

Developing English Learning Environment for Non-English Majors in a Non-native Community



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ABSTRACT: Teaching and learning English as a foreign language in a non-native community poses a lot of challenges to both teachers and students. While it is commonly shared that in-class learning does not guarantee the success of the learning, the need for the extension of learning opportunities beyond the class has been remarkably increasing, encouraging English educators to create an environment for English learning beyond the class door. This study aims to set up such environment for non-English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education, Vietnam. A series of out-of-class English activities were conducted during October 2020 to May 2021 for non-English majors at the University. 200 students joined the study as questionnaire respondents in two phases (before and after the implement of the activities) and 10 students were selected for focus group interview. Results revealed that the majority of the students believed in-class English learning were insufficient for their demands and needs and thus expected similar activities should be carried out beyond the class. The research would be a significant case study to illustrate that efforts to include out-of-class activities in the learning process should be encouraged for the development of an extended language learning environment for the benefits of the students in places where English is largely limited within the classroom walls.

KEYWORDS: English learning environment, out-of-class English activities, non-English majors, non-native community, Thai Nguyen University of Education

I. INTRODUCTION

English has become a global language undoubtedly because of its existence in all fields of life such as politics, economics, culture, society, science, technology and education. According to the British Council (2013), there were about 1.75 billion speakers of English and in 2020 it was supposed to reach 2 billion, about one quarter of the world's population. English has contributed to socio-economic and cultural exchanges as well as mutual understanding among nations and peoples.

The mastery and proficiency in English use either in communication or in the profession is a great advantage to anyone. Therefore, in such countries where English is not the mother or the second language as Vietnam, English is still recognized as one of the most important foreign languages in the education system. In recent years, Vietnamese government has launched many critical policies for foreign language teaching and learning. In Vietnamese current school curriculum, English is a compulsory subject from Grade 3 onward.

Located in midland province in the north of Vietnam, Thai Nguyen University of Education (TNUE) is a teacher education university whose mission is to train teachers of English for the midland and mountainous areas. Roughly 80% of the learners come from rural and mountainous provinces and about 30% are ethnic minority, which is a challenge for the English teaching and learning in the university since those students have limited opportunities to approach English study at school as well as at university.

English plays a fundamental role in the undergraduate training program at TNUE; it accounts for one third of the compulsory general knowledge block. As required by the national qualification framework and the requirements of the society and the world of work, TNUE has adjusted its English outcome standard from A2 to B1 according to CEFR. However, such change presents particular difficulties for TNUE administrators, teachers and students, especially when the number of credits devoted to English courses remains the same and opportunities for students' exposure to English outside the classroom in a non-native community are bounded. Therefore, it is vital that out-of-class activities should be conducted at TNUE to encourage students' frequent and authentic use of English for the improvement of their proficiency.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The environment, as it is generally understood, refers to the totality of all external conditions and influences directly and indirectly affecting human beings. Despite various learning sources, school has long considered to be a fundamental means through which

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formal education is accomplished (Zandvliet & Fraser, 2005). However, the idea that language learning within classroom boundaries is not adequate for language development and success is discussed by a large body of research (Nunan, 1989). English teaching and learning in Asia including Vietnam relies very much on prescribed curriculum and pre-selected textbooks and materials. Despite their valuableness in information provision for the students, textbooks or in-class learning fails to address realistic problems and prepare students for functioning well outside of school (Resnick, 1987).

Foreign language proficiency is best accumulated through active and frequent use both inside and outside the classroom context. Engagement in out-of-school learning enhances student language development and is more directly connected to the physical world for greater learning success. Hence, it is crucial to provide students with maximum English exposure as well as meaningful and purposeful activities through which they can learn and apply the language.

Therefore, the teacher's role does not limit in her in-class teaching but should extend to encourage students to shorten the distance between in-class English and authentic English community. It is widely agreed that the noblest achievement of a successful language educator is to nurture their learners' self-study by empowering their English learning outside the classroom. (Chisman & Crandall, 2007; Chisman, 2008). Out-of-class learning should be integrated in the whole learning process as there is a crucial link between in-class and out-of-class learning. Out-of-class English activities must be incorporated into formal instruction to enhance one's learning effectiveness through the participation in meaningful communicative activities (Pearson, 2003).

There have been several research on correlations between out-of-class experiences and educational achievements among EFL students. These gains do not only include growth in language knowledge acquisition and application and complexity of cognition such as critical thinking and intellectual flexibility but also cover humanitarianism, interpersonal and intrapersonal competence, and practical competence (Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994). Hyland's study (2004) on 208 student teachers and 20 primary teachers in Hong Kong suggested significant improvements in English language learning via various English activities outside the classroom. The immense benefits of out-of-class activities should lead institutions to use available resources to create opportunities inside and outside of school to accelerate students' learning. Guo (2011) worked with 90 English majors at a college in Taiwan in the English Detective Activity Project where he attempted to expand students' awareness of the English language available to them outside the classroom and add to the degree of students' autonomy in learning. Results revealed that the participant self-perceived that there was an increase in their vocabulary size, their general English ability and translation skills. Gaines's (2015) project with 9 EFL learners in an intensive English program after class showed increases in students' confidence levels and increases in the overall quantity of English use outside the classroom.

The context in which learning takes place makes a vital contribution to the success of learning; this is true in particular for language acquisition. Countries in which English is not a primary language often lack an authentic English environment. In such countries, in-class instruction may be the only contact students have with English. Once students leave the classroom, they are totally immersed in their own first-language environment, which seems to offer little exposure to English materials and few chances to see or use English in real settings. Because sole reliance on classroom instruction is far from sufficient for EFL learners to practice the target language (Xiao & Luo, 2009), more effort needs to be made to increase opportunities for these students to encounter English. Collaborative learning offers an environment to liven up and supplement the learning practices. Establishing interactive classmates into an educational system creates more practical social contexts, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the language teaching. Such an environment would uphold the language learners' interests and provide more natural learning surroundings. In language learning classrooms, collaborative learning can be a supporting means for the instructors in order to create a rich and meaningful learning process. Collaborative learning has a major role in constructive cognitive development (Piaget, 1928). This theory is reliable with other well-known learning theories (Vygotsky, 1978) in highlighting the significance of collaboration.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. *Participants*

200 non-English majors in TNUE were involved in the project as participants in the series of activities conducted in the school from October 2020 to May 2021. They were also invited answer the questionnaires before and after the project. A focus group of 10 students were randomly chosen for in-depth interviews.

The participants are first and second-year students at the age range of 18-20 who are pursuing their majors in different faculties in TNUE. English is one of their compulsory courses in the undergraduate programme, which are taught in 3 semesters with 10 credits. 80% of the participants come from rural or mountainous areas where their English learning in secondary schools are largely limited within prescribed curriculum and textbooks. Entry test results show that their English proficiency is roughly at A1 level according to CEFR; yet, their expected learning outcome for English after 4 year or exactly after 10-credit courses is at B1 as prescribed in the national standard for university graduates.

Differently from the English majors whose English proficiency may allow them to seek for resources and support for their self-study of English, for example making friends with foreigners, learning with English websites, watching English films and

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reading English books, non-English majors at TNUE generally learn English as a subject and such activities outside the classroom as doing English homework or assignments are also for and on their in-class learning duties.

B. Research instruments

Questionnaires and focus group interviews are employed as the instruments for the research.

The questionnaire conducted before the project aims to seek for students' opinions on English environment, their practices of out-of-class English learning activities and their expectations of the development of English environment. Hence, the pre-questionnaire is divided into 3 parts with 35 items corresponding to the purposes. 10 items in part 1 are close-ended questions with 5-point likert scale showing students' degree of agreement on the statements (1= agree, 5= disagree). Fifteen items in part 2 in the same format as those in part 1 seek to investigate the frequency of students' out of class English practices (1=Always, 5=Never). In the last part, students are required to rank 10 listed activities from 1 (the most wanted) to 10 (the least wanted), which shows their wishes on the expected activities for English environment development in their university. The pre-questionnaire was printed and sent to the participants in-persons in the beginning of October 2020.

The post-questionnaire focuses on students' evaluation of the series of the activities which were conducted in TNUE from October 2020 to May 2021. Eight questions in 5-point likert scale were delivered to collect students' judgements of level of successfulness, effectiveness on their English study, students' preferences, and the contribution of the activities to English environment and their expectations of the upcoming activities in TNUE. Due to COVID-19 outbreak, the questionnaire after the project was sent electronically to the non-English majors.

The interview of the focus group consists of 5 open-ended questions to seek for the students' feedback on the five activities conducted in TNUE during the project time as well their suggestions for future activities in TNUE.

C. Research design

Mixed methods were deployed in this study with the integration of both quantitative components (questionnaires) and qualitative components (interviews) to increase the validity and reliability of the findings through richer and more comprehensive data. Restrictions of quantitative results and qualitative findings are minimized for better understanding of the research problems as mixed method research designs allow research questions to be examined thoroughly from different perspectives.

Findings from the pre-questionnaires provided quantitative data of students' opinions on English environment at TNUE, their participation in out-of-class English activities and their expectations for the development of English environment at TNUE. The same kind of data collected from the post-questionnaire revealed participants' evaluation of activities conducted at TNUE for development of English environment, the list of factors contributing to the successfulness of these activities as well as students' expectations for the continuation of the activities. However, these numeral data did not reflect in-depth attitudes, viewpoints and desires of the respondents, which requires a qualitative approach to the research question to compensate the weaknesses of the other.

D. Project description

The project was approved by TNUE to be conducted in the academic year of 2020-2021. An investigation of students' opinions on English language learning environment was carried out before the start of the project. During October 2020 to May 2021 a series of English learning activities were designed and implemented in order to provide extended learning environment for TNUE non-English majors outside the language class. Those activities included: (i) The setup of notices in English in offices and building in TNUE; (ii) the conduct of Talk show *English – Mastery & Integration*, *English Festival 2020* and *English Bright Night*, and (iii) the launch of English radio program *Your songs, Your soul*.

Located in a non-English speaking community where Vietnamese is used extensively in and out offices, TNUE previously designed all the notices and sign boards in the mother language. The setup of notices in English language supplemented with the mother language was expected to provide TNUE students with more target language inputs in a practical and meaningful way.

The conduct of performance-like programs, i.e. Talk show *English – Mastery & Integration*, *English Festival 2020* and *English Bright Night* aimed to involve non-English majors in fun, relaxing but competitive activities. In the Talk show *English – Mastery & Integration*, lecturers of English and English majors who have good English proficiency were invited to share their experience in English learning with the non-majors. The speakers also inspired the students by their successful stories with their academic and life achievements brought about by good use of English. *English Festival 2020* and *English Bright Night* is university-level competitions where all students joined in a series of activities such as: video-clip making in English, general knowledge quiz in English, talent performances in English, English film dubbing and English debates.

English radio program *Your songs, Your soul* was intended to create an English surrounding for TNUE students where the English songs are requested, the messages are written and the radio program are planned and broadcasted by the students.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

Students' Opinions on English Language Learning Environment in TNUE

Table 1. Students' opinions on English environment in TNUE

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
1. There are many resources for English listening in TNUE.	3.91	1.241	.975
2. I can speak English outside class in my TNUE.	3.68	1.399	
3. I can access to a wide range of English reading materials in TNUE campus.	3.59	1.443	
4. There is no reason for me to write in English outside class.	1.71	1.278	
5. TNUE organizes various English competitions and contests for English non majors.	3.85	1.370	
6. I don't think TNUE should create more activities for English non-majors to use English outside classroom.	4.01	1.336	
7. I am pleased with the opportunities for English use outside class given in and by TNUE.	3.84	1.470	
8. There is no real use of English out of classrooms at TNUE.	2.11	1.223	
9. I think in-class English activities at TNUE are adequate for me to develop my English.	3.72	1.405	
10. More exposure to English use outside the classroom helps me improve my English.	1.71	1.278	

Non-English majors at TNUE were invited to show their viewpoints on the environment for English study in the university by saying to what extent they agreed (score 1) or disagreed (score 5) with the statements. As can be seen from Table 1, generally, it is partly agreed that in-class English activities at TNUE were not adequate for the learners to develop their English (M=3.72). Moreover, it appeared that there was no authentic use of English outside the classroom, which is indicated in item 8 with the average mean response of 2.11. Regarding the opportunities for improving the four language skills, students partly disagreed that they could access to listening and reading resources (reflecting in the mean score of 3.91 and 3.59 respectively) and they seemed to have no reason to speak and write in English outside class. TNUE learners seemed to partly disagree that they were pleased with the opportunities for English using outside class given in and by TNUE (M=3.84). A more concrete evidence for this was illustrated in item 5 with the mean score of 3.85 suggesting that students tended to disagree that TNUE organized various English competitions and contests for non-English majors. With the average mean score of 4.01 indicating disagreement with the statement, item 6 shows that students expected TNUE should create more activities for out-of-class English use as they believed that more exposure to English use outside the classroom helped improve their English (M=1.71). It is also noteworthy to mention the wide range of standard deviation for the students' responses (between 1.223 and 1.470>1.0), which indicates that students' responses vary widely. Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the nine statements was calculated to examine the internal consistency of the scale and the value was found to be .975, which means the items have remarkably high internal consistency.

Students' Out-of-class English Learning Activities

Table 2. Students' out-of-class English activities

Activities	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
1. Using the internet in English for research, email or chat	2.41	1.137	.996
2. Listening to music or radio in English	2.79	1.207	
3. Watching television programs, video, or movies in English	2.92	1.175	
4. Reading books, magazines or newspapers in English	3.39	1.260	
5. Listening/watching English news on the radio/television	3.40	1.299	
6. Working and talking with other students who are also learning English	3.24	1.233	
7. Personal writing: writing diary, letters, notes, etc.	3.44	1.266	

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8. Independent study in a library/self-access centre	3.27	1.193
9. Having a friend who is a native speaker	3.51	1.330
10. Talking with native speakers off-campus	3.56	1.238
11. Using English in the place where I stay	3.51	1.236
12. Attending meetings, conferences, workshops in English	3.62	1.347
13. Participating in international projects	3.66	1.270
14. Attending English club	3.59	1.304
15. Having regular contact with foreign students	3.63	1.342

Table 2 describes the frequency of TNUE non-English majors' out-of-class activities which is scored ranging from 1 to 5 (1. Always/ Almost always, 2. Often, 3. Sometimes, 4. Rarely, 5. Never/ Almost never). Therefore, higher mean scores represent higher level of frequency and vice versa. As revealed in the table, overall, students did not have frequent practice of English outside their English classroom. Among the 15 listed activities, using the internet in English for research, email or chat, listening to music or radio in English, and watching television programs, video, or movies in English were the three most frequent activities for English use outside class. Yet, with the average mean scores of 2.41, 2.79, 2.92 respectively, it did indicate that students tended to sometimes use English on the internet for their personal needs and for their entertainment. Furthermore, non-English majors at TNUE appeared to have limited access to meetings, conferences, workshops in English ($M=3.62$) and international projects ($M=3.66$). The two activities were also among those with the least frequency. Having contact with native speakers or foreigners ($M=3.63$) including making friends ($M=3.51$) and talking with native speakers ($M=3.56$) was recorded rather occasional activities for out-of-class English use for TNE students. Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .996 indicated remarkably high internal consistency among students' responses of the frequency of their English activities outside class.

Students' expectations for the Development of English Environment in TNUE

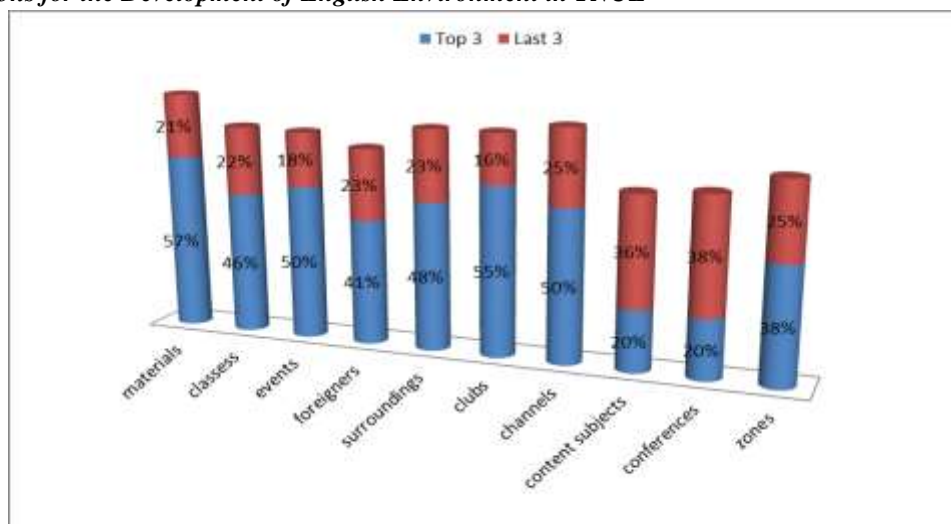


Figure 1. Students' expectations for the development of English environment in TNUE

Learners' expectations for TNUE' organization of the activities for English development were described in Figure 1 with the score ranging from 1 to 10 (1. the most wanted, 10=the least wanted). Providing English books, stories, magazines and other reading resources; organizing English events, contests or competitions; organizing English clubs; having an English channel on TNUE media were selected by more than 50% of the non-English majors as the top 3 activities to be implemented in TNUE. In contrast, offering content subjects in English taught by teachers with high English proficiency or foreign teachers and allowing students to participate in international conferences, workshops and seminars were decided by more than one third of the participants to be on the last-wanted activity list.

Results from the interview revealed that the students generally wish the university frequently organizes out-of-class English activities for the non-majors. They mentioned the number and the frequency of the activities.

"It would be great if TNUE can conduct more activities for our English learning beyond the classroom," B, female, 20 years old.

"I would love the activities to be implemented annually and frequently. We students need those to improve our English," H, female, 19 years old.

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“More activities mean more exposure to English learning. In-class learning is not adequate. The English learning environment should extend beyond the class,” I, female, 19 years old.

Students’ Evaluation of Activities for English Environment Development in TNUE

Table 3. Students’ evaluation of out-of-class English activities

Activities	Evaluation					
	Involvement	Successfulness	Usefulness	Preferences	English use	Contribution
1. English notices in offices and buildings in TNUE	75%	88.8%	86.3%	55%	58.8%	86.3%
2. Talk show English – Mastery & Integration	72.5%	86.3%	82.3%	53.8%	65.3%	83.8%
3. English Festival 2020	94%	93.8%	83.8%	66.3%	70%	90%
4. English Bright Night	94%	93.8%	85%	67.5%	66.3%	88.8%
5. Radio program <i>Your songs, Your soul</i>	61.3%	82.3%	88.8%	53.8%	60%	81.3%

Students’ feedback on the series of activities conducted at TNUE was collected and presented in Table 3. Students’ evaluative answers were categorized into 6 groups: involvement, successfulness, usefulness, preferences, English use and contribution and scored in 5-point scale (1. the most, 5 the least). Students’ involvement in 5 mentioned activities varied differently: 94% of the respondents confirmed that they had heard of the activities and/ or participated in the activities, which makes English Festival 2020 and English Bright Night to be the two most engaging activities; on the contrary, Radio program Your song your souls was considered to involve the smallest number of participants (61.3%). Regarding the successfulness of the activities, it is obvious that all the 5 activities were labelled remarkably successful with the percentage of student’s vote for success ranging from 82.3% to 93.8%. Moreover, the usefulness of the activities to learners’ English study was acknowledged with the majority of respondents’ selection (more than 80%). English Bright Night and English Festival 2020 continued to be the two most favourite activities with 67.5% and 66.3% of students ranking the first and second most favourite whereas Talk show English – Mastery & Integration and Radio program Your song your souls were the two at the end of the list. How much English use was involved in the activities was also indicated in Table 3: more than half of the students believed that these activities required considerable English use. However, despite the differences in participants’ answers, they generally appreciated the contribution of those activities to the English environment at TNUE: English Festival 2020 was regarded by 90% of the respondents to importantly contributed to the English environment in the university; English notices in offices and buildings in TNUE which are not on the top of other evaluation perspectives were amazingly ranked the third.

The contribution of the activities to the English learning at TNUE was further explored through students’ feedback received from the focus group interview. Overall, they acknowledge the positive roles of out-of-class English activities conducted in TNUE from October 2020 to May 2021 in their language practice, their enjoyment, life skill improvement, their realisation of authentic English and their personal mature.

“We found those activities relevant and meaningful to our English learning. We have had opportunities to practice our listening and speaking skills beyond the classroom, which previously we may not have so many,” A, female, 21 years old mentioned the English Festival 2020.

“I have never thought that English can be learnt in such a fun way. There is no pressure, there is no worry about grades. We all laughed and enjoyed,” D, male, 19 years old with reference to English Bright Night.

“Not only my English skills but my life skills have improved. I worked cooperatively with my team mates to get my team to win in the contest English Festival,” F, female, 20 years old.

“When looking at the notices in English, I need to refer them to Vietnamese. I have learnt many new words, and they are the one that I need for my daily communication. I have a feeling that English is closer to my life,” G., male, 21 years old.

“Before the event [mentioning English Festival 2020], I didn’t find my part. I thought I couldn’t compete with the English majors. But then I felt more confident. Winning or losing is not a matter. It’s that you can join and be part of it,” J, female 22 years old.

Factors contributing to the successfulness

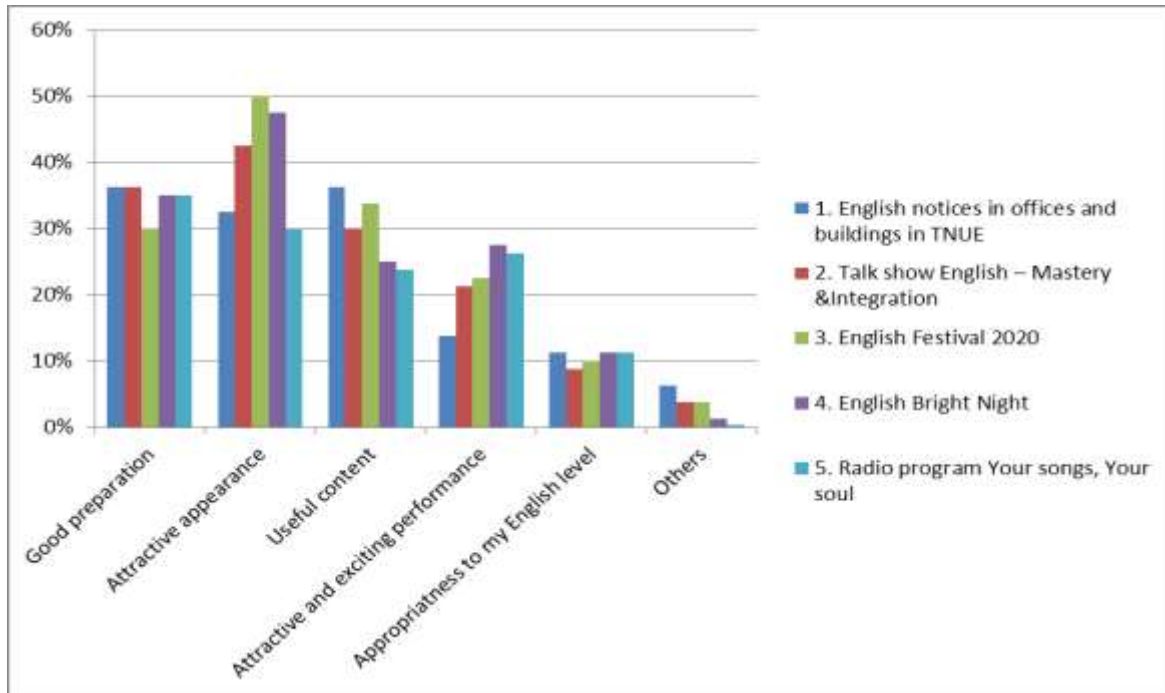


Figure 2. Factors contributing to the successfulness

Figure 2 presents respondents’ thoughts on the factors contributing to the successfulness of the activities which were implemented at TNUE from October 2020 to May 2021. The factors include: good preparation, attractive appearance, useful content, attractive and exciting performance, and appropriateness to students’ English level. According to the Figure, attractive appearance was regarded as the factor of importance by most students ranging from 32% to 50%. These activities were also acknowledged for good preparation, and this consideration is relatively similar among the respondents: 36% of the choices were for English notices in offices and buildings in TNUE and 35% for English Bright Night and Radio program *Your songs, Your soul*. Another contributing factor to the success of the events was useful content which was selected by at least one-fifth of the students. Nevertheless, quite many TNUE non-English majors did not regard those series of activities were appropriate to their English level: only around 10% considered this as a contributing factor to the successfulness, which means the majority of respondents (90%) recognised the irrelevance of the English use in the activities to their English language proficiency.

Students’ expectations for the continuation of the activities

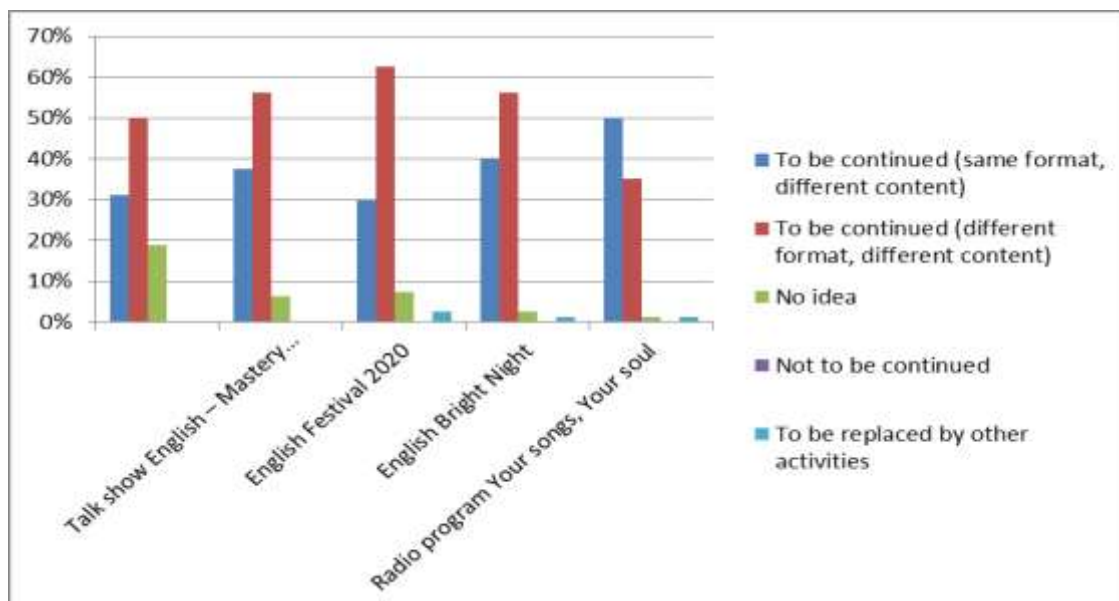


Figure 3. Students’ expectations for the continuation of the activities

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Results of students' responses on expectations for the continuation of the activities which were conducted at TNUE for the development of English environment were demonstrated in Figure 3. It is noticeable that all the five activities were expected to be continued; a very small percentage of the participants expected that these activities would be replaced by other activities and none of the responses wished the activities not to be continued. However, they supposed these activities were extended with different format and content rather than with the same format. This expectation applied to all the activities and the number of those who had preferences for continuing the activities with different format and content outweighed that for the activities with the same format by at least 20%. Specifically, English Festival 2020 was the activity which was decided by the largest percentage of respondents (63%) to be continued in different format and different content. English Bright Night and Talk show English – Mastery & Integration were placed in the second position with 56% of the students who wished these activities to be continued. More than one-third of the non-English majors favoured Radio program *Your songs, Your soul*, making it the activity chosen by the smallest number of participants.

Students' suggestions for the conduct of the activities

Regarding the types of activities, most interviewees agreed that performance-like activities would attract more students. It seems that they expected English learning is incorporated meaningfully and tactically in leisure activities.

"I think overall students would like to have English music performances where they can learn English and enjoy the performances at the same time. Students love songs, dances and singing," E., male, 20 years old.

"Competitions in English are good chances for us to review our English in a more challenging way. Participants will try hard to win, so they need to revise what they have learnt in class," C., female, 20 years old.

"Comfortable English zones where we can have easy access to and practice English with someone who are more fluent in the language will help us a lot. Probably it can be set up in the library or somewhere in the dormitory," J., female 22 years old.

"In my opinion, TNUE should take advantage of its location in an education centre where there are many foreign students and foreign experts. The University can invite them to meetings, talk shows sharing about their experiences. It would be fantastic that we can make friends with them," G., male, 21 years old.

With regards to the students' involvement, interviewees all believed that TNUE should have better strategies to engage more learners, including non-majors into out-of-class English learning settlement.

"I found not all students knew and were interested in these activities although they are useful for their English learning. Students should be aware of the importance of such opportunities. And I think the University should have better dialogues to students about how essential English is to the learners' study, and this is a great way to support them, to increase their access to English. Once they understand, they will surely take part in those activities," G., male, 21 years old.

"I think the university should have more effective communication methods. Let the students themselves inform one another of the activities. Let them talk about the benefits. Let them share those practices on one of the events. It will become more real. People like to experience real things," A., female, 21 years old.

"Social media like Facebook can help a lot here. Encourage students to share the post, then everyone will know about the event. If the activity is good but is kept in the dark, then it cannot inspire other people," F, female, 20 years old.

"Students basically have respect to their teachers. They will consider the teachers' advice and suggestions. Why don't we involve the teachers from their faculties in such activities?" I., female, 19 years old.

"Let the students be the host of the activities. They plan, they prepare, they act, they perform, they speak out, etc. They will have the sense of belonging and would love to contribute," B., female, 20 years old.

Though there are so many other considerations while conducting the out-of-class English activities, students' ideas about how TNUE will arrange the activities in the future are essential prompts for the teachers of English, organizers of the events and anyone who involves in the conduct. Taking students' voices into account helps make English learning 'of students', 'by students' and 'for students'.

B. Discussion

It is obvious that overall, the students did not acknowledge the English language learning environment at TNUE is sufficient to their learning. There are no real reasons for them to use English outside the classroom as it is not required on daily basis. This can be explained by the fact that Vietnam is a non-English speaking country and English is also not the second language; hence, access to English learning is bounded in classrooms. Students' engagement in out-of-class English learning activities is largely limited, which was illustrated by a very low percentage of students practising English outside classroom or having connection with English.

However, as it is documented in Buckingham (2009) and reflected in students' viewpoints, out-of-class English learning should be incorporated in the whole learning process not only for the improvements in students' English learning but also for the increase of their confidence and motivation. Chisman and Crandall (2007) suggested that EFL instructors and institutions should facilitate students to take control of their own learning by bridging the gap between the classroom and English use in the real world. This is particularly significant in a non-native community where the teachers and the institutions seem to be both the input and the

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context for English use. Therefore, the implementation of a series of out-of-classroom English activities at TNUE is not only research but also practice driven.

The benefits of English learning outside the classroom are reported in terms of involvement, successfulness, usefulness, English use and contribution to English learning. Educational gains in students' English language proficiency, their enjoyment, life skill improvement, their realisation of authentic English and their personal mature are the strengths of the activities conduct, which demonstrates that out-of-class English learning activities should be an essential component of the formal English instruction in TNUE.

The study is of personal attempts in helping students to get access to an extended English learning atmosphere together with their in-class English learning. Nevertheless, it would be unsustainable and have limited impact on students' learning if it cannot be made a systematic conduct practice. Therefore, the University should be aware and have strategic plans for supporting students in increasing opportunities for English access in and outside the language classroom. Students' ideas and suggestions should also be reflected in such designs to attract more students and to make the activities address their needs and commands in English learning. In addition to the activities like competitions, talkshows, and gameshows, it is advisable to consider Myers' (1990), Sam's (1990) and Chisman and Crandall's (2007) suggested activities such as simulation activities, reflective activities and community immersion programs to sustain students' engagement in real-life use of the target language.

CONCLUSIONS

The present research is another case study to illustrate a prevalent argument in experiential learning theory that establishing a connection between in-class learning and out-of-class applications can maximize learning effectiveness (Nunan, 2014). It is also congruent with previous studies in the perspective that in-class learning is inadequate for students' English and creating and involving students in real life activities outside the classroom enlarges students' learning environment and thus benefits their learning (Xiao & Luo, 2009; Guo, 2011). These mentioned studies tend to examine out-of-class English learning activities as students' individual preferences including listening and reading in English receptively and taking opportunities to use English to communicate with other learners and in the context of real world tasks. These opportunities for English exposure are available in the learners' community, very often outside the campus and of individuals' choices.

However, driven by the fact that the opportunity for English learning outside school campus is rather restricted, the present study has attempted to provide extensional out-of-class activities for English learning in TNUE, whose location is in a non-native community, giving students additional exposure to English use in an authentic, stress-free environment within university campus. Findings have revealed that this series of English activities outside the classroom are generally appreciated by TNUE's non-English majors for their successfulness, usefulness and contribution to students' English learning. Though they have demonstrated different level of involvement and preferences, the majority of learners have recognized the significant contribution of those activities to the English environment in the university; as a consequence, they expect the continuation of these activities at TNUE. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that students have not mentioned similar conduct of the activities, suggesting the need for the variations of the activities to increase students' engagement during the implementation.

In this research, the term "building English environment" is understood as the creating and providing additional out-of-class English learning for the students, which may exclude other aspects of learning environment in its broad sense. Therefore, it is advisable that a more all-inclusive study on this topic be conducted, further explored and better discussed in different perspectives to better inform the administrators and EFL educators at TNUE in particular and other institutions in general of more coherent and comprehensive English education policies and strategies to extend students' learning beyond the classroom doors.

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