to socialize with friends.

You know sometimes you have to check the email to see whether your supervisor would like to meet you or something. You know a lot of things here. Sometimes for my study. You know sometimes we have to communicate with our classmates. I find Internet is more often used than mobile phone. In China, if I don’t have a mobile phone, I will be isolated. But here, I don’t have a mobile phone. The email
is like my mobile phone. So I guess that’s different cultures. I mean the Chinese culture and Western culture. (Amy ID)

I use the Internet to check email. This is one of the most efficient ways to communicate with people nowadays in Canada, linking you with friends in China, and linking you also with friends all over the world, to talk about what happened in a couple of days, to know what happened to them in their country. (Jian ID)

Some participants (e.g., Lan) used some software attached to the email system to send greetings to friends and relatives.

Also, this evening, I checked my email from the website. From the email, I received a reminder of my friend’s birthday. I think this one is very important for me. About one year ago, one of my friends’ sent me this reminder system. So from this way, it’s no need for me to remember each friend’s birthday exactly. I mean, keep in my mind. So it’s no need for me to do this, because when I sign in this system, or when my friends’ birthday coming, this system will send a reminder message. I think it’s three times. So in this way, I will never miss my friends’ birthday. When the day is coming, I can send E-card to them. This kind of E-card is free, of course. It’s especially useful and helpful for friends who live outside Canada. If I choose the traditional birthday card, I have to mail them. It always takes about one month, so I think this way is very, very important for me. Yeah, E-card! In this way, I can type my congratulation words. Also, I can attach music. For the traditional birthday card, I can’t do this. So I like this way. (Lan TD)

Eight participants (except Pang) had selected and installed some chat software (e.g., MSN, QQ, Google Talk, VOIP, and Skype, etc.) to have live talk or to make phone calls to their friends or families in Canada and other countries, because of its convenience and low cost. But none of them reported using this technology to communicate with any Canadian colleagues or friends.

I only chat with my parents through MSN. Because my parents want to see me, see my face through the web camera. (Yong ID)

Because now I have the web camera, and I can chat with my friends and my family today. I used MSN, QQ to contact my friends. And I used VOIP and Skype to make a phone call to my family. I feel very happy to keep in touch with them. And I can show, I can tell them how I spend my Christmas Day in Canada. And they can tell me how’s everything going recently. (Henry TD)
We talk from QQ, MSN, Skype this kind of things. Compared to the traditional contact method, I prefer online because it’s fast, it’s easy, and it’s free, or maybe cost much less than the traditional way such as telephone. Also I can make call online. So, much better than the traditional ones. (Lan TD)

All the participants used the Internet to listen online and download their favourite music, either from the Chinese websites or English websites. Five participants (Henry, Lan, Tang, Wen, and Zhen) used the Internet to download movies and TV programs they were interested in or watched online. Two participants (Henry and Tang) used the Internet to listen to the radio. The radio programs that Henry listened to were from Chinese stations. Three participants (Henry, Lan, and Yong) used the Internet to download pictures. Henry and Lan collected pictures to satisfy their aesthetic needs. Yong searched a lot of beautiful pictures for the PowerPoint presentation at his church events.

Four participants (Henry, Jian, Pang, and Wen) occasionally played games (e.g., poker, chess, billiards, etc.) on the Internet. None of them were addicted to the games. They played games to relax. For some games (e.g., poker and chess), it would be “more interesting to play with other players” (Wen ID). In that case, they would find their friends or partners on the Internet, and set a time to play together. “It’s good for relax, and also it’s a chance for you to communicate with your friends” (Jian LD).

Three participants (Zhen, Yong, and Lan) used the Internet to search for different kinds of entertainment information.

I also checked the American Idol website today for five minutes. Just to update what’s happening this week. I am just curious to see who is out this week. It’s one of my favorite shows. I watched the American Idol for, this is my third year. Not at the very beginning, because at the very beginning, some people, they can’t sing. They’re still on the show. They make themselves very silly, which I don’t like. But when it’s down to top 24, it’s so interesting to watch. And the judges are fun. They make good comments, constructive annotation. They make the show so
entertaining. I don’t think I have ever seen a similar show that successful. I also googled the Canadian Idol, and wondered, “Well, after all we are in Canada, it seems normal that we talk the Canadian Idol. But almost nobody talked about it. Not only me, people who are not really Canadians, but also the real Canadians. The one who recommended me this show, a Canadian professor in our faculty, he only talked about American Idol. He never mentioned Canadian Idol at all. He’s very proud to tell me that he drove all the way down to Illinois to watch the first American Idol, Kelly Clarkson’s real live show. When I googled the American Idol, one of the news pops out. It says three nights of Idol beat one Oscar night. And I like the 17-year-old contestant, David Archuleta. He outshines the competition with his poise and confidence, p-o-i-s-e. At first, I don’t think he’s the best, but now I think he’s so lovable. And the host, Seacrest said: “Ladies, you can only vote for him, you actually can’t adopt him.” (Zhen TD)

Yong used the Internet to check reviews and comments on different movies to help him choose the movies he wanted to watch.

Because when I want to watch a movie, but I don’t know which movie is good. So I want to find some visions about the movie, because sometimes the promotion clip is very attractive, but people’s comments on the Internet are not very positive. I think it’s a good tool. Usually it’s good. (Yong ID)

All the participants had used the Internet to make various kinds of reservations. For examples, all the participants booked air tickets online; all the participants used the Internet to book a road test; seven participants (except Pang and Tang) used the Internet to book a hotel or motel room when they travelled out of town for conference or vacation; four participants (Pang, Wen, Yong, and Zhen) used the Internet to rent a car; and Tang used his computer at home to reserve a computer at the public library for his son if they planned to go there at a specific time.

Eight participants (except Wen) used online banking to manage their accounts, such as paying bills, transfer money between accounts because of its speed and convenience. Most of them trusted the credit and security system of the bank. Some of them (e.g., Henry and Tang) used some software to protect their computers. “Well, if it’s
not my mistake, the bank will reimburse me.” (Tang ID) Wen chose not to use online banking because of his concerns on the security of the Internet.

Five participants (Henry, Lan, Wen, Yong, and Zhen) used online flyers for shopping information. All the participants used online shopping as a way of purchasing certain products. Some participants (e.g., Wen and Lan) chose it because some products were not available locally or were only available online. Some participants (e.g., Jian, Ying, and Yong) chose it because of its convenience, detailed information, and low cost in price and transportation.

This morning, I looked at the Internet at futureshop.ca and bestbuy.ca, looking for laptops. The prices are going down so quickly. And new laptops are much less expensive than before. I am trying to look for a laptop that’s smaller and lighter, and still better in capacity, and faster in speed. So that I can save those movies I have downloaded. Don’t need to worry whether I need to delete it or not. It seems that everything is just routine, nothing special. This is the best way for looking for some merchandise, compare prices, and see if there’s any on promotion, compare models, compare stores, and also compare the detailed description. So I am really satisfied. (Zhen TD)

Online banking and online shopping were new ways of managing and spending money to most Chinese students when they came to Canada. Jian felt that online shopping, in particular, implied some cultural differences between China and Canada.

Searching or buying commodities on the Internet has lot of significant cultural implications. It’s not common to buy products or commodities in China online. And the most favourable means for people in China to shopping is just to shop on spot. I think the first reason is different personal mentalities between Chinese people and Canadians. For Chinese people, they think if they buy the things on the Internet, it’s not as secure as they buy these things in the shop or the market in person. They want to make sure everything is going on well by themselves. And the second reason maybe, Visa and Master Card are not commonly used, especially in a lot of rural areas in China, because the credit system is not strongly set up as it is here. As Chinese are also on the way towards modernization, the new technology is not as advanced as what is developed here. Shopping on the Internet is still on its long march towards its popularity in China. (Jian TD)
All the participants regarded the Internet as a good tool for learning English and the host culture (see more details in different themes).

In this study, Henry was the only participant who enjoyed most of his media use activities through the Internet (except listening to his MP3. Many songs in his MP3 were downloaded from the Internet). He believed that the Internet was more effective than other media in fulfilling certain needs, and could replace some traditional mass media in the future.

You know, not only me, but most of my friends, don’t watch movie now, don’t listen to the radio now. We just use the Internet, the multimedia to get information. I think gradually, the Internet, as a multimedia will replace some of the traditional media, such as radio, TV, and newspaper. (Henry ID)

Jian also believed that the Internet was “the most inclusive, comprehensive, and practical medium nowadays.” However, the great influences of newspaper, books, magazines, radio, and television could not be ignored either.

If you get on a bus, you can read a newspaper, a book, or a magazine. If you don’t want to read, you can close your eyes and listen to the radio. Radio is not only portable, but very cheap in cost. When you’re at home, if you don’t want to read, you don’t want to listen to the radio, you can turn on the TV. Television is able to offer the audience vivid images and audio-visual personal experience, which is far beyond the reach of radio. That all depends on their unique characteristics and your own situation. I think it’s very hard to say that a single mass medium will have all the influences on an individual. I think they just work together, and have a great influence on every person, provide an environment or surrounding that is filled with information, though it’s a little dominated by the Internet. (Jian TD)

Although Internet was the predominant medium they used today, it also has its own limitations. Besides using certain software to chat with people, Internet remains a one-way communication—human being to machine. Sometimes, the communication was not as vivid and effective as interpersonal communication.

I get information not only from Canadian websites, but all around the world. But the Internet can’t give me the interpersonal, live communication information. So I
still need to talk with people, and then to learn what’s really going on, especially, for example, the subtle cultural differences between China and Canada, you must talk to people to get that. You can’t get that from the Internet. (Tang ID)

Internet is not accessible everywhere to everyone. In some situations, it is not as attractive and convenient as the traditional media.

The Internet is not accessible everywhere, not to mention the popularity of the laptop is the prerequisite, which is even harder to fulfill. I don’t think Internet is the only medium I am using today. I think I’ve got a lot of different choices of other mass media, because every single mass medium has its own advantages. For example, TV. It will provide you with a leisure and comfortable status when you’re relaxing. You’ll enjoy the whole effect of TV, more choices on different channels, the audio-visual effect. It couldn’t be produced by the Internet. It depends on your expectation. Also, the visual enjoyment of reading magazines is very difficult to fulfil online, because the screen is very limited. It will very easily separate a single page. So you have to scroll up and down. Maybe the picture is the same. If you read it from the magazine, wow, it’s gorgeous. But if it’s online, it might be divided into two pages. (Jian ID)

This evening I checked the bus schedule, not from the website, from the schedule publication …. Yes, sometimes the website is convenient, but it depends. If I didn’t turn on my computer, so it will need about at least five or ten minutes to turn it on, and to wait to connect to the Internet. So sometimes the publication, I mean the printed hard copy, yeah, is more convenient. How can you imagine that when I want to transfer or when I shop, I open my laptop and check the bus schedule or the flyers online? (Lan TD)

They could easily be distracted by the enormous information online, and overused it unconsciously.

Disadvantage, like the Internet, sometimes you can know everything from the Internet. Sometimes I am online for a long time, and I forget what I should do. Actually I should go online to look for some papers, academic information. But sometimes I will keep reading all the exciting news, all the interesting things. This attracts me a lot. So I forget my primary purpose. Sometimes since I have used the Internet for a long time, I feel my eyes are painful. (Amy ID)

In addition, some participants (e.g., Wen, Zhen, and Jian) had expressed their concerns about the security of online banking and shopping, and the disclosure of personal information to different parties.
I don’t trust Internet security. I have very little knowledge about anti-virus, so I am afraid of using Internet. I prefer use telephone banking or to the bank to do my banking stuff. (Wen ID)

I do shop online, not very often. But only do online shopping with those big stores. Maybe there’re still risks. (Zhen ID)

What I want to emphasize here is some disadvantages of shopping online, from a sociological perspective. As I mentioned before, I submitted an email, submitted an application to be provided weekly E-flyer by informing the company my email address. By knowing my email address, the company will have means of knowing who I am, my location and my interest. But the case will be even worse when you buy things on the Internet, because if you want to buy things on the Internet, you have to pay by Master Card or Visa Card, which will tell the company your specific personal information which might be a secret. It is fairly easy for the company or the government to know the individual activity. And in the long run, the control of the society becomes much more unconscious, and strong and firm. It forbids your personal will and personal freedom as well. (Jian TD)

*Flyers*

All the participants in this study used the flyers (either in hardcopy or online or both) for sales and saving information. “If you can compare different flyers from various stores, you can buy good products while you pay less. So it’s useful.” (Tang ID) They were most attracted to the weekly grocery flyers from the local stores. Price, quality, and the location of the stores were the most important elements they looked for. They believed that promotional flyers helped them save time and money; and helped the stores publicize their business and items at the same time. But none of them wanted to pay for any “good deals” they did not need.

Six participants (Henry, Jian, Lan, Pang, Tang, and Wen) read flyers as a habit. Five participants (Henry, Jian, Lan, Pang, and Zhen) mentioned they had learned a lot of daily-life vocabulary from reading the flyers in the first few years. Four participants (Jian, Lan, Pang, and Zhen) believed that the flyers reflected the social and cultural reality of the host society (e.g., food culture, marketing strategies, etc.). Two participants (Henry
and Yong) did not think flyers reflected any social and cultural values of the host society, “just advertise the products” (Henry ID), and “just directly give the sale information” (Yong ID).

Every Friday, Pang picked up a copy of flyers from the newspaper rack. Reading the weekly flyers had become a part of his life, “like a habit …. to find what’s on sale in each store, the price, the location, and decide what I will buy next day.” Aside from using flyers as a medium for information, Pang had learned a lot of names of food, tools, clothing, electronics, and auto accessories, etc., “because they have pictures in the flyer. First, I look for the picture. Then, I check the name. So this is a very direct way to learn.” Furthermore, the different pictures and names of food, for example, made him realize that flyers also displayed “Canada’s cultural diversity” to some degree.

Zhen did not read flyers as often as Pang did. She would only pick up a hardcopy during holidays, or when she had “something in mind,” because she had already “figured out where to buy” what she needed “at the lowest cost.” She said that she seldom used flyers as a guide for shopping when she was in China, but “many things in life have changed” since she came to Canada.

I am thinking about the stores in China. Do they have very different features? I don’t know. Maybe because when I was back in China, we are the so called middle class. We are paid well, so we usually don’t pay much attention to what kind of store are cheaper, which ones are expensive. But here, as graduate students, I think we’re more sensitive in terms of the price. (Zhen TD)

Zhen also mentioned that in the first few years, she did learn some vocabulary from the flyers, but had never paid attention to the “features of different stores” or “their target customers” until her fifth year in Canada.

One thing I have noticed some promotion about cheese, most of us, we don’t like cheese. I don’t think a Chinese store flyer in Toronto or Vancouver will put
cheese on the first page. But if they have a promotion on cheese, they will put it on the first page. That is something different. It reflects the people’s eating habit, what they think is the most necessary in the local people’s life. Those stuff will be on sale more often and to attract customers. (Zhen ID)

Lan preferred reading flyers online, although there were free hardcopies available at the main entrance of her residence building. She thought it was more convenient to find the information online, because “You know if you bring several hardcopy of flyers upstairs, you have to bring it down to the recycle box.” Availability and price were the two important considerations: “First, I will check whether there’s something I want to buy, and I will check the price. So if the price is attractive enough, I will go there.” Sometimes she was annoyed by “the tricks” on some shops’ flyers. “For one step, they give you an attractive price, at the corner there’re some small size characters, maybe said only this brand or that brand, something like this.” (Lan ID)

She thought these kinds of tricks were very common in flyers. Lan said reading the flyers was a very efficient way of learning the daily-life vocabulary such as food, clothing, stationary, and electronic products etc. because “the flyer’s pictures were the best explanation, because some of the things we don’t have in China, for example, like some fruits.” It was also a source for her to “get some ideas about the shopping culture” in Canada. She had learned to shop accordingly.

Boxing Day, for example. So in China, there’s no Boxing Day. At first year, I don’t know what is Boxing Day. So I see the flyer, it means nearly most of things half price. I see many, many information, the price of it, the description of it, and the details of the products. So I can choose which one I like. I was deeply surprised and also deeply know how important the flyer is. On the Boxing Day, the shop always opens at six o’clock, and get limited products in each shop. So I get up early to wait in line. (Lan ID)
Jian used flyers (both online and hard copy) as a “guide” for shopping, and subscribed to a few mailing lists to receive promotion information by email. Gradually, he figured out some promotion patterns and marketing strategies. For example,

When you’re reading the flyers from different supermarkets, one thing that is very obvious is that the things on promotion in each supermarket are different in certain period. What I mean is that, for example, in this week, the promotion in Food Basics is pork. On the other hand, the promotion in Loblaws won’t be pork anymore, maybe lamb, because they don’t want to conflict with each other. So both the supermarkets will survive. (Jian ID)

Sometimes, like Lan, Jian felt disturbed by the “cheating” strategies deployed by the stores.

I often buy their tricky things. They got a picture on blueberry, very attractive price. That is one dollar. But besides one dollar, you will find if you don’t read carefully, you won’t find the weight is just 100 gram. So you have to pay careful attention to the advertisement except the price, but also the weight. That’s one of the purposes of the advertising. They want to make profits. (Jian ID)

Sometimes, he saw it as a “kind of learning opportunity.” Jian felt that advertisement was not simply a message of selling or promoting a product, but rather “a process of psychology”, “a process of communication” and “a process of negotiation.” He thought about himself as a product. To sell a product, people need to advertise it. There were a lot of advertising strategies in business. He thought he could apply those advertising strategies he learned to promote himself.

Advertisements tell you the ways to do business. Advertising also tells a lot about social implications. For example, how they persuade you to buy a thing; how you’re persuaded to buy a thing. It’s a process of psychology. It’s a process of communication. Maybe not face to face. It’s also a process of negotiation. These are all very important strategies. It’s a little sociological as well. By seeing how they make a product popular, you can learn how to make yourself popular. If you think advertisement is a kind of trade between selling and buying of a commodities, yourself is a kind of commodity that you need to advertise by yourself. (Jian ID)
He also saw reading flyers as a way of increasing his daily-life vocabulary, and learning “cultural implications.” Jian liked fashion, so he was very interested in reading the flyers from different department stores. He was impressed by some stores’ selection of fashion models.

I have seen some flyers of S & R, because S & R sells a lot of clothes. Yeah, I remember one thing that is during the Christmas promotion. They’re going to sell a lot of new clothes. I can see the models are all white people, no visible minority …. To me, it means a lot. First of all, Christmas might be a festival for the white people. Three white kids, happily hand in hand, in very beautiful clothes …. You will see a lot of women, but all these women are white, wearing very fashionable clothes. I should say it has a lot of implications. (Jian ID)

Tang had seen reading flyers as a habit, but he also had some unsatisfied experiences in reading flyers. He recorded in his think-aloud data that when he read flyers online, he was often confused by the notes “available while quantity last” or “limited amount” on some items for sale, because most of the time, when he got there, those marked items were sold out. So he searched on the Internet and found an article, which listed a number of tricks played by some retailers.

I found an interesting article on MSN.ca. Its title is Retailers’ Most Annoying Tricks. This article discusses a dozen of the most common complaints among the customers …. Generally, it’s interesting to know that the retailers in North America use those tricky manoeuvres to mislead or cheat their customers or make their customers feel uncomfortable. (Tang TD)

From the list, he learned which stores he should avoid in the future.

TV

Two participants (Lan and Henry) did not have traditional TV sets in their homes. They often downloaded TV programs from the Internet or watched TV online. Tang did not watch TV except with his children. They watched TV for entertainment, information, knowledge, language and culture learning. Most of the TV programs (e.g., movies, TV
series, news reports, and talk shows, etc.) they watched were produced in the United States. Four participants (Jian, Lan, Pang, and Yong) confessed that they had difficulties in fully understanding the TV programs.

Henry would download his favourite TV programs when he was not using his computer for school work. He only watched those downloaded programs at weekends for entertainment. He believed that some TV programs, such as *Prison Break*, reflected the reality of the U.S. society.

I think the TV program or movie is a mirror of the society. I think some of the stories maybe happen in the real world to some extent. I believe the powerful control of the U.S. government described in this program does exist. (Henry ID)

Lan watched TV programs online. Her favourite TV series was *Friends* as “it’s a way to relax.” Sometimes she went to a friend’s place to watch *Discovery* channel “for knowledge.” She seldom watched online TV news report because she did not have “such a habit even in China.” Without caption, she felt “a little bit difficult to catch every word” because of the “new words,” “speed of their talking”, and “lack of background knowledge.” So, one of her main purposes of watching TV was to practice her listening ability.

Wen did not watch TV very often. He was only interested in watching movies on TV, mainly for entertainment, rather than language acquisition, although, as a result, he might “learn a few new words every time.”

I think, when I want to watch a movie, my first priority is I am interested in the material of the movie. I don’t care about how to improve my English. I just take the easy way. I just turn on the caption, the subtitle. It helps me to explain what’s going on about the movie. So, recreation first, and maybe language second. (Wen ID)

Jian only watched TV occasionally, mainly for two reasons:
For example, like the talk show. This kind of program is very cultural specific. I am not quite accustomed to the slang, or phrases, or proverbs. I think slang and proverbs are kind of informal words often used in talk shows, which might be a little bit difficult for me to understand, because students from China begin to pick up English in a very, very formal way. The second reason is: I don’t have time. I don’t have so much time to get access to so many mass media. I have my own preference. TV is not my favorite mass medium. (Jian ID)

When he turned on the TV, his main purpose was to improve his English listening ability.

Pang had the habit of watching TV news every night after dinner when he was in China. Usually the program included “local, national, and world news.” He did not change this habit after immigrating to Canada, but watched much less than before. Since he did not have cable services at home, he could only watch the local news. He said that watching TV news was “like a window to see, to know the host society.” Sometimes he watched TV series, but could not “follow the language.” His son and his wife might explain to him when he asked for help. He thought watching TV could help him “improve listening skills and spoken English.”

Amy liked watching TV very much. Her initial purpose for watching TV was to learn English (e.g., “some new words or new expressions”). When she first arrived in Canada, she did not like to watch TV programs without closed captions, because she was not able to hear the audio content clearly. One and a half years later, she could select any channel she liked. Although she could not catch every word all the time, she could “still feel and guess based on what has already been done before that, and have a general idea about what it is.” Watching TV had become a major way to relax and entertain herself. Sometimes she felt that she had spent too much time on TV and became “sort of addicted.”
Sometimes if I watch TV, I will be interested in this program, and keep watching, watching until midnight when I have to go to bed. It’s occupying my whole evening. Sometimes I can’t concentrate on my study. (Amy ID)

*Fox 29* and *Peachtree* were the two channels she watched most regularly, “because as you know, the Americans always have good programs, like good package on the program.” *CSI, Prison Break, and Two and a Half Men* were the TV series she watched during the data collection process. She watched *Peachtree* for movies. Only occasionally did she watch the local TV channels.

When she watched TV, she often saw a warning on the screen before a TV show, which meant the content was a bit risky or not proper for younger children.

The following program contains violence and mature subjects. Viewer discretion is strongly advised. Something like that. The suggestion is that children shouldn’t watch it. In China, no such kind of information would be provided, because such kind of programs would not be broadcasted on television. (Amy ID)

She thought this was cultural difference. To Amy, television was also a very useful medium to learn about the norms, values, customs, attitudes, and acceptable behaviours of the host society. She believed that most of the movies and TV programs were based on real life or reflected real life. For example, it seemed to her that

In Canada, people respect freedom. TV was a platform for freedom. People could use the TV series or movies to disclose the dark secret of the government as in TV series *Prison Break*, or big companies as was in movie *The Island* …. Like in the comedy show *Royal Canadian Air Farce*, you can make a joke on George W. Bush or on Harper. But in China, you never get the chance. (Amy ID)

But sometimes she suspected that some values had been overstated or distorted. For example, she was moved by the love and caring between the brothers in *Prison Break*, but could not believe the younger brother “could sacrifice his whole life to help his older brother escape his death sentence.” She also could not believe nor accept the “weird”
mother-son relationship in the Harper’s family in *Two and a Half Men*, “because in China, usually the kids should respect their parents.”

Yong watched TV everyday, 20 minutes for news and the weather report, 30 minutes for TV series *Friends*. He said that for most of the time, he was very satisfied with watching these two programs. From the news report, he knew “what’s happening in Canada and around the world.” From *Friends*, he “got a good laugh after a whole day’s hard work;” and at the same time, “learned a lot about culture.” Sometimes, he would watch reports on some special events (e.g., Afghanistan War) for information and knowledge. Sometimes, he would watch programs on outdoor activities for entertainment. When he watched TV, he would turn on the captions to help with his listening and comprehension. Gradually, he found that he no longer relied on the captions as much as before.

Usually, I turn on the captions. But I found I have some changes actually. Because I always turned on the caption when I watched TV or DVD, but in this year, especially this year or last year, I think maybe my English is getting better. So I just see very few times. I found very relaxed, because I can understand most of them. Because if you watch the captions, you have to focus yourself, try to get the meaning, and very concentrated. Now, I think I learn more about culture too. (Yong ID)

Yong thought that watching TV was a tool for learning the social and cultural norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours of North American society, which was very useful information for his life in Canada. He believed that what happened among the six friends reflected the reality of North American society, even though the stories were based in New York.

The *Friends* background city is New York. It doesn’t matter where. I think the similar story, very possibly could happen in Toronto, for sure. I think there’s no surprise, because they have the same culture, same language. So I think it’s very possible. (Yong ID)
Zhen had a TV at home, but she only watched it at daytime, when her son was out for school. When she had time, she would download some TV programs to her computer. “Whenever I was bored, I just opened one episode, just to give myself a good laugh, and continue with my work.” So she watched TV mainly for entertainment.

Zhen said that almost all the TV programs she watched were from the United States. She thought Canadian TV shows were not very interesting. When I watch TV, I also watch Americans. Maybe there’re Canadian TV as well, but because you have so many choices, so you can change channels. Those one that you stop are usually American TV shows. I used to watch Friends a lot …. Now I start to watch Boston Legal which is a little bit more difficult, because there’re a lot of conversations happened in the court, law case. Still, I don’t think I can get all of them …. Sometimes I comfort myself, even if it’s in Chinese, say, the legal terms, I still don’t understand. (Zhen ID)

Zhen also thought that watching TV was a way of improving listening and speaking abilities. She was the only participant who did not use the captions when she watched TV programs. She said that she could “not get everything, but won’t bother.” Caption is usually a few seconds later than the spoken language. So I don’t like it. I need to listen, and I need to look at this, and look at that, and they didn’t match really well. So I don’t want to bother. I can understand the most of it. If I can’t understand the most of it, I will switch the channel. Why bother? (Zhen ID)

At the same time, Zhen said that from the TV shows, she had learned some social and cultural information about North America, and the knowledge she learned could be useful in her acculturation to Canadian life. “I can’t say which episode or which plot directly affected me. I can’t recall that. But subconsciously it did.” For example, after watching Friends, she had a feeling that TV series had tried to use different funny stories to teach people different aspects of life.

Life can have ups and downs. Maybe compared with the Chinese young people, even though this group of young people also struggle for life, career, they don’t
think this is all of their life. There’re something else aside from career. But we might think that is almost everything we need. I can appreciate that. (Zhen ID)

However, Zhen did not believe or had some “doubt” that the TV shows “always reflected the reality.”

For example, one question I have after watching so many TV shows is: Are these really typical of American people’s life? I don’t think so. Maybe one sort of 艺术夸张 [artistic exaggeration]. Like in Friends, the friendship between young people. People are from different classes. Phoebe is from the street. Rachel is from a very wealthy family. But they are very good friends. It seems their friendship becomes boundless. It’s not limited by their education, or social class, and social status. Is it ordinary American young men’s life? If this kind of thing really happens in real life, then Americans they become friends with a wider range. But I really doubt about that. (Zhen ID)

Movies

Two participants (Yong and Zhen) went out to movies regularly. Three participants (Amy, Tang, and Wen) had been out to movies a few times since they came to Canada. Four participants (Henry, Jian, Lan, and Pang) had never watched a movie at the theatre, either because of the high expense or lack of time. All of them had the experiences of watching movies on DVD at home. Six of them (Amy, Pang, Tang, Ying, Yong, and Zhen) had watched movies on TV. Five participants (Henry, Lan, Tang, Wen, and Zhen) used the Internet to download movies they were interested in or watched online. Almost all the English movies they watched were produced in the United States. Six participants (Amy, Henry, Jian, Lan, Yong, and Zhen) had never watched a Canadian movie. In this study, Amy was the one who watched movies most frequently, two or three movies each week. She did not think Canada had its own movies: “almost all the movies are produced by American people.” Zhen was “not aware of any Canadian movies” either. Pang only watched one Canadian movie three years ago when he studied at ESL school. They watched movies mainly for entertainment. All the participants thought that
watching movies in English was a good tool for learning English. Eight of them (except Zhen) would turn on the captions when they watched movies at home. Usually they listened to the dialogues in English, and read the caption in English or Chinese. They also agreed that some movies reflected the social and cultural history and reality of Western society (e.g., Yong, Lan, and Zhen).

Every month, Yong would go out with his wife for a movie to relax and for fun. Sometimes he would choose movies from which he could “know some culture.”

For example, once we went to a movie, a history movie about the Queen of Elizabeth. So we just want to know more about the culture, the history of the Western country. (Yong ID)

From a movie entitled *Horton Hears a Who*, Yong learned “an important moral theme.”

It’s a very funny story. It’s a cartoon. I think the most important information this director wants to show us is whatever, how people are small, or how weak they are, or how poor they are, we should help them. You can’t just because those people are not very important to you, so you don’t want to help them or ignore them. Even those people are very small, nobody knows that, but if you know they’re there, you should help them. They need help. The information is very healthy, and very important. (Yong ID)

Unlike Yong, Lan had never watched a movie at the theatre. She liked to watch “classic movies” online, and believed that watching movies was a very good way to “learn some values in the host culture.”

That movie, *BJ’s Diary* told me people should be confident. For a girl, even she’s fat, she’s not thin enough. If she’s confident enough, she can do well in other fields. She can has her career and to be a successful woman. In this way, she can own her successful life. In my country, maybe it’s the culture, people should be modest. (Lan TD)

Zhen went to the theatre with his son every two or three weeks. Many of the latest movies she watched were for her son, which usually were not available on DVDs, nor on the Internet.
Some new kid’s movies. Every kid knows, he needs to know. I need to take him to watch it, to update the information. I found it’s fun for entertainment. (Zhen ID)

Zhen also watched movies to her own interests, but only at home.

Newspapers

Eight participants (except Lan) read Canadian newspapers (in hardcopy or online or both) for news information, knowledge, language and culture learning, entertainment, and to pass time. They were interested in knowing the latest events or activities on campus from their university’s newspaper— The Journal, to see what happened in their city from two local newspapers. They read Toronto Star and The Globe and Mail for national and international news, and some American newspapers such as The New York Times for American and international news and opinion. The news information they looked for covered politics, culture, economy, technology, opinion, and sports. The knowledge they acquired varied from a degree name in law to a well-known legal case in the country. For examples,

So to read the news from The Journal, you can learn the latest thing of the university. For example, this one, “A Law Degree by Any Other Name.” It says the law students will soon graduate with a J.D. Juris doctor law degree instead of a Bachelor of Law’s degree. I don’t know what is a Juris doctor degree, but I know the Bachelor of Law’s degree. So from here, I knew a lot of novice stuff that I didn’t know before. (Amy TD)

The Journal said there’s a protest about uranium exploration. I am a geologist. So I know people can make a lot of money from uranium products, because many countries need uranium. The mining company has got permission from the government. But that area, the mining company wanted to explore is owned by the natives, the First Nations. These natives don’t want the company mining uranium there because of lots of environmental problems. So the mining company has problems. The natives try to stop the mining company, and they go to court and the court sentenced the natives guilty. The natives can’t stop the mining company to be there. So to me, this is really, really fresh knowledge about Canadian natives. Before this, I knew very little about them. I think they’re maybe very far from us, from our city. But now I know they’re very close. They just live
here. But they just don’t come to the city, or they never say something. When some special things happen, they will speak out. (Yong TD)

I find I also learned a lot about the law. Even that guy was supported by many people. Many students in our university support that guy. But he has to go to the jail, because this is the law. I think this is very useful and very important, especially for Chinese students from mainland China, almost in a relatively closed environment, usually don’t want to spend any time to know this. Even some time we have to take a little bit reading, it’s just for improving our English. Actually I think we need to know more definitely if we want to know more about the country, live with the people. (Yong TD)

Most of the participants (e.g., Amy, Jian, Tang, and Yong) felt that reading newspapers was a way of learning language (see more details in Language Acquisition) and some social and cultural norms, values, and attitudes of the host society. They believed that gradually accumulated knowledge and information would be useful in their adaptation to the host society. Some of them (e.g. Amy and Tang) raised concerns regarding the appropriateness of certain content.

You know newspaper they have different kind of news happened everyday, so sometimes from the social part, sometimes from the cultural part, sometimes from the attitudes of the reporters. So we really can learn a lot from different perspectives. (Amy ID)

So, if I want to learn, to understand what the local people think, I may go to the readers’ feedbacks, like what their problems are, and then how the columnists suggest them to fix that. I think that’s also a very good way to know the real life of the local people, because the information is real. Many times, I think, most people, whether from other cultures or from Canadian culture, I don’t think most people are willing to talk their personal problems even with their close friends. I think many people are more willing to talk with the newspaper columnists, because they can hide their identity. They would feel more comfortable. So that’s why here you can find the real thing of a single person. And if you read a lot of columns, you will find some general or common characteristics of the host country’s culture, especially the local communities. That’s quite interesting and useful. (Tang ID)

Sometimes you should be selective when you read the newspaper, especially if you read entertainment news, since some pop stars, I don’t think they have a very high moral standard. If you follow what they do, maybe it’s not a very good idea to you or to your kids …. It’s up to you …. That’s your own judgment. (Tang ID)
Most of the participants (e.g., Pang, Yong, and Zhen) felt that Canadian newspapers, in general, were less interesting and less relevant to their life than Chinese newspapers. Just as Pang said during the interview: “I can find more information to my interest in Chinese newspaper back home, more interesting things I want to read.” Most of them (e.g., Pang, Yong, and Zhen) had a habit of buying and reading hardcopy newspapers before coming to Canada, from several times a week to everyday. None of them ever bought or subscribed to any hardcopy newspapers since they were in Canada. All the hardcopy newspapers they read were free on campus or in residence. They all thought “this free service is very good.”

Even you don’t have enough money to buy newspaper, you can also be well-informed by the free local newspaper. At school, I can see some free newspapers for the students to pick up, like Toronto Star. It’s not free for people out of the campus, but free for the university students. But in China, this won’t work, because newspaper is also for recycle, but people will get money from recycling the newspaper. So maybe some people may take more than they need for recycle money. That’s partially influenced by our social and economic differences. (Pang ID)

Some participants (e.g., Jian, Wen, and Yong) would pick up a newspaper during lunch break or coffee break at the student centre or student lounge. Some participants (e.g., Amy, Henry, and Pang) would like to bring a newspaper back and read at home. They said that they read hardcopy newspapers less frequently than they did in China. Changes were closely connected with the increased use of the Internet. Although they read newspapers as a source of information, they no longer used newspapers as a major source of information. To some of them (e.g., Jian and Yong), reading hardcopy newspapers was a way to pass the time or to entertain themselves. Jian viewed the decreased influence of newspapers as a “life-and-death battle with the new media.” At the
same time, he recognized that newspaper reports and articles were more formal, official, and traditional than the Internet sources.

Seven years ago, when I was in China, newspaper was still one of the most important ways for us to know the news. Now, I think I read newspapers much less than before. Usually, like when I drink coffee, I want to find something to do. So I just get a free newspaper and read. So no special purpose, because those information I get from the newspaper, I can get from other sources too. So it’s just like a pass of time. (Yong ID)

I don’t think newspaper is a dominant source of information to me. As for me, newspaper serves as more like a function of entertainment. I just want to read newspapers for fun without any purposes. So it’s like some additional resource. (Jian ID)

On the surface, as radio, newspapers are challenged dramatically by the rapid development of science and technology, and the wide popularity of the Internet in particular. To be honest, newspapers, once as the dominant carriers of the information, are no longer effective, nor efficient, compared with the instant possibility of obtaining the information from the Internet. Furthermore, it is true that producing newspapers consumes paper, and woods as original sources, which is not good for the environment protection. Last, but not the least, the information newspapers conveyed is rather limited and not reader-oriented. What I mean reader-oriented here is that by using the Internet, the web-surfer is active in choosing the message, and deciding the knowledge one wishes to gain, while as a newspaper reader, the role is relatively passive, and as a result, the useful information one would receive might be scarce. (Jian TD)

When I read newspapers, I think all the newspaper articles are well presented, and a little bit official and formal, while you can see the articles on the Internet are much more informal, compared with newspapers. (Jian ID)

Three participants (Jian, Pang, and Yong) pointed out that Canadian newspapers were different from Chinese newspapers in layout and design, and selection of news to report. Jian believed that was mainly due to the impact of different social and political systems and newspaper ownership.

In China, no matter it’s a local newspaper or a national newspaper, they all have a basic format. The front page is always about the country’s policy. All other news or information will come after. Here, the Canadian newspaper, I am not sure if it takes the same format. (Pang ID)
Honestly speaking, I think now they [Chinese newspapers and Canadian newspapers] maybe become more similar. However, I found it’s still different. Like in China, we usually put all the politics or what happened in China first, and then what happened in the world, and then talk about like sports and other news, not that important news. But in the Canadian media, I think it’s different. But usually, you know, the sports at very attractive positions, you know. What’s the result of the two teams. But in China, this never happens. (Yong, ID)

Like years ago, TTC had a strike, and the newspaper put this news and information on the front page. In China, I don’t think this will happen. Chinese newspaper won’t put negative news like this on the front page. (Pang ID)

I think a lot of Chinese newspapers are still owned by the government or the institute which has very close relationship with the government. The newspapers are abundant with information that is supposed to be received to the individual judged by the government. While the Canadian newspapers are much more independent compared to the newspapers in China because of different social and political systems. I don’t think they have very tight monitor, but they still have some kind of surveillance as well. (Jian ID)

During the reading process, different participants read the newspapers in different ways. For examples,

In China, sometimes I just read the headlines or the titles. If it’s not to my interest, I will just jump to other articles or reports. Here, when I read the headlines or the titles in English, sometimes I can’t figure out what they’re talking about. So sometimes I won’t go to the details. (Pang ID)

Since I need all detailed information, its background, why it’s happening, especially the solutions. That’s very interesting to me. Just what’s happening is not enough, I want to know why, how, and then what they do …. Just to get some information, get some knowledge about the surroundings. I think in anybody’s entire life, you should always learn, right? So reading is an important way. (Tang ID)

However, when they had doubts or difficulties in fully understanding the content of a newspaper article or report, most of them (e.g., Jian, Tang, and Yong) would like to ask their Canadian colleagues or friends for an explanation or an opinion, if they had a chance.
Because of the cultural background, I have different understanding on one issue …. I may ask my Canadian colleagues for sure. They’re always friendly to answer my questions. (Jian ID)

When I find something difficult to understand, if I have a chance, I do talk to a local people for explanation. I think it really helps me understand Canadian culture. (Tang ID)

I remember several times. Sometimes, in some cases maybe I don’t understand, I ask my Canadian colleagues to get their explanation. But sometimes, I know what the journalist wanted to say. I just wanted to know what their opinions were. (Yong ID)

Radio

Six participants listened to the radio. Most of them listened to it occasionally, for example, when they were driving or on a bus. Usually when the trip ended, they stopped listening. Only Tang listened to the radio at home, “just a few minutes, not everyday.” When they turned on the radio, one of the purposes was to train their listening ability. They also used the radio for information, language learning, entertainment, companionship, arousal, and as a habit. Two participants (Amy and Henry) did not have a radio at home. Amy said she had never listened to the radio, because she still had language concerns. Pang had a radio in his car, but he found “No time to listen to it.”

Wen listened to the radio when he was driving. In addition, he had the habit of carrying a portable radio on his way to the school. His main purpose was to improve his listening ability through listening to CBC news reports, and “the by-products of this behaviour is: I can get some information—what happens in Canada and in this Ontario province.” Sometimes he would listen to the music channels (e.g., easy rock and country music), but could “hardly fully understand what they are singing.”

Yong also liked to listen to the news reports for information and language learning, and some music channels for entertainment. Yong had another interest which
differentiated him from other radio listeners—he liked a Christian station. But he could only understand 50% of the content. He felt it was hard to say if he was satisfied or not with the Christian program, because usually he just listened when he was driving “Just get in from the middle, and maybe stop from the middle, almost never finished anything.”

He was quite satisfied with the easy rock music and Christian music programs he selected.

During the driving it’s good, because I just want to wake me up …. So I think in terms of this purpose, make me satisfied, because I don’t intend to get too much information from this. (Yong ID)

When Tang listened to the radio while driving or at home, he always kept his radio tuned to CBC news with the purpose of knowing “what’s going on in Canada, and around the world.” He did not think he was satisfied after listening to the radio.

Radio programs, you just listen to it. You can’t keep. You can’t read that. But if you go to the web, you can download. You can save. Then you can do whatever you want. The other thing is, on the web, you can also listen to the voice, also watch the online video. So that’s much better than only listen to the voice. It’s much easier. (Tang ID)

Jian bought a radio clock as soon as he settled down in Canada. In the past one and a half years, he only used the radio a few times, as a form of entertainment. He thought a lot of people chose not to listen to the radio nowadays, or used the radio as a secondary media source mainly because the radio was “dying.”

Radio is backward …. Radio is not the representation of modernity and efficiency …. Radio is on its way of dying. It has been gradually replaced by other media, such as MP3 and Internet. The roles radio plays in our life have shrunk enormously. (Jian LD)

On the other hand, Jian noted that he did not think that radio would diminish completely in the near future.

In Canada, radio is still the choice for the senior. Basically, it is not fair to deny the possibilities that the senior cannot use the personal computer so well as to surf
the Internet without any difficulty. Nor is it solidly defended to exclude the fact that the Internet is yet not available in every corner of the country. (Jian LD)

Similar to Jian, Zhen believed that “Radio is maybe for the old people, or people who don’t have high-techniques.” It was her “last option for entertainment.”

If you have DVD, you have TV, you have Internet, you won’t go to the radio. Radio is the most basic way, but in my car it’s the only way, because my car is crappy. I don’t have CD, and I don’t want to install anything. This basic entertainment is good. (Zhen ID)

Zhen listened to radio for information, entertainment, and companionship. So I listen to the weather report through the radio. Recently, I don’t listen to the weather that much, because the weather is good. I switched to music channel (e.g., easy rock and classical music). Sometimes, if the music is not good, I switch to news channels. Just kill the time, and make driving more fun. (Zhen ID)

**Magazines**

Eight participants (except Pang) said that they had read magazines, either published in Canada or imported from the United States. Six of them named *Macleans*. All three female participants (Amy, Lan, and Zhen) had the habit of reading fashion magazines. One male participant (Jian) showed his interest in fashion magazines as well. Two participants (Wen and Yong) liked reading *National Geographic*. Almost all the participants read magazines in public places (e.g., library, gym, student lounge, waiting area), or borrowed from friends (Amy). Only Tang subscribed to *Reader’s Digest Canada*, and Yong bought a *National Geographic* once while waiting for his flight at the airport. They bought and read far less magazines than they did before coming to study in Canada.

Participants read magazines for various kinds of information (e.g., education, health), knowledge, entertainment, language and cultural learning, to pass time, and as a hobby.
Amy read magazines sometimes. Fashion and shopping magazines such as *Vogue* and *Loulou* were her favourites. Her friends gave them to her. She kept this reading habit as “a girl’s hobby,” because these magazines could satisfy her interest in fashion: “It’s just for fun. What’s the popular stuff nowadays?” Amy had a part-time job at the university library. Usually she would pick up a couple of magazines to read during coffee break. *Macleans* was one of her choices, “mainly for its information on education and campus life.” She said *Time* and *Newsweek* were also available at the library, but she never read any of them, because they were “all about politics.”

Zhen also liked reading fashion magazines, “because it’s easy. You look at pretty pictures and pretty clothes, which is nice.” She read magazines only when she worked out at a gym, where there was a big collection of magazines. One of her hobbies was to update with entertainment news or the celebrity gossip in magazines, and she found she had learned a lot.

Because when I am watching movies, videos, so many people, celebrities, I want to know their gossips. So magazines satisfy me. If I found something in magazine that is interesting and relevant, I will go to the Internet for further gossips. (Zhen ID)

Zhen’s other interest was in health magazines, which had “some articles about how to be healthy. What kind of activities you should do at certain age. This is something I am interested in, so I will read it.” She said she never touched the “serious magazines” such as *Time* which she thought for “guys.”

Jian was the male participant who read fashion magazines. He saw reading fashion magazines as a way to gain insights on new fashion trends, to get a feel for the culture, and adjust to the culture.
First, you get yourself updated with the fashion, because magazine is the pioneer in leading the fashion. It covers the latest information of the fashion, with a multitude of gorgeous photos of models, displaying up-to-date global trend of pop-culture. Secondly, I will read the magazine to see what my peers are doing. It will tell you what probably might be the most acceptable clothes, or the most popular clothes among the people of my age. I will adjust my preferences according to the norm, because you don’t want to be a unique person. (Jian TD)

Jian only read magazines occasionally (e.g., when he was waiting for a medical appointment). To Jian, reading magazines was a kind of “visual enjoyment” because of “the color, the texture, and the presentation,” which “is very difficult to fulfil by other media.”

I still remember one time I read a magazine. It’s advertisements of diamonds. You can see the diamonds. The quality of the magazine was just fabulous. The paper was just fantastic. It’s so obvious. You can see the advisements of cloth on magazines will cover two pages sometimes, while the advertisement on flyers will have very limited space. And every article in the magazines is delicately chosen with certain theme running through. So magazines concentrate on quality rather than the quantity of the message they would carry. (Jian ID)

In addition, Jian thought that magazines “targeted more on rich customers.”

Because we can see the advertisements for perfumes, diamonds, cars, houses. All these are luxury things. You can never find the advertisements on washing powder, potatoes, and cucumbers on magazines. (Jian ID)

Tang subscribed to Reader’s Digest Canada for his family. Sometimes when he found an interesting article, he would download the same article from its website. “One reason is I need some external second-hand references for this article, so I can get a broader understanding.”

Yong used to have the habit of buying and reading magazines both in Chinese and English (e.g., National Geography) while in China. But in the past six and a half years in Canada, he never finished reading a whole magazine.

I never specifically read some special magazines, just several pages at the waiting area to pass time. I don’t know, maybe it’s just the time issue, or too many
resources. I go through the Internet. I watch TV. No time for magazines. (Yong ID)

Wen often took his daughter out for children’s activities. Once his daughter engaged in the activities, he would sit down and chose some magazines to read. His favourite magazines included National Geographic and People. He read National Geographic for knowledge and information, and read People for entertainment. Sometimes he would have a quick look at other magazines (e.g., Chatelaine), but seldom continued because of “lack of interest.”

Books

Three participants (Jian, Tang, and Zhen) expressed that they had read some non-academic English books since they came to study in Canada. Three participants (Pang, Wen, and Yong) read and studied The Bible on a regular basis. One participant (Henry) said he did “not read much books.” Two participants (Amy and Lan) did not mention reading books as something they did during the data collection process. Generally, they spent less time, and read less books than they did in China.

When they read, they chose books that interested them most to gratify different needs, such as information, language and cultural learning, entertainment, relaxation, escape, and religious belief. For example, every week, Jian spent three or four hours on reading books. He was very interested in traveling. Books from Lonely Planet were one of his favourites. But it was just a selective reading, because “books are not easy to read.” First, as an ESL student, he did not have that much time to read books for leisure and tourism cover to cover. Second, his English language competence.

Anytime you use your second language to read a foreign book, you need to read every line, sentence by sentence. It’s really difficult for you to have a good
summary to have a quick look or browse through it. You have to read it in detail. (Jian ID)

So Jian read travel books for detailed information and knowledge about Canada, such as its history, people, and culture.

I am not that familiar with Canada, but I have many big cities’ name in my mind. I am particularly interested in Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver. So I just selected the descriptions on these three cities, and read very closely. By reading a guide book on Canada, you will be more familiar with the history, the people, and the culture which the book intends to provide you. The description itself is very vivid, and detailed, neutral. I mean the information without any bias. So specific, and so detailed. So I really enjoy this kind of books. (Jian ID)

Zhen also liked reading travel books. In addition, she had read a couple of novels and *Chicken Soup* in the past five and a half years. She confessed that she read much less than when she was in China, mainly for two reasons: “One reason is I have already had enough for my academic study. I would consider it as another form of studying. Another reason is: I can’t afford the time.” According to Zhen, she read books for entertainment and escaped from normal routine.

Like the *Chicken Soup*, it’s full of words of wisdom. Sometimes I like those sentences that make great sense. Even though maybe in daily life, you can’t apply it, but it’s inspiring…. Because life is already so boring and tiring, so I prefer those things that are more positive and inspiring. (Zhen ID)

During the interview, Tang told me that he was “interested in many kinds of books.” However, as a full-time student, and a father of two young sons, he did not have much time to read “fat books or thick books.”

Maybe one factor is for immigrants’ life should be harder than when they’re in their motherland. But the other thing is, I think, when people grow older, especially if you have a family, have a partner, and have kids, your time is limited. You don’t have an entire day to read a book. That’s normal. But the thing is you still need to read, and will learn continuously to refresh yourself, to update your knowledge. It’s up to every single person. (Tang ID)
When Tang read, for most of the time, he could only look for a general idea. He thought reading books was a way of learning the local culture and improving English. From the children’s books and parenting books he borrowed from the public library, he learned “children’s psychology, a lot of parenting skills, Canadian’s belief and practices in parenting, many laws that related to the protection and welfare of children.”

In Tang’s think-aloud data, he recorded that he was reading a book titled *Battling the Inner Dummy*. He found that book was “quite interesting, and informative. It just discussed why apparently normal people sometimes display irrational things, why people do that, and what the remedies are.” He hoped that he could become a little less of a dummy after reading this book.

Pang had a 13-year-old son. Sometimes he went to the bookstore with his son and selected books for him. Pang also read and checked his son’s textbook to watch his progress as a typical Chinese parent would do. But the book he read most often was *The Bible*.

In this study, three participants (Pang, Wen, and Yong) noted that they read *The Bible* regularly, from three years to five years. None of them read *The Bible* before coming to Canada. They studied *The Bible* for different reasons, to meet different needs. Yong said that due to limited time, Christian books were the only books he read in his spare time.

We spent almost all the time to read our major journals, papers, academic things. No time for leisure books. I think I might have tried to read one or two English books. One is our church book, *The Purpose of Life*. And another one is *Da Vinci Code* …. That one is also because it’s related to Christian. (Yong ID)
Factors Affecting Media Choice

Language Capability as a Factor in Choosing Different Mass Media

Only one participant, Tang, said he had no problem using different kinds of host mass media. To all other participants, language capability was a factor in their choice of different mass media to a different degree.

Lan did not talk about any specific language problem she had in reading, only indicated the time she consumed to read one single news. “For the Canadians, when they read a piece of news, maybe ten seconds. Now for me, maybe ten minutes. That’s a big difference.”

Jian said when he read news in English, he was not quite sure how much of his understanding was correct. So sometimes he would use Chinese media.

You’ll always puzzle yourself on how much you get from the news, which might have an influence in your understanding of the mass media …. So every time I talk to my friends I say: “I assume or I am thinking about, this is my understanding on the media I read today in English.” But I will never use the words “I assume” when I read any event in Chinese. So language is a very important issue or factor in choosing the media you want to use first. Because if you’re interested in a certain event, you want to have a very clear idea about what’s happening. So the first choice is the Chinese media. (Jian ID)

Compared to Jian, when Yong read news, he only wanted to get some general information. However, in order to get the general information in English, he needed to be very concentrated, or focused. Even though he knew the meanings of most words, sometimes he could not catch the accurate meaning.

Usually when you read news, you want to get some general information, not academic stuff, usually want to in a relaxed environment. So sometimes I won’t choose the English Internet for reading the news, because I have to focus myself and try to get the accurate meaning of each word. So it’s too tired. So I prefer to choose my own language websites, but not English. So language is a big factor for me to choose different mass media. (Yong ID)
Zhen was satisfied with her English proficiency, still she could not reach her level of fluency in Chinese.

If there’s a Chinese newspaper and a *Toronto Star*, if I have a quick glance at both of them, I can effortlessly get information from the Chinese newspaper. For reading English newspaper, it’s kind of like study. I am so tired of study. It’s not a kind of entertainment. I should say even though I am satisfied with my language to some extent, but still it’s not that good enough for me to make reading newspaper an entertainment. Reading newspaper is another type of study. I get enough. Language is still a factor. (Zhen ID)

However, compared to the problems they had with reading, the difficulties they had with listening were more serious. Pang and Wen were not confident in their listening abilities when they needed to talk to a business representative. In such a situation, e.g., car rental, they would log on to the car rental company’s website to find the relevant information rather than talking to a representative on the phone.

By Internet, I can read slowly to get the detailed information, the terms and conditions. I can choose to agree or disagree, and confirm when I am pretty sure about the meaning. But by telephone, the salesperson may speak only once. If I make a decision without fully understanding his meaning, that will be a disadvantage to me. So I won’t use the telephone to rent a car. It’s my last choice. (Pang ID).

If you want to save money, and if you want to understand the tricks, you do not trust your oral language, you can choose to use the Internet. You can read everything. Everything is clear there. You can fully understand what’s going on about the deal. Yeah, language is definitely a factor affect your choice of using a medium. (Wen ID)

Lan said when she needed to use the mass media for information, she preferred reading to listening.

I am not a native speaker, so my listening ability is not perfect as the Canadians. So sometimes I prefer to read something, and then make a decision. So I go to the website to check the weather forecast. I think we can listen to the weather report from the radio, but for me, to see something is more fit than listen something. I am sure I can’t quite follow what the radio said. So I prefer to see the words, to see the numbers. It makes more sense for me. I think that I should improve my
English, especially for the listening ability. But, you should know that it needs a little bit longer time. (Lan TD)

Jian often watched *National Geographic* DVDs when he wanted to relax at home. He did not need to turn on the caption because “its language is quite normal, formal, and well-written.” But he did not watch TV frequently because of “language deficiency.” He thought he needed “more time to reach that level of proficiency.”

Watching TV can improve your English, but all depends on your level. I think you have to be fully aware of your English level. At this kind of level, you have to decide which medium will help you a lot in improving your English. I think improving English by watching TV is at the advanced level. I am at the medium level. I should say watching TV is really a challenge to me because of the culture, the language style, and the speed. I think everybody will have an experience of transition. I mean the transition between the formal words and informal words. Watching TV requires this kind of skills. It’s demanding to watch TV, and fully understand what they’re talking about. (Jian ID)

After one and a half years practicing, Amy felt very comfortable and enjoyed watching TV programs without closed captions. Still she chose not to listen to the radio.

Actually the reason why I didn’t choose radio is: firstly, if you listen to the radio, it requires very high quality of language proficiency because you can only listen to that. Not like the TV, although you can’t understand it, but from the images, from the pictures, you can guess the idea of that. Also you can have the caption or the subtitles. But for the radio, if you can’t understand it, you can’t go back. I guess that’s the problem, that’s the reason I don’t like radio. (Amy ID)

Yong and his wife went out for a movie almost once a month. When they chose the movie, they preferred “those with beautiful pictures without too much language problems, without very deep meanings, and do not need to understand too much, such as, *The Lord of Rings* and cartoons.” Otherwise, they could not fully grasp the idea of the movie.

For example, early this year, we watched a movie called *I Am Legend*. Lots of people said it’s a good movie. But when we watched it, we couldn’t understand too much about that movie. So I think maybe the background is different or too difficult. Actually, this is a Christian background. Maybe it’s the language
problem, we didn’t get the meaning. We had to check after back home at the Chinese website to know what’s the meaning of those. (Yong ID)

**Language and Culture Difficulty**

Some of the problems are from language, some problems are from culture. For example,

I got a chance to read the magazines in the gym. So I usually don’t read the title. I don’t know, maybe it’s a language and culture thing. I can understand those normal words, but those words that created specifically for menus, for magazines, I don’t think they’re English. Maybe some of the words, they don’t have a normal English spelling, so that’s why I got stuck. This is something definitely related to language and culture, I think. (Zhen TD)

When Wen brought his daughter to see a doctor, he read an article entitled “Women and Children Lost” from *Chatelaine* during the waiting time.

In this article, the author introduced the current situation about women and children in Afghanistan. The liberation of women’s rights progresses very slow. I felt difficult to read this article. The reasons are: I) there are many words which are related to Islamic tradition. II) I know little about Afghanistan. The most difficult thing is like the background. There are a lot of words I never meet. For some quite difficult words, even after I know the words, but still difficult to understand, because I don’t not know the connotation of those words. (Wen LD)

In such a situation, usually he would stop reading and would not check the dictionary to find the meaning because of “lack of interest.”

In Yong’s Media Use Log, he mentioned that when he watched *Friends*, “some content are still hard to be understood.” During the interview, he elaborated more on this point. The situation was similar for Jian.

I think some of them definitely language, because when they talked, I didn’t get the meaning. But when I checked the subtitle, I know what they’re saying. So this is the language problem. But some even I know what the sentence mean, but just like the word, you know. For that word, I know the regular meaning. Still, I don’t know why they laugh at this. Why that made them laugh? So I mean there must be some content inside for the Canadian or the U.S. people they’re very familiar. I think definitely it’s the culture stuff. (Yong ID)
A lot of linguistic terms have implications on cultural background. If you could master the English language, you could understand the culture thing behind it very well. And if you know more about cultural knowledge, you will have a deeper understanding on a particular term. You’ll think deeper on the language and the culture. So it’s kind of double-win game. If you have problems both with the language and the cultural things, I guess you probably can’t understand the TV at all. (Jian ID)

**Chapter Summary**

Findings on the participants’ use of media showed that these students mainly used eight types of host mass media in their daily life, though the length of time they spent on using the media differed substantially. They used the media as a vehicle to achieve various gratifications, which included needs for information, language and culture learning, knowledge, communication, entertainment, relaxation, escape, habit, companionship, arousal, to pass time, religious belief, online reservations, online transactions, etc. The Internet was the most used medium among the participants, because it could offer a wider array of gratifications than any other single medium. The participants also chose among different traditional mass media based on their personal needs and capabilities, and the media’s characteristics. But these media forms were used much less than when they were in China. Language capability and knowledge of host society and culture were identified as factors affecting their choice of different mass media to different degrees. In the following chapter, I discuss the themes arising from the data.
CHAPTER 6
MEDIA AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In Chapter 5, I described the participants’ use of media. In this chapter, I present how the participants used media as sources of information; what information they obtained from various types of media; their feelings and/or reactions after seeing the content of the information; and what they have learned from the media information. It includes eight sections, and is presented in the order of importance to the participants.

Canada

All the participants were interested in knowing what happened in Canada. As Amy said: “I pay attention to the news in Canada, because I am in Canada right now. I tend to grasp the Canadian situation.” The issues they cared about included politics, immigration, safety, and economy.

As an immigrant from a different political system, Yong often compared the Canadian government with the Chinese government. From the TV news, Yong heard about the Liberal Party’s Sponsorship Scandal in 2006. He was impressed by the transparency in Canadian government: “It’s very public. Everything can be shown out very quickly.”

Also as an immigrant in Canada, Tang often looked for news on immigrants. For example, after the Robert Dziekanski Taser incident, Tang kept tracking the updated news and debates on the incident, and formed his own opinions on that incident.

I think obviously that’s a tragedy. I think the vital information was the RCMP did something that was not that carefully thought out. They should have appropriate policies and principles before their use of the Taser gun. I think they should streamline their procedures and policies. The police should protect the rights of the public. They should not abuse their rights. So that’s why those kinds of tragedies must be carefully investigated. I think many people, more or less, think
something is wrong with the RCMP policies or procedures regarding their use of the Taser guns. I think some independent agencies should monitor closely why RCMP did that, and then what really happened. It’s just the protection of human rights. (Tang TD)

During the interview, Wen talked about two pieces of negative news he remembered before and during the data collection process. One was heard on a CBC radio program. It was about the stabbing death of a 14-year-old girl, Stefanie Rengal, who was killed by a 15-year old girl and a 17-year old boy on New Year’s Day. The other one was from the Toronto Star. Hou Chang Mao, a recent immigrant from China was shot dead while at work in Toronto’s east Chinatown. He was the second innocent victim of gun violence in less than a week. Wen became worried when he learned the news report from the media. He expressed that when he looked for a job in the future, he would consider the new location’s reputation on safety.

I really feel that the big city such as Toronto includes too much young violence which is unsafe for my kid growth. When my daughter grows up enough to go to some high school, we’d better pick up some good high school. Don’t want her involve in the violence of youngsters. I really like to live at small city like Kingston. Since I have lived at Kingston for a while, as an immigrant, I don’t feel unsafe here. However, from what I read from the newspaper about big city violence, I really am afraid to live in the big city. During my job hunting, the violence of city must be one of my considerations. (Wen ID)

Besides safety concerns, Wen paid very close attention to the Canadian economy, Canada’s unemployment rate and job market, because he would complete his Ph.D. program in a couple of months, and faced difficulty in his job search. He was depressed by the news from The Globe and Mail that the “Canadian economy suffered a net loss of 18,700 jobs in one month, the largest drop since May of 2003, when the SARS outbreak sideswiped the nation.” At the same time, he believed the Canadian government would take some actions to relieve the pressure.
Canadian government, I think, is more practical. So when they found some problems specifically, like for the job loss, they act very quickly …. Canadian government is elected by people, so they must take care of people. Otherwise, they will lose their position. (Wen ID)

Wen was not the only participant who was concerned about Canada’s economy and job prospects. Zhen expected to complete her Ph.D. program in two years, but she had been watching reports on the economy since immigrating to Canada. She also worried that the slow economic growth rate would affect her job search in the future. She hoped that Canada’s economy would get better.

These students were also interested in the news about Canada’s involvement in international affairs, its relationship with the United States, and China. During the interview, Amy and Yong talked about their feelings and understandings about Canada’s military involvement in Afghanistan.

Canada sent their army to Afghanistan. Sometimes when I saw this kind of news, I was wondering whether there will be a war in Canada. In that case, what should I do? (Amy ID)

Sometimes, they also have some very good, special column to talk about some special topic, special events, like Canadian army in Afghanistan. I like to watch this kind of stuff …. They just showed why they have their army there, why they want to keep their army there. Because for Chinese maybe I just think they have some very special benefits there, so they want to have the army there to control this country. But I found they have different thinking …. It’s not just for benefit. They have some concept to help other countries. Maybe belief. So they have a higher level than what I think before. Maybe just follow the U.S. I know there’re lots of Canadian protests. I know there’re also many supporters, especially those soldiers’ parents. They are very proud of their army, their soldiers. So I think at least from the TV, I do learn many things about their concepts, different from what I think before. (Yong ID)

Tang reviewed some news reports on Omar Khadr. Khadr was a Canadian citizen born in Toronto. In 2002, he was captured by American forces, and was accused of throwing a grenade that killed a U.S. soldier in Afghanistan. He was kept in Guantanamo
Bay detention camps, and was the only Western citizen remaining there, because the Canadian government refused to demand the U.S. to turn Khadr over to Canadian authorities. Tang thought that was mainly because of the political and military cooperation between Canada and the U.S.

The United States population is ten times larger than Canada. The U.S. economy is ten times larger too. Also, Canada’s international defence heavily relies on the U.S. support. Like Trudeau said: “Living next to the United States is a little like sleeping with an elephant. You always wonder if they will roll over on you.” However, it does not mean that for any U.S. policies Canada should support that. I think that’s very important to a healthy U.S.—Canada relationship and the independence of Canada from the U.S. influences …. especially the much stronger U.S. military influences. (Tang ID)

**China & Canada Relationship**

All the participants in the study expressed that they sincerely cared about the relationship between China and Canada “because China is your motherland, and Canada is the country where you live. It’s just normal that you pay some attention to the Sino-Canadian relationship.”

According to these participants, the sitting Prime Minister of Canada—Stephen Harper seemed to play a key role in that relationship. His meeting with Dalai Lama made Amy question whether that means “the Chinese government has a bad relationship with the Canadian government? Will that affect us a lot? Because we are still Chinese.” Amy could not understand why “Canadian people liked Dalai Lama very much. Also a lot of Western writers, they wrote a lot of books about him.” Because Chinese people viewed Dalai Lama as a separatist who was seeking independence for a region integral to their country. Another participant, Henry, was angry about Harper’s decision that he would not attend the opening ceremonies of Beijing Olympics. Yong also watched the relations
between the two countries closely. He believed, from a Christian perspective, Harper was a good person, and expected that he could hear more voices.

I pay attention to the relationship between the government of Canada and China. This may affect a lot about my future. So when I watch news, I also pay attention to this, especially what Stephen Harper says recently against China. But this person is very good. He’s a Christian, I know. Just about China, I think he should get more opinions from all Chinese, not only from several Chinese he thinks good. (Yong ID)

These students’ interests were not limited only to the political relations between China and Canada, but also in their economic ties, e.g., “Canada was rated as the most open country to Chinese foreign investment.” (Tang LD) Or sometimes they used the host mass media just to look for different points of view on some general incidents.

I think one of the most basic needs for using host mass media in Canada is just to keep yourself informed of the events that happening around you. Maybe that’s the event happening in Canada. Maybe it’s the event happening in China, but the Canadian people put their views on it. You have to know what are their opinions on this. (Jian ID)

**International News**

These participants were not only concerned about what happened in China and/between Canada, but also showed their interests and paid attention to international affairs—from the assassination of Pakistan’s former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to the election of the President of the United States. As Lan briefly described:

So just like the President of the America, so recently they will have an election. So for me, the election, I don’t know the politics of the two people, what’s the difference between them. But I know one is a woman, one is a black people. So that should be interesting. So I pay a little bit attention about that. (Lan ID)

The major media sources they looked for world news included *CBC* news (TV & online), [http://ca.yahoo.com/] and [http://www.bbc.co.uk/], and *CNN* news (TV & online). *BBC* news had been generally accepted by these students for its coverage.
BBC has the world news, like it has different parts, the News in Africa, the News in America, news in Asia Pacific, and the news from Europe, Middle East, and South Asia …. And also more from BBC news like the Business, Health, Science or Nature, Technology, Entertainment in UK. And the most interesting thing is, you can find Chinese language from BBC website. They provide Chinese language and Spanish, Russian, the main languages in the world. And also the Chinese website is in simplified characters, other than the complicated characters which is easier for the people from the mainland to read the news. Almost you can find, because their news, I guess, some reporters, they can go deep into the truth of the news, which seems truthful to us. But who knows?
And it has a lot of news which are very, very hot right now, like the U.S. Iraq war, Israel Palestine conflict, and political and commercial independence. For example, this news, Iranians made threat to U.S. ships. After 1979, the Iranian they got their king out of the political stage. And also at that time, they stopped the good relationship with the U.S. Nowadays, they still hate the U.S. So they made like small trick or kind of threat to the U.S. ships. (Amy TD)

A couple of participants showed negative attitudes towards CNN because of its negative reports about China, e.g., on Tibet issues. Henry stated his standpoint very strongly:

Every medium has its own standpoint. Every person has his or her own standpoint. I believe my standpoint is against the standpoint of CNN. So it’s not necessary for me to read their stuff. (Henry ID)

University News

Six participants (Amy, Yong, Jian, Tang, Wen and Zhen) talked about their use of mass media in relation to their school life. One of the main channels to know what happened at the university was through reading The Journal, a student-run newspaper, which was published twice weekly. Different participants had shown different interests in different columns, such as the News, Editorials, and Careers Supplement. Some of them would read it page by page. Some of them would only have a quick look while waiting for somebody, or something.
Amy cared about “what’s going on in the campus, in the university.” From *The Journal* she could know almost every latest event that happened at the university.

Sometimes she would connect the information with her own personal experiences.

It has several parts …. I like the Editorial, because sometimes it discussed the topic, like this week, they’re talking about the “Racism in broad daylight.” Because two weeks ago, a Queen’s female professor reported being assaulted on campus by four male students wearing engineering jackets. This professor was forced off the sidewalk by the students who taunted her with racial slurs. And now a lot of Queen’s students and faculty members protest this racial violence …. *The Journal* gave a whole page comment on racial discrimination. So we can see the policy of the university. I mean, they paid more attention to the racial problems, racial issues. Many people called this university “a white university.” Most of the white people are very nice to us, but you know there’re still some bad guys. Actually, I faced a racial discrimination on campus …. That happened, I guess, three weeks ago, when I heated my lunch there. An old, white lady after me took my food out while the microwave was still running. I asked her why she did that to me. At first she just ignored me and kept heating her stuff, but I insisted. Later she took her stuff out, but asked me: “Are you a high school student or a Queen’s student?” I told her I am a Queen’s student. And she asked: “Which Faculty are you in?” I said: “Education.” And then she said nothing. (Amy ID)

Yong also considered *The Journal* as a good source of information about school life. But he did not read it every week, only once a month, to check out for some specific information.

Sometimes I know there’s something happen at Queen’s. I just want to know what’s the result, what comes out after that, like they have an election of President. Because I know last year, there’s an Asian face, I just wanted to see this year if there’s still an Asian face. Just a very small purpose. Because this is the closest environment to myself, so I think it’s useful for me to know some facts. We know this election of the President of the students. When we’re in China, we involved a lot. But when we came here, we think the only thing for us is to study, to get the degree from another, a better country as soon as possible. So when we come here, we don’t want to put any time in other things. So I think, of course, we are the students of Queen’s University, but it’s kind of like, maybe we don’t belong to this community. I feel we seldom involve in the society of Queen’s student …. almost in a relatively closed environment, know very little about Queen’s …. just like, nothing related with us. Actually, I think we should involve more in Queen’s activities …. It’s not only Chinese students, for students from other countries, I think it’s the same problem …. Even we stay here for over five years, still not ….
I think this is very useful. You can learn a lot more what happened at Queen’s last week, what happened just beside you, just around you …. If we want to know more about the Western country, live with Western country people, we have to know about them. (Yong ID)

Jian got to know the information about his school life from three channels. His first choice was *The Journal* as well, because “there’re the local news and especially campus news”, and it was a place to “see my colleagues on the newspaper.”

It’s really interesting, because you can see a lot of people who might be familiar with you on the newspaper. One time you should see there’s a report on one of the projects in my department. I saw a lot of professors and students you are so familiar with. Reading their story and knowing what’s happening around you. It’s awesome. (Jian ID)

Jian said he could see the university culture through reading *The Journal*.

When I read the campus newspaper, you will be fully aware of what’s happening around the campus, the students’ activities, and student attitudes towards certain issues, which will reflect the culture of the university. (Jian ID)

As an international student, Jian often dropped by the International Centre at the university. From the posters and flyers on the wall of the Centre, Jian could find when and where to attend different workshops held or sponsored by the Centre which would give him “basic idea on all the resources you can turn for help as an international student.” He also subscribed to a few listservs which would email him “some updated information on what’s happening on the campus.” For example, “You will know the important lectures or seminars in your disciplines going to be held at Queen’s, and you will have to arrange your time to participate it.”

**Local News**

Pang had the habit of reading the local newspaper every week, mainly for information, such as local news, local events, and local activities guide, etc. Sometimes
he checked the classifieds section to see if there was any employment opportunity for a
summer job or part-time job. Sometimes he would read some articles just out of curiosity.

For example, there was an article titled *Miracle Baby Arrives on January 1st*. Once
I saw the title, I was attracted. I was curious to know what happened to that baby,
and why people say it’s a miracle. So I read it. It’s really a miracle that a baby can
survive seven weeks before the actual due birth date. (Pang ID)

Pang believed that bit by bit knowledge was useful for his adaptation to the host society,
and he would “get more and more familiar with the society.”

Zhen was not very interested in reading the local newspaper, because there was
“not much interesting and exciting news.” But sometimes she would read it for
information.

Sometimes I read it, especially in summer when I am trying to find if there’re any
recreational activities, so I may bring my son to these events. I used to look at
newspaper to find used cars before I bought mine. After I bought my car, I no
longer read cars for sale. (Zhen ID)

Amy had only read the local newspaper a few times in one and a half years’ time.

She thought what happened in the city might not affect her life so much.

I think now I am studying in the university. I am not exposed a lot to the
community. So what’s going on in the city seems it’s none of my business. I don’t
care a lot about it. Like the policy maker of the city, I don’t have the right to make
a policy, so I don’t care that, you know. (Amy ID)

But she knew the local newspaper was a comprehensive source for information. When
she read it, she could “always learn something new.”

Sometimes the newspaper will introduce a new thing, like a new product, or like
nowadays the solar energy is getting popular. Like the City government, they
encourage people to use solar energy instrument. Because I just read this news
yesterday. They have a workshop in the City Hall. I guess next week they may
encourage the citizens to get there to attend that workshop to have a general idea
what is solar energy, then people can buy the new product. This is very useful,
because you may know people’s sense about environment. (Amy ID)
Media Perspectives & Media Biases

Eight participants in this study were conscious that different news sources might examine one incident from different perspectives, presented the same incident in different ways, and showed different attitudes. For example, from online news, Amy noticed CBC and BBC’s differences in reporting the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

For the war in Afghanistan, Canada sent their own army to Afghanistan. The Canadian mass media, like the news, they always criticize the Canadian government, because they sent their own people to die .... You can see from the Canadian news, they have very negative attitude towards Afghanistan war. As for the war in Iraq, Canadian didn’t send army to Iraq, but Britain they did send army to support America. So you can see like the Canadian news, so they would just report how many people died there. But for the BBC news, sometimes they will have a negative attitude about the Iraq war. So that’s the difference. That depends on who’s involved. (Amy ID)

Tang believed that was because of the “political standings” and “political correctness” of the media.

These participants were also aware that the selectively presented news would affect the audiences’ perceptions of reality. Just as Jian stated

I think news is in fact a kind of product that is produced by human beings. So it’s a kind of combination between objective and subjective. I think news is a kind of tool that is used to persuade people to follow their steps, and agree with them, in order for them to reach some political, economic goals, just to gain some consensus from the audience. (Jian ID)

Sometimes these participants were disappointed by (or angry about) some articles and news about China. They thought Western media, including Canadian media, should take a more objective view when reporting on China. Yong said that he had the habit of watching CBC TV news daily, and he used to be quite satisfied with the coverage and factual report from CBC. However this kind of trust and reliance was shaken after
thousands of Chinese rallied in Ottawa against ‘biased’ China coverage on the Tibet issue.

He thought the Canadian mass media had some bias.

I think before the Tibet issue, I never think that way. I think relatively the Western media is more balanced, more close to the reality than the Chinese websites, because this is the general thinking for me. But after this recently what happened, I found there’s still some bias. So if they have some bias to Chinese, maybe they also have some bias on other stuff. So I don’t know. I just don’t have that background. Just remind myself I need to be careful, especially when they talk about politics. A little bit change. (Yong ID)

Zhen expressed similar feelings and reactions

I don’t have strong feelings before, but now with this protest, these Olympic things, it seems quite obvious that those news agencies, they are spokesmen of the country. There’s no real neutral aspect. Everything is biased somehow. Before we thought Western media were unbiased, it seems it’s not, it all serves a purpose of political agenda. (Zhen ID)

Tang thought this kind of bias was Western media bashing of China.

I think, more or less, media in developed countries are doing China bashing, also you can say that is media bias and distortion against China …. If overseas Chinese disagree, some people in developed countries would say that: “You Chinese were brainwashed by the communist government of China.” But largely, it’s not true. Since traditionally, overseas Chinese are not interested in politics …. And then they don’t care about voting. If you look at the modern history of China, about 150 or 200 years ago, you can find that Chinese modern history is largely of humiliation. People all over the world traditionally did not think highly of Chinese. Maybe some media take for granted that if they do a China bashing, overseas Chinese, they won’t fight back, even not dare to protest. But now, things changed. I don’t know whether the media in developed countries realize it or not. If they don’t, it’s not a loss to China. If 1.3 billion people don’t believe in you, it’s a loss to the media. (Tang ID)

Henry compared the mass media both in China and Canada, and expressed the following beliefs:

I have to admit that media in China tell lies. But I also believe that media in Western countries tell lies too. Nowadays I find they tell more lies for different purposes. For example, in China, the government use the media to govern or control their people. But in Western media, different groups control different media. They also use the media to support themselves, for example, for their
election or something else, like attacking other countries, just as a tool for a country or for a government. (Henry ID)

**Travel Information**

Mass media have been a tool for the participants to find travel information, from local bus transit to overseas trips. Lan and Henry did not drive and they used a lot of public transportation both in town and in other cities. So checking the local bus schedules (either online or the hard copy) before heading out for a bus was a new experience to Lan in Canada.

Because in China, my home city is a so big city, so the frequency of it is much higher than here …. Just stand here and wait. Maybe ten or five minutes, there’s one will come. And another reason …. even if you have bus schedule, but there’s a heavy traffic jam. So no need …. You know here Canadian winter is so cold, and the low frequency of the bus. If I don’t check it, I have to be freeze outside for maybe half an hour. (Lan ID)

When Henry took a short trip to Toronto, he relied solely on Google for food, transit, hotel booking, and shopping information etc. Pang and Zhen used mapquest and googlemap a lot for driving routes and directions. As Pang said:

I don’t have a very good sense of direction. So wherever I go, I need to print out the map …. to find the direction, the estimated time, to see what is the most convenient way. If I don’t print out the map, seven out of the ten the chance, I will get lost. (Pang ID)

Zhen also used the mapquest to do a family trip search.

Today, I used the Internet. I did a map quest. I got to mapquest.com to find out whether it’s possible to drive to Disney World in Florida from here. The reason why I did this is because I had a conversation with a Canadian guy in the YMCA, when I was working out. He said last week he drove to Florida …. So I googled the process …. When I was doing the googling, I am thinking which way would be more fun to go. Whether it would be more fun to drive all the way down to the south or just take a flight? Of course, both have advantages. But I guess driving will be more fun, because I am not very familiar with the American geography. So if we manage to drive all the way down to the south, it will be a very eye-open experience to see the geography, to see the view along the way. But it will be
definitely, be very exhausting. So I am thinking about this. Maybe this Christmas, hopefully we can make it happen. (Zhen TD)

During the data collection period, Wen planned to take his family to Disneyland and Seaworld in California for a vacation. To make this trip more enjoyable and worthwhile, Wen checked some travel information brochures (hard copy) from different travel agencies, and then logged on the Internet for more detailed information, e.g., the ticket packages and prices. To his surprise, he found a website which could save him 20% on the tickets. He was very happy: “This information will help me spend less money for my trip, provide me senses how much money do I need if I want to take a tour in these places.”

Jian had a very big dream—traveling around the world when he was young. In his spare time, one of his hobbies was to read travel guidebooks.

For example, *Lonely Planet*. You can get very specific information on every individual city. It will be a great help if you carry this book when you travel. If you’re not going to travel, it’s also a good resource for you to get some basic ideas on scenic spots, museums, and on very famous buildings, very famous architecture. So I really enjoy this kind of books …. It will attract your attention to visit those places someday. (Jian ID)

Jian also used the Internet to look for travel information. However, since the information on the Internet was “so abundant,” sometimes he would consult his friends and “combined the Internet information with interpersonal communication.” Jian thought this was a “very perfect process.”

**Other Information/knowledge of Interest**

In this study, three participants (Wen, Yong, and Jian) expressed their interests in *National Geographic*. Wen and Yong liked to read *National Geographic* magazine.

Every time Wen took his daughter to the local public library for children’s activities, he
would pick up one and read it for a couple of hours. Wen said that as a student who majored in chemical engineering, one of his interests was to read some articles on environmental issues because these were the problems faced by both developed countries and developing countries.

First, I love the picture, it’s pretty good. And most information I am looking for is like, environmental issue, introduce pollution. Because I am from chemical engineering, so I want to know a little bit about environmental information. Environment is a big issue for the whole world. Now we have global warming, air pollution problems, and population expansion problems …. Like the Western countries, they really paid their price for the damage of the environment. And several decades, they realized they got hurt. Now they make that regulation and law to protect their environment. Now the Western countries are developed countries, they don’t need very fast developing speed. So they can slow down. So they can do some further development based on good environment protection instead of totally ignore the environment protection and do the development. China still have no time to learn this from the Western country. Now their number one priority is developing. That is the situation now China faces. (Wen ID)

Jian was also very interested in the products of National Geographic. Usually he liked to watch its TV series on DVD mainly for three reasons.

Firstly, the program is rich in information. To be concrete, the National Geographic covers almost every aspect of our daily life nowadays, from politics to economics, from natural environmental protection to the mystery of out space and cyberborgs. Secondly, the program is instructive, acted as a lively textbook on the global history, culture and tradition as well. It talks about the train system in India, the gorilla in Africa, the Silk Road as a connection between the East and the West, the Second World War and even the exploration in the Pacific Ocean in order to observe the underwater world. Thirdly, the program is critical. What I mean critical here is that with a narrator, every program presents a specific point of view by the producer. This program is absolutely positive in no doubt, to be frank, because it pursues scientific truth and seeks for humane perfection. It concerns the pollution and global warming, the sufferings of special animals, which are in danger, and the social inequalities among people with different culture background, different races, ethics and gender. (Jian LD)

As a student in social sciences, Jian tended to watch the program from a cultural perspective. He often took it as a source to learn about world history, to understand and analyze different cultures from different stands.
I am overwhelmingly impressed by the significant culture implications the program possesses. On the one hand, the *National Geographic* stresses on the self evaluation of human beings, especially on the reflection towards the relationship between nature and culture. Take the protection of *White Elephants in Thailand* for example. The program pinpoints the urgency of animal protection, indicates the necessity of coping with both the challenges and opportunities of rapid development of science and technology. And more importantly, it advocates for the fight against the greed of human beings in order to ban the illegal behaviour of killing animals for their commercial benefits. Although, as some people might argue, the program is scrutinized from a Western perspective, people all around the world share consensus, to certain extent, on the global environmental protection, which is deeply rooted in human nature.

On the other hand, the *National Geographic* emphasizes on the necessities of culture exchange, with the first step of showing one’s own culture, understanding the culture of other nations, and then as a forthcoming, it is beneficial for different nations to interact and eventually modify and adjust the respective culture towards global dissemination, penetration and integration. What I firmly believe is the trend of homogeneity of diverse cultures now existing in the world by the means of mingling and immersing, despite the obvious “culture gap” between different ones. The video I watched today *The Silk Road* serves a perfect example of that. As an ancient channel, which links the civilization of the East and the West, the Silk Road weighs heavily on culture exchange among different nations, in almost every aspect of routine life, for example, economy, science and technology, religion and political institutions. According to my personal understanding, this program contains huge culture implications, both implicitly and explicitly, which lay the foundations of any culture study.

Watching the *National Geographic*, and especially *The Silk Road* today, reminds me the unbalance between the two parties of the culture exchange. It is so evident that the East tolerates a double exploited position during the contemporary culture exchange. The double exploited position can be described as: the West is dominating the East, and as a result, the East is shaped by the West as a first exploitation. And meanwhile, the East is willing to cater for the interests of the West, for example, the colonized mentality in many Eastern countries, which strengthens the shape and more importantly, legitimizes the dominance of the East by the West as a second exploitation. Thus, it is not surprising at all for thousands of researchers to argue the gradual significance of “Orientalism” under the discourse of globalization, to be more precise, in the context of post-colonization.

(Jian TD)

Lan did not have a TV in her place. Sometimes she would go to her friend’s place to watch *Discovery*. This was her favourite channel since she was in China because “that channel is for knowledge. It can offer you so much information from nearly everywhere,
like the life science, like the social science, the natural science.” Lan thought it was a good source to learn how common, everyday items were produced.

The most interesting program I see is *Discovery* channel. It shows how to make something. What I see is *How to Make the Highlight Marker* and *How to Make Ice Container*. Yeah. It’s very interesting. They show the procedure how to make ice container. People can use this container to contain the wine. And they show how to make the highlight marker. From it I know something connected to my major field, the polymer …. Yeah, from this TV shows, people can understand something when they choose the product in the shop. They know how to understand the description, ingredients, something like this. If they have some, one of the ingredients reach some levels, it means that this product is good, it’s worth of this price, something like this. I think it’s very helpful. If not, the description, the ingredients mean nothing to the customers. (Lan TD)

Tang had a wide range of interests. He often used the Internet for various kinds of information “not only from Canadian websites, but all around the world.” [http://rand.org/](http://rand.org/) was one of his favourite websites for global policy and international affairs analysis.

This website is one of the most well-known think tanks in the world. It provides many strategic recommendations to the U.S. government. Sometimes if you visit their website, you will find very interesting research from there. Sometimes it’s useful, I mean the recommendation. Sometimes if you read really carefully, it’s quite absurd, if you consider the problem from another country’s standpoint. (Tang TD)

Knowledge learning is not limited to any famous books or magazines they read, any special programs they watched or any particular websites they searched. Sometimes a pamphlet for car maintenance could be an easy guide for a new driver; an advertisement for promoting tourism could be a source of learning geographic knowledge. Pang and Yong’s experiences were examples of this kind.

Today I read some pamphlets on cars from Canadian Tire. I want to get some information in case I have some problems with my car. So, I learned some information about wheel balance and tire inflation facts. For customers, they give customers some information about the car, and provide some general knowledge about vehicle maintenance, but won’t tell people how to fix a car. For themselves, it’s an advertisement for their business. From the pamphlet, I know what they can
do with the car. So if anything is wrong with my car, I may take Canadian Tire as one of my choices. (Pang TD)

Tonight, when I did exercise in YMCA, I watched some TV, just some public advertisement. Just before the spring, the local government of Newfoundland played this advertisement on TV. They used different ways to attract you, not only the landscape, the beautiful view. Also they used very, very mankind stuff, like the old lady and young children. They play together, live in a very old house, make you feel a very nice place, you know, a very sweet place you want to go, to take a look. So I think it’s a very nice way for us to know how it looks like, and maybe even after watching that even have time to go there to take a look. So it’s very, very interesting. I think most Chinese know very few about Newfoundland and Labrador. I think, at least, we don’t know the province of Newfoundland also includes Labrador. I also learned from this advertisement about the information of this province. It is a remote place. For the first time, I also know it’s a very beautiful place and very old, historic place. Definitely it’s useful information about Canada. TV advertisement provided by local government is one of the best ways for people, especially those non-Canadian to know about more about Canada, specifically those places we seldom go to. (Yong TD)

Chapter Summary

Findings from this chapter illustrated that the participants’ most salient mass communication need at this stage was the acquisition of various kinds of information from and about the host society. It included news about Canada, China and Canada relations, international affairs, university and local community events, and other information/knowledge of personal interest as in sales, travel, transportation, food, fashion, health, career, economy, weather, environment, etc. Moreover, it was found that these students were sensitive towards the ways the media portrayed and reported on world affairs, especially the media’s negative stereotypes and biases against China. It appeared that certain media wrongdoings affected their perceptions and further use of those media, or even their acculturation attitude.
CHAPTER 7

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND CULTURE LEARNING

In Chapter 6, I presented the participants’ use of media as sources of information. In this chapter, I focus on their English language acquisition and culture learning through media. It contains two sections. The first section is about learning the host language through media, which is stated as one of the most important purposes for the participants’ use of media. It describes how the participants selected and used different media as tools for improving their English language competence; and what strategies they adopted in dealing with the language difficulties. The second section is about learning the host culture through media, which includes the participants’ views or opinions of Canadian culture; what they have learned about Canadian/North American culture; and what adjustment they have made accordingly. This section is organized in seven subsections and presented in the order of interest to the participants.

Language Acquisition Through Media

All the participants used various kinds of host mass media as tools to some extent for improving their English language competence, which includes listening, reading, writing, and communication skills. All the media were seen as learning sources for increasing vocabulary for different purposes, e.g., flyers for food and home appliances, health magazines for medical terms, etc. Print media such as books, magazines, and newspapers were useful for grammar learning, reading and writing. Audio visual media such as TV, movies, DVDs, radio, and music were effective in training and improving listening and oral communication skills. The Internet was seen as a unique medium for language acquisition due to its power of inclusiveness of multiple media forms. All the
participants have developed some coping strategies to achieve better outcomes in the process of using and learning through the media.

To all the participants in this study, flyers were more than a source of local shopping information. They were also used as a non-dictionary vocabulary learning medium.

I learned a lot of English words from every week flyers. Before I came to Canada, I just know meat is meat. When I came here, I learned another word “sirloin”, and other names of different foods. Now I know the names of different parts of chicken. (Henry ID)

I learned some new words from the flyers, some product’s name, such as pasta. The picture means explanation. The advantage of it is: I think, because you have to read it each week, so repeat, repeat, you can learn it by heart. On the Boxing Week flyer, I think I learned “door crash” which means the products can’t be got online. It’s only available in stores. I didn’t go to the dictionary to check the words, because this phrase comprises of two words: one is “door,” the other is “crash.” I think both of are. I know the “door.” I know the “crash.” I am not sure the meaning of it, but I can imagine, so I got the meaning. (Lan TD)

Because by reading a lot of flyers and pamphlets you can learn very specific names. I mean that you begin to learn what this is called in English. For example, the thing you usually used in the daily life. You can tell its name in Chinese, but not in English. For example, there are a lot of seasonings, and specific sauces. We’ve got a lot of specific sauces besides ketch-up and peppers, because they’re so specific in daily life. (Jian ID)

Pang had become aware of the patterns of word formation and combination, and believed that the rules he found could help him build vocabulary skills.

I think it’s a good way to learn English, because there are a lot of pictures and item names in the flyers. Many things I only know their names in Chinese, but I can’t name it in English, such as treadmill, snowthrower, and log splitter. When I saw the picture in the flyer, and the English name is there. I can learn it easier, even I don’t need to use the dictionary to check its means. So this is a very direct way to improve my vocabulary. Usually in the weekend, I take a lot of flyers home. I read it one by one. And by this way, I learned lots of new words. For example, the “sweet potato,” and the “chicken wing,” and “red potato,” and “red or green pepper,” I found it is interesting. These words order is the same as in Chinese way, adjective before the noun. So it’s easy to remember these words. It will help me combine some words. (Pang TD)
Three participants (Pang, Wen, and Yong) read *The Bible* on a regular basis. They said that they could learn some vocabulary through reading *The Bible*, “but some of the words are seldom used in daily life, and the grammar, because it’s the old English” (Pang). Three participants (Jian, Tang, and Zhen) had read some non-academic English books since they were in Canada. Jian and Tang said that they could “learn some English” (Jian), such as “writing grammar” (Tang), but did not provide further details. Zhen thought it was “not that obvious. Maybe, vocabulary wise. But because I read so few books, can’t see much contribution at all.” However, Zhen mentioned that magazines were a source to increase her vocabulary which could not be learned from school.

Because I am watching quite a few of TV shows, there’re some words that come so often in the spoken language I’ve never learned in my formal English learning. And when I am reading magazines, I will come across those words which I think is quite useful. There’s “charisma.” I don’t think I have ever learned this word, but it was talked so much in *American Idol*. They don’t use charm or anything. They use “charisma” and some other words I learned from the magazines I read today. I don’t remember that quite well. It’s about human health, like “metabolism,” “menopause,” something like that. I can’t remember the exact spelling. If the words are in front of me, I can recognize. (Zhen TD)

Four participants (Amy, Jian, Yong, and Pang) believed that reading newspapers was a good method to improve their English, such as vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, writing, and communication skills etc. Amy said that reading newspaper was an efficient way of improving her English, such as in writing, grammar and vocabulary.

My previous ESL teachers told me: “If you’re going to learn the writing of English, go to read newspapers or novels. You will see the sentence pattern, and also the words you’re not very familiar with. You know the word, you always see this word, maybe next time when you’re writing a paper, then this word will suddenly occur to your mind.” So that’s what I am doing right now. What I found from the newspaper, a lot of expressions which I seldom met before. Although I have been learning English for several years, I still can find something which I don’t know, so I decide to write them down, I mean the sentence I can’t
understand or the new words I didn’t meet, and go to check for the information, like the dictionary or online *Wikipedia*, which can help me to understand it. So it’s really a good tool to learn English. (Amy TD)

At the same time, Amy felt that the language of BBC news and CBC news were different from the language of *The Journal* at the university. Compared to CBC and BBC vocabulary, *The Journal*’s words were “more polite rather than radical” and “easier to understand.”

*BBC* or *CBC*, they’re good at writing news, because they’re professional news agency. So sometimes the reporter has his or her own point of view towards this event. But for *The Journal*, usually most of the reports were from the students. So I don’t think students are too radical. Maybe sometimes they will write some just like everyday language, very polite. When I read the news, it seems not that radical. (Amy ID)

Jian thought that reading newspapers in English was a good tool for learning English, especially in writing and vocabulary.

I have read a lot of newspapers in English in China. They’re written by Chinese editors, but they’re in English. It’s a good way to learn English, because you can find the way they organize the sentences and paragraphs is very Western. They tried to present the events in Chinese philosophy with English. I read a lot of newspapers in Canada. They’re a little bit different from the newspapers in English in China. The language is the same. The culture and the way of thinking are different. It’s really a unique experience. Both will help you a lot in learning vocabulary. When people report an issue from a Canadian perspective, they use different words and have different perspectives as well. This is the same case from a Chinese perspective. They may use different vocabularies. So you will see how much of vocabulary can be used to describe a certain issue. Same issue, different words to describe this kind of issue. I think attitude will have an influence on the vocabulary used. This kind of vocabulary which is going to be used will enlarge your vocabulary in no doubt. (Jian ID)

Although Yong also said that reading newspapers in English was a way of improving English, for example, reading comprehension, he did not think reading a newspaper could help him in writing.

I think it’s hard to say that reading newspaper could help me in writing, because I don’t want to check any new words in a dictionary. I don’t want to guess. I know
sometimes the journalists just use different words to express the same meaning, so I just pass. If I don’t understand, just don’t understand. (Yong ID)

Pang said that from the newspaper, he could learn how to communicate his ideas and present information clearly.

I think the newspaper English is modern English, the English we hear people say everyday. Sometimes when we want to say something, express something, we don’t know how to say it. From the newspaper, I can see how the native speakers say one particular thing or present an idea. (Pang ID)

All the participants in this study watched TV programs, either through cabled TV or online TV channels. They also watched movies through different media (theatre, TV, DVD, and the Internet). No matter what movies and TV programs they watched, and how much time they spent watching these audio-visual products, one of their main purposes was to improve their English language competence, especially their listening ability and vocabulary build-up. Just as Pang briefly described “I think it improves listening skills, so I watch TV and DVD. I just try to understand some words and expressions, how to use them.”

Amy watched TV almost everyday, at least for three to four hours. Her primary purpose of watching TV was to learn English. She believed it was a tool of learning English that she might not acquire or learn through interpersonal communication or textbook. For examples,

When I watched CSI, I learned some terms, such as “crime lab”, “autopsy”, and a lot of words I seldom heard from our daily life, although I will never use them in the daily life. Because you know, in the daily life, we seldom talk about like dead body or violence, but here you know. When I watched Prison Break, I learned some expressions often used among prisoners close to their life, a lot of like slang, because you will never learn slang in a textbook, and some unofficial English. I think it’s good, because you may find in our daily life people don’t speak the language like what we learned from a textbook, from the documents, from the files. And sometimes, they speak something like without subject or without object
or without preposition. So that’s, I guess, daily life English which you can hear from the conversation among the native speakers. (Amy TD)

Amy said since she had learned English mainly at school, the formal written English might be appropriate for formal occasions or academic purposes. However, she also had other communication needs in daily life. From movies and TV programs, she learned some communication skills that were not taught in the textbook.

I don’t know how to have a quarrel with others. If I saw the movie, sometimes the movies have a lot of quarrelling or criticism, so I can learn a lot of words. They can teach you how to argue, how to fight. Sometimes you have to argue with somebody. (Amy ID)

During the interview, Yong said he mainly watched two TV programs—newscasts and the TV series *Friends*. He thought “that’s a very interesting way to improve English.”

Because sometimes I use the Internet to read Chinese websites for news, and then when I watched TV in English, the same news, if I didn’t read the Chinese, maybe I just understand like 50%. After reading, I found I can understand more words on TV news. This is a way to learn new vocabulary. Because without that information, maybe I don’t know that word’s meaning. I just pass. But now, the word is that. OK. It’s like a comparison. It’s a very special way. (Yong ID)

Lan was also a fan of *Friends*. From this TV series, she learned American humour and a lot of new words. One of them was an alternative word to express her feelings.

Today, I watched *Friends* online. I like this TV show. From it, I can learn some new words. For example, before it, when I want to describe my feelings, for example, the conditions, this thing cannot happen, but it happens, I always use the word “It’s so strange.” But from the *Friends*, I know that people in North America always say “It’s so weird.” I learned a word “weird.” I like this word. I also know what’s American humour, even though I can’t fully understand them. (Lan TD)

Jian loved to watch *National Geographic* on DVD. He thought it was a “fabulous program” for English language learners at his level.
*National Geographic* is really a good program. Not to mention the content itself, but also the language. It’s well written, and nicely pronounced, and the terminology, and the vocabulary, the sentence, the paragraph, the idea are all well organized. It’s really a good program, not only for the natives, but also for the foreigners. You can also learn very decent English from the *National Geographic*. You can slow down, and watch it over and over again. It’s excellent, I should say. (Jian ID)

Tang said that watching children’s movies on DVD with his sons helped him learn the “real English.”

To my experience, it looks like the simpler the wordings are, the more difficult you learn it. Most of time, you can speak very well the professional, the difficult words. But if you try to speak daily English, it’s more difficult. But if you watch children’s DVD, many times you can really get those kind of real English. (Tang ID)

Six participants (Jian, Lan, Tang, Wen, Yong, and Zhen) had ever listened to the radio. Most of them only listened to it occasionally, for example, when they were driving or on a bus. When they turned on the radio, one of the purposes was to develop their listening ability.

All the participants had listened to music from the host mass media, e.g., CD, TV, radio, and online. But it was not considered as a “main way” of improving their English competence.

I think the music help me learn a lot of English words and English phrases. (Henry LD)

At first, the melody is the most attracted to me, and then after a long, long time, may be I will pay attention to the words of it. It will happen a little bit, but it’s not the main way. (Lan ID)

When I listened to the music channel while driving, I hardly fully understand what they are singing. (Wen ID)
All the participants in this study agreed that the Internet was a place of choice to learn English. However, different people had different ways of using and evaluating the usefulness of this medium.

Internet is a tool of learning the language, because Internet includes everything: news, movie, music, and everything. (Zhen ID)

When we look on the web pages, even though I can’t quite understand the Chinese meaning of it, but I can read up and down, and I can guess the meaning of it. I think it’s a method of learning. Yeah, everyday we can make some opportunity to learn and improve English. (Lan ID)

If you intend to learn English on the Internet, it’s basically on improving your reading and listening, not speaking abilities. I think compared to TV, the effect of learning language through the Internet is obvious. (Jian ID)

I do use the Internet to help me translate something. It’s kind of like online translation. I think it’s helpful. It’s very convenient. They can even pronounce for you, the whole sentence. It’s a very good tool, saved lots of time. (Yong ID)

When these participants used the host mass media, they also used different tools to make the learning process more productive. Three participants (Tang, Amy, and Pang) said that they used a dictionary to find words for meanings and pronunciation. Tang often chose the electronic dictionary, because it saved time. Amy used to have the habit of checking a dictionary for new words. Gradually, she mainly looked for some keywords.

At the beginning, I will look up the dictionary, because if I read a sentence, oh, there’s one word I didn’t know its meaning, then I will get help from the dictionary. But later, I find it’s very annoying if you keep checking the dictionary. So now I guess I’ve already got rid of this habit. I just read the news. If I didn’t know the word, then I just skip it, because sometimes it didn’t affect the understanding. But if this word, for example, if this passage only talk about this phenomenon, and I don’t know what’s that, I will go to the dictionary to find the meaning, because this is the key word. (Amy ID)

Compared to Tang and Amy, Pang seemed to use the dictionary more frequently, and for more details, e.g., pronunciation. While reading Pang’s log, I noticed that when he read the flyers, he seldom added phonetic symbols beside the new words he learned.
But in his log on *The Bible* study, almost all the words were noted down with phonetic symbols. During the interview, I raised this question, and he explained as follows:

For the new words in the flyer, it’s not I don’t care. I know someone said it. I know the pronunciation. So I don’t need to check it. If I don’t know how to pronounce it, maybe I have to check the dictionary. For example, when I read the flyers or pamphlets from Canadian Tire, I want to know its meaning, its pronunciation, and I try to remember it in case sometime I will use these words to communicate with the technician, when I need to repair my car. I check the pronunciation of the words in *The Bible*, because I don’t know the means of the word. Also I don’t know how to pronounce it, because some of *The Bible* words are not used frequently in daily life. I just want to know its meaning. I don’t want to learn how to use it. (Pang ID)

Some participants chose not to check the dictionary for new words, either by guessing (Lan and Jian) or passing (Yong). Jian explained that he did not use a dictionary when he read newspapers, because there were too many new words, and his purpose was just to get a general idea.

I confess that sometimes I have difficulties in reading the newspapers, because they’ve got a lot of specific terminology which I might have difficulty. But you don’t need to grasp everything on the newspaper, do you? Just get a conception, just the basic idea. I think one of the reasons is there’s too much information. If you read the newspaper with a dictionary, maybe two hours for just one page. (Jian ID)

Eight participants (except Zhen) would turn on the caption to suit their needs, when they watched TV, movies, or DVD programs.

We found after several years, we still have some difficulties to understand some places in this soap. Some of them, we watched many times, but some of them are still not very well. So sometimes if we can’t listen clearly, we can see the words to understand. It’s easier to just read to get the meaning. Anyway, it’s much better than before. We just keep learning. (Yong TD)

Henry would turn on the captions in Chinese whenever the feature was available.

“I listen to the English. If I miss something, I can guess from the Chinese, and know what’s the word that I have missed.” He thought that if he could watch movies without
using captions, he might have improved his listening ability faster, but he might not be able to enjoy the program quite well.

When Lan watched an English movie, she would turn on the captions in two languages—English and Chinese at the same time, if both were available.

So for the English caption, you can follow each word, so you listen the English word and you see it. So it’s a very good way to practice your listening ability. At the same time, you can see the Chinese words, so it’s translate, so you can compare. In this way, I think I can more deeply understand some English words and practise my listening ability at the same time. I think this is the best way. If without caption, sometimes I can’t quite catch the words. (Lan ID)

Tang was very confident in his listening ability. Sometimes when he watched a movie by himself, he would turn on the captions in order to understand “the subtle meaning.”

Jian’s words on the function of mass media in language acquisition may generalize the language learning experiences of most participants in this study.

I think one of the most efficient strategies to improve English proficiency might be to read more, hear more, and listen more until you know the way that the Western people express themselves in decent ways. I think when you have time, if you pick up a newspaper or a magazine, turn on the radio, or turn on the TV, whatever it is about, just in English, you can learn a lot from it. Every single piece of reading, or radio, or TV program will help a lot in language itself, if you devote some time on it. (Jian ID)

Culture Learning

Is there a Canadian Culture?

Hockey, beaver, and Tim Horton’s were identified as symbols of Canada by the participants. Four of them (Tang, Wen, Lan, and Yong) talked about hockey, and saw it as a part of Canadian culture, although none of them ever played hockey. Tang had two sons who were born in Canada, and he wanted them to learn to play hockey when they grew up.
If you just want to learn some characteristics of Canadian culture, you will notice that its official, national sport is ice hockey. Hockey is an integral part of Canadian culture. There’s lot of information about hockey, especially in winter, I think maybe due to the weather, you don’t have many sports other than hockey. I think that’s why its popularity is always higher among Canadians. I am interested in this hockey simply because I want my children, they are two boys. I want them to learn hockey when they are old enough. (Tang TD)

Two participants held some negative feelings toward hockey because of the violence in the games.

I watched some hockey games since I came to Canada. But surprisingly, I saw so many violence in the game. It’s very common that you may see players punch each other. I still remember one scene: two players start fighting. One already lost his helmet and the other had it. The first point to his helmet and ask the other guy get rid of his helmet so that they can have a fair fight. The other guy did it, and then they start boxing. All other players and referees just stand around and watch. Finally, the guy was down and the other one ride on him and punch his body as hard as he can. Then the referees had seen enough and jump in and separate them. Then the referees resume the game just like nothing happened. I just can’t believe how could they let this happen. People want to watch hockey, not boxing. I don’t understand why it is difficult to avoid this. In many other games, like soccer, and basketball, the players are going to be suspended and be fined if they are involved in this kind of violence, and that’s why this scenario is rarely to see in the games. Last year, one NHL final game was broadcasted on NBC. The hostess laugh on this violence and said this is a crude game. Do you know how the famous commentator explained to them? He said this is the culture of hockey! He said because the girls love it! What a reason, what a shame. In my opinion, hockey is a sport, people play it, watch it, just because they love the game itself. I seriously doubt about they watch this because they love the violence. I don’t think people punch each other in the game just because the girls love the violence. It’s unnecessary. Violence should not be part of the hockey. Hockey can be as clean as soccer or basketball. I don’t admire this kind of culture. (Wen ID)

Lan was a female student, and she did not like the violence in hockey games, either.

In Canada, maybe only hockey. But you know, hockey, I don’t like it. When I had field trip with my classmate last year, when we’re eating in the restaurant, the TV gave the hockey. I remember in ten minutes, they fought three times. So I don’t like it. (Lan ID)
Two participants (Lan and Tang) recognized the beaver as another symbol of Canada. From a TV advertisement, Lan noticed that the stars of a current advertisement campaign for Bell Canada were animated beavers.

Yeah, Bell Canada, the animal they use to represent their company is beaver. Actually speaking, at first, I don’t know which kind of animal it is. So it’s just like a mouse. My friend told me this animal represents Canada. So it’s the animal of Canada. In China, we also have this kind of animal. It’s Panda. It’s very famous, like the beaver. Now I know it represents the animal of Canada. Before that, I don’t know. (Lan ID)

Tang knew that the beaver was a national symbol of Canada from different mass media, e.g., Internet, TV, travel guides, etc. He said the image of beaver could be found in many places, in different forms.

The image of the beaver is depicted on the Canadian five-cent piece. And information says that beaver was depicted on the first postage stamp issued in Canada. And also it acts as a symbol of many units and organizations within the Canadian Army, the Canadian forces. (Tang TD)

Tang seldom went to Tim Horton’s, because he did not have the habit of drinking coffee. Sometimes his colleagues in the same office would bring each other a cup of coffee when they dropped by Tim Horton’s. When he heard them saying “double-double,” he did not understand its meaning, and was too shy to ask for an explanation. Then he got on the Internet for an answer. From Wikipedia, he learned what “double-double” meant, as well as the history of Tim Horton’s, its menu, and its brand image etc.

Tim Horton’s is highly liked by Canadians. So I think maybe it’s necessary for me to learn some facts or information about this company. So the interesting thing is Tim Horton’s is a prominent feature of Canadian life. Its branding is widely accepted as a Canadian cultural icon. And the media routinely refer to its iconic status. So one product is the “double-double” coined by this company. It’s interesting to know that “double-double” is coffee with two sugars and two cream. That’s interesting to me since I never knew that a product, a cup of coffee could be offered with two sugars and two cream. (Tang ID)
However, four participants (Pang, Yong, Zhen, and Amy) believed that Canada and the United States shared a “same” or “similar” culture, e.g., same language (Yong), same TV programs (Pang) etc. One participant (Tang) held that “Canadian culture was highly influenced by American culture, and were very similar, but still they’re different in some core values.” One participant (Henry) believed that they were very different in attitudes towards people and life.

Pang found that most of the movies and TV programs he watched were from the United States. It seemed to him that “Canadian culture is mainly the culture of the United States.”

It doesn’t have much of its own. Sometimes I just have the feeling that Canada doesn’t have its own culture, neither its own food. And people are from all around the world. So is it a country? It has everything a bit of all countries. (Pang ID)

Yong also had an impression that Canadian TV stations and newspapers were overwhelmed by the presence of “American stuff;” and in reality, Canada had an “unbalanced relationship” with the United States.

Maybe because our city is too close to the U.S., so sometimes when they talk about weather, sometimes they just mentioned the U.S. cities, like in New York, Syracuse, or Watertown. I think maybe because our city is at the border, very close, so. (Yong ID)

And also I found they have no difference between the Canadian. You know, sometimes, in the political news, they just mixed together the Canadian news and the news in the U.S. Even many news in the U.S., what the President Bush said even before what happened in Canada. In China, what happened in China is definitely reported first. (Yong ID)

I don’t know if my feeling is right or wrong. I found many times many Canadian cases, like the government, especially those small towns or cities at the border, they kind of mixed with the U.S. I don’t know if they tried to do this or not. You can see the U.S. national flags everywhere, in the front of the shop, in the front of the hotel, on the street, anywhere. However, when you go to the U.S., never find a Canadian flag. Even at the Niagara Falls. In the Canadian side, they have both. On the American side, just American flag. I don’t know why. Because I know many
Canadians say “We’re different from the U.S.” But I found in most cases, they maybe not pay attention to this. But they kind of mixed already. They’re trying to do this. But the Americans look like they’re not very. They don’t want to put your flag. I think maybe Canada think the U.S. as a big brother, because the U.S. is much stronger than Canada. Even the U.S. can protect Canada. But I don’t think the U.S. may take Canada as. I can feel from my U.S. friends. Several times when they talked about Canada or Canadian, it’s kind of laughing. It’s kind of different. It’s not balance. Most Canadians maybe have more, better feelings about the U.S., and want to come together with the U.S. But most U.S. people, maybe they don’t have that strong feeling. Some Americans even think Canada is a part of the U.S., but this is definitely wrong. Many U.S. people just think that way. So this is why they don’t use two flags at the border. U.S. flag is enough for them. (Yong ID)

Zhen thought that Canada and the United States shared a similar culture, “but the Canadians won’t agree. Maybe I am not here longer enough.” She believed that mass media could reflect the art and symbolic forms of a society. However since “many mass media in Canada broadcast the American culture, American art forms, and American movies,” Canadian mass media did “not totally reflect the Canadian culture.” “Only if they accept that American culture is their culture. Otherwise, we shouldn’t say all the mass media are transmitting Canadian culture.” She also regarded that Canadians were exposed to too much American culture.

It’s not “will affect”, it is “affecting” or “has been affecting Canadian culture.” I noticed one thing that Christine, a colleague, and I talked about Hollywood. Hollywood is theirs, it’s not foreign movie. Foreign movie is something outside of North America. Even though they think they don’t want to belong to, they want to be different from Americans. Even though they say so, but they don’t really do so. Most Canadians know Americans so well, but no Americans know Canadians. They don’t care. (Zhen ID)

Although Amy had never been to the United States, she felt that Canada and the United States shared the “same” culture.

America is like a big brother of Canada. Almost everything I guess Canadian follow the American. From the TV shows, it seems to me that Canadian like be part of America, like under the control of American, sort of like that. Canadians they don’t think they do. They will say: “Oh, we have our own culture.” I didn’t
find out. Like, I don’t think Canadians have their own movie. I think almost all the movies are produced by American people. Last week, I went to the Cineplex, watching the *Juno* …. All the characters in this movie are Canadians …. I think this is a Canadian movie, but the money is from the U.S. (Amy ID)

Henry had a feeling that Canadian people were “quite different” from American people in their way of treating other people and life.

In Canada, people are very peaceful. In the United States, people are more aggressive …. It’s my personal feelings. And I think Canadian people like to enjoy life. The United States people like to earn money. But most Canadian people don’t like to sacrifice their time of rest to earn money. They open the shop late, and close it early. (Henry ID)

*Cultural Distance between China and Canada*

All the participants in this study were conscious of the cultural distance between China and Canada (e.g., collectivism vs. individualism). Henry and Jian felt that there were many differences between Eastern and Western cultures, but they did not give any concrete examples. Amy thought that Chinese and Canadians had “different minds, different logic things regard one stuff.” Lan, Pang, Tang, Wen, Yong, and Zhen thought the difference was “not so big as before” (Lan), or “not very obvious” (Pang). Zhen regarded that there was no overall clear cut difference between collectivism and individualism.

People always say that, we Easterners are collectivism, and here they’re more individualism. But I found this line very blurry. It’s not really that clear cut. Here we are international students or immigrants. I found most of us are more individual focused. Mostly we are minding our own business. Maybe because of situation, we are in a different country, we need to survive. And I also found people here are not really that individualized. They get together. They form groups, and gangs. The distinction is not that clear cut. Maybe there’re people who are more individual focused, but that maybe, I will say, only one-third of them. But the majority of them, they also try to find a group they can belong, a group that can recognize them. Canadians I found they are also seeking for group approval. (Zhen ID)
Four participants (Wen, Tang, Pang, and Zhen) had children with them in Canada. Three of them (Wen, Tang, and Pang) talked about their thoughts and concerns in parenting and educating their children after the use of relevant mass media.

During the data collection process, Wen was shocked by a “Muslim family tragedy” reported by the *Toronto Star*—a 16-year-old Muslim girl was strangled and killed by her own father because she did not conform to the family’s religious beliefs and refused to wear a traditional Islamic head scarf. Wen had a six-year-old daughter. As an immigrant from China, Wen knew that many of the values and traditions of the first generation of immigrants held might conflict with the Western culture. He worried the generation gap caused by culture clash could affect his relation with his daughter in the future.

> I grow up in China. My brain thinks in Chinese tradition and Chinese culture. But my kid grows up from here. What she learned is Canadian stuff, all Western country stuff. So definitely, there will be conflict. So maybe, I think, when my kid grow up, become bigger, definitely, this conflict become like larger. I need to prepare myself to deal with this problem. (Wen ID)

Tang had two young children. He often searched on the Internet for educational information, such as “how to be a good parent.”

> So from those websites I can learn a lot, especially how to respect children’s rights, and how to protect their psychological development. So those are very important factors if you rear children …. Many principles are very good. (Tang TD)

To learn more specific parenting skills, Tang also borrowed a lot of books from the community public library. He thought they were “very good resources for raising kids in Canada.”
Actually many families really need to develop their parenting skills, and follow the best principles recommended by the books. That problem is not specific to Chinese parents. I think many Canadian families have the same difficulties. The information does help me to learn Canadian living style, especially how Canadian culture protects children’s rights. (Tang TD)

Tang often borrowed children’s DVD movies from the community public library and watched them with his children. He thought those DVD programs were very suitable resources for educating his children at that stage, because they “respect children’s personalities, especially their psychological, developmental needs.” For example,

The Cartoon movie *Franklin* teaches children about cooperation, sharing, and taking care of the others. In front of difficulties, children are encouraged to be independent, to solve problems by themselves, and cooperate with others rather than fight. I think they are very helpful. Sometimes my sons just quote the slogans in the DVD. (Tang TD)

He felt that China “should learn those kind of educational principles, educational skills from North American counterparts.”

Pang had a son in Grade seven. Sometimes he would read his textbook and checked his son’s progress. He had the impression that “maths is more challenging in China compared to the same grade in Canada.” As a university lecturer back in China, Pang did a comparison.

It could be the differences in education policy and guideline. In China, the emphasis is on early education. People have the belief that the earlier the children receive the education, the better. So the children’s burden of study starts at very early stage. Here in Canada, take maths as an example, you may think that many skills and knowledge are not taught at the elementary level, but they will be taught at high school. I think most of the basic skills will be taught before the university education. Same amount of knowledge, Chinese students need to learn more when they’re very young, while Canadian students will catch up when they’re getting older. But at the same time, we must admit that the kids from Chinese education system have a solid grasp of basic skills, especially in maths. I think Chinese education system put too much emphasis on children’s development of intelligence and ignore their needs on health and other aspects in life. Here in Canada, they emphasize on the development of students’ ability, for example, the ability to solve problems. It seems that one of the purposes of
education is to let the students have a happy learning experience. In China, the examination system is sort of cruel to the kids. The learning burden is too heavy, and leaves the kids so little time to play. For example, after school, the young kids have to spend a long time to do homework, and need to take part in various kinds of extra learning activities, almost leave them no time to play and relax. (Pang ID)

Pang was very satisfied about his son’s education in Canada. In the father’s eyes, “He’s a good learner, a good student, especially in his ability in maths, creative writing, and doing project.”

Zhen had a son in Grade five. He started his elementary education in China, and skipped Grade two when he moved to Canada because of his advanced skills in mathematics. Zhen did not give any comments on her son’s education in Canada. She just felt that her son, as an ESL student, was weak in language arts. Like most parents in China, she would supervise his homework, and used the Internet to find some extra exercises for him to practice more.

My son has only been here for two and a half years. Sometimes he asked me for help in his homework. Sometimes I use the Internet to look for some materials that are suitable for his study. I will let him do some multiple choice and short answer questions. I encouraged my son to read the newspaper, but he didn’t, so I just put it back. (Zhen TD)

Yong and Amy did not have any children, but they also had some thoughts on parenting and educational differences between China and Canada. When Yong watched the TV series *Friends*, he was shocked to see that parents and children in North America could “talk everything, even topics about sex. And they don’t have any limit about this.” He said this kind of parenting style was quite different from Chinese tradition, “Usually, we are trying to avoid such topics.” According to Yong, the parenting differences between Chinese and Western cultures were “not just about talking.”

The parents here, usually, they let the children do what they want. I mean if the children want to camp somewhere, even it’s a little bit dangerous, but the parents
here maybe keep them going. But in China, the parents always want to keep the children very safe, and never let them get any hurt. Keep them away from dangerous environment. From this TV show, I can know maybe there’re some differences. Parents like here give the children more freedom. Let them explore their own world, even some are a little dangerous. I think maybe this is the better way, because they will face the danger later in the future anyway. (Yong ID)

Amy watched a lot of science fiction movies and TV series, e.g., *The Fifth Element* and *The Heroes*. She found that “There’re a lot of aliens, transformers, or supernatural things in North American movies and TV series. But you can seldom find that in Chinese movies.” As a graduate student in social sciences, Amy attributed this to the educational differences between China and North America, both at home and in school.

The North American people, they ask people to have creative ability. When they’re a child, they may know how to fix something, how to maybe fix a car. Maybe their parents will buy their kids a lot of games, but you have to use your hand to put things together. And also they require creativity or innovation. So that’s why they put more on this, based on this. So people may produce their own things, not just the fixed system. (Amy ID)

At school, the students were not restricted to classroom learning.

I read a news several months ago. It’s for Grade seven. Their homework is: the teacher asked the students to go to the public library to look for the resources to write a paper. But you know, if it’s a Chinese case, if they’re at Grade seven, the teachers won’t give them the homework to ask them to go to a public library, to go for help from the librarians, and to write like what’s going on in the library. But you know, in China, students are always a kind of, they study for examination. (Amy ID)

*Sex/relationships/social roles of Men and Women*

Before coming to Canada, a lot of Chinese students had the conception that in North America sexual freedom was unlimited, and people could do whatever they liked with their relationships. But from the mainstream media they found it was not completely true.
Zhen was very interested in watching *American Idol*. In her log and think-aloud data, there were quite a few recordings of her use and feelings about this program. Among these, there was a controversy about the qualification of a contestant David Hernandez, who was revealed as a former nude dancer before his participation in “*Idol*.”

Soon after, Hernandez was eliminated from the ‘Top 12’ round. Zhen believed that Hernandez was eliminated earlier than he deserved because of his past working as a stripper, even though this scandal was not mentioned during the live telecast. She thought maybe *American Idol* did not want to deal with his shady past.

I feel it’s interesting, because in our mind, we thought Americans they are very open, they won’t mind those sex-related scandals. This kind of things happened to the President, to a lot of celebrities, so why bother with a little young boy who’s singing in a show business? This should be a more liberal business. But he is a stripper. He was eliminated earlier because of his past as a stripper. American people are in some sense, maybe conservative than we thought. Maybe a stripper is not a good example. (Zhen ID)

Amy and Yong found that in North American TV shows, there were a lot of sexual talk and sexual humour geared primarily toward adults. They said this was quite different from Chinese TV programs. Usually programs like *Friends* and *Two and a Half Men*, which contained sexual dialogue and situations would be banned in China.

China, the *CCTV*, they wanted to translate *Friends* to China. Actually they had made this. They have finished the translation. But then get rejected, because some content is still for adult people. In China, there’s no classification of TV shows. So I think this is the reason why it’s get rejected, because it’s not very suitable for the young people, the teenager in China. In here, maybe, but in China, it’s still not very suitable. (Yong ID)

Amy believed that these adult-oriented shows reflected “the reality in North America, just like freedom.” Yong did not think “anybody can talk or do this very openly like those friends in the TV show ….. It definitely depends on different person.” He said it
seemed that some young people were very casual about sex. But he felt that one of the
themes that *Friends* intended to deliver was the importance of “a serious relationship.”

For example, like Phoebe, she has lots of boyfriends actually. None of them has a
long-term relationship with her. She didn’t realize this before, but when Ross
carefully pointed out this, Phoebe was very sad about this …. So I feel for these
young Americans, they still think a serious relationship is very important.
Marriage is still very holy for them. And it’s also their responsibility to maintain
this relationship and avoid hurting this relationship. (Yong ID)

In addition, Yong thought *Friends* tried to use different comedy stories to teach
young people what kind of relationship might not survive and led to a happy and
successful ending, e.g., Monica’s relationship with her parents’ close friend, Richard;
Ross’s short marriage with Emily; and Joey’s romance with Charlie, etc.

I think even in North America for those young people, if they don’t match very
well, I mean, for example, like the background is quite different. One is a scientist.
Another is an actor, maybe very low educational level. Just like Joey and that
female professor. They have very good feeling at the very beginning. But you can
see later, they found maybe they can’t communicate very well. It’s not the
language problem, of course, but different thoughts or the interest. Everything is
different. It’s very important two persons match very well, especially for interest.
If these two persons they have very different background, and very different
educational levels, it’s very hard to stay together for a long time. So I think this is,
it’s the same, no difference between American or Chinese. (Yong ID)

Zhen thought that people in North America were more reasonable about boyfriend
and girlfriend relationships.

Even after they break up, they manage to be friends, somehow. If it’s done, it’s
done. Even though they fight, they argue all the time, but compared to our
relationship, they’re more reasonable. This is something that quite difficult to do
in real life. So their sense of being boyfriend and girlfriend, it may not necessarily
affect their friendship. I can’t imagine this kind of scenes in Chinese shows. So if
it’s an American shows, maybe it’s possible. But this kind of scene will not
happen in Chinese TV shows. So that means we don’t think that’s really possible.
That’s the cultural difference. (Zhen ID)

Some participants (e.g., Amy) were astonished to see Western people’s openness
about homosexuality. In China, homosexuality was a sensitive and taboo topic.
Homosexuals were often reluctant to identify themselves openly with the fear of prejudice and discrimination. Amy recorded her feelings while watching *Two and a Half Men* as follows:

> You know in China, I have never seen the lesbian or gay. I am sure in China, we have gay or lesbian. Because in China usually they pretend they are the normal people. They have pain inside. They dare not to tell others. They have to pretend. They have to cover themselves. Sometimes they are very painful for them. But here in the Western country, seems everybody can do everything they like. In China, we have discrimination. I guess, why they protect themselves, because they don’t like the people’s discrimination on them. (Amy TD)

During the data collection process, Yong watched *Friends* every night. There was a lot of talk about homosexuality in that TV series. In Yong’s view, although people in North America held a more open attitude and displayed greater tolerance towards homosexuality, they would not feel comfortable if any of their close friends were homosexuals. Yong did not think that North Americans considered and accepted the homosexuals as “completely normal.”

> I found here in North America, generally they can accept that, no problem. Very open, very understandable. But nobody wants themselves to be, or even one of their friends is lesbian or gay. Because you can feel when they talk about this, still like “Oh, lesbian.” Like Chandler, I think because his father becomes a mother, sometimes just a little bit like a woman dress, dress in pink. I think when Chandler dresses like that, all friends just like “Oh, Chandler.” Like everybody thought Chandler looks like a gay. Yeah, from their tone, you can still feel it’s still not normal, not proud. When *Friends* mentioned that, you’ll find all the audiences laughed at this. I think this is definitely not normal. Even it’s more acceptable here than in China. Now in China it’s more open now. Still for most of Chinese people, it’s kind of very abnormal, very weird. I think they have the same feeling, but just maybe more open than in China. (Yong ID)

In addition, all the participants expressed that through various kinds of host mass media, they learned the traditional and changed social roles of men and women in North America. Yong believed that TV shows could reflect traditional concepts about “gender appropriate jobs.” For example, there was an episode in *Friends* in which Rachel hired a
male nanny, Sandy, to take care of her daughter Emma. Yong said when he watched this episode, he felt “really weird” and “unusual” that a man “came to your home as a nanny…. even though he did it very well.” He commented that some jobs were more appropriate for men and women.

Because we all feel there’s some limit for male and female to do works, to do jobs. For example, very few men do the nanny or do some work for sewing, working in a factory for sewing or making toys. Usually it’s just female. But males do different works usually …. Because from this episode, you can see, except for Rachel, because she needs a nanny very badly. So she doesn’t think too much about this is a man or a woman. But all other people, you know, like “What?! It’s a man?!” So maybe this reflected the traditional belief about this definitely. You can feel that nanny was not a proper job for a man even in North America. (Yong ID)

Yong further elaborated his views on the proper jobs for men and women by relating his own profession of geology.

The most important thing for doing a job is, of course, you have the ability to get this job well done. However, many jobs are still affected by many other things. Sometimes even you can get this job well done, but because of other reasons, you can’t get this job. Like my job, geologist. I often need to go to the field. For a woman, I have some classmates. They have very good feeling about geology, no problem. But in the field, you have to stay many nights with those construction people. Even you can do very good geology job, but you can’t live with other helpers. So you can’t get this job or finish this job well. Like nanny, that man in that episode, he can do very well. You know, just people cannot accept this. Many people, I mean. How could a man just like a woman taking care of a baby? So still, always feel weird. So what I mean the most important thing for doing a job, you have to see from both sides: your own capability and also the environment. (Yong ID)

Lan thought advertising could also reflect “the daily lives and social roles of each family member.”

I remember one advertisement is about fast food. It shows a story that the Dad was repairing the family’s car, and the Mom rushed into the house and in one minute she came out and shouted: “Dinner is ready.” So it shows that this kind of food can keep the normal life, because both of them work outside. So it seems that the housework still belongs to wife. You know, women do the housework,
and men will do most of the big issues, like fixing the car, fixing the furniture. (Lan ID)

From the image of women in the mass media (e.g., movies and Internet), Zhen believed that women’s situation in the Western society had been improved, “women’s roles are important, and sometimes prominent, as can be seen from the competition for Miss World Canada.”

I searched http://missworldcanada.com. There’s one candidate who’s a Chinese and who’s from Queen’s. She sent email to our mail list and saying that she’s in top, top 50 or 20. She invited us to vote for her. And one of her emails saying “Beauty comes with brain” which I think makes a lot of sense. I think especially nowadays, you can see a lot of beautiful young women who has brain. The percentage maybe going up. In old times, usually beautiful persons are not really bright, and bright persons are usually ugly. So I would admire those people who possess both beauty and wisdom. So I voted for her three times to show my support. (Zhen TD)

Family Values

Three participants (Amy, Yong and Lan) indicated that it was through mass media that they got to know family values treasured by North American people. Amy and Yong’s learning experiences were connected to religion or The Bible.

During the data collection process, Amy watched a Christmas-themed movie Elf on TV. From that movie, she learned what Christmas and Christmas spirit meant to North American people, and the importance of love, forgiveness and family reunion.

Before I saw this movie, I didn’t notice there was a term “Christmas spirit” in the Western culture, I mean, for the Christmas holidays. I guess Christmas spirit is like the Chinese Spring Festival spirit, because it’s a kind of family reunion. Each family member should go home to celebrate it together, because each year you only have once. Even though you’re very busy for your own business, still you have to spend some time to reunite with your family members. But for that movie because the father, he’s too busy, so he only cared about his own business, and didn’t care his family members’ feelings. And also a lot of New Yorkers. New York is more businesslike. So they always care about their business. Even the Christmas Eve, they don’t go home. They’re still in their offices to do something. So American people are lacking of Christmas Spirit. So this movie called for the
Christmas Spirit and asked people to go back to their old days. There’re many lessons to be learned as you watched this movie, because it touched your heart in many ways. (Amy TD)

In Yong’s log and think-aloud data, he recorded that on Christmas Day, Chandler (as in Friends) quit his job in Tulsa, and flew back to New York to be with his wife, Monica. Yong also talked about his feelings and reactions after watching the episode.

The comment is about the relationship, is about the understanding and the supporting between wife and husband. So for me, from tonight’s show, I can feel staying together, understanding, and being equal and supportive to each other are very important to a healthy relationship between wife and husband. We can’t just think about always for yourself, for your own side. I think everything is like, because you know, it’s not like your own job. (Yong TD)

During the interview, he elaborated how he formed this impression.

I think it’s not completely, because before I watched this TV show, I definitely learned this thing from The Bible, from my communications with my brothers and sisters in church. But after I watched this TV show, I just feel this just strengthened my thinking. Because I thought these young people in North America, maybe they don’t have this value any more. But I found most of them still keep this value, still have this belief. So I think this is still a very important thing. This thing is actually what I learned from the TV. But about this concept, not first learned from this TV. (Yong ID)

Yong thought North American people’s values on husband-wife relationship were somewhat influenced by Christianity, and were different from the traditional family values that Chinese people held.

I think maybe in North America, it’s more easy to get this, because they have some background of Christian. So it’s like that’s the right relationship between husband and wife—it should be equal, and also should respect, should understand and support each other. So all this is from husband and wife are equal. But in China, maybe the background is a little bit different, because our tradition is like, wife usually follows the man, follows the husband. Husband controls everything. Now China is changing, but still this tradition is very stable, yeah, still there. A little bit different. But I can’t say this is particularly in North America. But in North America, it’s more popular. (Yong ID)
Lan was also a regular *Friends* watcher. Rachel’s experience of being an unmarried single mother made Lan believe that North American people were more tolerant and supportive towards unmarried single mothers. While in China, an unmarried single mother was looked down upon as something of a social outcast. There was not any special social service or program to help her and her child.

In one of the episodes of *Friends*, it tells that Rachel will be a single mother and her friends accepted this fact and encouraged her to let the baby come out. Maybe in the U.S. society, it’s open enough, so people can accept this fact. In China, I think the fact will be quite different. The pressure the single mother face should be much, much more heavier than here. So maybe most of them will choose abortion …. And also the North American society will give many assistances from the spirit, and also from the insurance—offer enough money and something like this to help the single mother. In China, I don’t think so. Maybe because in China, there’re too many people. From the aspect of money, there’re still many difficulties. (Lan ID)

Yong also thought that in North America, single mother was more acceptable than before, though the traditional values still persisted.

Because they think single mother is OK. They don’t think it’s a sin, you know. But I don’t think they want this way. The friends tried to make Ross and Rachel together, because you have children. You have to be together, because you’re the parents. The traditional value is still there, because you can feel, especially Ross’ parents. They even think this is the normal way. You have to be together. But for those young people themselves, they think that’s OK. I can just be a single mother. No problem. So it looks like the traditional issues changed from old people to young people. (Yong ID)

*Social Customs*

Food and cooking skills are essential for all of us at all times. The participants in the study learned different food cultures and cooking techniques from various types of mass media.
From the flyers, Pang had seen a great variety of food originated from different countries, e.g., China, Japan, Italy, and Mexico etc. One question he asked was: “What is the real typical Canadian food?”

Jian thought flyers could “reflect a lot of things.” First of all, “You will see what kind of goods, what kind of commodities consumers are using. You will have a basic knowledge on the basic living standards of the local people here.” Secondly, he observed that different flyers were designed and printed to target customers with different needs.

I found that different supermarkets concentrate on different products, and they target on different customers as well. For example, the flyers of Food Basic and Loblaws are absolutely different, not from the superficial level, for instance, the paper quality, but the space for the commodities, and the commodities that are in promotion in particular. Bananas are always as a main promoted fruits in Food Basic versus blueberries in Loblaws …. So Loblaws targets much more on middle-class customers than Food Basics …. which means that they have different symbols of social status. (Jian ID)

Thirdly, the grocery flyers reflected the local food culture and “economic reality.”

The flyers will influence a lot of other social values and things like that. This is culture. People assume people who can consume salmon are of higher class. So they should pay more on that. So it’s really decent food for them to go to A & P like that …. It’s also a kind of economic reality. (Jian ID)

Lan had never had Japanese Sushi before coming to Canada. She had her first sushi dinner with some Canadian colleagues and became a sushi fan after the first try. During the Christmas holidays, she learned how to make Sushi by following the recipe she found from the Internet, and brought her dish to a potluck party. “I want to DIY …. try some new food …. So with the description, with the instruction, I know how to do it.”

Amy said she was a gourmet and her biggest hobby was eating. She enjoyed watching TV commercials on food and cooking, and loved to learn cooking from TV commercials. For example, baking was a new way of cooking to her.
You know baking, you have to put the stuff in the oven. But in China, we don’t have oven because this is not a part of our kitchen. Here in North America, each house, each apartment will have an oven … If I live in China forever, I bet I may never bake a cake …. I am now in Canada, so I follow their cooking techniques. (Amy ID)

From TV commercials, Amy learned how to bake a cake, how to make Thai food and Vietnamese food. She thought the commercials on food and cooking were good, like “a cooking lesson. You pay nothing, but you can learn something like from the cooking school.”

Amy believed food could reflect a country’s culture and cultural differences between countries. As Amy observed from the TV commercial:

North American people they prefer baking or grill or roasted, fried or boiled. They seldom do the stir-frying. But you know Chinese people they prefer the stir-frying. But Canadians seldom, they just boil something or fried, grilled or toasted. That’s the culture. (Amy TD)

Like Amy, Zhen also loved eating, but she hated cooking. So sometimes she chose to eat out at different styles of restaurants. However, understanding the foreign names on the menu was always an issue for her.

So I get a chance to read a menu in a French restaurant. I always have this problem that I can’t fully understand the courses, the names, the content, the complexities of the menu …. So I always order A, or others order B, that day special. (Zhen TD)

In addition to food, the participants also learned a number of social customs and behaviour patterns practiced by North American people. Amy said she came to Canada as an international student, and had never been to a formal party. From TV programs and movies, she learned how to dress respectably for formal occasion.

When I see a movie, if a people got an invitation letter to a party, she will dress up in an evening dress with high heel shoes. But in the street, you will never see people dress like that way. But in a party, you have to dress up this way to show you’re polite to the host. So it affected me a lot. If I accept an invitation letter, I
will dress up like that. I am pretty sure. Also in the movies and TV programs, I learned that if you do a presentation or an interview, you should have some light make-up, not like just a student dressed go to a class. (Amy ID)

Chinese people do not celebrate Christmas, and do not have the tradition of sending Christmas cards to each other. For her first Christmas in Canada, Lan sent her supervisor an electronic-card (E-card). In her second year, she decided to prepare a traditional card for her supervisor, because she had seen some advertisements in the shopping mall, and a lot of Canadian people shopping for cards at Hallmark before Christmas.

E-cards are much more convenient and cheap than traditional ones. But I bought a traditional Christmas greeting card for my supervisor and his family. Because maybe this way could show more respect than other cheaper ones. When I chose this card, I have to read it because some words have already written on them. So I have to read and choose which can fit for my situation. And beside it, I write my own words. I think this is a Canadian cultural tradition. I think in North America, people do this way, I mean, to send card each other. I am not quite sure about this. But, now I am in North America, so, I want to learn some Canadian culture, I want to a little bit accepted by this society. So I follow the traditional way. I really want him to understand it. (Lan TD)

In the TV series Friends, there was an episode with the baby shower for Rachel. When Yong watched this, he thought this was “a kind of knowledge”, because he had never heard about baby shower in China. According to Chinese custom, the first important event for the newly born baby was the one-month celebration “In China usually after the baby was born, we have lots of celebrations. First month, first year, many things, but never before the born.” He also learned that people invited to the party should bring gifts for the expected child. Yong believed that knowing this popular tradition “should be very useful” for his life in Canada.
Having stayed in Canada for almost seven years, Yong had the impression that Canadians were not punctual. Watching the TV series *Friends* on “Phoebe’s birthday dinner” made him realize the importance of being punctual.

Usually we know, Canadians are not very on time, for the meeting, or picking up some stuff, you know. Always like, several minutes later, always like that. So I think maybe they don’t have too much, not very strict on time. What I learn this evening. I think first is, either in here in North America or in China, late is not good. If you make an appointment with other people, and if you’re late, it’s definitely not a good thing, especially between friends. Nobody likes late. Of course, every people have their own important reasons to explain how they’re late, and friends of course can try to understand each other, but it’s not a good thing. It could make a lot of trouble for the people waiting for you, and also could destroy something, and some relationship even, if the situation is worse. So if you make an appointment with people, especially with friends, you’d better make it on time. I think this is very important even for myself. (Yong ID)

When Zhen watched the TV series *Boston Legal*, she learned a new expression: “Third date is a first-kiss date.” She thought that was an interesting saying. She did not verify the truthfulness of this information with any of her Canadian colleagues, because she thought she was “too old to know that.” But she believed that was “a normal practice, because it’s not just one person said so. It seems that they all accept this thing.”

Jian thought that one of the most important functions of mass media was to inform and educate people “to do the right thing properly.”

Not only to educate the local people, but also to educate the people from all over the world. So I should say, from the Canadian mass media, I get a lot of information on the acceptable social behaviours in Canada. I am taught to act as the local people. For example, by reading the newspaper, I can get a general idea about the local people’s ideas, and attitudes, the norms valued or accepted by the public, which will guide my behaviour. I mean, both intentionally and unintentionally, I will adjust my attitude and behaviour to the normally accepted rules set by the local people, local society. So, this is a very comprehensive adaptation process which includes psychological, physical, and sociological factors. (Jian ID)
Religious Belief

All the participants have been to the Chinese church and attended church activities. Wen, Pang, and Yong were baptized, and became church members. During the interviews, only Yong presented himself as a Christian. Pang thought he was “not that qualified to that standard …. just to make up the number.” They read The Bible regularly. Their motivation to read The Bible was different. Wen and Pang said their motivation of reading The Bible was to learn the culture and/or English language. Yong read The Bible as “a life guide.” They had different feelings and understandings about The Bible.

Wen had studied The Bible for five years. The Bible was the non-academic book he read most. A Canadian couple visited Wen’s home and taught him once a week for two hours. In addition to home study, Wen also participated in the church meetings at Kingdom Hall Jehovah Witness. He thought The Bible was the “foundation of Western society …. Even the President, American President, when he is in power before, he should put his hand on The Bible. So The Bible is the foundation.” His motivation in studying The Bible was to learn and understand the Western culture.

Bible is the foundation of Western society. Yeah. So if you want to live here for a while, you want to understand the whole system or the way, how do people thinking, how do people treat each other, you’d better go through The Bible …. Understanding Bible will help me understand the Western culture, religion, and law …. It is a good book to teach people to become a good man. (Wen ID)

Pang had never read The Bible before coming to Canada. His wife was a Christian. She often encouraged him to read The Bible. Pang started reading The Bible three years ago. He had The Bible both in Chinese and English languages. He chose to read the English version because he wanted to learn “the language and other things.” He would read The Bible when he was free or felt bored.
Like Wen, Pang also had the experience of studying *The Bible* with a Canadian couple who were members of the Jehovah Witness. Later, Pang switched to Chinese Christian church. There, he studied *The Bible* twice a week, and shared his feelings and thoughts with other group members. Talking about the differences between these two sects, Pang said

All sects believe that they’re the most authentic and others are not. I don’t know who’s right and who’s wrong …. I don’t think there’s a standard for that …. It doesn’t matter if his name is Jehovah or Jesus …. I know there’s a God there. (Pang ID)

When Pang read *The Bible* alone, he often raised some questions. “For some questions, I can ask others for an answer. For some questions, I just asked myself. I don’t think it’s necessary to ask others for an answer.” He also had a lot of doubt about some of *The Bible* stories. “For example, in *The Bible*, it said, Mary was with the child of the Holy Spirit. I just can’t believe this. I think it is impossible a woman with child of Holy Spirit.” He could not accept all the teachings, for example, “love your enemy.” Pang believed that “there’re love and hatred in this world …. it’s impossible that there’s no hatred, only love.”

To Pang, reading *The Bible* was a way of learning the Western culture and improving his English (further discussed with respect to language acquisition). For example, Pang believed that *The Bible* was “the base of Western moral system,” and had “a great influence on the Western society.”

I think *Bible* is the base of Western moral system. It’s like that the Chinese moral system, which is built up on Confucianism and Daoism. It’s the standard of human behaviour. *Bible* has a great influence on the Western society. Everything is built on it …. I have asked some local Canadians at school if they studied *The Bible*. They said they didn’t. I think, although they don’t study *The Bible*, they grow up in this kind of environment; they know it and will be influenced by it to some extent …. Their actions, their behaviours are guided and influenced by the
values, practices, and teachings. They should have a frame for understanding what they can do and what they are not supposed to do. (Pang ID)

Pang often went to the Salvation Army Thrift Store. He thought Salvation Army was “a channel of offering help to those people who are in need,” and the local people’s donation to the Thrift Store reflected the spirit of kindness and generosity that The Bible taught: “We should help and take care of the poor.” In addition, the Thrift Store services not only helped “reduce the household waste, but also meet some people’s needs.” The Bible changed Pang’s “thinking about a lot of things,” and helped him “understand the society of Canada.” Sometimes he would use The Bible to justify his behaviours.

Yong had read The Bible for almost four years. Before reading The Bible, he felt “lost” and “had no standard to follow” in his life. He thought it could be the change of environment—from China to Canada. A close friend, who was also a Christian, offered him some printed materials on Christianity. These materials aroused his interests in Christianity and led him to The Bible study with his friend. After reading The Bible, he felt that he had found resonance from the teachings, and they were “kind of like eternal standards,” made him feel very peaceful, and comfortable,” and “pointed out the right way” for him.

Before reading The Bible, I just found many standards in my heart are not standards anymore …. I found people never do as those standards …. Different societies, different stages have different standards. So I found I had no standard to follow. So I feel lost. When I read The Bible, I found oh, there’re some absolute standards in this world …. It’s kind of like eternal standards, make me feel very comfortable …. I feel oh, I have something to follow. I have something to take as my guide in my life. This is my first feeling. Even some things like teaching you, very serious words, like just criticise yourself, but I feel very comfortable. Lots of words in The Bible like teaching, teaching people what you should do, what you should not do, but also lots of things about the people’s heart. My feeling is all these words are right. What The Bible said is like I can feel deeply from my heart. Those things are right. But I can’t do like that way. I just feel The Bible pointed out the right way. (Yong ID)
Yong felt that he had “changed a lot” after reading *The Bible*.

Many things changed. For me, when I just came here, I just followed what most Chinese students do. Do what I want, or just make more benefits. After reading *The Bible*, *The Bible* has lots of words like talking about you can’t just make benefits for yourself. It’s like guilt. It can be a very small guilt to a very serious guilt in *The Bible*. Even you envy other people, even you’re over proud. These are all guilt in *The Bible*. God doesn’t like that. So I think this definitely changed myself. Even other people can’t see from my face, but my heart changed. And also my wife, we can see each other very deeply. So we can feel we’re changing. Many things changed—attitude about marriage, about our purpose of life. (Yong ID)

Yong was very happy with these changes. He had a peaceful mind, and no longer worried a lot about his future.

Like Wen and Pang, Yong also thought *The Bible* was the foundation of Western culture: “From many different aspects, you can see its affection—their law system, their government system … moral, and also people take names from *The Bible.*” At the same time, Yong was clear that not everybody in the local society was a Christian, like his colleagues.

None of them is Christian. So when I talk about *The Bible* stuff, they kind of don’t like this. I can feel. Of course, they’re very polite. They know I am a Christian. But they’re just like “We know, but we just don’t believe.”

To respect others’ religious freedom, Yong had never read *The Bible* in public places “because too many people from other religions.”

**Chapter Summary**

Findings from this chapter showed that the participants in this study selected and used different media as tools to some extent for improving their English language competence, which included vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading, writing, and communication skills. They have developed some strategies for dealing with the
difficulties they encountered in the learning process, such as checking dictionaries for meaning, pronunciation, and usage of an unknown word, learning the patterns of word formation and combination, guessing the meaning from the context, and turning on the captions while watching movies and TV programs, etc. In addition, from the host mass media, they learned more about the cultural distance between China and Canada, as in history, traditions, people, language, education, sex/relationships, family values, social roles, social customs, and religious belief. Most of the students believed that Canadian culture was highly influenced by American culture, thus posed a question whether there was a Canadian culture or a Canadian way. Moreover, an examination of individual differences showed that using the same medium in different contexts and for different purposes could lead to different kinds of learning and understanding. In the following chapter, I discuss factors affecting the participants’ communication competence and acculturation.
CHAPTER 8
FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AND ACCULTURATION

In the previous chapter, I focused on the participants’ language acquisition and culture learning through media. In this chapter, I examine factors affecting the participants’ communication competence and acculturation. First, I describe how the participants perceived their learning through both interpersonal and mass communication, and observation; why they chose one way of communication more or less than the other two ways; and how these three learning sources complemented each other. Secondly, I depict the participants’ feelings and experiences within the acculturation context. The themes include multilingual/multicultural policy and facts; racial discrimination; and adaptation pressure. Thirdly, I present the participants’ acculturation attitude, and how they identified themselves.

Learning Through Communication

Host Interpersonal Communication

All the participants believed that interpersonal communication was a key factor in acculturation. All but one participant (Zhen) expressed that they did not have enough contact with the local people. Most of them did not have any local friends beyond their academic circle. Pang and Tang said that they were satisfied with the discussion and group work with their Canadian colleagues in class. “Other than academic topics, we don’t have much similar things to talk.” (Pang ID) Lan, Wen, Yong, Jian, and Henry would talk with their supervisors, and chat with their Canadian colleagues or colleagues from other countries when they were working at their office or lab. For example, Yong’s
conversations with his supervisor and colleagues covered many topics, and he felt that they were very helpful to his study and life.

Supervisor, this is for professional communication. They do care about my life, too. Colleagues, my officemates, we communicate a lot in the office. Academic is just a very small part. We usually talk about many things there. We did talk culture very often, many things, like Quebec, politics, human rights in China. Also our life in Kingston, family stuff, everything. I think the communication between me and my officemates definitely helped me a lot to know about their culture. Sometimes they will directly point out something I should pay attention to, maybe something they don’t like very much. Some of them maybe very directly. I think it’s very helpful, very useful. …. Except for these people, actually very few …. So still it’s not very sufficient. If I have more chances, maybe I should talk more or find more local people to talk. Just no time. (Yong ID)

After school, they had very little personal communication. To Jian, “talking to the cashiers at a supermarket was a kind of interpersonal communication with the local people.” Henry regretted that even sometimes when he got an opportunity to talk to the local people, that opportunity could turn out to be a frustration.

For example, one time when I joined a party, no one talked to me, I felt lonely. And at that time, a girl came to me, and wanted to talk with me. But she started with a football match in some year …. I just smiled to her, and I didn’t know how to communicate with her about this topic. So I was frustrated. (Henry ID)

Zhen said that besides communications with colleagues on academic topics, she did not have much interpersonal contact with the local people either, but she felt that was sufficient for her.

I am doing my study. So it’s really not so much need for me to communicate with them. Of course, if I have more communication, it would be better, but I don’t have this motivation to social. (Zhen ID)

Among these participants, only Amy had regular communication with a Canadian student after school. She enrolled in the One-to-One Assistance Program offered by the International Centre since she came to study at the university. She was matched up with a Canadian graduate (who was called a language buddy) to help with her English language
skills and adjust to life in Canada. They met twice a week and continued this tutorship and friendship at the time of this interview. During the meetings, her language buddy taught her a lot of idioms and local expressions, as well as some social norms and situation-appropriate behaviour which she could not learn from the textbook. For example,

She told me in a banquet, by accident, if you pour some wine on the other’s skirt, at most, you can only say three times of “Sorry”, because three times are enough for people to say sorry to acknowledge his or her mistakes. More than that it seems that you’re a little bit sham. And also the Western people, they prefer to say “Thank you” more than the Chinese persons. Chinese persons always prefer to say “Sorry, sorry, sorry” like that. (Amy ID)

Six participants (Amy, Henry, Lan, Jian, Pang, and Tang) expressed that they wanted more interpersonal communication with the local people.

When I first arrived in Canada, I couldn’t communicate with people in the person-to-person way. I had to choose mass communication, because I was not capable of communicating in that way. But gradually I think I can. I think I should choose interpersonal communication, the direct person-to-person communication. (Pang ID)

Three participants (Yong, Wen, and Zhen) said that they did not have a strong motivation to communicate with the local people due to language deficiency, cultural differences and personality.

Yong did not want to join the local community or the department get-togethers, because sometimes he felt “not very comfortable and a bit tired.”

You know, understanding is a problem. So when people all laugh together, you don’t know what’s the meaning. You can only pretend to laugh. Actually in the early years, I attended several times our department parties. Of course, it’s very happy, but not like those Canadians. They’re just totally relaxed, but I can’t. Every time when I talked to some people, I had to think, like paying more attention. I had to be very focused to get what people talked in order to get the meaning, and then try to answer. Every time when I went back home, I felt really tired. It will take you some other time to relax yourself again. I am always very
busy. I don’t want to spend too much time on this. So this is why later when my wife came here, we never went to any Canadian parties anymore. (Yong ID)

Wen said that he did not have much interpersonal communication because of personality, cultural differences, and language problems.

This depends on my personality. I am not very like a very social activity guy. So just occasionally, we will have some colleagues in the same office …. Sometimes we talk a little bit about studying material or even some cultural differences, because in that room, in that office, many people come from different countries. So it’s an exchange of cultural differences, but not too many …. I am a quiet guy …. I have cultural differences, and my language, like a difficulty. (Wen ID)

Zhen was satisfied with her English proficiency now. “If I can get better, that would be better as well.” She said she did not want to be a person she was not.

I think even though I have been here for five years, I don’t find myself really fit into this context, this environment. I don’t have a strong urge to communicate with other people to practice my English. It’s not because I think I am really good. I am not. Just don’t feel like, don’t think it’s worthwhile to be a person that you’re not, just to get the English proficiency. I feel awkward to bring my son to those social events, like the events organized in our faculty. I just feel a little bit reluctant …. I am never a very social people even in Chinese context. (Zhen ID)

All the participants regarded interpersonal communication as one of the most efficient ways in improving listening and speaking abilities. It could provide answers to some specific questions. For example, when Yong had some questions about the medical care system in Ontario, he usually chose to ask his colleagues at the office. Amy often asked her language buddy for an explanation when she had difficulty in understanding some news.

Sometimes if I can’t understand very well from the news, I will talk with my language buddy. Because you know her major is history. Now she’s doing a joint program between Law School and MPA program. So she knows a lot about politics, like something about Harper or something about the previous Prime Minister who’s involved in a scandal. Sometimes we talked about the independence of Quebec. (Amy ID)
Interpersonal communication was also taken as a more personal and direct way of knowing the host country. It was a basic need in daily life.

From your friends and peers, you can hear vividly what Canada is about, what are their personal experiences. They will provide you very unique, personal, direct, and first hand experiences. Sometimes you can get some answers you can never get from the official sources. I think sometimes through interpersonal communication, you can further your conversation because by asking questions and answering questions, you can go further and further, to know more and more, deeper and deeper about the country. (Jian ID)

Wherever we are, we need to know people, and their personal opinions through talking. (Yong ID)

Some people have needs to talk with people some time instead of talking with computers, because you have to get responses on your own questions. (Jian ID)

Eight participants (except Zhen) expressed that they did not have enough interpersonal communication with the local people. It seems that the quantity and quality of their interpersonal communication with the local people were influenced by four factors. The first one was their lack of competence in the host language, especially in listening and speaking. Some of them worried that they could not understand accurately what the other person had expressed or they could not express their own meanings clearly (e.g., Pang, Wen, and Yong). Just as Pang said: “You can’t let others repeat and repeat till you understand …. You can’t let others wait and wait till you find a proper word. In some situations, the word may never come out of your mind.”

The second factor was the lack of common topics and interests. According to Wen,

> Interpersonal interaction, at least, you must have at least one native-speaking person to sit down or with you …. You both should have the same topic that you both are interested in, so you can communicate. Otherwise, it’s hard to continue the conversation. (Wen ID)

The third factor was their tight schedule for study (e.g., Henry, Wen, and Yong).

The fourth factor was their personality (e.g., Wen and Zhen).
Mass Communication

All the participants agreed that by using mass media, they could easily access abundant resources to meet their personal needs and interests (e.g., academic research, information, communication, entertainment, language and culture learning etc.). According to the participants, about 50% to 70% of the information they needed was obtained from the host mass media. It was fast and efficient. For example, when they used the Internet, they could get a lot of information in quite a short period of time (Henry and Tang). They could keep searching and comparing, until they found a satisfactory answer (Yong and Lan).

And for the interpersonal communication, sometimes you can get the answer directly, but you can’t make sure if this is right or wrong. It depends on the people that you asked right. And sometimes this kind of answer contains the person that you asked, his or her feeling. So when you go to the mass medium, actually speaking, from the different websites, you can get almost different answers. From this point, you can compare them yourselves. At this time, your feeling will control the final answer what you got. (Lan ID)

In addition, they could choose among different media according to their strengths and weaknesses, and used the media at a pace they felt comfortable with. For example, some participants (e.g., Yong, Lan, Pang, and Wen) felt that their reading ability was much better than their listening and speaking abilities, they chose to read for more accurate information.

Another advantage of mass media is not limited to talk. There’re different ways to get information. You can watch. You can listen to the media. For me, what I prefer is reading, not listening. When I meet something I don’t quite understand I can keep searching. (Yong ID)

Some participants (e.g., Pang and Henry) expressed that they did not have sufficient interpersonal communication with the local people partially because of the lack
of common topics and interests. Amy, Yong and Zhen had found their own topics from their everyday mass media sources.

Amy believed that keeping up to date with news helped her find common topics to share with others, “If you’re talking with someone, if you see some news, you can have more talk topics with others. Otherwise, you look like an idiot that knows nothing.”

Growing up in the south part of China, Yong did not have much interest in hockey before. All the knowledge and information he “learned maybe from the newspaper.” One of the main reasons he read sports news on newspaper was to find a common topic to communicate with his Canadian colleagues.

I learn many different games of hockey, hockey teams…. I think this is because if you learn a little bit about this, you can talk and can communicate with your officemate …. similar topic, because he loves hockey. So maybe sometimes it’s like this.

Zhen once chatted with a Canadian colleague about Chinese movies. Zhen was not sure “if this colleague really liked Chinese movies or not, but it is something that people can start a conversation. If people talks about Chinese movie, at least he’s showing that he has interest.” After that conversation, Zhen thought “talking about movie was a very good topic with people you’re not very familiar with,” and she felt she needed to “update some movies…. It’s a good vehicle to communicate.”

To some participants (e.g., Wen and Zhen), the use of mass media had allowed them to escape from the interpersonal communication they were unwilling or not confident about.

So I don’t need to contact other people in person. So I can manage by myself. I think one reason might be because of personality. I tend to use those things that do not need to interact with other people, and self entertainment, self sufficient, self satisfaction …. I tend to use host mass media more than interpersonal communication. (Zhen ID)
Some participants (e.g., Henry) admitted that they had spent so much time on the use of mass media, and left relatively less time for interpersonal communication, thus reducing the chances of improving their spoken English, which was seen, by some participants, as “the number one problem for Chinese students.” (Wen ID)

The disadvantage is: mass media don’t involve a lot of oral English directly, very little about speaking ability. They won’t improve your oral English. So if you really want to improve your oral English, which is the number one problem for Chinese students. We must improve, so host mass media won’t help that part. (Wen ID)

Mass media could not provide “a prompt answer for some specific question in some situations.” (Pang) In many cases, “the knowledge, the information that media provide is a little bit general.” (Jian ID)

All the participants regarded that both interpersonal communication and mass communication were important to their acculturation to the host society. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. They complement each other. Just as Jian stated during the interview:

I think both the host mass media and the interpersonal communication work cooperatively in contemporary society. Mass media is so powerful that it occupies every corner of our daily life. Clearly, it changes personal attitudes, behaviours and everyday stock of knowledge in an individual level, and in a social level, it reshapes social moral, values and disciplines in an unconscious manner. Considering the fact that we are linked in a delicately-knitted social network, the significance of interpersonal communications is not dwarfed at all. In fact, interpersonal communications are vivid, indispensable to establish personal social web, and efficient to deliver and exchange information. To be concluded, host mass media and the interpersonal communication coexist mutually, and both target to bridge the linkage between personal milieu and social structure, as Mills argues in The Sociological Imagination. (Jian ID)
Learning Through Observation

Zhen said half of her knowledge about Canada was acquired from the host mass media; 20% was learned from interpersonal communication; and 30% was “just daily life experience.”

It’s your own experience here without interacting with other people, but your own experience …. You know what I have seen, what I have heard. It doesn’t necessarily mean I need to interact with other people. It’s something accumulated through daily life. It’s maybe something I observed, I heard …. This is another form of learning. Like in the classroom, you see how other people communicate with classmates, how this class is conducted, you know the norm, you know the usual practice in Canadian universities. It’s not necessary through mass media, but it’s through some personal experience. You accumulate more and observe more, notice and learn something should be done, something shouldn’t be done. (Zhen ID)

Zhen also explained the relations among mass media, her daily life experience, and the credibility of the information. For example,

I did learn a lot from those TV shows, but I found it’s kind of indirect. So this needs to be reinforced with some information that I observe, I see, or I encounter directly. If these two overlap, this kind of information will be stronger. If I only see in daily life, I may see this is just an incident. If there’s a connection between these two information, it becomes stronger. (Zhen ID)

Similar to Zhen, Amy also observed the local people’s speech and behaviours closely. She used the information she gained from observation to adjust her own behaviours.

Sometimes, for example, in a bus in China, if I get off the bus, I will never say ‘thank you’ to the bus driver. But here I see everyone says like that. So I guess I have to be like them. Also another example, when you open the door, if people who follow you, they also want to come through the door, usually we will keep the door for two or three seconds in order to let him or her to pass by. In China, we just open the door, and then you go. We don’t pay attention to the people after. So I guess in such cases, it’s better for us to adjust ourselves to their ways. It’s a kind of common sense. (Amy ID)
Acculturation Context

Multilingual/multicultural Policy & Facts

Six participants expressed that they knew Canada was a diverse country, and thought that various types of mass media reflected the cultural and linguistic plurality of Canada.

Yong was a Christian, and he knew that Canada was a multi-religious country: “You can feel that Christianity is now mixed with other religions.” For example, there were “some news or some discussion about Muslims” on TV. There were “lots of Muslims in Toronto or Montreal.”

Canada is a bilingual country. A lot of mass media offer services or programs in two official languages, from a user manual to broadcasting service. As Amy observed, CBC has two main websites. Of course one is in English, and the other one is in French. From the TV, we have the French program. Last night I saw a program, it’s like firstly they spoke some French, then turned to speak English, French, English. (Amy TD)

Jian thought that Canada was “neutral” and “really multicultural” and the mass media reflected the cultural diversity of Canada. They’re broad and cover all different colors of people here which will reflect some cultural diversity for sure in Canada. They will introduce a lot of people maybe of different colors, and some festivals held in big cities as well, which are mainly celebrated by the minorities. For example, the mass media will broadcast Chinese festivals as well, because Chinese festival might be the biggest festival for Chinese people. So this is kind of cultural diversity. Let more people know about the Chinese culture. So this is kind of cultural diversity in mass media. (Jian ID)

He felt that the local people around him were “very friendly” and “showed their respect when they’re talking with you or when they’re working with you, even though you’re a foreigner.”
Amy said she had seen a lot of advertisements for banks. She observed who were used as models in those advertisements, and analyzed why these people were chosen for what intention. For example,

Like I guess in CIBC. They have an advertisement. There’re three persons. It’s like a whole family. Actually, they are a whole family. There is a girl with her father and mother. Her mother is a white person, but her father is an Indian, I guess. It’s very funny because my boyfriend was her TA. You know why they chose this family? Because it’s like a multicultural background, white, Indian, and their child. Because like the Canadian culture is multiculture. Every culture from different countries should be equal. This picture is like kind of company image. They are trying to make every race of person more comfortable. (Amy ID)

From the news, Henry saw “people from different countries, different races joined one event …. one black people and a yellow girl showed in a news”; or from YouTube, he heard people speak with different English accents.” He thought “this reflects the culture and language” of Canada.

Zhen noticed that to celebrate the arrival of Chinese New Year, many grocery stores’ flyers would “have something they think Chinese people may like on sale.”

At least it’s something we should say they are acknowledging our existence. Maybe back in ten years, they even won’t know when is Chinese New Year. Now, at least more people know it. It’s not personal. It’s just a recognition …. So if can be recognized by the international world, that’s definitely a good thing. (Zhen ID)

However, Zhen did not think Canada was “that multicultural, that multi-racial, multi-religious and pluralistic society as they said it should be. It’s still white focused.” She said the policy and the mass media “emphasized a lot, but the fact is not.” There was a discrepancy between media portrayals and reality. One of the examples she gave was about the Chinese program at her university.

I noticed that our Chinese program is under the Department of German. It’s not a separate program at all. Even many, many people are learning Chinese, still they’re not hiring more instructors, and they’re not expanding it. Even though the student number is increasing, and the teacher has to decline quite a few students
who want to learn, because there’s only one instructor who’s teaching three levels of Chinese. If they have a department of Chinese, I am sure there would be more people who would like to learn Chinese. Eventually, the Chinese culture will be a more important part. (Zhen ID)

*Racial Discrimination*

Three participants (Zhen, Tang, and Amy) had personally experienced racial discrimination in a variety of different ways. One participant (Wen) did not have any personal experience about racial discrimination, but “heard a lot of stories about the teenagers do some impolite behaviour on Chinese adults, such as language abuse.” One participant (Yong) felt like an “outsider.” One participant (Henry) felt like “a member of the host society.” Jian believed that the feelings about ethnic differences or racial discrimination depended on personal emotions at that moment.

Zhen said she liked the natural environment of Canada, and believed that the racial tension in Canada was “not very high.” She thought as a graduate student, she could choose to communicate a lot, or not communicate that much,” because she was judged by her “academic achievements mostly.” A couple of incidents happened to her, and made her feel “60% to 70% comfortable with the social environment.” The first incident happened five years ago, when she was walking on the street with her husband.

When we first came to Canada in 2003, me and my husband walked on a street in Montreal. We were walking this way, and this guy just came directly to us and shouted to us: “You Chinese, why come here? You steal our jobs” something like that, going like crazy. I was really scared …. So I feel we’re totally not welcomed here. (Zhen ID)

Another incident happened at a hospital. Zhen burned her face with boiling water from a pot, and rushed to the Emergency Room at midnight.

When I was in the Emergency Room, I met a nurse. She was very cold. I don’t know if it’s because my situation was not bad to see emergency or it’s because I am an Asian people. I don’t know. Maybe we as minority sometimes are too
sensitive. Whenever we don’t have very good treatment we think this is racial
discrimination. Maybe these kinds of things also happen within whites. Maybe it
happens as well, but because they are white to white, white people to white people,
least they won’t include race as an element. (Zhen ID)

No matter what the “real reason” was, Zhen said, “at least, at that moment,” she had a
very strong feeling about being a minority “Iranians, Chinese, Japanese, Americans, all
are minorities in this society. But we are at the bottom of the minorities, or near the
bottom.”

Like Zhen, Tang also felt like a minority, rather than a member of the
multilingual/multicultural society. On campus, he thought the university was, as many
people classified, “by the white, for the white.” But racial discrimination was not limited
to “white to coloured.”

You can clearly find that some professors, they have racial discrimination. It’s
clear. You could not deny that …. I think it’s mainly from the so-called
mainstream people. The mainstream people can be white and can be coloured
people….Sometimes maybe white professors are better. Sometimes minority
people have racial discrimination against other minorities. (Tang ID)

Outside the campus, he thought that most of the local people treated him in a fair way.
Still there was some kind of “maybe, misunderstanding …. or hostility that could not be
ignored completely.”

I remember once I went to Food Basics for grocery shopping. There’s a beautiful
lady with a one or two-year old girl. They’re shopping too. You know young
children are interested in everything. They don’t know the racial discrimination.
They want to laugh with you. They’re interested in you, interested in everyone.
But her mother, the beautiful lady said: “Don’t talk to any Asian. They don’t
understand English. If you understand, then you go to Asia.” That lady just said
this at your face. Obviously, that’s racial discrimination. (Tang ID)

Eventually, Tang chose to keep silent. He said it did not mean that he dared not fight
back.
It’s just not worthwhile. I think those kind of behaviours are discreditable. It’s just low moral, low standards. It’s hard to say whether it’s comfortable or not. It’s up to you, your personal feelings. I think if you have a strong mind, strong enough to fight off any negative influences from the society, from your surroundings, you can survive. If not, I think you should go back. (Tang ID)

Amy also felt that most Canadian people were very nice. Once she encountered a racial discrimination on campus, she chose to “face bravely.”

Yong did not mention any experience of discrimination, but a sense of differences and “outsider” status.

We are not even similar to them. So the university student community, the whole community is composed by them, not by us. We’re kind of outsiders. But of course, I think, if I eagerly want to involve, I think I can still get to know more friends of them …. I just don’t want to do that. (Yong ID)

Henry believed that Canada was different from the United States, “It needs immigrants and respects multilingual/multiculture.” He felt comfortable in this society, “like a member of the multilingual/multicultural society.” He thought the local people were very friendly. “For example, when I want to get some help, I just seek for help. There’ll be somebody give me a hand. They’re warm-hearted.”

Jian thought Canada was different from China. Canada was a country of immigrants. The population was composed of people of various ethnic origins, and “ethnic differences can be easily observed by different colours.” The feelings about differences or discrimination depended on a person’s momentary emotions.

You will be fully aware that you’re surrounded by a lot of Canadians. I think their way of thinking, their way of doing things, might be totally different from you, which reminds you very clearly that you are different from them. Sometimes when you feel lonely, you will feel like a minority. If you’re a very sensitive person, you will feel it’s racial discrimination. If you take it easy, think about it, you will feel it’s just normal. It’s just like a member of the multicultural society. I think that all depends on your contemporary personal emotion at a specific point. (Jian ID)
Adaptation Pressure

Tang did not feel any adaptation pressure either from the host society or the people around him. Pang felt that sometimes he had to “try to adapt, acculturate to the host society, otherwise I may have problems in daily life, to survive in the host society. I have to.” Jian said he never had the feeling that he had to change, but he thought it would be better for him to change “because of the surroundings, the differences in cultural background. You have to think many different issues, to communicate with others in their contexts. So you need to change in some way.” Henry felt the adaptation pressure was mainly from academic studies and English language problems.

When I took courses in the first semester, I couldn’t understand what the professor talked about or my classmates talked about. It’s a very tough situation for me. So I felt some pressure. I think people around me pushed me, like my supervisor. He asked me to talk to him in English, not Chinese. (Henry ID. Note: Henry’s supervisor was a Chinese Canadian.)

At the same time, he believed that he needed to adjust himself into the host society “We live in a society. We live around people. So we’re forced to change, not only in Canada, but also in anywhere else.” Like Henry, Zhen also felt the pressure from school.

I feel adaptive pressure from supervisor or from committees, but not from others. Others almost have no influence on me. Nobody can force me to do anything, because we are in school doing Ph.D., so pressure is from academic sources. (Zhen ID)

Amy believed that in order to adapt to the host culture, she had “a lot to learn, to change.”

Because you have to stay here for at least two years, I mean if you are doing your master. So it’s better for you to adjust yourself to this country. But it’s very difficult for the beginner, I mean for the people who is new to this country. Because you can’t let the situation suits you, but you have to suit with the culture, with the environment. (Amy ID)
Acculturation Attitude

All the participants in this study expressed that they were prepared to experience some changes in their life, when they decided to study or immigrate to Canada. They were from different backgrounds, held different thoughts on what they needed to confront in a different country. For example, five years ago, when Zhen decided to immigrate to Canada, she tried to prepare financially for change, but not mentally. She thought she was smart and young, and should be able to adjust to anything. Seven participants (except Tang and Zhen) had concerns about their English language competence. They wanted to improve it in different ways. Just as Henry said:

Firstly, I want to learn English. I want to practice my English to chat with people, and listen to people. And then by this language, I can learn some culture or some useful information from the Western people and the Western society. (Henry ID)

Every participant (except Tang) believed that there were cultural differences between China and Canada. They needed to adjust themselves to the new culture in one way or another. Take Jian as an example, he thought the cultural differences between China and Canada were very sharp. He was “prepared to change to some extent,” e.g., his way of expressing himself and “a lot of behaviours” because of the information he had received from the mass media while in China. Contrary to Jian, Tang believed that “all the cultures are very similar,” and changes were “natural things.”

At the time of this study, all the participants had been in Canada for at least one and a half years, and had formed their own attitudes towards acculturation. Five participants (Tang, Amy, Jian, Wen, and Henry) held positive attitudes towards acculturation. One participant (Pang) felt positive towards the host culture, but “a little bit
passive in action.” Three participants (Lan, Zhen, and Yong) expressed less positive or negative attitudes toward acculturation.

Tang was very satisfied with his acculturation process and outcomes.

The common points, the similarities between different cultures are much more than the differences .... All the cultures are very similar, very similar regarding core values, and regarding the basic needs of human being .... There’s not much difference between Canadian way or Chinese way .... just because maybe I read a lot, so whatever differences between these two countries, I already knew that, and I understand why .... I am quite adapted and I know the differences. I think I am quite comfortable either in Canada or in China. No difference to me. (Tang ID)

Amy said that she had “a positive attitude towards adjustment, because it’s a kind of common sense to adjust ourselves to their attitudes.”

Like attitudes to different things. The Western people and Eastern people, they have different attitudes. So sometimes we have to adjust ourselves to theirs, because you’re in their culture right now. You can still keep your own culture, but seems like very weird in a new culture if you still keep your own culture. So sometimes, I guess, in this way, in such a case, we have to change our attitude to the thing, like a little bit more to adapt to. (Amy ID)

Jian claimed that his acculturation attitude was “absolutely positive.” He saw “academic stress”, “problems in language”, and “different stages of culture shock” etc. as challenges, and learning opportunities as well. “I should say though it’s challenging, it’s kind of opportunities providing you to understand this country better.”

Wen held a positive attitude towards acculturation. However, since he spent most of his time on his study, acculturation was “not a big issue.” But he expressed that in the future, after getting a job, he would like to be involved in the culture, in the society.

Henry thought his acculturation attitude “may be negative” for two reasons: (1) he thought people (e.g., his supervisor) around him pushed him to accept the culture here; (2) he did not have enough time because of academic pressure. At the same time, Henry expressed that he would like to learn more about the host society once his academic load
was not that heavy “I think I will live in Canada for a few years. I want to join this society, and join the people here.”

Pang said that he had a positive attitude towards the host culture, “but not very enthusiastic, and a little bit passive in action.”

I don’t want to change like my lifestyle, habit. Honestly, I am not willing to change too much. Just let nature take its course. I won’t change myself intentionally, like giving myself a new English name. I don’t think having an English name will change your identity. You may not be treated as a member of the mainstream with an English name. My attitude is: I am myself. I will try my best to adjust myself to adapt to the new society, new social environment. I just want to survive, no intention to be the upper class. (Pang ID)

Lan’s acculturation attitude was not very positive. It seems that her attitude was influenced by other Chinese immigrants’ experiences she knew of.

For the first immigrants around me about 40 ages [years old], what they said is: even though they tried their best, he [they] finally found that he [they] can’t get into the mainstream. So that’s the fact. That’s what I have to admit it and accept it. So for me, I don’t think I can do better than them. When I have to adapt it, I will do it. If it will cost more than I can accept it, I will forget it. (Lan ID)

Zhen confessed that her acculturation attitude was “not very good.” She attributed this attitude to two reasons. The first reason was her age.

I just feel my identity has already formed. It’s quite difficult for me to change to acculturate to some other culture. Maybe if I come here a little bit younger, ten years younger, maybe I’ll have a stronger urge to be acculturated, be adjusted. But now, I feel I am in my middle-age. I just don’t feel there’s a need to adjust it. (Zhen ID)

The second reason was her belief in the merits of both Chinese and Canadian cultures.

I don’t think this one is superior than the other. They’re two things, just like Chinese language and English language. The best thing will be you know both. Not that if you learn better English, you speak better English, you’re superior than those only speak Chinese. Maybe ten years ago or even before, Chinese people will think that way, but now, I really don’t think so. It’s no need …. It’s expected, I don’t know by whom, I should be adjusted to here. But if acculturated to the Canadian culture means you need to give up your own culture that you have formed for so many years, it would be a loss. It’s not necessary to do so. (Zhen ID)
Yong admitted that he was not positive to involve himself into the local society because of lack of interest and time.

I don’t want to pay too much time, pay too much my own stuff on it. It doesn’t mean I try to stop myself in front of the system. I just want to automatically and easily involved. But I know this is impossible. You have to improve your language. You have to attend lots of events, like in the department or in the university. Sometimes we attend some events organized by Chinese association, but not the university’s events. Because you can’t totally involve, you have to focus yourself very much on people, what they’re talking about, what they’re saying. You didn’t feel totally, completely relaxed in that environment. Another special thing for me is because I have a church community. So I have a lot of friends there. So actually I spend a lot of time with them in the church. So I don’t think I still have time. I am satisfied with that community already. (Yong ID)

**Intercultural Identity**

Four participants (Lan, Yong, Pang, and Tang) expressed that they were Chinese in Canada. Lan said “I am only an international student. Canada is not my country.” Yong thought his choice of reading Chinese websites was a significant indicator that he was “a Chinese in Canada.” Pang said he did not feel like Canada was his country. “My true feeling is: It feels like I am a tree. My root is in China. My leaves are here in Canada. Although I have lived here for several years, I don’t feel I belong to Canada.” Tang did not want to change either.

I don’t know what a real Canadian should be like, but since I always believe that all the cultures are very similar, the differences are minor, most time it’s negligible. I don’t think I change. I also don’t think that I need to change any local people around me. It’s just like “You can have your way, and I can have my way.” (Tang ID)

Three participants (Jian, Henry, and Zhen) stated that they would like to change to a certain degree in order to adapt themselves to the host country. At the same time, they wanted to maintain their Chinese identity.
I was born in China, and grew up in China. All my values are Chinese. Chinese culture is something very deeply rooted in my personal characteristics which will be very difficult to change. But I am living in Canada now, I have to change slightly. I think now I can accept ideas and opinions from both sides. I am happy about all these changes. All these changes will make my life here easier. But I will never change my Chinese identity because we’re all cultivated when we grow up. (Jian ID)

I am a traditional Chinese. I like my culture. Now I am living in the Western society, I want and can accept ideas and opinions from both sides. I am willing to accept more ideas from Canadian people, because I want to live here for quite a long time. So I have to adapt to it to some extent, but not mostly. (Henry ID)

I am a Chinese, educated, and raised in China. I don’t really feel necessary to change to be more Canadian like. I can keep my Chinese identity, and also suit in this Canadian culture without really changing too much of myself. That’s the ideal. Even though I have some dissatisfaction with Chinese society, but still that’s who we are. Chinese is a kind of culture. Canadian is a kind of culture. I am stuck in the middle …. I won’t say I think like a Canadian, but I can think from both sides, sometimes, or most of the time. Maybe I didn’t agree with them, but I can understand why other people are doing different things. (Zhen ID)

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I presented factors that had been identified as affecting the participants’ development of communication competence and acculturation. Findings from this chapter illustrated that host mass media use played a great role in these students’ acquisition of host communication competence, and facilitated their successful adaptation to the host culture. The functions of interpersonal communication were emphasized by the participants as well. However, most of them expressed that they did not have sufficient and quality contact with the local people. They believed that to some extent, their active use of mass media and observation complemented their limited participation in host interpersonal communication. They also pointed out that various types of mass media reflected the cultural and linguistic plurality of Canada. On the other hand, perceived racial discrimination and “outsider” status appeared to have affected their
full participation and integration in the host society. Moreover, cross-cultural transition issues, host language competence, and educational concerns were found to be closely related to the participants’ feeling of pressure in the acculturation process. Findings from this study also showed that most of the participants would like to change to a certain degree in order to adapt themselves to the host country, but none of them demonstrated a strong desire to join mainstream society. At the same time, they wanted to preserve their culture of origin and maintained their Chinese identity. In the following chapter, I use the uses and gratifications theory and Kim’s theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation to discuss the findings of this study.
CHAPTER 9
DISCUSSION

Using the uses and gratifications perspective and Kim’s (2001) theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation as a theoretical framework, this chapter analyses the themes arising from the data, and discusses some channels and factors that contribute to the participants’ acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation into the host society. My research questions serve as a guideline for the analyses and discussion. These questions are: (1) What host mass media do Chinese ESL students use in their everyday life? (2) How do Chinese ESL students use the host mass media? (3) What are their intentions (purposes) of using certain media? and (4) What are the influences of the host mass media on Chinese ESL students’ acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation (if any)? I also include some unforeseen themes.

First, by applying the uses and gratifications theory, I analyse the participants’ media use patterns, examine how and why they chose among a variety of media sources to gratify their diverse mass communication needs, and discuss individual differences in media selection, uses and gratifications. Secondly, I use Kim’s theory to discuss the influences of host media on the participants’ acquisition of communication competence which includes information and knowledge attainment, language and cultural learning, and their feelings and reactions to the host media content. Thirdly, I discuss the multilingual/multicultural environment of the host society, the impact of perceived racial discrimination, the felt adaptation pressure, the participants’ acculturation attitude and identity, the interrelationships among the above five factors, their linkages with the
participants’ host communication competence, and how these factors connect and interact with each other and function on the participants’ overall acculturation into the host society.

**Media Use**

The uses and gratifications theory is often employed to examine people’s use of mass media according to social and psychological needs. In order to examine what, why and how Chinese students used Canadian mass media in their acculturation process, the uses and gratifications approach was used in this study.

**Media Use Patterns**

Data collected from three sources show that the length of time participants spent on using the host media differed substantially, from half an hour per day to five or six hours per day. It appears that five participants (Pang, Tang, Wen, Yong, and Zhen) who have been in Canada for a longer time (from four and a half years to seven and a half years) spent less time on using the host mass media (no more than three hours per day); and four participants (Amy, Henry, Jian, and Lan) who have been in Canada for a shorter time (one and a half years) spent more time on using the host mass media (from three hours to six hours per day). Some possible reasons for this difference are: (1) The five participants (former) who have been in Canada for a longer time have accumulated more knowledge and information about the host society than the other four participants (latter); (2) some of the participants who have been in Canada for a longer time (e.g., Yong) reported feeling tired of using English all the time; and (3) the former have families with them and might have less free time to use the host mass media.
Findings from this study also show that most participants have established new patterns of media use as their informational, linguistic, social, cultural, educational, financial, physical, psychological, and environmental needs changed in the process of their adaptation to the host society. They mainly used eight types of host mass media in their daily life, though there were significant differences in the amount of time they spent on different media. From the most used to the least used, they were: Internet, flyers, TV, movies, newspapers, radio, magazines, and books. The Internet was the most used medium among the participants because of its fast speed, low cost, rich information, high efficiency, multi-functions, and convenience. Flyers were not a new form of medium to most participants, but were seen and used significantly less in China. In this study, they have been used as a vital form of communication. Generally, the participants used the traditional media such as TV, movies, newspapers, radio, magazines, and books significantly less than when they were in China. They attributed the changes to a variety of factors which included: (a) popularity of the Internet, (b) a tight academic schedule, (c) a lack of English language competence, (d) tiredness of using English all the time (e.g., at school and in the larger environment), (e) culture difficulty, (f) cost, and (g) a lack of interest.

General Mass Communication Needs

From the participants’ point of view, the most salient mass communication need at this stage was the acquisition of various kinds of information from and about the host society. It included news about Canada, China and Canada relations, international affairs, university and local community events, and other information/knowledge of personal
interest as in sales, travel, transportation, food, fashion, health, career, economy, weather, environment, etc.

These information needs/interests differed (except for a common interest in information on sales and prices) from the subjects in Hwang and He’s (1999) study of Chinese immigrants in Silicon Valley in the United States. In Hwang and He’s (1999) study, most of the subjects were working professionals. Their information need was more about the host society’s financial situation because of their investment in real estate and the stock market. This difference indicates that people from different professions, different financial status, at different stages may have different needs; and they would choose different media or programs to gratify their respective needs.

The participants’ second need was the improvement of English language competence. Only two participants were satisfied with their current English proficiency. The other seven participants reported having language concerns when they chose among different types of media and media content or in daily interpersonal communication. The English language skills they intended to improve included listening, reading, writing, and some social communication strategies. Speaking capability was not considered to be greatly enhanced through the use of host mass media. They believed that interpersonal communication with the host people was the most efficient way in developing their speaking skills.

The third salient mass communication need of the participants was the acquisition of knowledge about Canadian culture, which embraced norms, values, customs, education, history, religion, attitudes and behaviours accepted and practiced by the ongoing system. It was found that the participants’ need for learning this knowledge was
very important to their acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation outcomes. This finding is consistent with Moon and Park’s (2007) recent study about media effects on acculturation. (See p.19 for more details).

Taking a deeper and wider look at their social communication activities, it is not difficult to find that their need to learn the host language and culture through mass media was partially due to the fact that most of them did not have any local friends to associate with beyond their academic circle. Three participants said that they did not have a strong motivation to communicate with local people. Six participants expressed that they wanted more interpersonal communication with local people. However, most of them did not appear to have actively sought information and opportunities for doing so. The main reasons, according to some of them, were personality, language deficiency, cultural differences, lack of time, lack of common interests with the local people, and being worn out from using English. (See example comments from Wen, Yong, and Zhen on pp. 172-173). Only one of them, Amy, had regular communication with a Canadian student after school. The Canadian student volunteered to help her improve her English language skills and adjust to life in Canada. I comment further on this on p. 213.

There were many other needs that have been addressed by the participants. They were: entertainment, relaxation, escape, arousal, habit, passing time, companionship, religious belief, and communication topics (utility). (See example comments from Yong and Zhen on pp. 96-97).

*Uses and Gratifications*

In this study, all the participants chose to spend a large portion of their limited free time on the use of the Internet for multiple information; communication;
Sixteen years ago, results from Perse and Courtright’s (1993) study showed that the computer was rated as the least useful communication medium at filling various needs. Findings from this study suggest that the Internet could provide to users satisfaction of more needs than any of the traditional media, though it also has some limitations. It was regarded as the most useful medium for satisfying diverse needs associated with both mass communication and interpersonal communication. This finding confirms the tremendous growth in the Internet as a communication medium.

Regardless of the technologies employed, the participants’ needs for information, entertainment, and language and culture learning that the Internet could fulfill may not be too different from the needs met by more traditional mass media. According to the participants’ description, what distinguished the Internet from the traditional mass media were the following three features:

1. Access to the Internet has extended their information-retrieval capabilities (e.g., specific, personal information), because they could actively choose information from different websites and search additional text through hypertext or hypermedia links. It appears that the sought for information on the Internet was much more under the control of the users. As Jian said in the interview: “The Internet can provide the specific news you want. If you are not satisfied with the content, you can use hypertext links to navigate for further information.”
(2) In a study on people’s Internet use, Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) find that an important motive for using the Internet is interpersonal utility. Cemalcilar, Falbo and Stapleton (2005) examined the role of computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies in international students’ adaptation to the United States. The findings suggest that the use of CMC has affected the students’ initial adaptation to the new culture. In this study, the interpersonal communication features of the Internet (e.g., email, chat software) have fulfilled their social and interactive needs with very high efficiency and a low cost, thus setting the Internet apart from the traditional mass media. This is confirmed by example comments from Yong, Henry, and Lan on pp. 82-83.

(3) Various texts from online services have provided detailed and accurate information for the participants, and eased their felt stress of person-to-person communication due to lack of host language skills such as listening and speaking. In this sense, their cognitive and psychological factors mediated their communication behaviour. To some extent, online services have become less stressful, functional alternatives to interpersonal interactions to gratify certain needs, which is a feature that traditional mass media can not compete with. This is confirmed by example comments from Pang and Wen on p.114.

As many studies (e.g., Dimmick, Chen & Li, 2004; Ferguson & Perse, 2000) have reported, the use of the Internet affected their time spent on other media forms. Henry believed that “the Internet, as a multimedia will replace some of the traditional media, such as radio, TV, and newspaper,” because it could offer a wider array of gratifications than any other single medium. He enjoyed most of his media use activities through the
Internet. However, the majority of the participants’ wide and continuous use of traditional media indicates that at the present stage the Internet is not uniquely capable of fulfilling all needs and cannot supplant traditional media use but rather complements them. This is evident, for example, in the utilization of radio for companionship while on the road. Jian’s note in his think-aloud data as presented on p. 86 is another example.

All the participants in this study used the weekly flyers (either in hardcopy or online or both) for sales information, and learned to be smart shoppers in the new environment due to the changed financial situation. It is noteworthy that the learning involved was not just financially driven. To most of them, reading flyers has become a habit and an informal way of learning language (especially daily-life vocabulary), and about the social and cultural realities of the host society. Some of them saw the use of flyers as an opportunity to learn business and advertising strategies. This is a function that was not identified by Liu (2008) in her study of Chinese immigrants’ use of grocery flyers in the Greater Toronto Area in Canada. Liu’s findings from both a survey and in-depth interviews indicated that most of her participants learned to read flyers mainly for bargains or sale goods.

The major reasons for the participants’ use of TV were their needs for entertainment, information, knowledge, language (especially listening) and culture learning. With the pervasive use of Internet technologies, traditional TV has lost some of its popularity among some participants. But there were indications that watching TV remained an important medium for entertainment. Unlike other traditional media, such as print media and radio, television offers both visual and sound features. Some programs have added a caption option. These three features together assisted the viewers in
understanding and enjoying their favourite programs, and at the same time, gratified their desire to learn English.

The findings also show that the participants (e.g., Zhen) who were more competent and confident in their English language abilities laid special emphasis on TV’s entertaining function, while their counterparts (e.g., Jian) seemed to use TV more as a tool for improving English, and the programs they chose to watch were limited to quite a few genres, such as situation comedies, crime TV series, and movies, etc. which required less language skills and cultural background.

Some of them believed that many TV programs were like a mirror, and reflected the reality of North American society. Some of them did not believe that the television content was an unaltered, accurate representation of actual life, “exaggeration in art is unavoidable.” They suggested that life illustrated in newspapers, books, and magazines was closer to everyday reality. This divergence in interpreting the TV programs, in my point of view, largely depended on individual differences such as needs, selections, expectations, experiences or outcomes. These individual differences in perceived reality in TV were common among local television viewers as well (Potter, 1988; Rubin, 1985), and resonated with Oliver’s (2002) argument about individual differences in media effects. No matter what information or knowledge they acquired from TV, it was thought to be useful in their acculturation to Canadian life.

Since many researchers have studied ESL/EFL learners’ use of TV programs and movies as one item (e.g., Green & Oxford, 1995; Yang, 1999), the participants’ use of movies was analyzed as a category of TV programs. Considering the high expense in theatre and time spent on the road, most participants chose to watch movies (mostly
American movies) at home on TV, DVD, and the Internet. Their motives for movie viewing were to gratify the needs for entertainment, language and culture learning. These findings confirm results from previous studies (e.g., Reece & Palmgreen, 2000; Stilling, 1997) and suggest that movies and TV programs play an important role in immigrants’ and international students’ information seeking, language and culture learning, and acculturating into the host society. One participant (Zhen) used movies as a source for acquiring communication topics with colleagues, which is a new finding from this study.

Eight participants read Canadian newspapers (in hardcopy or online or both) for authentic news information, knowledge, language and culture learning, entertainment, to pass time, and for communication topics (utility). Most of the needs (except language and culture learning) fulfilled by newspapers were similar to the perceived utility among host readers (e.g., Lin, Salwen & Abdulla, 2005; Vincent & Basil, 1997). The newspapers they read included the university newspaper, and newspapers on the local, national, and international levels. The news information and knowledge they acquired were diverse.

They spent a certain amount of time daily on reading newspapers’ online editions or online only newspapers. All the hardcopy newspapers they read were free on campus or in residence. Hardcopy newspapers were no longer used as a primary source for news information. Some participants would pick up a newspaper as a way to pass the time, to entertain themselves, or to find a conversation topic with colleagues. Jian viewed the decreased influence of hardcopy newspaper as a “life-and-death battle” with the Internet. At the same time, some participants believed that newspaper reports and articles were more formal, official, and authoritative in language and content than certain Internet sources.
Six participants listened to the radio for information, language learning (especially in listening comprehension), entertainment, companionship, arousal, and as a habit. Five of them listened to the radio while they were on the road, either driving or on a bus. One participant turned on the radio at home occasionally. It appears that most of them chose to use the radio only when other media channels (such as Internet and TV etc.) were not available or inappropriate to be used. Three participants turned away from radio because of language concerns (i.e., due to lack of visual support), or lack of time and interests. Previous studies on ESL learners have indicated radio’s important functions in obtaining news and information, improving listening comprehension skills, and fostering intercultural understanding (Brinton & Gaskill, 1978; Crookall, 1983; Derwing, Munro & Thomson, 2008). Nevertheless, the participants’ occasional use of the host radio shows that radio has become a relatively neglected source to gratify their mass communication needs.

Eight participants read magazines occasionally, mostly in public places. Six of them named Macleans. Only one participant subscribed to a magazine. Three participants had read some non-academic books. Three participants read The Bible regularly. Based on personal interests, they chose magazines and books to gratify different needs such as information, knowledge, entertainment, language and culture learning. Magazines and books were different in that magazines were also noted for gratifying needs to pass time, and to some participants were related to hobbies, while books were used as satisfying needs related to relaxation, escape, and religious belief.

From the number of books they read and the portion of time they spent on magazines, it is reasonable to conclude that books and magazines were no longer
perceived and used as the most helpful media for mass communication needs nor leisure time entertainment among the participants in this study. However, compared to other media, especially TV and the Internet, their strengths lay in their capabilities in satisfying individuals’ special affections and interests with higher quality writings and pictures, thus they complemented the participants’ needs-gratifications in diverse settings and situations.

The uses and gratifications theory assumes that people are active elements in the communication process; different media can satisfy different needs; and people select and use different media or media content to satisfy their felt needs and desires (Hornik & Schlinger, 1981; Katz et al., 1973). In general, it appears that the participants’ needs for information, English language competence improvement, knowledge about the host culture, entertainment, etc. have been gratified, to varying degrees, by their active selection and use of the host mass media. This indicates that these students approached the host media mainly for instrumental purposes. They used the host media for ritualized purposes as well. For example, Zhen listened to the radio for information, entertainment, and companionship, but only when she was driving, “Just kill the time, and make driving more fun.” “If you have DVD, you have TV, you have Internet, you won’t go to the radio. Radio is the most basic way, but in my car it’s the only way.” Zhen’s attitude and expectation of radio, and the amount of time she was with radio suggest that she used radio for ritualized purpose, “less-active” and “more habitually to consume time and for diversion” (Rubin, 2002, p. 535).

It appears that the participants’ differences in orientations to some extent depend on their English language competence, which means the participants who were more competent in certain English skills (e.g., listening and reading) were more likely to use a
medium or media content that demanded that specific skills for ritualized purpose. The participants who were less competent in certain English skills were less likely to use a medium or media content that demanded those specific skills for ritualized purpose. Some of them chose not to use the medium or media content they felt difficult or uncomfortable with, for example, Jian only watched TV occasionally (as described on pp. 93-94). Some of them chose that specific medium or media content for instrumental use at an earlier stage, and might develop into ritualized use as their language competence improved. Amy’s experience of watching TV over one and a half years (as described on pp. 94-95) provides some supporting evidence for this argument.

The findings also show clearly that these participants were different in basic needs, interests, experiences, abilities, personalities, preparedness for change, environment, and interpersonal interaction with the host people. Their individual differences shaped their different orientations and expectations about the media selection and use, thus resulting in different gratifications and consequences. This cause and effect relationship corresponded well to the audience’s different assumptions that underlie the uses and gratifications theory (Palmgreen et al., 1985).

As the data have shown, all the participants in this study had spent a large portion of their limited free time on mass media. Based on the needs, motives, abilities, and personalities, some of them (e.g., Pang and Zhen) tended to use the media as an alternative to interpersonal communication in some situations. To be more specific, they used the mass media, especially the Internet, not only as a tool to keep in touch with supervisors, colleagues, friends and families, but also as a channel to shun face-to-face interpersonal contact. This finding suggests that there was a competitive relationship
between their consumption of mass media and interpersonal communication, and is consistent with one of the uses and gratifications’ assumptions that mass media could provide alternative channels of communication, “such as interpersonal interactions …. so that we can seek to gratify our needs or wants” (Rubin, 2002, p. 528). However, it does not mean that the Internet was regarded as a fully functional alternative to face-to-face interaction. One of the reasons, according to them, was: compared to face-to-face interaction, it was less direct and less efficient in improving their speaking skills, “which is the number one problem for Chinese students” (Wen ID).

As discussed earlier, the uses and gratifications perspective sees “media audiences as variably active communicators, rather than passive recipients of messages” (Rubin, 2002, pp. 525-526). However, it does not mean that media effects on people are denied altogether. There is little question that certain content of the host mass media have caused direct effects on the participants in this study. For example, the influence of flyers on the selection and purchase behaviour of these participants, the influence of the Internet content and TV commercials on their cooking and eating habit change, and the influence of news media on their perceptions of the most important issues in the host country.

Individual differences (e.g., age, gender, experience, attitude, and cognition) that exist among these participants seem to play a role in the process of the effects that media messages have on their perceptions and behaviours. For example, some participants’ responses to certain types of content were naïve and superficial. Amy watched numerous TV shows and movies. Her repeated exposure to TV shows such as Two and a Half Men might have cultivated a belief in her that the sex and value messages sent by the shows were normal and socially acceptable, thus accepting them as “the reality in North
America, just like freedom.” To get a better understanding of each participant’s feelings and reactions to certain media content, I tried to access the media content they mentioned during the data analysis process. In my view, Amy’s understanding and perception of *Two and a Half Men* were incomplete. Based on her data, I do not think that she has seen the sarcasm in the actors/actresses’ tone, and the functions of clothing and body language in the humorous context.

In contrast, Yong’s responses to the sex and relationships reflected in *Friends* were relatively more mature than Amy’s. He observed the actors/actresses’ (e.g., Chandler) dress, their tone, and their body language. He also compared the content in different episodes, connected what he watched on the TV shows with what he read from *The Bible*, related what happened in the TV shows to real life experiences, and stated his perspective with a more complete set of information. Amy and Yong’s differences in age, experience, recall of media content, interpretation, and attitude show that similar TV shows have different effects on their opinions on sex and relationships, and their reception of media messages.

**Acquisition of Communication Competence**

To answer the fourth research question of this study, I used Kim’s theory to guide my analysis and discussion about the influences of the host mass media on Chinese ESL students’ acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation.

*Information/knowledge*

As discussed earlier, the participants’ needs for various kinds of information and up-to-date knowledge about the host country, their native country, and the world were perceived to be both important and essential for them, and appeared to be greatly satisfied
by their use of English media sources. Any small piece of reading (e.g., a menu or a pamphlet) or a few minutes of TV watching (e.g., an advertisement for promoting tourism) was regarded as a valuable learning opportunity for daily life knowledge and information. They believed that gradually accumulated knowledge and information were useful in their acculturation to the host society and they would “get more and more familiar with the society.” The findings thus offer support for previous studies on the role of host media in strangers’ acculturation (e.g., Hwang & He, 1999; Kim, 2001; Moon & Park, 2007; Ye, 2005).

Most participants were able to critically analyze the media content and stance, and were very sensitive about the media bias against China. This suggests that emotionally, they were strongly tied to their native country and culture. Generally, they showed more interest in Canada’s policy on immigration and the university’s policy on international students, but less interest in the local news because they thought that what happened in the city might not affect their life so much or that there was “not much interesting and exciting news.” Their concerns and interests reflected their affinity for the home country and their weak status of host-country membership, either as immigrants or international students in Canada. These are confirmed by example comments from Amy on p.126, and comments from Yong on p.188.

Other than news information, in many cases, the information and/or knowledge they looked for or felt interested in were relevant to their academic research field. For example, Wen, as a student majored in chemical engineering, one of his interests was to read some articles on environmental issues such as pollution and global warming. To Lan, a graduate student in chemistry, “the most interesting program” was Discovery
channel …. From it I know something connected to my major field.” As a student in social sciences, Jian tended to watch *National Geographic* (DVD) from a social and cultural perspective and took it as a source to learn about world history and cultures. According to Yong, a Ph. D. student in geology, he was attracted to news on a protest about uranium exploration in the local community. From that single news item, he learned some “really, really fresh knowledge about Canadian natives …. “also learned a lot about the law.” The exploration of these content areas has not only fulfilled their personal interests, but also broadened their perspective on their field of study.

In addition, due to the change of environment, most of them have adjusted their habit of using information, e.g., checking the bus schedule before going out or planning a trip by using the Internet. Sometimes they would use different media sources to broaden or narrow down their search for information. It appears that they were quite familiar with the capabilities of different media and could use them in combination or alternatively in the search for desired information, and learned to do things which they had never done before.

Findings from this study also show some gender differences in the preference of certain media content. For example, female participants were less interested in political issues than male participants. Amy and Zhen pointed out that they did not like to read magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. They thought these kinds of magazines were “serious magazines” for “guys.” Unlike the male participants, their favourite information was more in fashion and health.
Language Acquisition

A number of studies have found that one of the most important factors concerning host media use by ESL speakers is associated with a desire to learn English and improve language skills (Hwang & He, 1999; Richmond, 1967; Won-Doornink, 1988). Host mass media play a significant role in the acquisition of language skills and facilitate acculturation into the host society (Kim, 1988; Lee & Tse, 1994; Shah, 1991; Subervi-Velez, 1986).

The data from this study suggest that all the participants were more confident about their reading and writing skills than their listening and speaking skills. Consequently, they tended to feel more comfortable reading the print media and reading on the Internet than watching TV and listening to the radio. In order to adapt to the new linguistic environment, most of them have actively used various media forms and content, which they believed suitable and effective, as tools for improving their English competence. All of them indicated that their vocabulary, listening, reading, writing, and communication skills improved to some extent, and this language improvement was positively related to their use of the host media. These findings confirm already-mentioned studies in mass communication demonstrating that the use of host mass media can play a positive role in ESL students’ host language acquisition and acculturation into the host society.

However, for some participants, the freedom of selection and use of specific medium types and content were often restrained and sometimes reduced by their existing English language competence. For example, Yong indicated that his listening ability was “getting better” since last year as compared to the past five years. He found that when he
watched TV or DVD at home, he used captions less often as he could “understand most of them.” But when Yong went out for a movie in a theatre, he preferred “those with beautiful pictures without too much language problems, without very deep meanings, and do not need to understand too much.” Without closed captions, a movie like *I am Legend* did not make much sense to him.

Extensive research on vocabulary learning has demonstrated that vocabulary acquired through reading could lead to increased retention of that new vocabulary and increased availability of those items for active use (e.g., Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nagy, 1997). However, Chinese students’ learning style has often been stereotyped as rote-learning and passive (Kennedy, 2002). Participants from this study were found to have employed a variety of active strategies to enlarge their vocabulary, rather than relying on rote memorization. These strategies include skilful use of dictionaries, contextual guessing, using pictures, asking Canadian colleagues or people around, and comparing and contrasting the vocabulary in different texts. The last strategy seems new and not reported in previous studies.

Amy compared and contrasted the language of BBC news and CBC news with the language of the student newspaper at the university. She felt that the former was more “official”, “radical,” while the latter was “easier” and more “polite.” Jian often read Canadian newspapers and Chinese newspapers in English to compare how different media agencies covered “one story or same event.” He noticed that usually reporters with different positions chose different words to suit their particular perspectives or attitudes. By comparing and analyzing the news reports in different contexts, gradually, he acquired a lot of new words and their synonyms, captured the nuances of meaning and
feeling conveyed in these words. Also, he learned how these nuances affected the meaning and sense of a message, thus enhancing his language skills in reading and writing. This finding lends support to Krashen’s (1989) argument that more comprehensible input may result in more language acquisition, especially when it comes to vocabulary building.

One additional interesting finding of this study is that some participants’ personal interests in certain topics and media forms have functioned as an impetus for them to learn the host language in a dynamic rather than passive way. I can take Jian as an example. He was very interested in traveling. Every week, he squeezed out three to four hours on reading travel books from *Lonely Planet*, even though they were “not easy to read.” These travel books allowed him to access content of his choice as “free voluntary reading,” which has been regarded as a crucial component in the acquisition of a second language (Krashen, 1993, 2004). Since the books fit his interest, when the text was not too far beyond his English proficiency, in a zest for comprehension, he would work through the context, and tried to negotiate meanings until the content made sense to him. From the free voluntary reading, in a recreational manner, he acquired both lexical and grammatical knowledge, and improved his reading and writing skills to a higher level.

In addition, Jian “extremely enjoyed watching *National Geographic* on DVD, because it is rich in information, instructive and critical.” He felt that he had “to watch it again and again” for “entertainment, knowledge, and its fabulous language.” Sometimes, Jian would slow down the program, imitated the narrator’s pronunciation, and repeated the lines. It turned out that the DVD programs heightened Jian’s interest and motivation for improving his listening and speaking skills. One can see that the voluntary, combined
use of various media forms and content has maximized the effectiveness of learning language through mass communication.

**Culture Learning**

*Is there a Canadian culture?*

This is an unexpected theme that emerged from this study. Most of the participants in this study were aware that they had been exposed to too much American mass media content. Four of them (Amy, Pang, Yong, and Zhen) believed that Canada and the United States shared a “same” or “similar” culture. Different participants repeatedly referred to numerous similarities between Canadians and Americans—they used the same language, consumed the same popular culture which was produced mostly by the Americans, and shared many other aspects of life. Some participants (e.g., Yong and Zhen) commented that “maybe Canada think the U.S. as a big brother …. But I don’t think the U.S. maybe take Canada as.” They saw Canada succumbing to American values and political and military domination, and enduring American elitism. On this issue I agree with Tang, who explicitly expressed his opinion that “Canadian culture was highly influenced by American culture, and were very similar, but still they’re different in some core values.”

In the participants’ view, Canada is closely tied to the United States politically, economically, culturally, and militarily. How can we interpret this observation? Can we conclude that this close relationship indicates that Canada has been increasingly Americanized by its neighbour to the south? Are we witnessing the consequences of globalization as manifested in the U.S. takeovers of Canadian companies, treaties such as FTA and NAFTA, the dominance of American popular culture, and their defence
relationships? It is an undeniable fact that Canada and the United States share so much, but when these two countries are examined by their citizens, there are still significant national and cultural differences between them (Adams, 2000; Jones & Kilgour, 2007).

Scholars from both sides of the border have conducted many systematic comparative studies that dealt with some key concepts of their differences (Adams, Langstaff & Jamieson, 2003; Boychuk, 2008; Evans, 2008; Hurtig, 2002; Kerans, 2008; Lipset, 1990; Smith, 2008; Srebrnik & Thomas, 2008; Thomas, 2008; VanNijnatten, 2008). Their empirical analyses show that despite many similarities, Canada and the United States are different in their founding principles, political institutions, early histories as colonies, and then on the development of two models of federalism on the North American continent. Furthermore, they are different in their laws, education, social values, social policies (e.g., health care and welfare), environmental issues, and economic behaviours. These national differences have greatly influenced their divergences on some very crucial dimensions of culture. Based on three surveys results in Canada and the United States over the past decade, Adams et al. (2003) conclude that Canadians and Americans have distinct values, worldviews, and lifestyles, such as religion, gender equality, family organization, and openness to sex and violence.

For the question on the existence of a Canadian culture, based on the data, I suggest that there are three possible reasons for the discrepancy between some Chinese participants’ perception and Canadians’ belief. First, is the participants’ lack of interpersonal contact with the larger Canadian society. While some cultural differences between these two countries are external or concrete (e.g., bilingualism and hockey), many differences only exist in Canadians’ minds: in how they see the world, how they
engage with it, and how they hope to shape it. Among my participants, only Amy had regular communication with a language buddy after school. From that Canadian buddy, Amy had not only learned the language, social norms and situation-appropriate behaviours in Canada, but also had a rough idea on how a Canadian saw the political issues within Canada and around the world, and how she perceived the peoples and cultures from other countries. Just as Tang pointed out, to learn the subtle cultural differences between countries, “you must talk to people…. You can’t get that from the Internet.”

Secondly, some participants were so overwhelmed by the dominance of American popular culture in Canada, as in many other countries, that they even became less aware of the characteristics of Canadian culture as, for example, presented by CBC (or perceived to be so). As one of the most profitable and largest U.S. exports, American popular culture has saturated Canadian media channels (Jones & Kilgour, 2007). In this study, most of the movies and TV programs the participants chose to watch were produced in the United States and reflected American culture. For them, it does not seem unnatural to feel that American culture “has been affecting Canadian culture,” even though they knew that Canadians wanted “to be different from Americans” (Zhen ID). It appears that some participants had focused their attention to American popular culture’s influences on Canadian audiences and themselves (especially Hollywood movies and TV shows); thus overlooking the essence of Canadian culture and its differences with Americans’. These differences, in many circumstances, may exist and be reflected in other media forms and content (Dutt, 2003; Keohane, 1997). According to Lipset (1990), an American political sociologist, who had studied the differences between Canada and
the United States for over 40 years, Canada has a strong national identity, “one that is reflected in its increasingly important literature and other creative arts. And these have helped both to form and reflect the national self-image” (Lipset, 1990, p. 57).

Overall, the differences between Canadian and American literature and film, whatever their sources, have contributed to the distinctive character of the two nations. American novelists, largely accepting their country’s universalistic and egalitarian creed, hold up American institutions and elites to a critical light from the stance of the “adversary culture.” According to Richard Hofstadter, American intellectuals have been predominantly on the left for at least the past century, but they, like most of their fellow citizens, believe that the United States is the best country in the world, one that should be a light unto the nations. Canadian writers focus on their social criticism on the United States, in the context of seeing their own society as a better, less aggressive, gentler, more peaceful, but also more mediocre country, one that wants to live and let live, not to foster utopias. And the self-stereotype that Canadians have of themselves, that they hold out to their children, coincides not surprisingly with the image fostered by their country’s nationalist intellectuals. (Lipset, 1990, p. 72)

However, data from this study show that most of the participants did not mention any Canadian literature they read or knew about (only Zhen had read a couple of novels). Six participants had never watched a Canadian movie. Some participants (e.g., Amy and Zhen) did not think that Canada had its own movies, or were unaware of any Canadian movies.

Thirdly, some of the differences between Canada and the United States exist, but beneath the consciousness of the participants’ daily lives. For example, in talking about his feelings about the programs on TV, Pang said:

Canadian culture is mainly the culture of the United States …. It doesn’t have much of its own …. neither its own food. And people are from all around the world. So is it a country? (Pang ID)

The answer to his question is “Yes.” Actually, the diversity he felt in food and people reflected something of Canada’s national policy—multiculturalism, which is supposed to ensure that immigrants can retain their cultures while developing a strong sense of
attachment to Canada. Like Canada, the United States is also a country built on immigration, but its melting pot model tends to be more assimilationist. The American immigrants can join the melting pot, but must abandon their cultures, and take on the characteristics of the dominant culture (Jedwab, 2006).

Given the assumption that mass media reflect the cultural values of a society where they are produced (Moon & Park, 2007), and the fact that many of the media programs and content the participants used in Canada were produced in the United States, it is reasonable to say that part of the information they received about cultural values and practices in Canada were, as a matter of fact, American values and practices. Just as Zhen argued: “[Canadian mass media did] not totally reflect the Canadian culture, only if they accept that American culture is their culture. Otherwise, we shouldn’t say all the mass media are transmitting Canadian culture.”

Based on the analysis of data from nine participants and the analyses from many systematic comparative studies conducted by Canadian and American scholars, I would like to argue that the cultural knowledge the participants acquired was a mixture of two cultures. In this context, an understanding of the commonalities and differences of the two cultures and a decision on what and how much they would like to learn from each culture are important to their acculturation to Canadian society.

_Cultural distance between China and Canada_

Prior research (e.g., Kim, 1988) suggests that individuals tend to enter the host culture with some simple, gross stereotypes. As introduced in the Research Methods chapter, before starting their degree program in Canada, only four participants had ever used Canadian mass media other than university or immigration application materials.
The mass media in English they used were mainly from the United States and Great Britain. Only two participants (Amy and Henry) had had some interpersonal contact with a couple of exchange students from Canada, and “learned something about Canada from them.” Zhen had learned “a bit of Canadian history” when she was an undergraduate student in China. Generally, the participants’ knowledge and pre-perceptions of Canada and Canadian culture were quite limited.

In most cases, all of them would relate what they learned about the host culture to their culture of origin, and identified similarities and differences between the two cultures. One example is a comparison of women’s role at home. Lan said that from the content of TV advertisements, she could see “the daily lives and social roles of each family member.” In Canada, “it seems that the housework still belongs to wife …. While in China, according to the Chinese tradition, the women’s main role is still inside.”

Another example is a contrast on the extent of freedom of expression in the two countries. When Amy watched the comedy show *Royal Canadian Air Farce*, she was surprised to see those characters could make jokes about George W. Bush or Stephen Harper on TV. She compared it with the TV programs in China, and believed that was a reflection of political freedom in Canada, “But in China, you never get the chance.”

In addition, both Amy and Yong mentioned that they could watch American TV shows like *Prison Break*, *Friends*, and *Two and a Half Men* in Canada, but Chinese TV stations would not broadcast programs containing violence and mature subjects to avoid unwanted or potentially disastrous impact from the West media. Amy thought this was a cultural difference. This is a cultural difference; one that, in my view, reflects effects of globalization on mass media. This influence, of course, varies from country to country
Globalization has become a defining marker of the 21st century (Dissanayake, 2006), and has brought forth new technologies and cultural interaction from country to country (Edwardson, 2008). China has also imported numerous foreign language movies and TV programs. Compared to Canada, the Chinese government still has a tighter media control over its media system through its censorship.

Over the years of learning, comparing, and contrasting, six participants concluded that the cultural differences between China and Canada were “not so big as before.” It is these differences that provide them the opportunity to learn as much about their home country as about the host country. It appears that the process of comparing and contrasting two cultures has enhanced their cross-cultural awareness, understanding, and knowledge.

All the participants agreed that different media sources provided considerable information for them to increase their cultural knowledge about the host society contextually and systematically. They learned values in sex, family (e.g., social roles and relations), and religion. Some of the host values were accepted as reinforcement of their native culture’s values or their personal values (e.g., equality, respect, understanding, and support between husband and wife). Some of the host values were taken as alternative values to consider or appreciate (e.g., the focus of life, other than career). They also learned some social rituals and norms, practical behaviours in dressing, and strategies in shopping and eating. As the examples given by Lan (choice between E-card and traditional card), Yong (the importance of being punctual), and Jian (learned to do the right thing properly) showed, most of the participants’ previous social cognition and behaviours have been modified and changed in certain ways through the use of host
media. Furthermore, some participants (e.g., Amy, Yong, and Zhen) noted that the cultural knowledge about the host culture helped them find common topics with their Canadian colleagues, so that they felt more comfortable when communicating with these colleagues. It was clear that their use of the host media has directly affected their learning of the host cultural values and eventually facilitated their acculturation into the host society.

In the following discussion on the relationship between acquisition of cultural knowledge and acculturation, I will focus on three topics which I believe were demonstrated to be very important to these participants. Three traditional Chinese sayings will be cited to illustrate why these three topics were chosen.

*Education concerns*

The first adage is on the importance of education: “*Wan ban jie xia pin, wei you du shu gao.*” It means that “All walks of life are unworthy; only the educated are highly regarded.” This saying has been one of the core values of Chinese culture for over two thousand years. It drives most Chinese people to believe that excellence in academics will guarantee a successful life (Chen, 2007; Hui, 2005).

In this study, after their use of mass media, four participants (Wen, Tang, Pang, and Zhen) who had children with them, talked about their concerns and practices with respect to their children’s education. Traditionally, Chinese parents place great value on education (Li, 2006; Zhang, Ollila & Harvey, 1998). They especially emphasize their children’s academic performance. Chinese immigrant parents’ educational expectations for their children are found to be rooted in their culture of origin as well. They are concerned with the quality of teaching (Dyson, 2001), and believe that it is one of their
responsibilities to attend to their children’s homework and to make sure if all assignments are completed correctly (Constantino, Cui & Faltis, 1995). Findings from this study indicate that Chinese traditional values and practices of education still had a great deal of influence on some participants’ parenting styles, which support the conclusion of other researchers (e.g., Huang & Prochner, 2004; Li, 2001).

Furthermore, some participants’ (Pang and Zhen) previous working experiences as educators and their engagement in their children’s education have differentiated them from the participants in other studies. Both Pang and Zhen were faculty members of universities in China. Consciously or unconsciously, they used different types of mass media to get to know more about the norms, values, and practices advocated in the Canadian education system. Then, they applied their professional knowledge and experience to examine and compare the education systems, curriculum, and differences in approach between China and Canada. With a perception of the differences between the two education systems, and an awareness of their own children’s strengths (e.g., in math) and weaknesses (e.g., in English language), their involvement in their children’s education was not limited to checking their children’s homework. They took different measures to support their children’s academic development (e.g., bought or downloaded extra workbooks to strengthen their children’s math learning, assigned additional reading to improve their children’s English comprehension skills, provided their children with a variety of reading resources, and encouraged their children to read widely) which they believed could make a positive difference.

While concerned about Canadian schools’ weak intellectual challenge at elementary and junior high levels (e.g., math development), they also acknowledged the
positive aspects of Canadian schools (e.g., better at focusing on the development of students’ abilities and on encouraging creativity). They managed their involvement in their children’s education so it would not conflict with the child-centred approach generally practised in Canada (Holmes, 1998), which they believed was good for their children’s growth and learning. Pang and Zhen’s practices suggest that they still hold certain Chinese cultural beliefs in their children’s education, and would like to take an active part in remedying the shortcomings of the school and the weaknesses of their children at home. At the same time, they appreciated and adopted some Canadian practices and presented an integrative attitude towards their children’s education in the Canadian context.

Unlike Pang and Zhen, Tang and Wen’s children were between three and six years old. There was a tendency that they were more willing to learn and use the “Canadian stuff” and “Canadian living style” to raise their children in Canada, and compared less with the practices in China. One possible reason for the difference is that Tang and Wen’s children were born in Canada. As parents, they would like their second generation to grow up as “real Canadians.” However, a Muslim family tragedy reported in the newspaper led Wen to worry that the intergenerational discrepancies in cultural values and practices between him and his Canadian-born daughter might increase when his daughter grew older. In this study, Zhen taught her son: “The best thing for him is just to keep both if it is ever possible.” Zhen’s words showed that as a first-generation immigrant, she would like her China-born child to be a bicultural person, an integration attitude as suggested by Berry (1980, 1997).
Two participants (Amy and Yong), who did not have any children also expressed their thoughts about the differences in schooling and parenting between China and Canada. For example, Amy noted that in contrast to Chinese schools, teaching and learning in Canadian schools were more flexible, creative, and student-centred. Yong found that compared with Western parents, Chinese parents were more conservative, controlling, and protective in child rearing and less encouraging of independence and exploration than were North American parents. He believed that acquiring certain social skills such as self-reliance and autonomy in challenging situations at an early age was important for child development. Although they were distinctively different in multiple ways from the participants who had children, it seems that both Amy and Yong were making an effort to know more about the changing context through the use of host media.

**Food**

The second old saying in Chinese is on the importance of food: “Min yi shi wei tian.” Its literal translation is “Eating is as important as the sky.” It means “Food is of the utmost importance to everyone.”

Everyday, people eat food to sustain life. Participants in this study showed great interest in talking about the foods they saw, selected, prepared, and consumed while studying in Canada. Some of them (e.g., Amy and Jian) related the food to culture (e.g., cultural meanings attached to food) and the socio-economic reality of the host society (e.g., promoted foods in different stores).

The findings show that these participants continued to adhere to their traditional food habits, and used the food available in Canada in preparing traditional Chinese meals for most occasions. Some participants (e.g., Amy, Nan, and Zhen) reported some non-
Chinese dietary practices, from food purchasing choices and food preparation techniques to patronage of non-Chinese restaurants. They explored different types of foods from other cultures (e.g., Japanese, Vietnamese, Italian, French, etc.), adopted some basic cooking techniques (e.g., baking and roasting) in the host country, incorporated the “new foods” into their diet, which to some extent, resulted in a multicultural eating pattern. The factors that influenced their food choices include:

(1) Socioeconomic status—As a low income group, their food choices tended to be most affected by the food’s price.

(2) Exposure to host mass media—They acquired food-related learning through mass media such as the Internet, TV, flyers, and menus, etc.

(3) Convenience—Some host foods or localized ethnic foods were more convenient to prepare than some Chinese traditional foods.

(4) Desire to try different flavours.

Previous studies indicate that food is more than a basic source of nutrients. It is also a key component of culture (e.g., Koc & Welsh, 2002). Food-related behaviour is modified by culture, and can reflect the lived experiences of people (Axelson, 1986; Cervellon & Dube, 2004). Food choices, like various other cultural practices, can offer insights on how people define their membership and express their distance from others. Because it is through sharing seemingly everyday acts, such as eating, that the cultural boundaries of membership become permeable (Koc & Welsh, 2002). In this study, some participants’ sharing of “other foods” illustrates their acceptance of diversity in Canada and tendency for adaptation. In other words, they experienced meaningful dietary acculturation while studying in Canada.
Religious belief

The third saying or aphorism is about Chinese people’s attitude towards Christianity before the 1980s: “Duo yi ji du tu, jiu shao yi ge zhong guo ren.” It means “One more Christian, one less Chinese”, which implies that becoming Christian will lose one’s Chinese identity (Yang, 1999).

Arriving in Canada as immigrants or international students, none of the participants in this study practiced any religion. By the time of this study, three of them (Pang, Wen, and Yong) had converted to Christianity. However, only Yong declared his religious commitment as a Christian and claimed that Christianity served as a guide for his life and living since his conversion. Wen and Pang were reluctant to declare that they were Christians, rather they said that they read The Bible for language and culture learning. But they were not the so-called ‘cultural Christians’ either, in the sense of “a group of intellectuals from Mainland China who are interested in Christian theology and who even take Christianity as their personal faith, without officially becoming church members” (Lai, 2001, p. 227).

In Canada, the government is officially committed to religious pluralism. Canadian people value religious diversity and have the freedom of religion (Dib, 2006; Gall, 2006). So the participants should not need to fear to declare their religious beliefs openly. It seems to me that there were some inner conflicts in Wen and Pang. It is quite possible that they wanted to embrace the host culture and the Christian traditions, but did not want to betray the Chinese culture, traditions and identity, because in the past, there was a belief that becoming a Christian means to be less Chinese, or losing Chinese identity (Lo, 2003; Yang, 1999).
History has shown that Christianity has been a minority religion with a short history in China (Yang & Ebaugh, 2001). Not until the mid-19th century did Christian missions begin to penetrate Chinese society. It was seen and treated as a foreign religion imported from a fundamentally different cultural matrix (Lai, 2001). In 1919, China witnessed the rise of scientism and an anti-religious, particularly anti-Christian, ethos. After the founding of the People’ Republic of China in 1949, China was under the leadership of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, and drove all foreign missionaries out of the mainland. Christians were less than one percent of the total population. Christianity was regarded as part of Western imperialism, the opium of the people (He, 2001). There had been strong anti-Christian sentiments among the Chinese, especially during the Great Cultural Revolution starting in the 1960s.

In the late 1970s, the Chinese government adopted the Reform and Open Door Policy. Since then, China has undergone tremendous changes in all aspects of life. One of the consequences is a great religious revival in the 1980s and 1990s (Kipnis, 2001). Thousands of Chinese citizens have converted to Christianity (Levtt, 2001). In contemporary China, the Chinese government’s attitude towards religions is ‘mutual accommodation.’ It is a religious policy endorsed by former President Jiang Zemin in 1993, which states that

We oppose and correct any discrimination against believers and non-believers. We do not employ any political power to extinguish or support religions. We implement the policy of religious freedom, that is, to unite believers and non-believers, believers of this religion and that religion to live peacefully and respect one another in order that we can concentrate our will and power for the contribution to the development of socialism in the Chinese way. (Cited in Kung, 2002, pp. 206-207)
Looking back on the history of China, there was a stereotype of thinking of religion in terms of ideology and politics (He, 2001). In the circumstances of contemporary China, more and more people have accepted the idea of religion as culture. Many religious developments are indeed brought into being by or through cultural activities (He, 2001). According to the participants’ description, one of the reasons that they were attracted to Christianity was their belief that *The Bible* was the “foundation of Western society” (Wen ID), and “Everything is built on it” (Pang ID), “their law system, their government system …. and also people take names from *The Bible*” (Yong ID). It is natural for them to believe that Christianity was an important part of Canadian culture, and they could learn the host culture through studying *The Bible*.

In Chinese tradition, morality is regarded as one of the basic principles for holding together the social existence of human beings. It reflects the need and the possibility of ‘co-existence’ in social life (Zhuo, 2001). Historically, it is believed that religion and morality have a close connection, and many moral principles are embodied in religion’s ideas and practice (Zhuo, 2001). Christianity as a religion with moral orientation, namely as a ‘religion of love’, with its teaching on moral goodness, was regarded as “the base of Western moral system” (Pang, ID), and had a close connection with the social life of the host people. Findings from this study indicate that the three participants (Pang, Wen, and Yong) have understood Christianity mainly through *The Bible*’s teaching of religious morality.

Yong explained that during his first couple of years in Canada, he underwent a crisis of moral standards. His originally accepted moral standards were no longer meaningful after moving to a new environment. Consequently, he took his own judgment
as a starting point, but the application of an individual moral judgment did not bring him a peaceful mind until he found a qualitative change through the reading of The Bible.

Wen and Pang also tried to use Christian moral standards as guides to understand the host people’s conduct, thus to adjust their own behaviours.

According to Pang, Wen, and Yong, their experiences of reading The Bible for language learning, cultural information, or life guide widened and deepened their understanding of the host people and their culture, and facilitated their adaptation to the host society. Their participation in church activities shows that church organizations and activities provided a social space for them to exchange their feelings and establish friendships. Their conversion to Christianity could be seen as a pattern of adaptation. It seems that during this process of identity construction and reconstruction, they would like to remain attached to their traditional Chinese culture, at the same time, attached to a religious tradition, thus to co-exist with multiple identities as Chinese, Christian, and Canadian immigrant. I feel that religion was important for their adaptation to the host society. Belonging to the local Chinese Christian community was important for them as a source of community, because they did not have much relationship with the locals. In the next section, I will discuss their psychological and social engagement with the host environment.

**Multicultural Environment**

*Multiculturalism & Racial Discrimination*

From different sources of mass media, the participants have seen that Canada is a diverse society, where there is diversity in culture, language, race, religion, and marriage; and they were aware of the Policy of Multiculturalism. However, the cultural plurality
presented in various media meant significantly different things to different participants. Some participants (e.g., Jian and Henry) felt that Canada was “really multicultural”, the host mass media were open and inclusive in providing multicultural information, and the host people were “very friendly.” While others (e.g., Zhen) did not think Canada was “that multicultural, that multi-racial, multi-religious and pluralistic society as they said it should be. It’s still white focused”, the policy and the mass media “emphasized a lot, but the fact is not.” These feelings were largely a result of daily and continuous communication they had experienced in the host social environment.

Previous research (e.g., Horenczyk, 1997) has noted that host attitudes can exert strong effects on strangers’ acculturation and adaptation. Less favourable host attitudes towards them during daily communication within the immediate social context may be a factor contributing to their distress and some other negative psychological consequences (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Sanchez & Ferdinadez, 1993).

Findings from this study show that discrimination remains a concern for some participants. Three participants (Amy, Tang, and Zhen) had experienced a number of racial discrimination incidents against them at school, in a hospital, on the street, and in the supermarket. Two of them (Tang and Zhen) reported that they had experienced discrimination more than once. The expressions of discrimination were various, through offensive language, action or inaction. Certain actions were in immediate and obvious manners. Other actions were in subtle and discreet forms experienced by victims. So there was a feeling of fear, anger, frustration, helplessness, even hopelessness among them as shown in the findings and discussed below. What they have attempted to do, and
what has been done to them (e.g., unfair treatment) during communication directly affected their acculturation attitudes (Berry, 1997) and how they identified themselves.

Take Zhen’s experiences as an example. Five years ago, Zhen arrived in Canada as an immigrant. At that time, she was only financially prepared for change, but not psychologically. While walking on the street, she was pointed to as being the source of taking away jobs from a “stranger.” That incident left her with a memory that she was “totally not welcomed here.” For weekly grocery shopping, the neighbourhood superstore was famous for its quality products, but “If you don’t buy a lot of things, if you only buy a couple of things, maybe the cashier will give you a cold face.” So whenever she had to shop at that store, she would rather use a self-serve kiosk. At school, she chose “not to communicate that much,” and believed that she was judged by “academic achievements mostly.” So besides communications with colleagues on academic topics, she did not have much interpersonal contact with the local people. In a midnight accident, she burned her face with hot water. At the emergency room, alone, a nurse’s cold attitude made her feel that as a visible minority, “we [Chinese] are at the bottom of the minorities, or near the bottom.” Zhen’s individual experiences suggest that discrimination remains a problem in Canada, not only from individuals, but also in the public service.

One of the impacts of these demeaning incidents on Zhen was: she began to look at discriminatory practices beyond the individual level, some phenomena at the institutional level, for example, at her university. She noticed that as the largest visible minority group in Canada, the Chinese population has surpassed one million. However, the Chinese language program at her university was administered through the Department of German, with one faculty teaching a growing number of students. Zhen believed that
although the university did not openly suppress the Chinese language program, directly or indirectly, its practices would have an exclusionary impact on the spread of the language and culture. Zhen’s personal experiences and observations of discrimination in different social contexts formed her understanding of multiculturalism and racism, and the discrepancy between media portrayals and reality. That is, the Policy of Multiculturalism did not fully break the mono-cultural nature of the society. It is no surprise that she was only “60% to 70% comfortable” (Zhen ID) with the social environment in Canada, and held a “not very good” acculturation attitude in her own words.

Canada is widely proclaimed as one of the world’s most robust multicultural societies, and is internationally recognized for its commitment to human rights and for its fight against all forms of discrimination (Fleras, 2006). *The Multiculturalism Policy* was first articulated an official policy of Canada in 1971. In 1982, *the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* entrenched multiculturalism and equality rights in the constitution. Survey results over the years show that most Canadians tend to be accepting and supportive of multiculturalism (Berry, Kalin & Taylor, 1977; Biles, Tolley & Ibrahim, 2005; Jedwab, 2002). But support for multiculturalism is one thing; action is something else. We continue to hear of discrimination and racism against minorities. People like the participants in this study were still feeling demoralized, frustrated and fearful. They used silence, tolerance and avoidance strategies, deliberately or unconsciously isolated themselves (or were isolated) as “outsiders”, and led to a social situation that was marginalized (or separated) from the host society. So it is important to look beyond the
acculturation attitudes or strategies of these people to the acculturation behaviours of members of the host society.

*Adaptation Pressure*

Interviews with the participants revealed that the social pressure to adapt to the host cultural environment was not considered to be very significant in their lives. One reason is, as some of them stated, they were graduate and undergraduate students in a university, to achieve academic success was their primary concern. They felt the conformity (adaptation) pressure was mainly from their academic field. The greatest block to adaptation was lack of intercultural communication competence which includes both the knowledge of host language and culture. These findings support previous studies that ESL students’ overall English language competence and cultural differences are closely related to their academic success and overall adaptation (Barratt & Huba, 1994; Lewthwaite, 1997; Novera, 2004). Another possible explanation is that most of the participants have stayed in Canada for many years. However, it is worth mentioning that two students, Henry and Zhen, whose supervisors were of Chinese origin talked about the “adaptive pressure” from their respective supervisors.

*Acculturation Attitude*

The participants in this study have demonstrated a willingness and desire to learn more about Canada and adopted some fundamental mores and values of the prevailing culture through the use of host mass media. All of them have learned to adjust their behaviours through the use of mass media and interpersonal contact with the host people and through observation. According to Berry’s model of acculturation and adaptation, it seems that they held a positive attitude towards integration. But their daily
communication activities show that they were not active in most aspects of Canadian society. For example, some of them expressed that they even did not want to participate in the communal activities that served to connect with their Canadians colleagues, though none were excluded from this opportunity. In so doing, there would be few commonly shared interests or activities which could effectively bridge them with local Canadians. It seems that they did not foster a strong sense of social connection with other groups in the larger host society, but separated (withdrew) themselves from the host people and the larger social context. According to Gudykunst and Kim (1984), the degree of intimacy in the relationships developed with the host people is an important indicator of the degree of a stranger’s acculturation, and more interaction with the host people will likely lead to a higher degree of acculturation. Hsu, Grant, and Huang (1993) also argue that more interaction and a highly acculturated social network with the host people or higher acculturated ethnic people will reinforce an individual’s degree of acculturation.

However, most of the participants in this study did not have any Canadian friends out of their classes or offices, although they knew that friendship with the host people would assist them in adapting to the host society more quickly and effectively. Their friendship patterns were very much like the results in previous studies: a stronger preference for making friends with people from their home country or people from other countries over the host people (Bochner, McLeod & Lin, 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985).

This reality suggests that there were discrepancies between the participants’ preferred acculturation attitude and their actual acculturation behaviours; their desired goals and actual outcomes. It seems to me that willingly and/or unwillingly, they lived in an isolated social circle, separated from the broader host environment, and relied heavily
on the host media for information, language improvement, and knowledge about the host
culture. It might not have been their initial goal when they chose to study or immigrate to
Canada.

Lack of host communication competence was one of the explanations for the
acculturation attitude of this particular group of participants, but I do not think it was the
primary cause. There are many possible reasons to explain these discrepancies, as some
of them mentioned in the interviews, which include: (1) tight schedule for academic
studies and research; (2) lack of interest in social and cultural activities; (3) personality;
(4) age (ranged from 25 to 45 at the time this study was conducted); (5) strong Chinese
cultural identity; (6) sufficient communication within Chinese community; (7)
uncomfortability with the host social environment; (8) lack of common topics and
interests with the host community; (9) lack of host communication skills (e.g., language
competence); (10) limited knowledge of the host culture; (11) perceptions of the host
country’s negative attitudes towards their home country; (12) previous discouraging
experiences with the host people in some circumstances (e.g., not accepted and even
treated in hostile ways); and (13) impact of other group members’ unsuccessful
acculturative experiences.

Identity

In this study, four participants (Amy, Heng, Jian, and Lan) were international
students. Coming mainly for academic reasons, they might not expect to settle in Canada
permanently and, thus, might have less incentive to integrate into the host society than
those who came as immigrants. Most of them stated that they could “accept ideas and
opinions from both sides,” and would like to change to a certain degree (“not mostly”) to
adapt to the host country, which indicates that they have broadened their perspective to include the parameters of both cultures and intended to be bicultural. But all of them made it clear that they would like to maintain their Chinese identity, because Canada was not their country, and they liked their culture of origin. Five participants (Pang, Tang, Wen, Yong, and Zhen) were immigrants. All of them expressed that they were Chinese in Canada. Although they may be happy to live and study in Canada, most of them did not seem to feel very strongly attached to Canada where they have settled.

For example, they sincerely cared about China and Canada, and wished that these two countries could maintain a healthy relationship, “because China is your motherland, and Canada is the country where you live.” So they were sensitive to Canada’s attitudes towards China, and paid close attention to relevant reports and articles from various sources of mass media on the relationship between China and Canada, especially in political aspects and trade and economic cooperation. The ways the media portrayed and reported on China and Chinese groups in Canada greatly affected the ways they perceived Canadian society, because “the media is responsible for the ways that Canadian society is interpreted” (Mahtani, 2002, p. 28). For example, the Canadian government’s political stance and Canadian mass media’s coverage on China’s Tibet issue were one of the barometers they used to observe the Sino-Canadian relationship. Canadian mass media’s under-presentation or downplay of the thousands of Chinese rally in Ottawa on the Tibet issue changed some participants’ previous belief about Canadian mass media and what the media wanted to unfold to the residents of Canada.

There’re so many people. They all get together, but the Canadian mass media just mention a little bit. Just give one sentence. Just don’t think this is a big deal …. For us Chinese, of course, that thing is important, but maybe not for Canadian. There may be two reasons. One is: they don’t think that is so important to
Canadian. The other reason is: they intentionally under-report, purposefully don’t want to make it a big deal. So it’s politics. (Zhen ID)

To these participants, the under-representation of the rally in Canadian media was deliberate. It has been suggestive not only of the political stance of the Canadian government, but also their “unimportance to Canadian society.” From this incident, they realized that Canadian media were not that fair, democratic nor objective as they used to believe. The Chinese, as a minority, would not be represented fairly in Canada’s mainstream mass media because such efforts could cost too much in a society where the bottom line is the mainstream customers’ interests. Consequently, their perceptions of the host country’s negative attitudes towards their home country have affected their acculturation attitude and how they identified themselves.

From the host mass media, these participants gained knowledge and information about the host country. This perceived knowledge and information, together with other factors (acculturation outcomes) directly affected their identity (re-)formation in a new environment. Findings from this study show clearly that although the Canadian policies support multiculturalism and allow people from different countries to retain their culture of origin while adapting to the host society, they are not the only decisive factors for these students’ identity (re-)formation and psychological adaptation. These findings support the view that the acculturation process is affected by the host country’s multicultural policy, but it is also strongly influenced by many other factors as identified in the literature by Berry and many other researchers (e.g., Berry, 1984; Berry et al., 1989; Gibson, 2001; Selltiz & Cook, 1962; Williams & Berry, 1991).
Chapter Summary

An analysis and discussion of the findings revealed that most of the participants in this study have developed new patterns of media use as their informational, linguistic, social, cultural, educational, financial, physical, psychological, and environmental needs changed in the acculturation process. Their exploration of the content areas has fulfilled their personal needs and interests in information, broadened their general knowledge and perspective on their field of study, improved their language skills, developed their perspectives of Canadian culture, and facilitated their acculturation to the host society to varying degrees. At the same time, most of the participants have shown to be able to critically analyze the selected media content and stance, and have formed their own interpretations and taken their own stance. Moreover, these students’ initial intentions and efforts seemed to suggest that they would like to integrate into the host society. However, their daily communication activities indicated that they have been largely marginalized (or separated) from the host people and the larger social context, which directly affected their acculturation attitude and how they identified themselves in the host society. Factors (e.g., linguistic, academic, social, cultural, personal, and environmental) which closely related to their acculturation process and outcomes were discussed as well. In the following chapter, I present the conclusions and implications of this study, as well as its limitations and some recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions and Implications

The purposes of this study were to investigate Chinese ESL students’ use of the host mass media; the intention they hold in mind when attending to certain media; and the influences of the host mass media on their acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation from their perspective. Based on the data, it appears that the uses and gratifications theory has provided a sound framework for explaining the reasons they used a certain medium, their actual media behaviour, the functions of a certain medium, the relationship between expected and obtained gratifications resulting from certain media use motivations, and individual differences among the participants (e.g., Pang, Wen, and Yong read The Bible for different purposes). Looking at these data more closely, I found that the participants used the media mainly to meet their acculturation needs. However, the uses and gratifications theory alone has limited power in offering a comprehensive perspective to understand and explain the influences of host mass media in the context of cross-cultural adaptation, and how these influences interact with individual characteristics and host environment. So for the purpose of this investigation, I used Kim’s theory to guide my analysis about the influences of host media on the participants’ acquisition of communication competence and overall acculturation into the host society. Generally speaking, findings from this study have supported, extended, and modified Kim’s (2001) theory.

Kim (2001) points out that acculturation can not take place without communication. Therefore, communication is crucial to acculturation. Her theory of
communication and cross-cultural adaptation highlights the significant role that interpersonal and mass communication play in this stress-adaptation-growth dynamic process. Mass communication activities are regarded as being vital to strangers’ cultural/language learning, particularly during early phases of the adaptation process when they have less direct access to the natives.

Findings from this study show that about 50% to 70% of the information the participants needed was obtained from the host mass media. Thus, it confirms one of Kim’s assertions that various host mass communications can play an important role in strangers’ learning about and acculturating into the host society, especially in the initial phases of the process, to bypass the uncertainty and anxiety of interpersonal communication. Furthermore, it appears that even the participants who had been in Canada for more than three years still depended heavily on the host media to learn the host language and culture. It means that the host mass media were the major influence on these students’ perceptions of and acculturation to Canada. Based on the participants’ experiences, it could be inferred that immigrants’ and international students’ reliance on mass communication might go on into the later years (stage) of their acculturation process, if they did not have sufficient interpersonal communication with the host people in their daily life.

As a result, they have experienced different dimensions of acculturation in diverse ways. For instance, they have improved their communication competence (e.g., language and culture knowledge) by using various kinds of host media sources; they tended to use more of the host mass media for various needs gratifications (e.g., entertainment and pass time) as their host communication competence improved; and their behaviours, habits,
beliefs, and values have been influenced by the program content of the host mass media. However, when compared with interpersonal communication, the overall acculturative function of mass communication was regarded as relatively limited, less detailed, less personalized, and could provide little opportunity for instant and direct feedback. These findings offered support to another of Kim’s assertions which stresses host mass communication’s strength in complementing the limited scope of information or knowledge provided by interpersonal information, even though host mass communication also has some weaknesses.

According to Kim (2001), mass communication can provide alternative and less stressful channels of communication for strangers with inadequate communication competence to broaden their perspective of the host culture. Findings from this study were resonant with this proposition. The findings further indicated that mass communication could continually aid competent strangers’ acculturation when they did not want to have social and interpersonal contacts with the local people.

In Kim’s structural model (2001), six dimensions are identified to constitute the structure that may facilitate or impede the acculturation process. Among these, host communication competence is positioned as the “engine” that pushes strangers along the process. Findings from this study suggest that host communication competence was a primary factor that influenced the participants’ use of the host mass media, but it was not the only decisive factor relevant to their degree of acculturation. The social and cultural environment in Canada, for example, was also found to have a significant impact on their acculturation process and outcomes.
According to the participants, there were 13 factors that could impede their actual acculturation behaviours. I have generalized and classified the participants’ concerns and experiences into five categories which include learning through communication, learning through observation, acculturation context, acculturation attitude, and intercultural identity. Most of the categories were comparable to the dimensions proposed by Kim (2001). Since this study was designed to focus on the participants’ use of the host mass media and its influences on their acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation, it did not examine the participants’ ethnic interpersonal and mass communication activities. So Kim’s ethnic social communication dimension was not considered in this study.

According to Kim (1988, 2001), strangers’ host social communication includes their participation in host interpersonal and mass communication activities. Strangers’ host social communication experiences are directly and reciprocally related to their host communication competence. Findings from this study suggest that observation could also contribute to the participants’ understanding about the social practices and cultural patterns of the host society, and helped them adjust accordingly. In some situations, they would relate the observation results to the information they acquired from the host mass media, thus reinforcing (or weakening) the credibility of information obtained from the host mass media. This is a finding that can be added to Kim’s theory.

Given that acculturation is a dynamic, multi-faceted process, and the important roles that mass communication activities can play in this process, the integration of the uses and gratifications approach and Kim’s theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation provided a basis to examine Chinese ESL students’ use of the host mass media.
and relate how the use of such media enabled them to acquire host communication competence and acculturation.

Data from this study reveal that all the participants selected and used different media as tools for improving their English language competence and employed some strategies for dealing with various kinds of difficulties they encountered in the learning process. It appears that to a certain degree, their active use of media complemented their limited scope of language learning through insufficient participation in host interpersonal communication. The data also show that some of them were not fully aware of the capabilities of a particular medium, and how to take advantage of these capabilities. For example, Pang had a radio in his car, but he found “No time to listen to it.” To help these students learn more with media, the university could invite experts in cognition and communication to offer workshops or information sessions for these ESL students. The contents may include: (a) the characteristics and capabilities of different media, (b) the effects of media characteristics on mental models, and (c) methods to take advantage of those characteristics and capabilities. These information programs may help ESL students understand more fully the functions and impact of mass media, thus improving their communication competence.

My analysis indicates that most of the participants in this study believed that mass media was a representation of a country’s social and cultural norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and behaviours—of its whole way of life. However, they were aware that living in Canada, they had been exposed to too much of American mass media. Some of them (e.g., Pang) even questioned whether there was a Canadian culture. To help these students get to know more about Canada through the host media, the services and
programs for international students could provide some information (e.g., a list or brochure) on where and how to locate more Canadianized media sources. Explicit information could be helpful to these students as some of them may not discover them by themselves.

As often happens in research, findings from this study also extended beyond the original research questions. At the end of this study, I discovered that three of the participants (Wen, Yong, and Zhen) had completed their Ph.D. studies and chose to leave Canada. All of them were immigrants. I did not ask them why they decided to leave, because my research was over. All I did was to wish them the best of luck in their future life. Maybe in Canada, they could not find jobs in their field of study, because the ongoing recession has impacted hiring demand; or maybe they were not accepted appropriately; or maybe they did not have any connections in the host society, because the data in this study seem to indicate that was the case. There are so many maybes and might have beens for their new migration. Data from this study show that for most of the time these students lived in an isolated social circle, and functioned in their cultural ghettos. On campus, their interpersonal communication was limited to a couple of classmates, officemates, and supervisors. According to some of them, these relations were superficial and negligible. Off campus, they did not have any friends from the local community. Only three of them joined their ethnic church community. Besides that, they did not have an adequate social network that could provide information or support in their daily life, study, and future career development. Some of them did not “have a strong urge to communicate with other people” (Zhen); some of them felt “always very busy” and did not “want to spend too much time on this” (Yong). Media did play a significant
role in their learning about and acculturating into the host society. However, if their interpersonal communication with the local people was insufficient and ineffectual, they would have missed critical opportunities that could have eased the process of acculturation (Myles, Qian & Cheng, 2002). This finding led me to relate the issue to the need for internationalization of higher education in Canada.

Internationalization is a multifaceted issue, and an area of interest for most Canadian colleges and universities (Bond, Qian & Huang, 2003). Internationalization of higher education is conceptualized as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2003, p. 2). As a part of internationalization, the university has accepted students from different countries and different cultures. According to Knight’s definition, the university should take responsibility in providing an education that could assist its students to achieve their academic and professional objectives. But outcomes from this study show that three immigrant students left Canada after their graduation. It appears that social skills and social networks are equally important to academic knowledge and intellectual skills. In response to the challenge that these students may encounter in school and after graduation, the university should: (a) recognize these students’ linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, (b) recognize these students’ differences in knowledge and skills, (c) help these students build their cross-cultural skills to communicate effectively with host people and people from other countries, (d) get to know about these students’ experiences on and off campus, (e) provide these students with different types of opportunities to study and work with Canadian colleagues if possible (e.g., mixed learning and research groups), (f) provide
these students with different types of opportunities to connect with outside companies or institutions which are related to their chosen future professions, and (g) encourage these students to take part in social and career information activities available on campus. Bond, Qian, and Huang’s (2006) study and a report from Longview Foundation (2008) have provided some practical advice on the internationalization of higher education in Canada and the United States.

Canada is known for multiculturalism and diversity. Findings from this study suggest that multiculturalism is a two-way street. Both people from different cultures (countries) and the host culture (country) have responsibilities on this street. All the participants in this study expressed that they were prepared to undergo some changes in their life, and did adjust themselves to the host culture in different aspects. But it seems that their acculturation attitudes and actions were affected by a series of factors. On the other hand, survey results show that a total of 60% of Canadians agree that “there are too many immigrants coming into the country who are not adopting Canadian values” (Dasko, 2005, p. 42). So the question remains about how Canadians from diverse cultural backgrounds can change their negative stereotypes about newcomers and achieve true multiculturalism. For multiculturalism to work, there must be a high degree of cross-cultural communication, cross-cultural understanding, cross-cultural fertilization, and cross-cultural adjustment between the host people and people from diverse cultural backgrounds who may need more host cultural capital (e.g., language and cultural skills). It is necessary for the host people to be more open and inclusive, recognize the intention and potentials of the people on the “other” way, accept them as equals, encourage them to integrate into the host society, and provide social support for them to make a more active,
better adjustment and improved acculturation. Education and training on multiculturalism are essential. We must also develop more effective ways to respond to the presence of discrimination in the society, because an intended outcome of the Multiculturalism Policy is integration (George, 2006), rather than marginalization or separation (as described by Berry and other researchers (e.g. Phinney et al., 1992; Zagefka & Brown, 2002) in the theoretical framework).

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has provided vivid evidence for the role of host mass media in enabling a sample of Chinese ESL students to adapt to Canadian culture, but it is not without limitations. There are two limitations of this study that should be addressed and considered for future research. The first limitation, perhaps, is the demographic characteristics of the participants. The participants were diversified in gender, marital status, having children or not, and degree programs. However, since the participants were recruited through snowball sampling method, they were not diversified enough in terms of age and level of education. To be more specific, the participants in this study ranged from 25 to 45 in age, and all of them had completed their first bachelor’s degree or master’s degree in China. Some of them (e.g., Ying) were working towards their fourth degree at the time of the interviews. On average, the educational level of the sample seems to be higher than the whole population of Chinese ESL students. No Chinese students who were younger, and came to study in Canada for their first undergraduate degree were included in this study. Had the first method for recruiting participants been successful (as described on pp. 63-64), some younger, undergraduate students might have been involved in this study. This group of Chinese students might be different from the
participants in this study in various ways. For example, the participants’ more advanced level of education might have equipped them with better communication skills, while the younger potential participants might spend more time on using the host mass media so as to improve their communication skills. Therefore, it would seem unwise to generalize the findings to the whole population of Chinese ESL students in Canada.

The second limitation of this study is: it focused only on the participants’ use of host mass media, and did not investigate their use of ethnic mass media. I thought the Chinese ESL students in the targeted city had limited access to traditional Chinese mass media, compared to large cities (e.g., Toronto and Ottawa). So the traditional ethnic media might not contribute to their acculturation. Data from this study (e.g., media use logs and interviews) showed that all the participants spent a certain amount of time on ethnic media content on the Internet. Most of the websites they visited were based in Canada or North America. It turned out that even though the participants were not able to improve their English language competence directly through the use of Chinese language content, they were still likely to obtain some information about Canada and the Canadian way of life. Some of them (e.g., Jian and Ying) chose to use Chinese language content on the Internet because they did not have any linguistic concerns. In addition, the use of Chinese language content maintained or reinforced their ethnic identification. Just like Yong stated during the interview: “Because I am a Chinese, so I search Chinese websites.”

Therefore, it will be useful to investigate ESL speakers’ use of both ethnic media and host media. To examine the potential different effects that ethnic media may have, future research may (a) ask ESL speakers to identify the sources of ethnic media they use,
for example, whether the ethnic media they choose are from their home country or host country or a third country, (b) ask ESL speakers to clarify their motivations for choosing certain ethnic media content, (c) delve into the ethnic media effects and functions on their ethnic cultural maintenance, as well as on their acquisition of host communication competence and acculturation process, and (d) compare and contrast the influences of both ethnic media and host media on acculturation.

Future research can also use a three-stage panel research design to explore ESL students’ media use patterns, and the media’s role in their acculturation over time. For example, selected participants can be interviewed shortly after their arrival, six months after their arrival, and one and a half years after their stay. Such a longitudinal study will be helpful in recognizing and understanding the possible changes and adjustment they make in the choice of mass media over time. The findings may provide additional insights on the overall impact of mass media use on different stages of acculturation.

Should this kind of research be conducted in the future, the think-aloud protocol that I used would need to be altered in some way. For example, ask the participants to talk out loud and record their thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and explain their reactions after using a mass medium. However, it may be that this is not an appropriate strategy in this context because of H. S. Kim’s (2002) finding that talking would not interfere with European Americans’ cognitive performance, but talking would impair East Asian Americans’ performance in solving reasoning problems. European Americans tend to use verbal thinking, and only need to vocalize their thoughts when they are thinking aloud. In contrast, East Asian Americans tend to use more nonverbal thinking, and need to engage in an extra task of transforming their thoughts to words. This finding suggests that the
Western assumption that talking is connected to thinking is not shared in the East. People from different cultural contexts are different in modes of thinking and solving the same set of problems.

Future research can also be conducted along the following lines: (a) compare and contrast ESL speakers’ use of mass media with the local people; (b) investigate the similarities and differences between these two groups of participants in the types of media they use, time they spend on the media, their ways of approaching different media, their understanding of language and cultural connotations, and their perceptions of reality after the use of the media; and (c) examine the main causes of the similarities and differences.

Little research has related the impact of host mass media use to ESL students’ development of host communication competence and acculturation in a Canadian context. This qualitative study has compensated the paucity in the literature and given us a detailed picture of a complex reality. It has made a contribution to our understanding that host mass media were the major influence on ESL students’ acquisition of host communication competence, their perceptions of and acculturation to Canada when there was a lack of interpersonal communication channel. The findings of the present study have provided educators and researchers with valuable information about how these students perceived their learning through both interpersonal and mass communication and outcomes; and how linguistic, academic, social, cultural, personal, and environmental factors could affect these students’ development of communication competence and degree of acculturation both on and off campus. It is expected that the findings can assist
colleges and universities in designing effective programs based on these students’ needs and characteristics, thus enabling them to achieve their academic and professional goals.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix A

An Initial Message

Participants Required for Research in Host Communication Competence and Mass Media Use Among a Sample of Chinese ESL Students

Dear Chinese Student,

I am a graduate student studying at the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University. I am currently doing my thesis and investigating Chinese ESL students’ use of host mass media and adaptation to Canadian culture.

If you volunteer as a participant in this study, you will be asked to keep a record of your use of host mass media over 14 consecutive days. You will also be interviewed by me, for approximately 60 minutes.

Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. There is no expected direct benefit to you, although, some increase in self knowledge and communication competence may result. The research results will help inform effective information programs that help ESL students understand more fully the uses, functions, and impact of host mass media, with the ultimate goal of improving their communication competence and acculturative abilities in the host environment.

For more information, or to volunteer for this study, please contact Jun Qian at 613-533-6000 ext. 75952 or at 9jq@queensu.ca. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Jun Qian
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Tel: 533-6000 ext. 75952
E-mail: 9jq@queensu.ca
Appendix B

Letter of Information

Host Communication Competence and Mass Media Use
Among a Sample of Chinese ESL Students

Dear Student,

I am a graduate student studying at the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University. I am conducting research about Chinese ESL students’ use of the host mass media (media in a new cultural context) and adaptation to Canadian culture. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

This research is a part of my studies for a Ph.D. degree and your participation will help me to complete my research. Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. You may also learn something about yourself.

Three methods of data collection will be used: (a) media use log, (b) think aloud method, and (c) interview. It will take you 14 consecutive days (two weeks) to participate in the media use log and think aloud data collection. You are invited to fill out a media use log sheet to record the media you have used throughout the two-week period. In addition, you will be given a digital voice recorder (Olympus VN-4100PC) and a think aloud instruction to record your think aloud responses to mass media use at your convenience over the two week period. A total average of approximately 15 minutes/day would be appreciated.

You will also be interviewed once, by me, for approximately 60 minutes, depending on your available time. The interview will be conducted primarily in English. However, you will be allowed to move between English and Chinese during the interview to accurately express your meanings. The interview will be conducted at a convenient location of your choosing. The interview will be recorded by a digital voice recorder (Olympus VN-4100PC) with your permission, and will be transcribed verbatim. Data collected in Chinese will be translated into English and will be checked with you for accuracy.

To protect confidentiality, both during the study and in the release of the findings of this study, you will be referred to as a Chinese ESL student who is currently registered at a university in Ontario. You will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity. Media use log and transcripts will be shared with my supervisor Dr. Eva Krugly-Smolska and my committee members for data analysis purposes only. Only I will hear and transcribe the recordings. No personal information other than general demographic data will be revealed at any time to anyone inside or outside the University. You will receive information about the results of this study from me (in the form of abstract), or you can review the results of the study (in the form of Ph.D. dissertation) in the Queen’s Library after the study is completed.

All written records and digital recordings of think aloud sessions and interviews will be retained until the completion of the study and related publications, and kept secure in a locked drawer in my room available only to me. Electronic files will be held on my laptop with a password. All the data will only be used for scholarly publication or
findings. As final disposition of the data, the written records will be shredded, electronic files will be deleted, and the recordings will be erased completely.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obliged to answer any questions you find objectionable or which make you feel uncomfortable. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and you may request the removal of all or part of your data without any negative consequences. There are no known physical, psychological, economic or social risks associated with participation in this study. There is no remuneration for participation.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me, Jun Qian at 613-533-6000 Ext. 75952 (9jq@queensu.ca). For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, please contact my supervisor, Dr. Eva Krugly-Smolska at 613-533-6000 Ext. 77410 (kruglye@queensu.ca), or EREB committee at ereb@queensu.ca or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Steve Leighton at 613-533-6000 Ext. 77034 (greb.chair@queensu.ca).

Sincerely,
Jun Qian
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Tel: 533-6000 Ext. 75952
E-mail: 9jq@queensu.ca
Appendix C

Consent Form

I agree to participate in the study entitled *Host Communication Competence and Mass Media Use Among a Sample of Chinese ESL Students* conducted by Jun Qian of the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University.

- I have read and retained a copy of the Letter of Information and Consent Form concerning this study and have had all questions answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that the purpose of this study is to investigate Chinese ESL students’ use of the host mass media (media in a new cultural context) and adaptation to Canadian culture. I understand that it will take me 14 consecutive days to participate in the media use log and think aloud data collection. I will be asked to fill out a media use log sheet to record the media I have used throughout the 14-day period. In addition, I will be given a digital voice recorder (Olympus VN-4100PC) and a think aloud instruction to record my think aloud responses to mass media use at my convenience over the 14-day period. A total average of approximately 15 minutes/day would be appreciated. I will also be interviewed by Jun Qian, for approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be recorded by a digital voice recorder (Olympus VN-4100PC).
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I can decline to fill out any cell of the media use log, record any think aloud process, or answer any of the interview questions if I so wish. I am free to withdraw this consent at any time and I may request the removal of all or part of my data without any negative consequences. I have also been told the steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality of all information.
- I am aware that if I have any questions about this study, I can contact Jun Qian at 613-533-6000 Ext. 75952 (jq@queensu.ca). I am also aware that I can contact her supervisor, Dr. Eva Krugly-Smolska at 613-533-6000 Ext. 77410 (kruglye@queensu.ca), or EREB committee at ereb@queensu.ca or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Steve Leighton at 613-533-6000 Ext. 77034 (greb.chair@queensu.ca) if I have any concerns, questions or complaints about the research ethics of this study.

Participant’s Name: _________________________

Signature: ______________________

Date: __________________________

Please write your email or postal address at the bottom of this sheet if you wish to receive information about the results of this study.
## Appendix D

### Media Use Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time &amp; Duration</th>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>Title/Column/Channel/ Program/Web Page etc.</th>
<th>Reasons for Using the Media</th>
<th>Feelings and/or Reactions</th>
<th>What I Have Learned from the Media</th>
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Note: If you need more space, please attach additional pages using the same format.
Appendix E

Think-aloud Instruction

Please keep talking out loud and record whatever thoughts come to mind, while using a mass medium. It is important that you try to say everything that goes through your mind on each aspect of the medium, record your thoughts, beliefs (e.g., what you believe you are learning from the medium), feelings, and explain your reactions as well as describe your usual habits using mass media.

You are invited to record your think aloud responses to mass media use at your convenience over the 14 consecutive days. A total average of approximately 15 minutes/day would be appreciated.

Thank you very much for your participation in this study!
Appendix F

Sample Interview Guide (Jian)

General Questions Part I:

- Please tell me a little about yourself, such as your age, education background.
- How many years have you been in Canada?
- What is your major? What program are you in at the university?
- Did you have any experience with using Canadian mass media or other English media before studying at the university (e.g., in China)? If yes, please indicate what they were about. What’s your motivation of using those media?
- Do you have many personal interactions (contacts) with people of the host country? Why or why not?
- Do you think that you have sufficient interpersonal communication with the local people?
- Why do you think it’s sufficient or insufficient? If possible, would you want more of interpersonal communication with the local people?
- At present, do you think that your vocabulary is enough for you to communicate with the host people? Are you satisfied with your current English proficiency (e.g., reading, writing, listening, speaking)? If not, do you have any strategies to improve it? Does that include the use of host mass media? If yes, what are they?
- What are your general (basic) needs for using host mass media?
- What types of host mass media do you usually use in your daily life (e.g., books, magazines, newspapers, billboards, radio, television, recordings, films, videos, and the Internet etc.)?
- What is the average time you spend on host mass media per day?
- For what purposes do you choose to use different host mass media? Are you satisfied? Could you please give some examples?
- Compared to interpersonal communication, what do you think about the advantages and disadvantages of using host mass media?
- How much of your knowledge about Canada is learned from mass media, and how much is from interpersonal communication?
- Generally speaking, what medium do you use most?
- Do you think that host mass media is an important agent as you learn to adapt to the norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours accepted and practiced by the ongoing system?
- Are you conscious of the cultural distance between China and Canada (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism)?
- Are you conscious of your language capability while using mass media? Is language capability a factor in your choice of different media? Could you please give some examples?
- What do you think of your acculturation attitude? Positive or negative?
- Do you think that you can learn any social information/social behaviours from the mass media? Could you please give some examples?
Internet

1. How long do you use the Internet each day?
2. In your Media Use Log and Think-aloud data, you mentioned that you used the Internet to look for e-flyers or promotions, or do online shopping. Is this a good tool? Are you satisfied?
3. In your Media Use Log and Think-aloud data, you emphasized the social surveillance from the government or the relevant companies. Do you think that your personal information will be abused someday in some way?
4. Besides this, do you use the Internet to do other things? If yes, could you please give some examples? What are the main reasons or motivations for using the Internet?
5. Do you read news from the Internet? If yes, why are you interested in the news?
6. What would you expect to obtain from the Internet news?
7. Do you think what’s happening in Canada or around the world would affect your life? If yes, in what way?
8. Besides the Internet, through what channel do you know about the news about Canada and Kingston, interpersonal contact or other host mass media?
9. Do you think that the Canadian mass media and Chinese mass media are different in choosing the news in reporting? If yes, why do you think there’re such kinds of differences?
10. Have you ever noticed that different sources of media will report one incident or event from different perspectives? If yes, could you please give an example?
11. Do you think that the Internet is a tool of learning language and the social and cultural norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours etc. of the host society? If yes, could you please give some examples?
12. Are you satisfied with the use of the Internet?

DVD

1. In your Media Use Log and Think-aloud data, you talked about the National Geographic on DVD. What do you think this program is trying to tell people? In other words, what’s the theme of this program?
2. Are you satisfied after watching this program?
3. Will the knowledge you learned from this DVD program be useful in your acculturation to Canadian life? If yes, in what way?
4. What else do you watch on DVD?
5. Do you remember you have ever watched any TV or DVD programs produced by Canada? If yes, what’s that about? If not, why not?
6. When you watch the DVD programs in English, do you need to turn on the caption? Why or why not?
7. Do you think that watching DVD in English is a way of learning English?
8. Do you think that watching DVD is a tool of learning the social and cultural norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours etc. of the host society? Could you please give some examples?
9. Could you see any interrelationship between the improvement of English and acquisition of cultural knowledge?

TV

1. Do you watch TV? Why or why not?
2. Do you watch TV in China?
3. Do you think that watching TV is a way of improving your English? If yes, could you please give some examples (e.g. listening, speaking, reading, and writing)?

Radio

1. In your Media Use Log and Think-aloud data you mentioned that you listen to the radio. What kind of programs (channels) are you interested in?
2. What’s your motivation of listening to a radio?
3. Are you satisfied?
4. How often do you listen to the radio?
5. What about in China?
6. In your Media Use Log and Think-aloud data, you commented the dying of traditional radio, and compared it with the online radio, and its function in China and Canada. Why do you think in Canada, radio is a way of showing the social status?

Flyers & Pamphlets

1. In your Media Use Log and Think aloud data, you talked about your use of flyers in Canada. It is a very well thought one. In addition, do you think flyers can reflect social/cultural rules, norms, reality, and image?
2. Have you ever used or paid any attention to pamphlets both in your mailbox or public places? If yes, could you please talk something about this medium?
3. Do you think reading flyers/pamphlets is a way of learning English?

Newspapers

1. In your Media Use Log and Think aloud data, you compared and analyzed the traditional newspaper and online newspaper, as well as their differences across the borders. Besides the effects of globalization, do you see any other factors as the reason(s) for the differences between Chinese newspaper and Canadian newspaper, e.g., what about the influences of the United States?
2. How often do you read the campus newspaper? Why are you interested (not interested) in that newspaper?
3. Do you think it’s useful to learn some facts about the University?
4. Do you think it’s useful to know what’s going on at the University?
5. Do you think what happened at the University affect your survival?
6. Through what channels do you get to know relevant information about the University?
7. Besides reading campus newspaper, do you read any other newspaper, e.g. the local newspaper, *Toronto Star, The Global and the Mail* etc.?

8. Usually, what sort of information are you looking for in a newspaper?

9. What column are you mostly interested in?

10. How often do you read the local or national newspaper? If on a daily basis, for how long?

11. When you read the newspaper, do you just read the title or go to the details for all?

12. Generally speaking, what’s your purpose(s) or motivations of reading a newspaper?

13. Are you satisfied after the reading?

14. Will reading the newspaper help you know more about the host society?

15. Did you have the habit of reading newspaper in your home country?

16. How often? Daily? Or is it a must?

17. You think you read less or more of the newspaper here in comparison with your reading in China? Why there’s such difference?

18. Do you think that reading newspaper is a way of learning the social and cultural norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours etc. of the host society? Could you please give some examples?

19. Do you think that reading newspaper in English is a tool of learning English? If yes, in what way?

20. Will you check the dictionary when you’re reading a newspaper? If not, how can you get through the meaning?

21. Will that bit by bit knowledge be useful for your life (adaptation) in the host society?

22. Would you talk with people (could be Canadian and non-Canadian friends) anything you find you don’t know or understand in the newspaper and ask for their explanation? Why or why not?

Magazines

1. In your Media Use Log and Think-aloud data, you mentioned you read magazines and periodicals, and did a great comparison between Canada and China. Generally, what kind of magazines are you interested in? Hard copy or online?

2. How often do you read magazines?

3. Are you aware that different magazines targeting readers with various interests or from different social classes?

4. What’s your motivation of reading a magazine? Could you please give some examples?

5. What column attracts you most?

6. How do you read (use) a magazine?

7. What’s your feeling or reaction after the reading?

8. What did you learn from reading the magazines?

9. Are you satisfied?

10. What about in China?

11. Do you think that reading magazines is a way of learning language?
12. Do you think that reading magazines is a way of learning the social and cultural norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours etc. of the host society? Could you please give some examples?

Books (other than academic books)

1. Do you read books?
2. What kind of books are you interested in?
3. What’s your motivation of reading a book?
4. How do you read (use) a book?
5. What’s your feeling or reaction after the reading?
6. What did you learn from the book?
7. Are you satisfied?
8. How often do you read books?
9. What about in China?
10. Does the reading of books help you (learn to) adapt to the host society? In what way? Could you please give an example?
11. Does the reading of books help you improve your communication (e.g. language) competence? If yes, in what way? Could you please give some examples?

Movies

1. Do you watch movies in Canada? Theatre or DVD or from the Internet?
2. Have you watched any Canadian movies?
3. How often do you watch a movie? Chinese or English?
4. What kind of movies are you interested in?
5. What’s your motivation of watching a movie?
6. How do you watch a movie (e.g. If you watch an English movie at home, would you turn on the caption)?
7. What’s your feeling or reaction after watching the movie?
8. What did you learn from watching the movie?
9. Are you satisfied?

Advertising

1. Have you paid any attention to the advertisements in Canada? On the newspaper, TV, magazine, billboard, big screen, poster, flyer, etc.?
2. Do you think that you can fully understand the meaning it intends to convey?
3. How do you see the commercial/advertisement in Canada? The content, style, meaning, etc.
4. What do you think that an advertisement can reflect? e.g. social/cultural values, expectations, roles, rules, norms, reality, and images?
5. How do you see the stereotyping of woman and minority? What do you think the advertising reflects?
6. In comparison with the advertisement in China, do you see any differences?
7. If you see an interesting advertisement, will you buy the products?
8. Do you think that you can learn anything from the advertisement?

General Questions Part II:

- In Canada, the official policy is multiculturalism. Can you see this from the mass media?
- Do you think the mass media reflect the cultural and linguistic plurality of Canada?
- Do you think the mass media reflect the art and symbolic forms of the host society?
- Do you think the mass media reflect the manners, fashions, styles of life and norms of the host society?
- Do you see the mass media as channels of social changes? Could you please give some examples?
- Do you see the mass media help with the transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next? Could you please give some examples?
- Do you see the mass media present images of social relationships? Could you please give some examples?
- Do you think mass media could reflect the host society’s social, political, economic, educational, cultural and technological reality?
- Do you think that the information you obtained from the mass media could assist you adapt to the host society?
- Predisposition
  1. When you first arrived Canada, were you prepared for change? If yes, in what aspect?
  2. Do you think that you have changed a lot?
  3. Are you happy about these changes?
- Environment
  1. When you’re in Canada, are you aware of your ethical differences with the people around you? Do you feel like a minority or just a member of the multilingual/multicultural society?
  2. Do you feel comfortable in this society (community)?
  3. Do you think the local people welcome you or treat you in a fair way? Could you please give some examples?
  4. Have you ever had the feeling that you’re forced to change?
  5. Do you feel any adaptive pressure from the host society or the local people?
  6. What do you think of your ethnic group strength? Strong or weak? You feel more connected to which group of people (Chinese or Canadian local people & community)?
- Intercultural Transformation
  1. Do you think that now you’ve grasped fairly enough communication competence for your studying and future living in Canada?
  2. Do you think that time is a factor to influence your communication competence and acculturation in the long run?
  3. Are you happy and satisfied with your current situation, in studying, personal life, environment (school, living), education, personal goals?
4. What do you think of your intercultural identity? (A Chinese inside-out, can accept ideas and opinions from both sides, thought more like Canadians, or no longer hold Chinese traditional beliefs, living styles?)

5. In view of these changes, how much do you think is the influence of host mass media, how much is the influence of interpersonal communication?

Thank you.
## Appendix G

Sample Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Name</th>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>Source of Data</th>
<th>Category (Sub-category)</th>
<th>Relevant Quotes</th>
<th>My Notes &amp; Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>TV Series</td>
<td>Think aloud</td>
<td>Topic II</td>
<td>You know in China, I have never seen the lesbian or gay. I am sure in China, we have gay or lesbian. Because in China usually they pretend they are the normal people. They have pain inside. They dare not to tell others. They have to pretend. They have to cover themselves. So sometimes they are very painful for them. But here in the Western country, seems everybody can do everything they like. In China, we have discrimination. I guess, why they protect themselves because they don’t like the people’s discrimination on them.</td>
<td>Amy compared Chinese and Westerners’ attitudes towards homosexuality, and believed that the TV shows reflected the sexual freedom in the Western society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Two and a Half Men</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Relevant Quotes

- You know in China, I have never seen the lesbian or gay. I am sure in China, we have gay or lesbian. Because in China usually they pretend they are the normal people. They have pain inside. They dare not to tell others. They have to pretend. They have to cover themselves. So sometimes they are very painful for them. But here in the Western country, seems everybody can do everything they like. In China, we have discrimination. I guess, why they protect themselves because they don’t like the people’s discrimination on them.

### My Notes & Analysis

- Amy compared Chinese and Westerners’ attitudes towards homosexuality, and believed that the TV shows reflected the sexual freedom in the Western society.
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<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Internet Advertisement</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Topic III Category: Acculturation Context Sub-category: Multilingual/multicultural policy &amp; facts</td>
<td>Like I guess in CIBC. They have an advertisement. There’re three persons. It’s like a whole family. Actually they are a whole family. There is a girl with her father and mother. Her mother is a white person, but her father is an Indian, I guess. It’s very funny because my boyfriend was her TA. You know why they chose this family? Because it’s like a multicultural background, white, Indian, and their child. Because like the Canadian culture is multiculture. Every culture from different countries should be equal. This picture is like kind of company image. They are trying to make every race of person more comfortable.</td>
<td>She observed who were used as models in the advertisement and analyzed why these people were chosen for what intention. As she implied, this advertisement reflected the multilingual/multicultural policy and facts of Canada.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>