

Learning Experience Outside Classroom By Students With Different Proficiencies

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ABSTRACT

The research on students' language learning experience outside classroom has been widely studied by researchers, especially university students with high proficiency levels. Therefore, this study focuses on discovering language learning experiences outside the classroom by students with different proficiencies in elementary school: questionnaires and open-ended interviews were given to collect the data. In total there are 30 students in grade 6 filled out the questionnaire, and some students with different proficiency were chosen to be interviewed. The result shows that students at any level of proficiencies have a positive attitude toward English. However, the students with good proficiency levels have more varied activities learning the language than students with another proficiency level. However, still, the researcher found that those activities are more into improving receptive skills. It is difficult for the students to improve their productive skills, especially speaking skills because they do not have a chance to use English outside class since people around the students use Thai for communication.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy, Learning Experience, Outside Classroom, Independent Learning, Proficiency Levels, Young Learners.

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of study

The terms "autonomous learning", and "learner autonomy" may be familiar in the world of education, because research discussing learner autonomy has been widely researched by scientists for the last four decades. starting from the basic principles regarding the definition of autonomous learning or autonomous learning, how are the basic concepts of autonomous learning, until over time the scope of research studies on this, extends to the application of autonomous learners within, beyond, and the combination of both within and beyond the classroom and also the connection among technology and autonomous learning (Nguyen & Stracke, 2020).

Learner Autonomy

(Holec, 1981) originally defined *learner autonomy* in language teaching and learning as the capability to take charge of one's learning. Further, Phil Benson, in his book titled "Teaching and Researching," defined current research and understood autonomy as the willingness and ability to initiate and follow a self-directed learning agenda (Benson, 2011). Benson also added that it is necessary to understand that autonomy is a feature of the learner's approach to the learning progression, not the learning technique. However, the concept of autonomy is based on the natural tendency of learners to seek control over their learning. Autonomy is thus available to all but is expressed in different ways and to varying degrees, depending on the unique characteristics of each learner and each learning (Benson, 2011). (Littlewood, 1999) divided the level of learners' autonomy into two levels, those are reactive autonomy and proactive autonomy. Further, he explained that reactively autonomous learners rely on others (such as curricula and teachers) to set the direction of their learning. Once the direction is initiated, learners organize their resources autonomously to achieve their goals. At a higher level, actively autonomous learners take partial or complete responsibility for the learning process, including many stages traditionally considered the teacher's responsibility, such as setting learning goals, selecting materials, and assessing progress.

The purpose of Autonomous Learning is to promote a concept or the foundation of lifelong learning to the students. Autonomy is a prerequisite for effective learning. If learners can develop autonomy, they will not only be better language learners but also be more responsible and essential members of the communities in which they live (Benson, 2011).. Therefore, to achieve the autonomous learner's goals, cooperation is needed between teachers, students, and people in the student's environment.

Learner Autonomy Outside Classroom

Since language is a tool to communicate from one person to another, learning languages cannot only be inside language classes but can be done anytime and anywhere (Hyland, 2004). Inside the classroom, outside the classroom, or even a combination of both inside and outside the classroom. From time to time, studies on language teaching and learning have focused a lot on learning within the classroom. By an extended margin, learning within the classroom is considered a predominant concern in educational research compared to beyond-classroom learning (Benson, 2011). Similarly, (Richards, 2015) stated that theoretical studies and realistic studies in language teaching and learning of withinside the beyond typically targeted classroom-primarily based elements, along with syllabus design, teaching methods, substance development, and instructor training. The motives for this recognition have been to help schools- primarily based on gaining knowledge throughout the curriculum or to put together students for examination.

Learning outside the classroom can be interpreted as learning process that takes place beyond the classroom and it includes autonomous, true-to-life, or voluntary realistic knowledge. (Munzilin, Batubara, Fauziyah, Sukaris, & Rahim, 2021) stated that one of the advantages of learning outside classroom is learners will have opportunities to observe, obtain information, or study everything directly. (Pearson, 2003) Understanding factors that shape student behavior patterns beyond classroom language learning helps us to gain a better understanding on the differences in individual development skill in learning second language and the differences among learners with different levels of language and overall

proficiency. Since then, the number of studies studied about language learning out-of-classroom has increased yearly.

A study by (Inozu, Sahinkarakas, & Yumru, 2010) titled "The nature of language learning experiences beyond the classroom and its learning outcomes" on 309 first-year students in Adana and Mersin University, Turkey, focused on elaborated the following issues such as the student's attitude toward English, the variety of materials and activities that can be used to engaged the students with the learning so they can improve English beyond the classroom and also how's the contribution of beyond classroom language learning experiences to the learners' learning outcomes. This study found that most students emphasize language learning outside of class and use various materials and activities outside of class to expand their ability in English. However, most selected materials and activities could be more productive but are designed to improve vocabulary, grammar, and receptive language skills. Learning is perceived as an extension of teacher-led curriculum activities.

Another study by (Lai, Hu, & Lyu, 2017) titled "Understanding the nature of learners' out-of-class language learning experience with technology" interviewed 21 learnersd at university level who study foreign language. This research focuses on the study of these two questions as What types of technology-enhanced learning experiences that the learners do to engage in and outside the classroom? What are the factors influenced learner to engage with different types of learning experiences? The findings of this study were that it had identified three types of technology experiences and additional types of technology experiences that support these three types of technology experiences. Furthermore, it found that different stimuli drove the three types of technical experiences, elicited different learner emotions and dialogue behaviors, and were differentially influenced by different attitudes and supportive variables.

A study titled "Autonomous English Language Learning Beyond the Classroom: Indonesian Tertiary Students' Practices and Constraints" by (Daflizar, 2020) with a total of 402 participants who were students in their first year, and then 30 of them were interviewed to gather information related to the focus of this study which is the practice of autonomous learning by Indonesian tertiary students out-of-class. Results indicated that students engaged in some English learning activities outside the classroom, but many of the activities were receptive rather than productive. Meanwhile, the interview result showed that students thought they were not autonomous in their learning due to some limitations.

One more study (Nguyen & Stracke, 2020) titled "Learning experiences in and outside class by successful Vietnamese tertiary students studying English as a foreign language" with four English primary undergraduate Vietnamese students from the university participated in this study. As mentioned in the title, this study focuses on the student's role in providing opportunities to practice their learning within and beyond the classroom. How those four tertiary students engaged in English learning within the classroom as well as how those four tertiary students engaged in English learning beyond the classroom. The result shows that when learning occurs within the classroom, students mostly play a passive role in their learning practices. They preferred teacher-led learning and assessment or test-based practice. In-class practice activities were often exam-oriented and tailored by teachers to exam content and format. When learning takes place outside the classroom, students actively and creatively create opportunities through part-time jobs, social activities, and hobbies aimed at developing language skills rather than high test scores.

At the end of this study, Nguyen gives some suggestions for future research. One was comparing the language learning experience with low proficiency or a mix of low and high-proficiency students. Because of this suggestion, the researcher on this current study comes with the idea of comparing language learning experiences with different proficiencies. Furthermore, the writer noticed that most previous studies on learner autonomy outside the classroom focused on students at the university level. Therefore, this current study tried to figure out the language learners' learning experience at the elementary level. From the study's background, the purpose was to elaborate on the learning experience of elementary students with different proficiency levels. Specifically, this study focused on the following questions:

- a. How do the students' attitudes toward English?
- b. How do students with different proficiencies engage in English learning beyond the classroom?

B. Method

This research was conducted in Chumchon Nonghin School Thailand with a total of 30 students of grade 6 elementary school. The researcher on this study adapted questionnaire from (Pearson, 2003) and (Hyland, 2004) to be used and given to the 30 students to know their attitude toward English as well as their learning experience outside classroom. Questionnaire reference from Hyland was used to get the information about students' attitude toward English in section one. Meanwhile the second section was about students' learning experience adapted from both Pearson and Hyland. Both sections used Likert-Type 5point scale. The first section was in agreement scale, while the second section was in frequency form, followed by multiple choice statements.

Semi structured interview was held to follow up students' answer on questionnaire for an in-depth analysis. 5 students consist of 2 students who got "A" in English class, 1 student who got "B" and 2 students who got "C+" were participated on this interview. During the interview, the researcher was assisted by the English teacher there to interpret the questions for the students, and convey the answers from the students to the researcher in order to minimize misunderstanding since the students are in elementary school and with different language proficiency. Three main topic questions were chosen by the researcher. The first topic question was about the students' language input. The second topic question was about the students' environment and the last topic question was about the students' motivation.

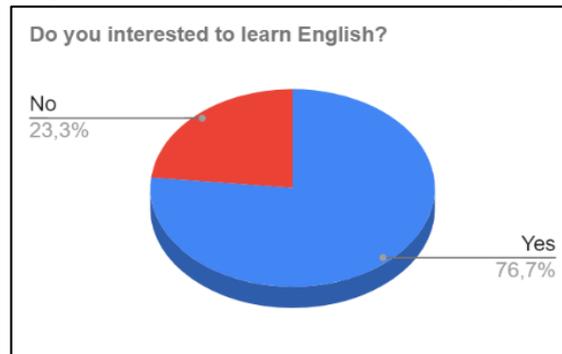
C. Findings and Discussion

1. Students' Attitude Toward English

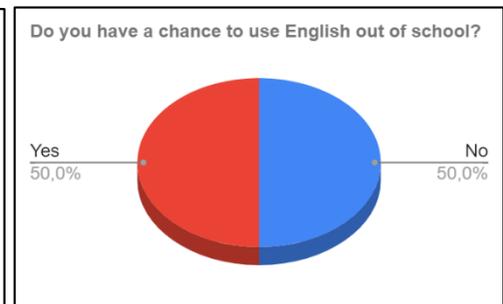
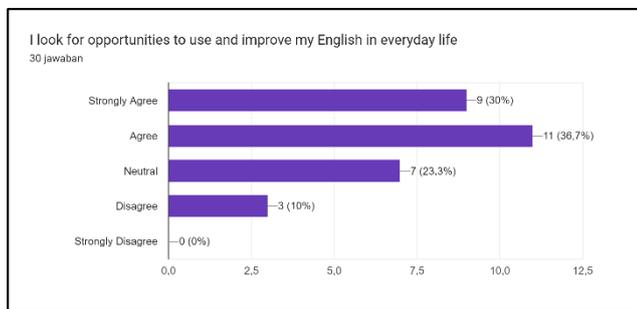
Data from the questionnaire and interview regarding the students' attitude toward English showed that most students have a favorable view of English. It can be seen from the percentage of students who like or are interested in learning English and the number of students who are looking for opportunities to use English in their everyday lives. 76.7% of the students, or 23 out of 30 students interested to learn English (Figure 1). Meanwhile, there are 11 students (36.7%) agreed, and nine students (30%) strongly agreed with the statement that they have been look for

opportunities to improve their English so that they can use it in everyday life (Figure2)

Figure 1. Anthusiasms of students to learn English



Based on the interview result, the researcher found that the students' motivation plays an essential role in the reason of the students' anthusiasms to learn English. For example, Watcharaporn Intarachaisree said that she likes or is interested

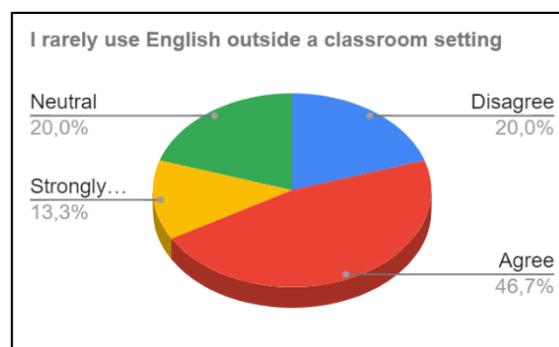


to learn English because she wants to talk to foreigners. Another answer from Jiratchaya Malaiya said that she is interested to learn English because, in the future, she wants to travel to other countries. Another answer from Thanawat Chomchuen stated that he is interested to learn English because he wants to pursue his study. However, even though the students are interested and motivated to learn English, the data showed that 50% of the students couldn't practice English because do not have chances to use English beyond academic life (Figure 3). Meanwhile, 14 students (46.7%) agreed, and four students (13.3%) strongly agreed that they are rarely practice and use English outside the classroom (Figure 4).

Figure 2. Opportunities to use English

Figure 3. Chance to use English

Figure 4. Frequency of using English



The data from the questionnaire also revealed some difficulties faced by most students using English out-of-classroom, such as 14 students (46.7%) feeling nervous, unconfident, and anxious using English outside the classroom. 13 students (43.3%) find communicating in English complex. There are also 13 students (43.3%) who have yet to make any English-speaking, which is why they find it difficult to use English in their daily lives. Another area for improvement is that they need someone to speak to, experienced by ten students (33.3%). Last but not least, they mix mostly with people from their own country (23.3%), they don't like making any mistakes, they are only interested in academic English (13.3%), and also don't have enough time (10%) are also become the student difficulties using English out-of-class (Figure 5).

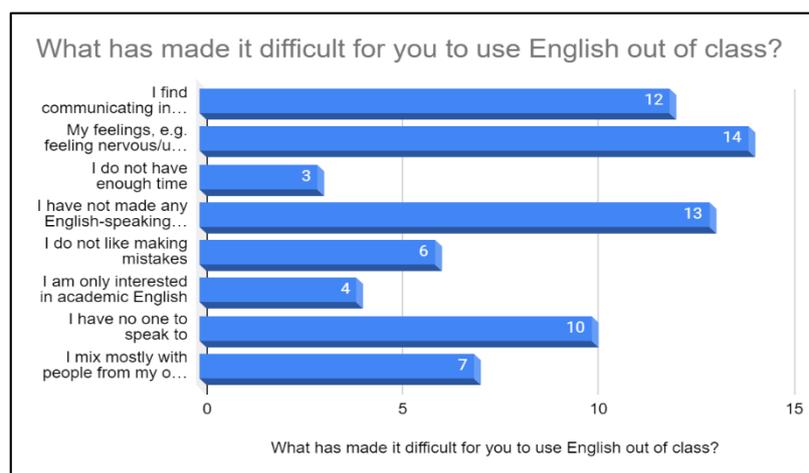


Figure 5. Students' difficulties using English

2. Students' Engagement in English Learning Beyond Classroom

Students with good proficiency

Data in table 1 below shows the frequency of students with good proficiency engaging in particular activities outside the classroom to improve their English. Three activities were frequently practiced (very often and often) by students with reasonable proficiency. Those activities are listening to English songs and music (75% very often or often), using English to search from the internet, email, or chat (58.4% very often or often), and also watching television programs, videos, or movies in English (50% very often or often). Meanwhile, the students indicated two activities they could have been more engaged in using English where they stay (66.7% rarely or never) and talking to native speakers out-of-school (58.3% rarely or never).

Those two activities considered rarely or never done by the students based on the questionnaire align with the student's answers in the interview. Two students at this level of proficiency stated that it is difficult to use English in the place where they stay because people around them use Thai to communicate, and also, they never talk to native speakers. In addition, one student on this proficiency level stated that she used to learn English using an app called Duolingo to develop her English proficiency.

Statement	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
How often do you follow the following activities out-of-class to improve your English?					
Listening/watching news in English on the radio/television	8.3%	41.7%	41.7%	8.3%	0
Using English to search on the internet, email or chatting	16.7%	41.7%	25.0%	0	16.7%
Reading books, magazines or newspapers in English	16.7%	16.7%	41.7%	16.7%	8.3%
Talking or discussing with friends who are also learning English	8.3%	16.7%	41.7%	16.7%	16.7%
Communicating using English in the place where I stay	0	8.3%	25.0%	50.0%	16.7%
Watching television programs, video, or movies in English	25.0%	25.0%	16.7%	25%	8.3%
Listening to English song and music	66.7%	8.3%	16.7%	8.3%	0
Talking with native speakers, out of school	0	8.3%	33.3%	25.0%	33.3%

Table 1. good proficiency student outside the classroom learning activities

Students with middle proficiency

Table 2 below shows the percentages of the students in the middle level of proficiency engaged in learning activities outside the classroom. The students' answers showed the most frequent activities (very often or often) they have been doing are Using English to search on the internet, email or chatting (75% very often or often); listening to English songs and music (62.5 % very often or often); and watching television programs, videos or movies in English (37.5% very often and often). Meanwhile, the activities considered as rarely or never done by the students on this level are reading books, magazines, or newspapers in English (75% rarely or never); talking or discussing with other students who are also learning English. Similar to this questionnaire finding, the student also stated in the interview session that he rarely or even never discussed or talked in English with his classmates.

Statement	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
How often do you follow the following activities out-of-class to improve your English?					
Listening/watching news in English on the radio/television	0	25.0%	37.5%	25.0%	12.5%
Using English to search on the internet, email or chatting	50.0%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	0
Reading books, magazines or newspapers in English	12.5%	12.5%	0	50.0%	25.0%
Talking or discussing with other students who are also learning English	0	12.5%	25.0%	25.0%	37.5%
Communicating using English in the place where I stay	0	12.5%	25.0%	27.5%	25.0%
Watching television programs, video, or movies in English	12.5%	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%
Listening to English song and music	25.0%	37.5%	25.0%	12.5%	0
Talking with native speakers, out of school	0	12.5%	25.0%	12.5%	50.0%

Table 2. middle level proficiency students outside the classroom learning activities

Students with low proficiency

The students with low proficiency level answers (Table 3) on the questionnaire shows that the most frequent (very often and often) activities done to learn English outside the classroom are, listening to English song and music (30% very often or often); using the internet for research (30% very often); and listening or watching the news in English on the radio or television. Similar to the students in good proficiency level, students in this level also rarely or never use English where they stay (90% rarely or never) and also talk with native speakers out of school (80% rarely and never).

Statement	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
How often do you follow the following activities out-of-class to improve your English?					
Listening/watching news in English on the radio/television	0	10.0%	50.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Using English to search on the internet, email or chatting	30.0%	0	40.0%	20.0%	10.0%
Reading books, magazines or newspapers in English	0	0	30.0%	40.0%	30.0%
Talking or discussing with your friends who are also learning English	0	0	50.0%	10.0%	40.0%
Communicating using English in the place where I stay	0	0	10.0%	30.0%	60%
Watching television programs, video, or movies in English	0	0	50.05%	40.0%	10.0%
Listening to English song and music	10.0%	20.0%	70.0%	0	0
Talking with native speakers, out of school	0	0	20.0%	0	80.0%

Table 3. low proficiency student outside the classroom learning activities

From the findings above regarding students' engagement in English learning beyond the classroom on each student's proficiency level, it can be seen that first, students at any level of proficiency engaged principally in listening to English songs and music and watching television programs, videos, or movies in English. This finding is similar to research by (Daflizar, 2020) found that the top three frequently practiced learning activities out-of of class are listen to English songs, watching English movies, and watching English TV programs. Furthermore, this finding is also in line with the statement of (Sudiwijaya & Arifianto, 2022), which states that audio content is helpful as a learning medium. Second, from those activities listed above, using English in the place the students stay was considered the most rarely or never done by the students at all proficiency levels because most of the people there use Thai to communicate with each other, especially outside the school.

D. CONCLUSION

The focus of this present study is stated on the research question: How do the students' attitudes toward English? Furthermore, how do students with different

proficiencies engage in English learning beyond the classroom? So, the conclusion of this study is. First, the students in Chumchon Nonghin School Thailand have a favorable view toward English. It can be seen from their interest in learning English, even though they still face problems getting a chance to use English out-of-classroom and other difficulties, such as their anxiety about English. Second, listening to English songs is the most frequent activity practiced by students at any level of proficiency. Moreover, this study found that students with good proficiency levels have more variety of activities compared to students at another proficiency level. Third, the researcher noticed that the students' learning activities outside the classroom were dominated by improving receptive skills. Last but not least, since the subject of this study is limited, further research could conduct research with more subjects.

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