

# Exploring Out-of-Class English Learning Activities: Frequency and Preferences Among English Major Students

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## Abstract

Out-of-class English language learning plays a crucial role in enhancing language proficiency and fostering learner autonomy (Benson, 2011). Moreover, it allows students to take control of their language learning journey and develop lifelong skills beyond traditional classroom settings. This study investigated the frequency and preference of out-of-class English learning activities among English major students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, Thailand. Applying purposive sampling, 249 students participated in the survey. A questionnaire, adapted from Cheng (2015) and Sun (2016) and translated into Thai, was employed. The analysis included the calculation of mean and standard deviation, with interpretation based on the Likert scale. The findings revealed that participants demonstrated a moderate frequency of participation in out-of-class activities. In terms of preferences, participants showed a neutral level of preference for out-of-class English learning activities.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that students should be encouraged to engage in out-of-class English language learning by suggesting different activities. It is important to find a balance between what students like and what they don't like for better language learning outside of the regular class.

**Keywords:** Out-Of-Class Activities, English Language Learning, English Major Students

## Introduction

In the present's education, there is a change happening where the focus is more on the learner than the teacher. Importantly, it is generally agreed that learners should have control over how they learn. The idea of learner control, as noted by Holec (1981), involves being able to manage the learning journey. Rubin (1975) observed that learners who take control actively look for ways to learn outside of the classroom. Moreover, Little (2009) and Pearson (2004) stated that learners can take responsibility for their learning by making plans and checking their progress. Similarly, Benson (2007) indicated that learning outside of class is a way to be more independent from traditional school ways. Out-of-class learning, illustrated by activities such as reading or listening to the radio outside of school (Benson, 2013; Pickard, 1996), serves as a means for learners to become more independent (Hyland, 2004). Benson and Reinders (2011) stated that learners find it easy to learn outside of class because they can choose when and how they learn. Furthermore, good learners make learning part of their everyday lives (Cheng, 2015). For example, a study by Chusanachoti (2009) and Sundqvist (2009) found that learning outside of class can help learners talk better and learn new words. Similarly, Cheng (2015) and Wu (2012) argued that learning outside the class can also make learners more interested in learning. In Thailand, English is regarded as a foreign language. It is taught formally in classrooms, but it is not used as the primary language of communication in everyday life



outside the classroom. According to Dulay et al. (1982), having opportunities for language practice and conversation exclusively within the classroom setting is insufficient. Kagan (1995) discussed the relationship between input, output, and context in traditional language classrooms and language development, emphasizing that the resources available in the classroom may not be enough to build language skills. As a result, students might not be able to fully develop their language abilities, which could leave some students unable to apply the language they have learned in class to everyday situations outside of it. In conclusion, mastering a language only in a classroom setting might not be sufficient to foster effective language use (Dulay et al., 1982; Kagan, 1995). Thus, English language learning activities outside the classroom may be an alternative to creating English language learning resources to provide learners with opportunities to practice and apply the theories they have learned in the classroom in real-world English language situations and develop their use of language in real life more fluently. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of understanding students' engagement levels and preferences in out-of-class learning. It offers valuable insights for educators to enhance language learning initiatives effectively.

### Objectives

1. To find out the frequency of out-of-class English learning activities among English major students.

2. To find out which out-of-class English learning activities are preferred by English major students.

## Methodology

### Population and Participants

The population for this study comprised 775 English major students, ranging from their first to fourth year, during the second semester of the academic year 2022 at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University in Thailand. Purposive sampling was used to choose 249 English major students following the procedure described by Krejcie & Morgan (1970).

### Research Instruments

A questionnaire was designed to investigate the frequency level of students' practice and the preference for out-of-class English learning activities. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items, adapted from Cheng (2015) and Sun (2016), rated on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was created in English and translated into Thai by an expert to avoid misunderstandings among participants.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was developed into a Google Form and distributed to the participants through the link. Before collecting the data, the purpose was explained, and students were asked for their permission. After that, the data from the questionnaire were statistically analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and the five-



point Likert rating scale interpretation. The data from the 5-Likert rating scales were interpreted as follows: 4.21-5.00, always practiced; 3.41-4.20, often practiced; 2.61-3.40, sometimes practiced; 1.81-2.60, rarely practiced; and 1.00-1.80, never practiced. The interpretation of mean scores for levels of preference was as follows: 4.21-5.0, strongly like; 3.41-4.20, like; 2.61-3.40, neutral; 1.81-2.60, dislike; and 1.00-1.80, strongly dislike.

## Results

**Table 1** Frequency level of students' practice of out-of-class English learning activities

No.	Out-of-class English learning activities	( $\bar{X}$ )	S.D.	Frequency of practice
1	Reading English test-preparation books	3.87	1.05	Often
2	Watching English learning videos on YouTube	3.19	1.04	Sometimes
3	Learning English vocabulary using printed dictionaries	2.08	1.05	Rarely
4	Learning English vocabulary using online dictionaries	3.05	1.20	Sometimes
5	Doing English homework/exercises before coming to class	2.63	1.04	Sometimes
6	Surfing English websites to find information	3.31	1.06	Sometimes
7	Practice speaking English through mobile apps/iPad/YouTube	2.94	1.13	Sometimes
8	Playing English Language Games	2.83	1.06	Sometimes
9	Talking to foreigners/international students in English	3.12	1.02	Sometimes
10	Talking to Thai friends in English	2.47	1.11	Rarely
11	Talking to teachers in English after class	2.20	1.06	Rarely
12	Joining Internet discussion in English (blog/forum)	1.86	0.95	Rarely

13	Reading signs, slogans, proverbs, advertisements, posters and product labels written in English	3.56	0.98	Often
14	Writing/texting to friends/teachers/family in English	2.05	0.73	Rarely
15	Watching English movies/dramas/series	3.58	1.16	Often
16	Listening to and singing English songs	3.76	1.12	Often
17	Reading English /magazines/ novels/short stories	2.85	1.12	Sometimes
18	Participating in Online English Courses	2.42	1.06	Rarely
19	Listening to the news/videos in English on social media	3.11	1.12	Sometimes
20	Reading online news in English	2.34	0.94	Rarely
		2.86	1.05	Sometimes

Table 1 shows that, on average, students moderately participate in out-of-class activities ( $\bar{X} = 2.86$ ). The three most preferred activities are reading English test-preparation books ( $\bar{X} = 3.87$ ), followed closely by engaging in listening to and singing English songs ( $\bar{X} = 3.76$ ), and watching English movies/dramas/series ( $\bar{X} = 3.58$ ). In contrast, activities like joining Internet discussions in English (blog/forum) ( $\bar{X} = 1.86$ ) and writing or texting in English to friends, teachers, or family ( $\bar{X} = 2.05$ ) receive lower engagement from the participants.

**Table 2** Students' preference of out-of-class English learning activities.

No.	Out-of-class English learning activities	( $\bar{X}$ )	S.D	Level of preference
1	Reading English test-preparation books	3.40	0.92	Neutral
2	Watching English learning videos on YouTube, Facebook	4.18	0.98	Like
3	Learning English vocabulary using printed dictionaries	2.48	1.06	Dislike
4	Learning English vocabulary using online dictionaries	3.11	1.08	Neutral
5	Doing English homework/exercises before coming to class	3.47	0.95	Like
6	Surfing English websites to find information	4.34	1.08	Strongly like
7	Practice speaking English through mobile apps/iPad/YouTube	3.27	1.04	Neutral
8	Playing English Language Games	3.30	1.08	Neutral
9	Talking to foreigners/international students in English	3.35	1.12	Neutral
10	Talking to Thai friends in English	2.98	1.18	Neutral
11	Talking to teachers in English after class	3.17	1.14	Neutral
12	Joining Internet discussion in English (blog/forum)	2.45	1.12	Dislike
13	Reading signs, slogans, proverbs, advertisements, posters and product labels written in English	3.25	1.00	Neutral
14	Writing/texting to friends/teachers/family in English	3.28	1.05	Neutral
15	Listening to and singing English songs	3.95	1.05	Like
16	Watching English movies/dramas/series	3.87	1.05	Like
17	Reading messages or comments written in English on social media	3.30	1.04	Neutral
18.	Participating in Online English Courses	2.43	1.00	Dislike
19	Listening to the news/videos in English on social media	3.18	1.10	Neutral
20	Reading online news in English	2.24	1.06	Dislike
	Average	3.25	1.05	Neutral

Table 2 shows students' preferences for out-of-class English learning activities. On average, students demonstrate a neutral level of preference for these activities ( $\bar{X} = 3.25$ ). The top three preferred activities are surfing English websites to find information ( $\bar{X} = 4.34$ ), categorized as "Strongly like," watching English learning videos on

YouTube, Facebook ( $\bar{X} = 4.18$ ), falling under the "Like" category, and listening to and singing English songs ( $\bar{X} = 3.95$ ), also falling under the "Like" category. On the other hand, participating in reading online news in English ( $\bar{X} = 2.24$ ) and online English courses ( $\bar{X} = 2.43$ ) are the least preferred activities, categorized as "Dislike."

## Conclusions

Based on the results of this current study, it is highlighted that English major students showed a moderate level of participation in out-of-class learning activities. The top three engaging activities included reading English test-preparation books, listening to and singing English songs, and watching English movies/dramas/series. These activities demonstrate how vital multimedia tools and enjoyment are when learning a language.

However, there was an obvious lower engagement in activities such as joining Internet discussions and writing or texting in English to friends, teachers, or family. In terms of preferences, students, on average, expressed a neutral level of liking for out-of-class English learning activities. The top three preferred activities were surfing English websites to find information, watching English learning videos on YouTube, Facebook, and listening to and singing English songs, all falling under the "Like" category. In contrast, participating in online English courses and reading online news in English were the least favored activities, categorized as "Dislike." This shows that there may have been missed possibilities to effectively



use interactive platforms for language acquisition. This finding suggests that it is needed to get creative and find new ways to integrate digital communication tools into teaching methods.

## Discussion

The results of this study showed that students were sometimes involved in activities to learn English outside class, with an average frequency of 2.86. To make students more engaged, it is important to ensure these activities are easy to access and match their interests and learning styles (Oxford, 2011; Benson, 2011). For example, making activities personalized, using shorter learning sessions, and offering a variety of tasks could help students engage more often. The results also showed that student preferences varied, with an overall neutral leaning. The most liked activities, such as surfing English websites, watching learning videos, and singing songs, corresponded with the idea that enjoying learning is essential (Krashen, 1985; Benson, 2011). This finding indicated the need to consider what activities are effective and to use technology to make learning more interactive (Brown, 2016; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). However, less popular activities like online discussions, writing/texting in English, and online courses raised concerns. It was important to think about how different students learn and what activities work best. For instance, by understanding these things, teachers could create more interesting and helpful ways for students to learn outside class (Gardner, 2010; Nunan, 1990). It

might involve offering different kinds of activities to match how students learn (Reid, 2005), using technology to make learning more fun (Chapelle, 2001; Warschauer & Healey, 1998), and dealing with problems in activities that students might not like but are good for them (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Ellis, 2008).

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended to enhance out-of-class English learning activities for students. Firstly, promoting a diverse range of activities is crucial to provide different preferences and learning styles, ensuring sustained engagement. While popular activities like reading test-preparation books and watching videos are effective, introducing a variety of options can keep students motivated. Secondly, addressing the lower engagement in activities like joining Internet discussions and writing in English is essential to enhance communicative skills. Emphasizing tasks that promote communication, such as online discussions or written communication with peers, can significantly improve language proficiency. Additionally, acknowledging the strong preference for interactive online platforms and modifying online courses to be more engaging are key factors. Integrating multimedia elements and real-life applications can make online learning more appealing. Individualized learning plans should be considered to accommodate individual differences in preferences and engagement levels. Encouraging real-life language use, providing resources and support for preferred



activities, and continuously evaluating and adapting strategies based on student feedback are also essential for creating a tailored and engaging out-of-class English learning experience.

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