



**Out-of-class English Learning of PSU Students, Hat Yai Campus**

**Boyu Chen**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Teaching English as an International Language**

**Prince of Songkla University**

**2019**

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**Thesis Title**            Out-of-class English Learning of PSU Students, Hat Yai Campus

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**Major Program**        Teaching English as an International Language

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I hereby certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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ชื่อวิทยานิพนธ์	การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนของนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัย สงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตหาดใหญ่
ผู้เขียน	นางสาวโบยู เฉิน
สาขาวิชา	การสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษานานาชาติ
ปีการศึกษา	2561

### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาระดับความถี่ของการฝึกฝนภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน ความชอบในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน และการรับรู้ประโยชน์และอุปสรรคหรือข้อกั่วงวลในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนของนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตหาดใหญ่ นักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 3 จำนวน 306 คน ตอบแบบสอบถามและผู้วิจัยสัมภาษณ์นักศึกษาจำนวน 16 คน โดยใช้การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ผลการวิจัยพบว่าความถี่โดยรวมของการฝึกฝนภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนของอยู่ในระดับ 'บางครั้ง' จากกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนจำนวน 24 รูปแบบ การฟังและการร้องเพลงภาษาอังกฤษเป็นกิจกรรมที่นักศึกษาทำบ่อยที่สุด นักศึกษาฝึกฝนภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนโดยใช้กิจกรรมแบบการนำตนเองเข้าไปมีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมตามความสนใจและกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองมากกว่ากิจกรรมการเรียนรู้แบบธรรมชาติ นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิจัยยังพบว่าระดับความพึงพอใจโดยรวมของนักศึกษาต่อการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนอยู่ในระดับ “ปานกลาง” การฟังและการร้องเพลงภาษาอังกฤษเป็นกิจกรรมที่นักศึกษาชอบมากที่สุด นักศึกษาชอบทำกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนแบบการนำตนเองเข้าไปมีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมตามความสนใจมากกว่าการทำกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้แบบธรรมชาติและการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง ผลการวิจัยยังพบว่า นักศึกษาคิดว่าการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนมีประโยชน์ในระดับมาก

โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งด้านการพัฒนาการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง การพัฒนาทักษะการฟังและการเพิ่มความสนใจในการเรียนรู้ นักศึกษาระบุว่าอุปสรรคหรือข้อกั่วงวลในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนอยู่ในระดับปานกลาง สิ่งที่เป็นอุปสรรคหรือข้อกั่วงวลมากที่สุด คือการต้องการความช่วยเหลือจากผู้อื่น การประเมินความก้าวหน้าในการเรียนรู้และการขาดสภาพแวดล้อมการเรียนรู้ที่ดี การวิจัยชี้ให้เห็นว่านักศึกษาควรได้รับการส่งเสริมให้ทำกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนที่หลากหลาย ในขณะที่เดียวกันอาจารย์ผู้สอนควรให้การสนับสนุนที่จำเป็นเพื่อช่วยให้นักศึกษาจัดการกับอุปสรรคหรือข้อกั่วงวลในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน

คำสำคัญ: การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน ผู้เรียนแบบพึ่งตนเอง การเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง

<b>Thesis Title</b>	Out-of-class English Learning of PSU Students, Hat Yai Campus
<b>Author</b>	Miss Boyu Chen
<b>Major Program</b>	Teaching English as an International Language
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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the frequency level of university students' out-of-class practice of English learning, students' preferences for out-of-class English learning and students' perceptions of benefits and difficulties of out-of-class English learning in a university in southern Thailand. Three hundred and six third-year students from 16 faculties completed a questionnaire and 16 students were interviewed by a means of semi-structured interview. The results showed that the overall frequency of students' practice of out-of-class English learning was at the 'sometimes' level. Among the 24 out-of-class English learning activities, listening to and singing English songs was the most frequently practiced by the students. Students liked to practice *self-directed naturalistic learning* and *self-instruction* category activities more than *naturalistic learning* category activities. Moreover, the results revealed that the overall students' preference level of out-of-class English learning was at the 'neutral' level. Listening to and singing English songs was the activity that students enjoyed the most. Students preferred out-of-class English learning activities in the *self-directed naturalistic learning* category compared to those in the *naturalistic learning* and *self-instruction* categories. The findings also revealed that students perceived learning English outside the classroom as beneficial, especially in developing autonomous learning, practicing listening skills and increasing learning



interest. Furthermore, the findings showed that students stated the difficulties they faced in out-of-class English learning were at the ‘moderate’ level. Students indicated that the difficulties they faced the most were needing help from others, assessing learning progress and lacking a good learning environment. The study suggests that students should be encouraged to engage in different kinds of out-of-class English learning activities. Meanwhile, teachers should provide necessary support to help students overcome the difficulties they faced when conducting out-of-class English learning.

**Key words:** Out-of-class English learning, autonomous learner, self-directed learning

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Boyu Chen

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## LIST OF PAPERS

This thesis is based on the following papers:

Chen, B., & Intharaksa, U. (2018). How do Thai University students prefer out-of-class English learning. *Proceedings of 8<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences on 29-30 November 2018*, Phuket: Prince of Songkla University, 113-120.

Chen, B., & Intharaksa, U. (2018). Benefits and Difficulties of Out-of-class English Learning: A Thai University. Manuscript submitted for publication.

# Certificate



This certificate is awarded to  
*Boyu Chen & Usa Intharaksa*

for paper entitled  
*How Do Thai University Students Prefer Out-of-class English Learning?*

presented in  
8<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences  
30 November 2018  
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Organized by



In Cooperate with



Assistant Professor Dr. Srirath Gohwong  
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**LETTER OF SUBMISSION**

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Subject: [JLLS] Submission Acknowledgement

Miss Boyu Chen:

Thank you for submitting the manuscript, "Benefits of and difficulties of out-of-class English learning: A Thai university" to Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies. With the online journal management system that we are using, you will be able to track its progress through the editorial process by logging in to the journal web site:

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century highlights learner-centered rather than teacher-centered approaches and the need for learner autonomy is recognized (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001 cited in Eaton, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2012). Learner autonomy is typically defined as ‘the ability to take charge of one’s own learning’ (Holec, 1981). Rubin (1975) describes that the autonomous learners search for opportunities to learn language outside the classroom. They could take charge of their own learning, accept full responsibility for the learning process and develop metacognitive strategy that enable them to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning (Little, 2006; Pearson, 2004).

Out-of-class learning is classified as a mode of autonomy beyond the classroom (Benson, 2007). With regard to learning outside the classroom, out-of-class language learning refers to learner-initiated activities in the target language outside the classroom such as listening to the radio, reading novels and reading newspapers (Benson, 2013; Pickard, 1996). Benson (2013) classifies out-of-class learning into three categories: *Self-instruction*, *Naturalistic learning* and *Self-directed naturalistic learning*. *Self-instruction* refers to learning activities in which learners find resources to practice the target language without interacting with others. *Naturalistic learning* means language activities in which learners have direct communication with target language users. *Self-directed naturalistic learning* implies that learners engage in activities outside the classroom for interest or pleasure.

Considering benefits of out-of-class learning, engaging in out-of-class learning leads to the development of autonomy (Hyland,2004). Moreover, according to Benson and Reinders (2011), it is convenient and flexible for learners to engage in out-of-class learning and learners can manage their time, place and mode of learning to practice language. Cheng (2015) mentioned that successful learners regarded out-of-class learning as a part of daily life. In addition, out-of-class learning has been examined to be positively associated with language gains in terms of oral proficiency

and vocabulary knowledge (Chusanachoti, 2009; Sundqvist, 2009). Out-of-class learning could also increase learners' motivation for language learning (Cheng, 2015; Wu, 2012).

Despite the benefits of out-of-class language learning, there could be difficulties of learning outside the classroom such as personal, material or strategy difficulties (Chan, 2011). Bailly (2011) identified that some students faced problems relating to selecting learning resources and monitoring learning process when engaging in out-of-class language learning. In addition, Little (2009) stated that there were two concerns of out-of-class learning activities: an inadequate language learning environment and lack of knowledge about how to do out-of-class learning.

As discussed above, out-of-class learning significantly affects learners' language learning. Out-of-class English learning is necessary and students should be encouraged to do out-of-class learning (Benson & Reinders, 2011). In Thailand, reforming the learning process through the 'student-centered' approach is one of the aims of educational reforms (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005 cited in Kirkpatrick, 2012). Student-centered learning is one of the cornerstones of current education policy which can be defined as the concept of allowing students to take more control of their own learning and emphasizing active learning (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Prince of Songkla University (PSU), a university in the south of Thailand attaches importance to autonomous and student-centered learning (PSU Philosophy, 2018). It provides students with English learning centers to cultivate their autonomous learning and encourages them to learn English actively inside and outside the classroom.

Some research on self-access learning has been conducted in PSU. For example, Aksornjarung (2002) investigated students' English autonomous learning in the self-access learning center and the results revealed that students did not pay much attention in their self-learning in the self-access center for different reasons. Sukseemuang (2009) explored PSU students' preferences for self-directed and

traditional teacher-directed classroom settings and the results showed that students favored traditional courses which teachers could help them to learn. The current situation of out-of-class English learning as a means of promoting PSU students' autonomy, however, has not been explored. Therefore, it would be beneficial to take the first step in investigating students' out-of-class English learning.

This study focused on PSU students' frequency of practice and preference of out-of-class English learning as well as their perceptions of benefits and difficulties of out-of-class English learning. It included students from all the faculties located at Hat Yai campus. The findings of the study would provide detailed information, based on which to formulate guidelines for those who are responsible for managing English learning. The findings of the study would also provide some new insights of learning English beyond the classroom and might have implications for parties concerned who guide university students to conduct English learning outside the classroom. With these perspectives, they might provide better support to help students.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of this study was to explore out-of-class English learning activities that PSU students engaged in and students' preference of out-of-class English learning activities. It also aimed at investigating PSU students' perceptions of benefits and difficulties of out-of-class English learning. This study addressed the following four research questions:

1. What kinds of out-of-class English learning activities do PSU students practice?
2. What out-of-class English learning activities are preferred by PSU

students?

3. What are PSU students' perceptions of the benefits of out-of-class English learning?

4. What are PSU students' perceptions of the difficulties involved in out-of-class English learning?

### 3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The key terms used in this study will be defined as follows:

**Out-of-class English learning** refers to any kind of English learning activities taking place outside of the classroom by the learners. The activities are classified into three categories including *Self-instruction*, *Naturalistic learning* and *Self-directed naturalist learning* (Benson, 2013).

**Benefits** are defined as strengths and advantages from students' perceptions of engaging in out-of-class English learning.

**Difficulties** refer to problems, concerns and worries about out-of-class English learning from students' perceptions.

### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is divided into three parts.

#### 4.1 Learner autonomy

Learner autonomy has been established in language teaching and learning for years (Benson, 2007). According to Little (1991), autonomy is 'a capacity

for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action'. Typically, learner autonomy is defined as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Holec, 1981). He explained that an autonomous learner should be able to set objectives, define contents, choose methods, monitor the procedures and evaluate the learning outcome. Similarly, according to Benson (2013), learner autonomy is defined as the learners' capacity to control their own learning. He stated that autonomous learners could be capable of setting learning goals, deciding learning context, finding out the strong and weak points of learning and evaluating the outcome of learning.

#### **4.2 Out-of-class language learning**

The term "out-of-class language learning" is defined by different scholars (Bailly, 2011; Benson, 2013; Pickard, 1996; Rubin, 1975). Rubin (1975) identified out-of-class language learning as one of the characteristics of good language learners who looked for opportunities to practice language through different activities such as watching movies at the cinema and taking part in other cultural events. Packard (1996) pointed out that out-of-class language learning refers to learner-initiated activities for the target language outside classroom such as listening to the radio, reading newspapers and reading novels. Bailly (2011) classified the out-of-class learning activities of teenager language learners into two types. The first type is "serious" activities, which involving conventional learning techniques that learners learned at school, such as doing grammar and vocabulary exercise. The second type, "lighter" activities are any learning activities connected to learners' lives and environment, for example, watching television and listening to songs.

According to Benson (2013), out-of-class language learning is any kind of learning activities occurring outside the classroom. He classifies out-of-class learning into three categories: *Self-instruction*, *Naturalistic learning* and *Self-directed naturalistic learning*.

*Self-instruction* refers to learning activities that learners look for resources to practice target language by themselves and without interaction with others. Learners learn by themselves using various ways to increase language proficiency level. These activities typically include practicing pronunciation, learning vocabulary and grammar, practicing reading comprehension and doing writing exercises.

*Naturalistic learning* refers to language activities that learners can have a direct communication with target language users. These are also involuntary activities that learners engage in social activities by interacting with target language. In naturalistic learning, learners mainly make interaction with others through target language speaking and target language text, such as speaking with foreigners, talking to language teachers and talking to friends.

*Self-directed naturalistic learning* relates to activities learners engaging in for interest or pleasure and also with the intention of target language learning. Learners create naturalistic learning environment for themselves to learn language. Listening to songs, reading newspaper and novels, watching English movies are examples of self-directed naturalistic learning activities.

#### **4.2.1 Benefits of out-of-class language learning**

The benefits of out-of-class English learning are discussed in three aspects. First, in relation to autonomous learning, out-of-class language learning can help learners develop autonomous learning ability and cultivate learner autonomy awareness (Bayat, 2011; Chan, 2011; Guo, 2011; Hyland, 2004; Little, 2006; Pearson, 2004). Moreover, learners who liked to engage in out-of-class English learning activities had more positive beliefs and increased sense of confidence (Cheng, 2015; Lai, Zhu & Guo, 2015; Wu, 2012). Furthermore, out-of-class English learning is able to help students pay more attention to English usage in real life, increase their English

ability, provide opportunities for learners by increasing linguistic and communicative ability, improve the accuracy and fluency of English as well as develop the use of communication strategies (Cheng, 2015; Chusanachoti, 2009; Coskun, 2016; Guo, 2011; Richards, 2015; Sundqvist, 2009).

#### **4.2.2 Difficulties in out-of-class language learning**

The difficulties involved in out-of-class language learning have been described by a number of scholars (Bailly, 2011; Benson and Reinders, 2011; Cheng, 2015; Ferdous, 2013; Guo, 2011; Hyland, 2004; Little, 2009; Nunan, 2016; Pearson, 2004). Firstly, students have difficulty in conducting out-of-class language learning because of insufficient knowledge for selecting resources matching their learning style and improper instruction from teachers (Bailly, 2011; Benson & Reinders, 2011). Secondly, out-of-class learning is time-consuming and learners tend to devote inadequate time to learning outside the classroom (Nunan, 2016; Pearson, 2004). Moreover, there is lack of an adequate English environment outside the classroom and students may not find the opportunity to speak English (Ferdous, 2013; Hyland, 2004; Little, 2009). In relation to affective factors, students had little motivation to conduct out-of-class English learning activities because that was not part of the formal curriculum (Cheng, 2015; Guo, 2011). In addition, students may experience the negative feeling such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes when participating in out-of-class English learning activities, in which language anxiety might not be easily overcome (Ferdous, 2013; Pearson, 2004; Wu, 2012).

#### **4.3 Related empirical studies on out-of-class English learning**

Many studies have been conducted related to out-of-class English learning in EFL contexts.

In Taiwan, Shen, Tseng, Kuo, Su and Chen (2005) explored EFL college students' out-of-class English learning activities, learning difficulties and the

relationship between grades, gender, study time and students' learning activities. Using a quantitative approach, 316 EFL college students completed questionnaires. The results showed that writing English e-mails, watching English movies and learning online were the most popular learning activities outside the classroom. Students who had high scores of entrance examination preferred to spend more time doing out-of-class learning. But students' gender, study time and learning activities outside classroom were not related to out-of-class English learning. Moreover, vocabulary limitation was the major difficulty in out-of-class language learning.

Wu (2012) conducted a research to investigate the relationship between out-of-class English learning and the beliefs in out-of-class language learning. Three hundred and twenty-four learners undertaking vocational education in Hong Kong were asked to complete questionnaires. The findings revealed that most students liked to engage in self-directed naturalistic learning activities such as watching movies and television, but naturalistic language learning like talking with native speakers face to face was seldom done by students.

Lai, Zhu and Gong (2015) studied the quality of out-of-class English learning by 82 Chinese middle school students, who completed a questionnaire. The findings showed that the more participants conducted varied out-of-class English learning activities, the more they enjoyed learning English and had greater confidence in learning English. The study found that the three factors that most affected students' out-of-class English learning were their grades, their confidence and their enjoyment of the activities. The study suggested that teachers should help students to employ out-of-class learning activities to practice English and increase students' confidence.

Sun (2016) investigated out-of-class English learning activities of 248 vocational education learners at Kampong Chheuteal high school in Cambodia, and examined the differences in the implementation of out-of-class English learning activities across family income, gender, English ability level, academic-year level and



different majors by using the questionnaire. The results showed students' practice of out-of-class English learning at a low level and students preferred to engage in self-instruction activities. The results also showed that there were significant differences in the practice of out-of-class English learning activities across English ability level and different majors. However, there were no statistically significant differences across family income, gender and academic-year level.

Using a qualitative approach, Chusanachoti (2009) explored how learners engaged in English learning activities outside the classrooms to learn and practice English. The participants of the study were four third-year female undergraduates majoring in English at a Thai university. The results of the study showed that the participants routinely engaged in out-of-class activities including searching the Internet, reading poster and watching movies. In addition, the findings revealed that out-of-class English activities improved learners' knowledge and proficiency of vocabulary, sentence structure, and pronunciation. The study concluded that out-of-class English activities were necessary and beneficial for language learning.

Using a mixed method approach, Cheng (2015) investigated EFL students' experiences and perceptions towards out-of-class English learning in Taiwan. 164 EFL English major students from one vocational university completed questionnaires. Eight successful English learners were interviewed to get a deep understanding about their experiences and opinions of out-of-class English learning. The findings showed that out-of-class English learning was useful and necessary for students. The students preferred to engage in listening and reading activities outside of the classroom and the findings revealed that successful language learners spent more time in conducting out-of-class learning than the average language learners.

Tokan (2016) investigated out-of-class English learning activities that 148 Indonesian eighth-grade high school students engaged in with a five-point Likert

scale questionnaire and interview. The results showed that most students were frequently engaged in self-directed learning activities such as listening to songs. It is also found that students liked to engaged in self-instruction activities if the activities related to school assignments. This study suggests that teachers should pay more attention to students' out-of-class English learning and provide support to help students.

Coskun (2016) conducted a study in Turkey to investigate benefits of out-of-class speaking activities for EFL learners. Twenty-one first-year English major students from a university conducted six-week speaking activities outside the classroom. The researcher monitored and interviewed all participants to find out the benefits of out-of-class speaking activities during the six-week period. The results showed that students took part in role-playing activity because it could improve students' speaking skills and increased vocabulary. Besides, students joined in continuous story activity because it could improve creativity and English fluency. The study suggested that out-of-class speaking activities were useful for language learning.

From the above review, previous studies have mainly focused on learners engaging in various kinds of out-of-class English learning activities, the quality of out-of-class English learning, learners' perceptions, experiences and learning factors affecting out-of-class English learning. Those studies were conducted in different EFL contexts, including Taiwan context (Cheng, 2015; Shen, et al 2005), Hong Kong context (Wu, 2012), mainland China context (Lai, et al, 2015), Thai context (Chusanachoti, 2009), Cambodia context (Sun, 2016), Indonesia context (Tokan, 2016) as well as Turkey context (Coskun, 2016). The current study aimed to investigate the Thai university students' practice and preference of out-of-class English learning and the benefits of out-of-class English learning and the difficulties that students faced. The study was served to fill a gap in

the literature by focusing on the PSU students' practice, preference and perception of benefits and difficulties of out-of-class English learning.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Population and participants

The population of this study was 3,672 third-year students studying in 16 faculties in the second semester of the Academic year 2017 in Prince of Songkla University, Thailand. Using the sampling technique by Krejcie & Morgan (1970), 348 third-year students, aged 21-22, were randomly selected for this study. Table 1 shows the detailed information of the participants.

**Table 1.** The population and sample size (N=348)

Faculty	Population	Sample size
1. Agro-Industry	106	10
2. Dentistry	48	4
3. Economics	136	13
4. Engineering	511	48
5. International College	34	3
6. Law	117	11
7. Liberal Arts	242	23
8. Management Sciences	780	74
9. Medicine	238	23
10. Medical Technology	51	5
11. Natural Resources	283	27
12. Nursing	217	21
13. Pharmaceutical	129	12
14. Science	660	63
15. Traditional Thai	95	9
16. Veterinary Sciences	34	3
Total number	3,672	348

## 5.2 Instruments

In this study, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used as the research instruments.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections, the first section collected students' general background information including gender, age and faculty as well as overseas experience.

The second section was related to out-of-class English learning activities. There were 25 items consisting of 24 five-point Likert scale items and one open-ended question. Benson's framework (2013) which classifies out-of-class English learning into three categories: *self-instruction*, *naturalistic learning* and *self-directed naturalistic learning* was used as the basis of constructing the items in the questionnaire. Of the 24 closed items, items 1-9 referred to the first category, *self-instruction*, items 10-16 were related to the second category, *naturalistic learning*, and items 17-24 dealt with the last category, *self-directed naturalistic learning*. Some of the items were adapted from questionnaires used by Cheng (2015) and Sum (2016). Each item used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*) to and 1 (*strongly dislike*) to 5 (*strongly like*) to measure the frequency of practice which students engaged in specific out-of-class English learning activities and students' preference of these out-of-class English learning activities, respectively.

The third section comprised 16 items concerning students' perceptions of the benefits of out-of-class English learning and 15 items in relation to students' perceptions of difficulties entailed in and their concerns relating to out-of-class English learning. A 5-point Likert scale consisting of 5 = *Strongly agree*, 4 = *Agree*, 3 = *uncertain*, 2 = *Disagree*, 1 = *Strongly disagree* was used to measure the students' level of benefits/difficulties with the statements in the items, which were adapted from Bailly (2011), Benson and Reinders (2011), Cheng (2015) and Hyland (2004).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit more information. The information from the semi-structured interviews was used to discuss and support the findings from the questionnaires. It helped the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the university students' English learning outside the classroom.

### 5.3 Validity and reliability

The questionnaire was created in English and translated into Thai with the help of a translator. Three experts in this field reviewed its content validity using an item-objective congruence (IOC) index. The IOC index was 0.92, showing that the questionnaire had satisfactory validity. The Thai questionnaire was piloted with 35 third-year PSU students who were not the participants in the study. The Cronbach's Alpha index was performed to examine the reliability of the questionnaire and the results were shown in Table 2. This indicated that the items in the questionnaire were acceptable.

**Table 2.** Reliability results of the questionnaire items

Constructs	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Practice	24	.931
Preference	24	.944
Perceptions of benefits	16	.910
Perceptions of difficulties	15	.861
Overall	79	.931

### 5.4 Data collection and analysis

The data collection was conducted during January and February, 2018. Three hundred and six students fully completed the questionnaires and the overall response rate to the questionnaire was 87.93%. After that, sixteen participants, one student from each faculty, participated in the interviews which were conducted in Thai and the content of which were transcribed and translated into English by a translator.

For the analysis of the data from the questionnaires, descriptive statistics, namely mean score, standard deviation, were used. The interpretation of the mean values of the frequency of practice were as follows: 4.21-5.0 was classified as *always practiced*, 3.41-4.20 as *often practiced*, 2.61-3.40 as *sometimes practiced*, 1.81-2.60 as *rarely practiced*, and 1.00-1.80 as *never practiced*.

The interpretation of the mean scores of the level of preference were as follows: 4.21-5.0 was classified as *strongly like*, 3.4-4.20 as *like*, 2.61-3.40 as *neutral*, 1.81-2.60 as *dislike*, and 1.00-1.80 as *strongly dislike*.

The mean scores for level of benefits and difficulties/concerns were interpreted as follows: 4.21-5.00 as *very high*, 3.41-4.20 as *high*, 2.61-3.40 as *moderate*, 1.81-2.60 as *low* and 1.00-1.80 as *very low*.

The semi-structured interviews lasted between 10 and 15 minutes and the data gained through interview was analyzed according to the content analysis.

## **6. FINDINGDS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The findings of this study are organized into four parts based on the research questions as follows.

### **6.1 Students' practice of out-of-class English learning**

Table 3 shows the mean scores and standard deviations based on the participants' responses to the 24 closed items related to out-of-class English learning activities.

**Table 3.** Frequency level of students' practice of out-of-class English learning activities

No.	Out-of-class English learning activities	Mean	S.D	Frequency of practice
<b>Self-directed naturalistic learning</b>				
18	Listening to and singing English songs	3.76	1.12	Often
17	Watching English movies/dramas/series	3.58	1.16	Often
23	Reading messages or comments written in English on social media	3.38	1.06	Sometimes
21	Listening to the news/videos in English on social media	3.11	1.12	Sometimes
22	Writing statuses, descriptions of pictures and giving comments in English on social media	2.85	1.12	Sometimes
19	Reading English magazines/novels/short stories	2.64	1.07	Sometimes
20	Reading online news in English	2.40	1.01	Rarely
24	Joining an English-speaking club/English camp	2.08	1.05	Rarely
	Average	2.98	.71	Sometimes
<b>Self-instruction</b>				
7	Surfing English websites to find information	3.31	1.06	Sometimes
3	Watching English learning videos on YouTube	3.19	1.04	Sometimes
5	Learning English vocabulary using online dictionaries	3.05	1.20	Sometimes
8	Practicing English speaking through Apps in mobile phones/iPads/YouTube	2.94	1.13	Sometimes
6	Doing English homework/exercises before coming to class	2.61	1.04	Sometimes
1	Reading English test-preparation books	2.54	.85	Rarely
9	Learning English through the Tell Me More Program	2.40	1.08	Rarely
2	Doing online English exercises	2.37	.97	Rarely
4	Learning English vocabulary using printed dictionaries	2.03	.94	Rarely
	Average	2.72	.58	Sometimes
<b>Naturalistic learning</b>				
14	Reading signs, slogans, proverbs, advertisements, posters and product labels written in English	3.56	.98	Often
16	Listening to people speaking in English around me	3.12	1.02	Sometimes
10	Talking to foreigners/international students in English	2.47	1.11	Rarely
15	Writing/texting to friends/teachers/family in English	2.28	1.05	Rarely
11	Talking to Thai friends in English	2.20	1.06	Rarely
12	Talking to teachers in English after class	2.08	1.05	Rarely
13	Joining Internet discussions in English (blogs/forums)	1.81	.95	Rarely
	Average	2.05	.73	Rarely
	Overall average	2.74	.56	Sometimes

The results revealed the frequency of practice among three categories of out-of-class learning activities, namely *self-instruction*, *naturalistic learning* and *self-directed naturalistic learning*. The average mean score for all the 24 items was 2.74 (SD = .56), which showed that students' overall frequency of practicing was in the 'sometimes' range. This corresponded with the findings of Pearson (2004) and Sum (2016) who found that the students do not sufficiently take the initiative to practice various kinds of out-of-class English learning activities.

Among three categories, *self-directed naturalistic learning* obtained the highest score ( $\bar{x} = 2.98$ ; SD = .71) and *self-instruction* was ranked second ( $\bar{x} = 2.72$ ; SD = .58). These two categories of activities were practiced by the students at the 'sometimes' level, while *naturalistic learning* was the least practiced category and was in the range of 'rarely' ( $\bar{x} = 2.05$ ; SD = .73). These findings indicated that the students preferred to practice *self-directed naturalistic learning* and *self-instruction* activities rather than *naturalistic learning* activities. This finding is in line with Tokan's study (2016) which found that high school students practiced self-directed naturalistic learning activities outside the classroom the most.

Out of the 24 items, the highest mean score was item 18 '*Listening to and singing English songs*' ( $\bar{x} = 3.76$ ; SD = 1.12). It is in line with the previous research conducted by Cheng (2015), who found that listening to English songs was the most popular activity among vocational university students in Taiwan when they engaged in out-of-class English learning activities. Moreover, the second highest rated activity was item 17 '*Watching English movies/dramas/series*' ( $\bar{x} = 3.58$ ; SD = 1.16). These two most frequently practiced English activities outside the classroom belong to the *self-directed naturalistic learning* category, which students undertake for entertainment or pleasure facilitating language learning (Coskun, 2016). From the interviews, three students stated that they liked learning English outside the classroom, which made their learning more fun and enjoyable. Lai *et al* (2015) identified that



enjoyment is one of the main factors that influences students' engagement in out-of-class English learning.

On the other hand, item 13 '*Joining Internet discussions in English (blogs/forums)*' ( $\bar{x} = 1.81$ ;  $SD = .95$ ), belonging to *naturalistic learning* category got the lowest mean score. Similarly, in this category, *talking to foreigners* (item 10), *talking to Thai friends in English* (item 11) and *talking to teachers in English* (item 12), which mainly emphasizes speaking ability, were also found to be the least practiced by students and at the level of *rarely*. One student explained, "It is difficult to actually communicate with foreigners, which includes being able to listen and to pull out the right words." Another student added, "I have little chance of practice my speaking skills." This finding was consistent with Hyland's (2004) study which revealed that Hong Kong students did not like to seek opportunities to practice their speaking ability when engaging in out-of-class English learning owing to their personal identity, conceptions of the language used and the speaking environment.

The second lowest mean score was item 4 '*Learning English vocabulary using printed dictionaries*' ( $\bar{x} = 2.03$ ;  $SD = .94$ ), belonging to *self-instruction* categories. Interestingly, in *self-instruction* category, the three activities that students liked to practice were *surfing English websites* (item 7), *watching videos on YouTube* (item 3) and *using online dictionaries* (item 5), which indicated that the majority of the activities that students sometimes practiced outside the classroom in this category were technological resources such as websites, the Internet and mobile phones. One possible explanation for this might be related to technology which plays an important role in students' English learning outside the classroom (Ferdous, 2013). According to Sarica and Cavus (2009), web-based technologies and Internet connections provide various possibilities for students in English learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The responses from the interview support this finding when two students stated, "The learning resources that I use are mobile phone

applications” and “I prefer to learn English using the Internet such as Google, online music and online movies.” Eaton (2010) stressed that technologies do not only demonstrate student learning but also facilitate student learning.

## **6.2 Students’ preference of out-of-class English learning**

Table 4 summarizes the mean scores and standard deviations of students’ level of preference of the 24 out-of-class English learning activities.

**Table 4.** Students' preference of out-of-class English learning activities

No.	Out-of-class English learning activities	Mean	S.D	Frequency of practice
<b>Self-directed naturalistic learning</b>				
18	Listening to and singing English songs	3.95	1.05	Like
17	Watching English movies/dramas/series	3.87	1.05	Like
23	Reading messages or comments written in English on social media	3.40	1.05	Neutral
21	Listening to the news/videos in English on social media	3.30	1.04	Neutral
22	Writing statuses, descriptions of pictures and giving comments in English on social media	3.18	1.10	Neutral
19	Reading English magazines/novels/short stories	3.14	1.07	Neutral
20	Reading online news in English	2.83	1.06	Neutral
24	Joining an English-speaking club/English camp	2.71	1.11	Neutral
Average		3.30	.62	Neutral
<b>Naturalistic learning</b>				
14	Reading signs, slogans, proverbs, advertisements, posters and product labels written in English	3.55	1.00	Like
16	Listening to people speaking in English around me	3.40	1.12	Neutral
10	Talking to foreigners/international students in English	3.17	1.18	Neutral
11	Talking to Thai friends in English	2.87	1.12	Neutral
15	Writing/texting to friends/teachers/family in English	2.85	1.05	Neutral
12	Talking to teachers in English after class	2.75	1.14	Neutral
13	Joining Internet discussions in English (blogs/forums)	2.42	1.06	Dislike
Average		3.00	.81	Neutral
<b>Self-instruction</b>				
3	Watching English learning videos on YouTube	3.62	.98	Like
8	Practicing English speaking through Apps in mobile phones/iPads/YouTube	3.30	1.08	Neutral
7	Surfing English websites to find information	3.24	1.04	Neutral
5	Learning English vocabulary using online dictionaries	3.11	1.08	Neutral
2	Doing online English exercises	2.96	.96	Neutral
1	Reading English test-preparation books	2.93	.90	Neutral
6	Doing English homework/exercises before coming to class	2.80	.95	Neutral
9	Learning English through the Tell Me More Program	2.48	1.06	Dislike
4	Learning English vocabulary using printed dictionaries	2.46	1.05	Dislike
Average		2.99	.62	Neutral
Overall average		3.10	.62	Neutral

As Table 4 showed, overall, the result revealed that the average students' preference level of the 24 out-of-class English learning activities was in the range of *neutral* ( $\bar{x} = 3.10$ ;  $SD = .62$ ). It was also found that the average mean score of each category was in the *neutral* level. Among three categories, the *self-directed naturalistic learning* category obtained the highest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 3.30$ ;  $SD = .76$ ), followed by the *naturalistic learning* category ( $\bar{x} = 3.00$ ;  $SD = .81$ ), and the *self-instruction* category ( $\bar{x} = 2.99$ ;  $SD = .62$ ) respectively. However, the mean score of the *naturalistic learning* and *self-instruction* category was just slightly different showing that students' degree of preference for these two categories was almost equal. These findings indicated that PSU students preferred out-of-class English learning activities under the *self-directed naturalistic learning* category rather than the activities under the *naturalistic learning* and *self-instruction* categories.

Among the 24 items, only four items (items 18, 17, 3 and 14) were rated at the preference level of *like*. The remaining 17 items (items 23, 16, 21, 8, 7, 22, 10, 19, 5, 2, 1, 11, 15, 20, 6, 12, 24) were rated at the preference level of *neutral* while three items (items 9, 4 and 13) were rated at the preference level of *dislike*. These findings were in line with Wu's study (2012), which found that students preferred different kinds of out-of-class English learning activities according to their needs and interests.

The two items with the highest mean score were item 18 '*Listening to and singing English songs*' ( $\bar{x} = 3.95$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ) and item 17 '*Watching English movies/dramas/series*' ( $\bar{x} = 3.87$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ), belonging to the *self-directed naturalistic learning* category. These indicated that out-of-class English learning activities focusing on fun and pleasure were typically preferred by the students. This is in line with the finding shown in Table 3, which revealed that these two activities were most frequently practiced by PSU students outside the classroom. One student identified, "I love listening to music and watching movies because they are

interesting.” This finding confirms the research results of Cheng (2015) and Tokan (2016) that students’ two favorite out-of-class learning activities are listening to English songs and watching movies.

On the contrary, Item 13 ‘*Joining Internet discussions in English (blogs/forums)*’ belonging to the *naturalistic learning* category obtained the lowest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 2.42$ ;  $SD = 1.06$ ) meaning that students disliked this activity. Item 4 ‘*Learning English vocabulary using printed dictionaries*’ in the *self-instruction* category got the second lowest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 2.46$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ). As one student put it in the interview, “If I am not sure how a particular word is pronounced, I will consult the online dictionary.” Students stated that they preferred to learn English using online resources. These findings are in consistent with those shown in Table 3, two activities the least practiced by students.

### 6.3 Students perceptions of the benefits of Out-of-class English learning

**Table 5.** Students' perceptions of benefits of out-of-class English learning

No.	Benefits	Mean	S.D	Level of benefits
Out-of-class English learning...				
1	helps me develop autonomous learning ability.	4.18	.75	High
3	helps me improve my listening skills.	4.15	.77	High
2	helps me increase my interest in learning English.	4.11	.78	High
8	helps me acquire more vocabulary.	4.09	.81	High
4	helps me improve my speaking skills and communication ability.	4.04	.82	High
14	gives me exposure to a variety of out-of-class English learning resources and materials.	3.99	.83	High
5	helps me improve my reading skills.	3.98	.87	High
16	is challenging, interesting and different from learning in class.	3.91	.82	High
15	is flexible and convenient to engage in.	3.90	.86	High
13	makes me more active in English learning.	3.88	.88	High
12	helps me get more world knowledge of, for instance, arts, culture and history etc.	3.80	.95	High
9	helps me prepare better before going to an English class.	3.74	.89	High
11	helps me develop strategies for learning English.	3.71	.92	High
6	helps me improve my writing skills.	3.56	.94	High
7	helps me increase my grammar knowledge.	3.40	.92	Moderate
10	helps me get English-related certificates.	3.09	1.05	Moderate
Average		3.85	.63	High

Table 5 shows that the average students' perceptions of the benefits of out-of-class English learning was at the *high* level ( $\bar{x} = 3.85$ ,  $SD = .63$ ) indicating that the students agreed that out-of-class English learning is beneficial. Among the 16

items, 14 items were scored at the *high* level by the students with only 2 items at the *moderate* level. This finding was consistent with that of Cheng (2015), which indicated that out-of-class English learning was beneficial and necessary for students.

According to the mean scores shown in Table 5, item 1 ‘*Out-of-class English learning helps me develop autonomous learning ability*’ ( $\bar{x} = 4.18$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) received the highest mean score. One student stated, “Out-of-class learning forces me automatically to do something to improve my language skills since it is relevant to my needs and interest.” This finding is supported by the studies of Bayat (2011), Chan (2011) and Hyland (2004), which emphasized that engaging in out-of-class learning leads to the development of autonomous learning. Language learning in daily life is the basis of exercising autonomy, but conducting out-of-class learning requires some degree of autonomy, which varies from person to person (Benson, 2011). Moreover, according to Lai, Zhu and Guo (2015), learners with good learner autonomy had a more intense belief in seeking opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.

Item 3 ‘*Out-of-class English learning helps me improve my listening skills*’ ( $\bar{x} = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) was ranked the second highest. One explanation for this is that listening-related activities such as listening to English songs are easier to conduct outside the classroom. This is consistent with the findings shown at Table 3 and Table 4, which revealed that listening to English songs was the most practiced by PSU students. Based on the interviews, ten students agreed that out-of-class English learning gives them more opportunity to practice their listening skills. One student explained, “My listening skills improved, especially my ability to pronounce certain words. There are some words I used to mispronounce but after learning from native English speakers, I have never made the same mistake again.” The finding of this study confirms the results of those previous research relating to out-of-class English learning activities that listening to English songs is the most popular learning activity (Cheng, 2015; Sun, 2016; Tokan, 2016).

Item 2 '*Out-of-class English learning helps me increase my interest in learning English*' ( $\bar{x} = 4.11$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) was ranked the third highest. As one student stated, "Learning outside the classroom makes me feel happy every time I do it. It's interesting. Sometimes, you meet good new people and friends." Another student added, "There is no pressure at all. I can choose whatever I want to learn, which makes my learning more effective and enjoyable." One explanation is that out-of-class English learning activities can be framed to incorporate learners' interests which can increase their learning opportunities outside the classroom (Cheng, 2015).

On the contrary, item 10 '*Out-of-class English learning helps me get English-related certificates*' ( $\bar{x} = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) received the lowest mean score. One possible explanation for this is that students focus on other purposes rather than getting certificates when engaging in out-of-class English learning. One student stated, "I engage in out-of-class English learning for pleasure and in order to improve myself." Similarly, Item 7, '*Out-of-class English learning helps me increase my grammar knowledge*' ( $\bar{x} = 3.40$ ,  $SD = .09$ ) and item 6, '*Out-of-class English learning helps me improve my writing skills*' ( $\bar{x} = 3.56$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) were ranked the second and third lowest. This might be because these productive learning activities are not easy to conduct in daily life. Shen, Tseng, Kuo, Su and Chen (2005) found that writing was the most difficult language skill for college students to develop outside the classroom. Chen and Yeh (2004) explained that learners had problems with vocabulary and grammar when writing and because of these difficulties, learners do not want to do writing activities outside the classroom. Additionally, students preferred to engage in receptive activities such as listening and reading rather than productive activities like writing (Hyland, 2004; Lai, Zhu & Gong, 2015).



#### 6.4 Students perceptions of difficulties in Out-of-class English learning

**Table 6.** Students' perceptions of difficulties of out-of-class English learning

No.	Difficulties	Mean	S.D	Level of difficulties
6	I need to engage in out-of-class English learning with teachers or peers' help.	3.38	1.01	Moderate
3	I am not sure how to assess my progress.	3.28	.98	Moderate
2	There is not a good English learning environment to engage in out-of-class English learning.	3.23	1.08	Moderate
15	I lack the vocabulary to engage in out-of-class English learning.	3.18	1.16	Moderate
5	I lack knowledge and guidance about how to engage in out-of-class English learning.	3.14	1.10	Moderate
1	I lack motivation to engage in out-of-class English learning.	3.11	1.07	Moderate
9	I don't have enough time to engage in out-of-class English learning.	3.09	1.12	Moderate
14	I lack the ability and experiences to tackle problems encountered when engaging in out-of-class English learning.	3.09	1.12	Moderate
8	It is difficult to sort out the information I need among a vast amount of information online.	3.03	1.08	Moderate
10	My English proficiency is not good enough to allow me to engage in out-of-class English learning	3.00	1.15	Moderate
12	Out-of-class English learning is more time consuming than learning in class.	2.99	1.06	Moderate
11	I have little interest in engaging in out-of-class English learning.	2.85	1.13	Moderate
7	I am not familiar with autonomous learning.	2.74	1.12	Moderate
13	In-class English learning is more important than out-of-class English learning.	2.73	1.07	Moderate
4	English self-access learning resources and materials are insufficient.	2.66	1.03	Moderate
Average		3.03	.75	Moderate

As shown in Table 6, the mean scores of students' perceptions of the difficulties relating to out-of-class English learning were at the *moderate* level ( $\bar{x} = 3.03$ ,  $SD = .75$ ). Although all the items was at the range of *moderate* level, among the 15 items, item 6 '*I need to engage in out-of-class English learning with teachers or peers' help*' obtained the highest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). This means that students might not practice out-of-class English learning activities independently. One possible explanation is that students might not know how to deal with out-of-class learning. The finding is in line with that of Cheng (2015), which showed that most unsuccessful learners needed to rely on their peers or teachers to guide their learning outside the classroom because out-of-class English learning was not as organized as that in classes. Based on the interview, three students stated that they liked to ask friends who had higher English proficiency for help. This might imply that students need to take more responsibility for their learning and adapt themselves to more self-directed learning in the university.

Item 3 '*I am not sure how to assess my progress.*' was ranked the second highest ( $\bar{x} = 3.28$ ,  $SD = .98$ ). One student stated, "I don't know my English proficiency level so I cannot find the right learning resources relevant to my needs." This is in accordance with the finding of Bailly' study (2011) which found that students did not know how to assess their learning and measure their progress without external help when learning outside the classroom. Item 2 '*There is not a good English learning environment to engage in out-of-class English learning.*' was ranked third highest ( $\bar{x} = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). One student claimed, "There is very little chance that I would actually interact and communicate with foreigners." This finding is partly in line with a study down by Ferdous (2013), which revealed that one of the obstacles that students face when using English outside the classroom is a lack of an adequate English environment.

For the 3 items with lowest means scores, item 4 '*English self-access learning resources and materials are insufficient*' ( $\bar{x} = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) obtained the lowest mean score, followed by item 13 '*In-class English learning is more important than out-of-class English learning*' ( $\bar{x} = 2.73$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) and item 7 '*I am not familiar with autonomous learning*' ( $\bar{x} = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ), respectively. This showed that these 3 items were the least difficulties that students faced. The results from the interview supported this finding. For item 4, one student explained in the interview: 'I can choose to learn from whatever type of media that attracts my attention, such as videos, articles and news.' Item 13 '*In-class English learning is more important than out-of-class English learning*' ( $\bar{x} = 2.73$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) obtained the second lowest mean score. One student stated, "Language used outside the classroom can be applied in real-life situations with more authentic examples of language use compared to those learned in class." Item 7 '*I am not familiar with autonomous learning*' ( $\bar{x} = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ), obtained the third lowest mean score. This finding was consistent with Item 1 '*Out-of-class English learning helps me develop autonomous learning ability*' shown in Table 5 as being perceived by the students as being of the greatest benefit. One student claimed "I am more aware that I need to take care of my own English learning." This finding also revealed that students realized the need for and the importance of autonomous learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Eaton, 2010).

Interestingly, while items 6, 3 and 2 were ranked as the three highest and items 4, 13 and 7 were ranked as the three lowest, all the 15 items relating difficulties/concerns were ranked at the *moderate* level. This may be because students' frequency of practice of out-of-class English learning activities was at *sometimes* level as reported in Table 3. Therefore, they may not experience many difficulties. Form the interview, one student explained, "To me, there are no difficulties or concerns at all. It depends on how and what I choose to learn." Another student mentioned, "Since doing several things at the university, such as learning in the classroom and doing group work, I feel exhausted and I have no time for actually

practicing the language.” Moreover, there were other difficulties not listed in the questionnaire including fear of making mistakes and shyness. One student stated, “The most difficult thing for me is that I am shy. For example, when I have questions about certain things, I tend to stay quiet instead of asking someone for clarification.” Language anxiety such as lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes were the common reasons making difficulties for students to learn English outside the classroom (Ferdous, 2013; Pearson, 2004).

## **7. CONCLUSION REMARKS**

### **7.1 Conclusion of the study**

This survey study was conducted using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings of the study revealed that overall the PSU students who responded to the questionnaires practiced out-of-class English learning at the level of ‘sometimes’. It also showed that students preferred to practice *self-directed naturalistic learning* and *self-instruction* category activities more than *naturalistic learning* category activities, which was the least practiced. Moreover, the findings revealed that overall PSU students’ preference level for out-of-class English learning was at the level of ‘neutral’. It also showed that *self-directed naturalistic learning* category activities obtained higher preference scores than *self-instruction* and *naturalistic learning* category activities. These findings indicated that that students tend to prefer activities which entail pleasure or enjoyment rather than practicing activities related to communicating with English users. Furthermore, the findings revealed that out-of-class English learning was perceived as being beneficial and useful especially in developing autonomous learning, practicing listening skills and increasing interest in learning. The findings also indicated that PSU students perceived needing help from teachers or peers, assessing learning progress and lacking a good learning environment as the most

difficult issues they faced.

## **7.2 Pedagogical implications**

The findings of the study provide an overview of students' practice, preference and perceptions of out-of-class English learning. The pedagogical implications can be drawn as follows.

Firstly, this study revealed that students' frequency of practicing out-of-class learning activities was at the 'sometimes' level. Autonomous learning is necessary for students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and autonomous learning needs to be developed in the life-long learning process. Therefore, students should be aware that English learning can happen at any time both in and out of the classroom, and practice different kinds of English learning activities and seek opportunities to use English outside the classroom. Teachers could introduce students the variety and usefulness of out-of-class English learning activities and try to increase their motivation to engage in the activities. Universities and their various faculties should also provide sufficient basic facilities such as Internet access and high-speed Wi-Fi to support students to practice English outside the classroom.

Secondly, the study found that students rarely engaged in naturalistic learning category activities, which are related to interacting with target language users compared with self-instruction and self-directed naturalistic learning activities. Universities and their faculties should provide support for students relating to learning English outside the classroom and taking the initiative to engage in more speaking activities, including organizing English activities that help students communicate in English such as English speaking zones and English camps and other activities in which students can use English in real situations.

Thirdly, since needing help from others was the most difficult issues students faced when engaging in out-of-class English learning, teachers should help students cultivate independent learning habits and encourage students to practice English by themselves in their own time. For example, teachers should introduce

students useful online self-learning tools such as BBC Learning English, British Council Learning English and TED Talks. Moreover, teachers could help students to build their confidence in learning English so that they develop positive attitudes towards engaging in out-of-class English learning.

Finally, as stated in the result, assessing learning progress was another main difficulty that students faced. Those students who find it difficult to assess their learning progress need more guidance relating to the strategies needed in conducting out-of-class English learning. For instance, teachers should introduce and suggest Benson's (2001) metacognitive strategies, including planning, self-monitoring and self-evaluation in language learning. Teachers could also provide and introduce self-evaluation tools such as questionnaire, portfolio and check lists, which could help students to monitor and evaluate which stages they are.

### **7.3 Limitations and recommendations for further study**

Some recommendations for further study can be drawn as follows:

Firstly, since the current study was restricted to the third-year students at a Thai university in the south of Thailand, further study can be conducted with a bigger sample including students at different years of study at more universities. Comparison of out-of-class English learning can be also made among students across different disciplines.

Secondly, since this study focused on analyzing students' practice and preference as well as benefits and difficulties of out-of-class English learning, further studies could consider investigating motivation factors that can enhance students' out-of-class English learning.

Thirdly, further study can also focus on autonomous learning behaviors of learners with high and low English proficiency and the role of learner autonomy in out-of-class English learning. Researchers could also explore the relationships between self-study habits and the level of English proficiency.

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APPENDIX 1

Out-of-class English Learning Questionnaire

(English and Thai Versions)

### **Out-of-class English Learning Questionnaire**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine students' frequency of practice and preferences of out-of-class English learning and also students' perceptions about benefits and difficulties/concerns of out-of-class English learning.

All the information students provided will be only used for research purpose. Your responses will not affect your grades at all. The questionnaire includes three parts. Please complete all the questions accurately to reflect your opinions.

Part 1: Background information

Part 2: Frequency of practice and preferences of out-of-class English Learning

Part 3: Perceptions towards benefits and difficulties/concerns of out-of-class English Learning

**Please fill out this questionnaire by marking  $\surd$  and writing your answers in the provided space.**

#### **Part 1 Background information**

**Gender:**  Male  Female

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ years old

**Faculty:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Overseas experiences:**  yes  no

**Please leave your phone number and email for further interviews.**

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_







24	Joining English speaking club/English camp																			
25	Others(Please specify) _____																			

### Part 3 Perceptions towards benefits and difficulties/concerns of out-of-class English Learning

Please rate the level of agreement below with a '√' in the corresponding space.

1. What are your perceptions towards the benefits of out-of-class English learning?

5=Strongly agree 4=Agree 3= Uncertain 2=Disagree 1=Strongly disagree

Benefits		Level of agreement				
Out-of-class English learning...		5	4	3	2	1
1	helps me develop autonomous learning ability.					
2	helps me increase my interest in learning English.					
3	helps me improve my listening skills.					
4	helps me improve my speaking skills and communication ability.					
5	helps me improve my reading skills.					



6	helps me improve my writing skills.					
7	helps me increase my grammar knowledge.					
8	helps me acquire more vocabulary.					
<b>Benefits</b>		<b>Level of agreement</b>				
Out-of-class English learning...		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
9	helps me prepare better before going to an English class.					
10	helps me get English-related certificates.					
11	helps me develop strategies for learning English.					
12	helps me get more world knowledge, for instance, the arts, culture and history.					
13	makes me more active in English learning.					
14	gives me exposure to a variety of out-of-class English learning resources and materials.					
15	is flexible and convenient to engage in.					
16	is challenging, interesting and different from learning in class.					

17	Others (please specify) _____						
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2. What are your perceptions towards the difficulties/concerns of out-of-class English learning?

**5=Strongly agree 4=Agree 3= Uncertain 2=Disagree 1=Strongly disagree**

Difficulties/Concerns		Level of agreement				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I lack motivation to engage in out-of-class English learning.					
2	There is not a good English learning environment to engage in out-of-class English learning.					
3	I am not sure how to assess my progress.					
4	English self-access learning resources and materials are insufficient.					
5	I lack knowledge and guidance about how to engage in out-of-class English learning.					
6	I need to engage in out-of-class English learning with teachers or peers' help.					
7	I am not familiar with autonomous learning.					

8	It is difficult to sort out the information I need among a vast amount of information online.					
9	I don't have enough time to engage in out-of-class English learning.					
<b>Difficulties/Concerns</b>		<b>Level of agreement</b>				
		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
10	My English proficiency is not good enough to allow me to engage in out-of-class English learning					
11	I have little interest in engaging in out-of-class English learning.					
12	Out-of-class English learning is more time consuming than learning in class.					
13	In-class English learning is more important than out-of-class English learning.					
14	I lack the ability and experiences to tackle problems encountered when engaging in out-of-class English learning.					
15	I lack the vocabulary to engage in out-of-class English learning.					
16	Others: _____					

\*\*\*\*\*Thank you\*\*\*\*\*

### แบบสอบถามเกี่ยวกับการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน

แบบสอบถามฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความถี่ในการทำกิจกรรมและความพึงพอใจในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนรวมถึงศึกษาความคิดเห็นที่มีต่อประโยชน์และอุปสรรค/ข้อกั่วงของการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน ข้อมูลที่นักศึกษาให้มาทั้งหมดจะถูกนำไปใช้เพื่อจุดประสงค์ของการวิจัยเท่านั้นและการตอบแบบสอบถามฉบับนี้จะไม่ผลต่อคะแนนในการเรียนของนักศึกษาแต่ประการใด

แบบสอบถามฉบับนี้มี 3 ตอน

โปรดเลือกข้อที่ตรงกับความเป็นจริงและตรงกับความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษามากที่สุด

**ตอนที่ 1: ข้อมูลทั่วไป**

**ตอนที่ 2:** ความถี่ในการทำกิจกรรมและความพึงพอใจในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน

**ตอนที่ 3:** ความคิดเห็นที่มีต่อประโยชน์และอุปสรรค/ข้อกั่วงในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน

โปรดทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ และเติมข้อความลงในช่องว่างของแบบสอบถามฉบับนี้ให้ครบทุกข้อ ตรงความเป็นจริงและตามความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษามากที่สุด

**ตอนที่ 1 ข้อมูลทั่วไป**

เพศ:  ชาย  หญิง

อายุ: \_\_\_\_\_ ปี

คณะ: \_\_\_\_\_

ประสบการณ์ต่างประเทศ:  เคย  ไม่เคย

โปรดระบุหมายเลขโทรศัพท์และอีเมลติดต่อกลับเพื่อติดต่อขอสัมภาษณ์ต่อไป

หมายเลขโทรศัพท์: \_\_\_\_\_

อีเมล: \_\_\_\_\_

## ตอนที่ 2 ความถี่ในการทำกิจกรรมและความพึงพอใจในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน

โปรดทำเครื่องหมาย ‘√’ ในช่องที่ตรงกับความถี่ในการทำกิจกรรมและระดับความพึงพอใจของนักศึกษา

ความถี่ในการทำกิจกรรม
5=ตลอดเวลา (นักศึกษาทำกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนทุกวันหรือเกือบทุกวัน)
4=บ่อยครั้ง (นักศึกษาทำกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน 3-4 ครั้งต่อสัปดาห์)
3=บางครั้ง (นักศึกษาทำกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน 1-2 ครั้งต่อสัปดาห์)
2=แทบจะไม่ (นักศึกษาทำกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนน้อยกว่า 1 ครั้งต่อสัปดาห์)
1=ไม่เคย (นักศึกษาไม่ทำกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนใดๆ เลย)

ระดับความพึงพอใจ
5 = ชอบเป็นอย่างมาก    4 = ชอบ    3 = ไม่แน่ใจ    2 = ไม่ชอบ    1 = ไม่ชอบเป็นอย่างมาก

กิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน	ความถี่ในการทำกิจกรรม					ระดับความพึงพอใจ				
	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Self-instruction</b>										
1	อ่านหนังสือเตรียมสอบภาษาอังกฤษ									
2	ทำแบบฝึกหัดภาษาอังกฤษออนไลน์									
3	ดูวิดีโอการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษใน YouTube									









ตอนที่ 3 ความคิดเห็นที่มีต่อประโยชน์และอุปสรรค/ข้อกั่วงของการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน

โปรดทำเครื่องหมาย ‘√’ ในช่องที่ตรงกับระดับความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษา

1. นักศึกษามีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับประโยชน์ที่ได้รับจากการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน

5= เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง    4=เห็นด้วย    3=ไม่แน่ใจ    2=ไม่เห็นด้วย    1=ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง

ประโยชน์		ระดับความคิดเห็น				
การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน...		5	4	3	2	1
1	ช่วยพัฒนาความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง					
2	ช่วยเพิ่มความสนใจในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ					
ประโยชน์		ระดับความคิดเห็น				
การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน...		5	4	3	2	1
3	ช่วยพัฒนาทักษะการฟัง					
4	ช่วยพัฒนาทักษะการพูดและการสื่อสาร					
5	ช่วยพัฒนาทักษะการอ่าน					
6	ช่วยพัฒนาทักษะการเขียน					
7	ช่วยเพิ่มพูนความรู้ทางไวยากรณ์					
8	ช่วยเพิ่มคลังคำ ศัพท์					

9	ช่วยให้ฉันเตรียมตัวก่อนเข้าชั้นเรียนภาษาอังกฤษได้ดียิ่งขึ้น					
10	ช่วยให้ฉันได้รับหนังสือรับรอง/ประกาศนียบัตรที่เกี่ยวข้องกับภาษาอังกฤษ					
11	ช่วยพัฒนาทวิวิธีในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ					
12	ช่วยให้ฉันได้รับความรู้รอบตัวเพิ่มมากขึ้น เช่น ด้านศิลปวัฒนธรรม ประวัติศาสตร์ สิ่งแวดล้อม ฯลฯ					
13	ทำให้ฉันตื่นตัวมากขึ้นในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ					
14	ช่วยให้เข้าถึงแหล่งเรียนรู้และสื่อการเรียนรู้ที่หลากหลาย					
15	มีความยืดหยุ่นและความสะดวกทั้งเวลาและสถานที่					
<b>ประโยชน์</b>		<b>ระดับความคิดเห็น</b>				
<b>การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน...</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
16	ทำท่าย น่าสนใจ และแตกต่างจากการเรียนในห้องเรียน					
17	อื่นๆ(โปรดระบุ) _____					

2. นักศึกษามีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับอุปสรรค/ข้อกั่วงวลในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน

5= เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง    4=เห็นด้วย    3=ไม่แน่ใจ    2=ไม่เห็นด้วย    1=ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง

อุปสรรค/ข้อกั่วงวล		ระดับความคิดเห็น				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	ฉันขาดแรงจูงใจในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน					
2	สภาพแวดล้อมไม่เอื้อต่อการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน					
3	ฉันไม่แน่ใจว่าจะประเมินความก้าวหน้าของตนเองได้อย่างไร					
4	แหล่งการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษและสื่อการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองมีไม่เพียงพอ					
5	ฉันขาดความรู้และคำแนะนำเกี่ยวกับวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน					
6	ฉันต้องการความช่วยเหลือจากครูหรือเพื่อนในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน					
อุปสรรค/ข้อกั่วงวล		ระดับความคิดเห็น				
		5	4	3	2	1
7	ฉันไม่คุ้นเคยกับการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง					
8	เป็นเรื่องยากที่จะจำแนกข้อมูลที่ต้องการซึ่งมีอยู่มากมายบนโลกออนไลน์					

9	ฉันไม่สามารถจัดสรรเวลาให้กับการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนได้					
10	ความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษของฉันไม่ดีพอที่จะทำให้ฉันเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนด้วยตนเองได้					
11	ฉันมีความสนใจที่จะเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนน้อย					
12	การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนเป็นกิจกรรมที่ใช้เวลามากกว่าการเข้าชั้นเรียน					
13	การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษในห้องเรียนมีความสำคัญมากกว่าการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน					
14	ฉันขาดความสามารถและประสบการณ์ที่จะจัดการกับปัญหาที่พบเมื่อต้องเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน					
15	ฉันมีคำศัพท์ไม่เพียงพอที่จะเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน					
16	อื่นๆ(โปรดระบุ) _____					

\*\*\*\*\* ขอขอบคุณสำหรับการสละเวลาในการทำแบบสอบถามนี้ \*\*\*\*\*

APPENDIX 2

Semi-structured Interview Questions

(English and Thai Version)

### Interview Questions

1. Do you like learning English outside the classroom? Why and why not?
2. What purposes do you engage in out-of-class English learning?
3. What kind of resources do you prefer to learn English outside the classroom?
4. What are the benefits of out-of-class English learning? What do you benefit the most from out-of-class English learning? Why?
5. What are the difficulties/concerns when engaging in out-of-class English learning? What is your biggest difficulty? Why do you think so? How could you overcome this difficulty?
6. How does the out-of-class English learning influence your English learning?

### คำถามสัมภาษณ์

1. นักศึกษาชอบการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนหรือไม่ เพราะเหตุใด
2. นักศึกษาเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนเพื่อจุดประสงค์ใด
3. นักศึกษาชอบแหล่งเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนประเภทใด
4. นักศึกษาคิดว่าอะไรคือประโยชน์ของการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน และประโยชน์ใดบ้างที่นักศึกษาได้รับจากการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน เพราะเหตุใด
5. นักศึกษาคิดว่าอะไรคืออุปสรรคหรือข้อกั่วงวลเมื่อต้องเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน อะไรคือสิ่งที่ยากที่สุด ทำทำไมจึงเป็นเช่นนั้น นักศึกษามีวิธีที่จะก้าวข้ามสิ่งที่ยากที่สุดนั้นไปได้อย่างไร
6. นักศึกษาคิดว่าการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียนมีอิทธิพล/ส่งผลต่อการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาอย่างไรบ้าง

**Paper 1**

Chen, B., & Intharaksa, U. (2018). How do Thai University students prefer out-of-class English learning. *Proceedings of 8<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences on 29-30 November 2018*, Phuket: Prince of Songkla University, 113-120.



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## How Do Thai University Students Prefer Out-of-class English Learning?

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### Abstract

This survey study aimed to investigate students' preferences for out-of-class English learning in a southern Thai university. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was employed in data collection. The findings showed that the overall students' preference level of out-of-class English learning was at the 'neutral' level. Among the 24 out-of-class English learning activities, listening to and singing English songs was the activity that students most enjoyed. In addition, the students preferred out-of-class English learning activities in the self-directed naturalistic learning category compared to those in the naturalistic learning and self-instruction categories. The findings of this study suggest that students should practice different kinds of out-of-class English learning activities.

**Keywords:** Out-Of-Class English Learning, Students' Preference, Autonomous Learning

### Introduction

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, learner-centeredness is highlighted and the need for learner autonomy is recognized (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001 cited in Eaton, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2012). Learner autonomy is defined as the learners' capacity to control their own learning (Holec, 1981). Benson (2007) suggested that learner autonomy has become an established feature of language teaching and learning. Out-of-class learning is classified as a mode of autonomy beyond the classroom. According to Pickard (1996), out-of-class language learning refers to learner-initiated activities in the target language outside the classroom. Rubin (1975) identified out-of-class language learning as one of the characteristics of good language learners who looked for opportunities to practice language through different activities.

Previous researchers have found that learning English outside the classroom is beneficial (Gou, 2011; Hyland, 2004; Pearson, 2004; Sundqvist, 2009). Sundqvist claimed that out-of-class English learning had a positive impact on students' oral proficiency and vocabulary learning. Students would also increase their motivation to learn, improve their learning strategies and monitor their learning better after engaging in out-of-class language learning. Similarly, Guo (2011) found that out-of-class English learning was able to help students pay more attention to English usage in real life and increased their language ability. Pearson (2004) suggested that engaging in English learning activities outside the classroom provided real life learning opportunities based on being exposed to language. In addition, Hyland (2004) emphasized that out-of-class

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English learning helped learners cultivate autonomous learning awareness.

As discussed above, out-of-class learning is necessary and helps develop autonomous learning ability. Previous studies of out-of-class English learning have been mainly related to learners engaging in various kinds of out-of-class English learning activities, learners' perceptions, experiences and the learning factors affecting out-of-class English learning in different EFL contexts, including Taiwan (Cheng, 2015), Hong Kong (Hyland, 2004), mainland China (Lai, Zhu & Guo, 2015), Cambodia (Sun, 2016), and Thailand (Chusanachoti, 2009).

In Thailand, student-centered learning is one of the cornerstones of current education policy which can be defined as the concept of allowing students to take more control of their own learning and emphasizing active learning (Fitzpatrick, 2011). This study, which was part of a project, focused on students' preferences for out-of-class English learning using Benson's framework (2013). Benson (2013) classified out-of-class learning into three categories: *Self-instruction*, *Naturalistic learning* and *Self-directed naturalistic learning*. *Self-instruction* refers to learning activities in which learners find resources to practice the target language without interacting with others. These activities typically include practicing pronunciation, and learning vocabulary and grammar. *Naturalistic learning* means language activities in which learners have direct communication with target language users such as speaking with foreigners, talking to language teachers or talking to friends. *Self-directed naturalistic learning* implies that learners engage in activities outside the classroom for interest or pleasure such as listening to songs, reading newspapers or watching movies.

Prince of Songkla University (PSU), a university in the south of Thailand emphasizes the importance of autonomous and student-centered learning (PSU Philosophy, 2018). However, the current situation of out-of-class English learning as a means of promoting PSU students autonomy has not been explored. The findings of the study can be used as a baseline for faculties and those who are in charge of promoting autonomous learning.

#### **Research Question**

This study was conducted to explore students' preferences for out-of-class English learning in a southern Thai university. It aimed to answer the following research question: **What out-of-class English learning activities are preferred by Thai university students?**

#### **Methodology**

**The Participants:** This study was conducted at PSU, Hat Yai campus. Three hundred and forty-eight third-year students studying at 16 faculties were randomly selected from the total of 3,672 third-year students according to Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) sampling technique.

**Instrument:** The 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, which was the main instrument used to collect data, consisted of two parts. The first part collected students' general background information (including gender, age and faculty as well as overseas experience). The second part was related to out-of-class English learning activities. There were 25 items consisting of 24 five-point Likert scale items and one open-ended question. Benson's framework (2013) was used as the basis of constructing the items in the questionnaire. Among the 24 closed items, items 1-9 referred to the first category, *self-instruction*, items 10-16 belonged to

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the second category, *naturalistic learning*, and items 17-24 were related to the third category, *self-directed naturalistic learning*.

The questionnaire was constructed in English and translated into Thai by a translator. Then its content validity was checked by three experts using an index of item-objective congruence (IOC). The index of IOC was 0.92, which indicated a high validity for the questionnaire. The questionnaire was piloted with 35 third-year PSU students who were not participants in the main study. The value of Cronbach's Alpha in relation to students' preference was 0.94, showing a high reliability (George & Mallery, 2003).

**Data Collection and Analysis:** The data of this study was collected during January and February, at the beginning of the second semester of the 2017 Thai academic year. The overall response rate to the questionnaire was 87.93%. The interpretation of the mean scores of level of preference were as follows: 4.21-5.0 was classified as "strongly like", 3.4-4.20 as "like", 2.61-3.40 as "neutral", 1.81-2.60 as "dislike", and 1.00-1.80 as "strongly dislike."

### Findings and Discussion

Table 1 shows the mean scores, standard deviations and preference level based on the participants' responses to the 24 closed items relating to out-of-class English learning activities. The items are presented from the highest to lowest mean scores.

**Table 1** Students' preference of out-of-class English learning activities

No.	Out-of-class English learning activities	Mean	S.D	Level of preference
18	Listening to and singing English songs	3.95	1.05	
17	Watching English movies/dramas/series	3.87	1.05	Like
3	Watching English learning videos on YouTube	3.62	.98	
14	Reading signs, slogans, proverbs, advertisements, posters and product labels	3.55	1.0	
23	Reading messages or comments written in English on social media	3.40	1.05	Neutral
16	Listening to people speaking in English around me	3.40	1.12	
21	Listening to the news/videos in English on social media	3.30	1.04	
8	Practicing English speaking through Apps on mobile phones /iPads/YouTube	3.30	1.08	
7	Surfing English websites to find information	3.24	1.04	
22	Writing statuses, descriptions of pictures and giving comments in English on social media	3.18	1.10	
10	Talking to foreigners/international students in English	3.17	1.18	
19	Reading English magazines/novels/short stories	3.14	1.07	
5	Learning English vocabulary using online dictionaries	3.11	1.08	
2	Doing online English exercises	2.96	.96	

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**Table 1** (Con.)

No.	Out-of-class English learning activities	Mean	S.D	Level of preference
1	Reading English test-preparation books	2.93	.90	
11	Talking to Thai friends in English	2.87	1.12	
15	Writing/texting to friends/teachers/family in English	2.85	1.05	
20	Reading online news in English	2.83	1.06	
6	Doing English homework/exercises before coming to class	2.80	.95	
12	Talking to teachers in English after class	2.75	1.14	
24	Joining an English speaking club/English camp	2.71	1.11	
9	Learning English through the Tell Me More Program	2.48	1.06	Dislike
4	Learning English vocabulary using printed dictionaries	2.46	1.05	
13	Joining Internet discussions in English (blogs/forums)	2.42	1.06	
<b>Average</b>		<b>3.10</b>	<b>.62</b>	<b>Neutral</b>

Overall, the students' preference level of the 24 out-of-class English learning activities was in the range of "neutral" ( $\bar{x} = 3.10$ ;  $SD = .62$ ). Among the 24 items, only four items (items 18, 17, 3 and 14) were rated at the preference level of "like." Item 18 'Listening to and singing English songs' got the highest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 3.95$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ). This was in line with the previous research conducted by Cheng (2015), which found that listening to English songs was the most popular out-of-class English learning activity among vocational university students in Taiwan. The second highest rated activity was item 17 'Watching English movies/dramas/series' ( $\bar{x} = 3.87$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ). These two items belonged to the third category, *self-directed naturalistic learning*, which students undertook for fun or pleasure. On the other hand, three items (items 9, 4 and 13) were rated at the preference level of "dislike." Item 13 'Joining Internet discussions in English (blogs/forums)' belonging to the *naturalistic learning category* obtained the lowest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 2.42$ ;  $SD = 1.06$ ). The remaining 17 items (items 23, 16, 21, 8, 7, 22, 10, 19, 5, 2, 1, 11, 15, 20, 6, 12, 24) were rated at the preference level of "neutral." These findings were in line with Wu's study (2012), which found that students preferred different kind of out-of-class English learning activities according to their needs and interests.

Tables 2-4 summarized the findings of students' preference level of out-of-class English learning activities based on Benson's categories (2013): *self-instruction* (Table 2), followed by *naturalistic learning* (Table 3) and *self-directed naturalistic learning* (Table 4).

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**Table 2** Students' preference of out-of-class English learning activities under the self-instruction category

No.	Out-of-class English learning activities	Mean	S.D	Level of preference
3	Watching English learning videos on YouTube	3.62	.98	Like
8	Practicing English speaking through Apps in mobile phones/iPads/YouTube	3.30	1.08	
7	Surfing English websites to find information	3.24	1.04	
5	Learning English vocabulary using online dictionaries	3.11	1.08	Neutral
2	Doing online English exercises	2.96	.96	
1	Reading English test-preparation books	2.93	.90	
6	Doing English homework/exercises before coming to class	2.80	.95	
9	Learning English through the Tell Me More Program	2.48	1.06	Dislike
4	Learning English vocabulary using printed dictionaries	2.46	1.05	
<b>Average</b>		<b>2.99</b>	<b>.62</b>	<b>Neutral</b>

For the first category, it was found that item 3 'Watching English learning videos on YouTube' had the highest mean preference score ( $\bar{x} = 3.62$ ;  $SD = .98$ ). Interestingly, item 5 'Learning English vocabulary using online dictionaries' was in the range of 'neutral' ( $\bar{x} = 3.11$ ;  $SD = 1.08$ ) while item 4 'Learning English vocabulary using printed dictionaries' obtained the lowest preference score from the students ( $\bar{x} = 2.46$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ). Moreover, the majority of the out-of-class English learning activities that students preferred in this category involved technological resources such as websites, the Internet and mobile phones. One possible explanation for this might be related to computer media which plays an important role in students' English learning outside the classroom (Ferdous, 2013). Web-based technologies and Internet connections provide various possibilities for students learning English in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Sarica & Cavus, 2009).

**Table 3** Students' preference of out-of-class English learning activities under the naturalistic learning category

No.	Out-of-class English learning activities	Mean	S.D	Level of preference
14	Reading signs, slogans, proverbs, advertisements, posters and product labels written in English	3.55	1.00	Like
16	Listening to people speaking in English around me	3.40	1.12	
10	Talking to foreigners/international students in English	3.17	1.18	Neutral
11	Talking to Thai friends in English	2.87	1.12	
15	Writing/texting to friends/teachers/family in English	2.85	1.05	
12	Talking to teachers in English after class	2.75	1.14	
13	Joining Internet discussions in English (blogs/forums)	2.42	1.06	Dislike
<b>Average</b>		<b>3.00</b>	<b>.81</b>	<b>Neutral</b>

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As shown in Table 3, item 14 'Reading signs, slogans, proverbs, advertisements, posters and product labels written in English' obtained the highest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 3.55$ ; SD = 1.00). In contrast, item 13 'Joining Internet discussions in English (blogs/forums)' obtained the lowest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 2.42$ ; SD = 1.06). The majority of the items (items 16, 10, 11, 15 and 12) relating to English communication and writing were rated at the preference level of 'neutral'. The findings were in line with the study by Hyland (2004), who found that students might not like to practice the productive aspects of the language especially speaking when engaging in English learning outside the classroom.

**Table 4** Students' preference of out-of-class English learning under the self-directed naturalistic learning category

No.	Out-of-class English learning activities	Mean	S.D	Level of preference
18	Listening to and singing English songs	3.95	1.05	Like
17	Watching English movies/dramas/series	3.87	1.05	
23	Reading messages or comments written in English on social media	3.40	1.05	Neutral
21	Listening to the news/videos in English on social media	3.30	1.04	
22	Writing statuses, descriptions of pictures and giving comments in English on social media	3.18	1.10	
19	Reading English magazines/novels/short stories	3.14	1.07	
20	Reading online news in English	2.83	1.06	
24	Joining an English speaking club/English camp	2.71	1.11	
<b>Average</b>		<b>3.30</b>	<b>.62</b>	<b>Neutral</b>

Table 4 shows that students' two favorite out-of-class learning activities in this category were item 18 'Listening to and singing English songs' ( $\bar{x} = 3.95$ ; SD = 1.05) and item 17 'Watching English movies/dramas/series' ( $\bar{x} = 3.87$ ; SD = 1.05) while the other six activities with mean scores ranging from 3.40 to 2.71 were in the 'neutral' preference level. Interestingly, all the items in the *self-directed naturalistic learning* category tended to have higher mean scores compared to the other two categories meaning that activities focusing on fun and pleasure were typically preferred by the students. Additionally, in the open-ended question, eight students stated that they liked playing English games while three students preferred to learn English through travelling outside the classroom. These findings were consistent with the study by Lai et al., (2015) which found that enjoyment is one of the main factors that influences students' engagement in out-of-class English learning.

From Tables 2-4, it was found that although the average mean score of each category was in the 'neutral' level, the *self-directed naturalistic learning* category obtained the highest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 3.30$ ; SD = .76), followed by the *naturalistic learning* category ( $\bar{x} = 3.00$ ; SD = .81), and the *self-instruction* category ( $\bar{x} =$

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2.99; SD = .62) respectively. These findings indicate that PSU students preferred out-of-class English learning activities under the *self-directed naturalistic learning* category rather than the activities under the *naturalistic learning* and *self-instruction* categories. This might be because the students preferred to engage in entertainment-related English learning activities (Benson, 2013; Cheng, 2015).

### Conclusion and Implications

This survey study was conducted using a quantitative method. The findings of the study revealed that overall PSU students' preference level for out-of-class English learning was at the level of 'neutral'. It also showed that *self-directed naturalistic learning* category activities obtained higher preference scores than *self-instruction* and *naturalistic learning* category activities. This indicates that students tend to prefer activities which entail pleasure or enjoyment rather than practice activities related to communicating with English users and using English.

The findings of the study suggest that students should practice different kinds of English learning activities and seek opportunities to engage in more *self-instruction* and *naturalistic learning* category activities. Universities and their faculties should create more activities relating to learning English outside the classroom to help students. Organizing English activities that push students to communicate in English such as English speaking zones and other English-using activities can help students be exposed to and use English in real situations.

This study which was a part of a broader project revealed only the preference level of students' out-of-class English learning. Therefore, it would be interesting and significant to investigate students' perceptions of the benefits and difficulties of learning English outside the classroom.

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## **Paper 2**

Chen, B., & Intharaksa, U. (2018). Benefits and Difficulties of Out-of-class English Learning: A Thai University. Manuscript submitted for publication.

## **Benefits of and difficulties of out-of-class English learning: A Thai university**

### **Abstract**

This survey study explored the benefits and difficulties of out-of-class English learning perceived by 348 third-year students from 16 faculties in a university in southern Thailand. A questionnaire employing a 5-point Likert scale and semi-structure interviews were used for data collection and mean scores and standard deviations were used to analyze the data. The findings showed that the average students' perceptions towards the benefits of out-of-class English learning were at the *agree* level indicating that students perceived learning English outside the classroom as beneficial. However, the findings indicated that the overall difficulties of out-of-class English learning students faced was at the range of the 'uncertain' level. This study suggest that instructors and university should provide necessary support to help students overcome the difficulties they perceive in out of class English learning.

*Key words:* Out-of-class English learning, Benefits, Difficulties, Autonomy

### **1. Introduction**

Language learning not only happens in classrooms, but can also take place at any time and at any place (Hyland, 2004). Pickard (1996) suggested that out-of-class language learning refers to learner-initiated activities in the target language outside the classroom and learning beyond the classroom is a sign of independent learning as well as reflecting one's ability to learn. Out-of-class learning also leads to the development of autonomy (Benson, 2007) and Hyland, (2004) asserted that out-of-class learning is necessary for students to develop autonomous learning ability.

Learner autonomy has been defined as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Holec, 1981) and according to Benson (2013), learner autonomy is learners' capacity to control their own learning. Autonomous learners should be capable of setting learning goals, deciding on the learning context, finding their own strong and

weak points in learning and evaluating the outcome of their learning. Moreover, Rubin (1975) described autonomous learners as being similar to good language learners, one of whose characteristics was the habit of searching for opportunities to learn language outside the classroom.

In addition to the development of autonomy, out-of-class learning has been shown to be positively associated with language gains in terms of oral proficiency and vocabulary knowledge (Chusanachoti, 2009; Sundqvist, 2009). Moreover, out-of-class language learning can increase learners' motivation to learn a language and successful learners have been found to regard out-of-class learning as a part of daily life (Cheng, 2015). According to Benson and Reinders (2011), it is convenient for learners to engage in out-of-class learning and allows learners to flexibly manage the time, place and mode of learning in which to practice language. Therefore, out-of-class language learning is both necessary and to be encouraged for students (Benson and Reinders, 2011; Richards, 2015).

Despite the benefits of out-of-class language learning, there are problems associated with learning outside the classroom including personal difficulties, and difficulties in finding materials or selecting appropriate strategies (Chan, 2011). Bailly (2011) identified that students faced problems relating to the selection of learning resources and monitoring their learning process when engaging in out-of-class language learning. In addition, Little (2009) noted two major concerns relating to out-of-class learning activities: an inadequate language learning environment and a lack of knowledge about how to engage in out-of-class learning.

As discussed above, out-of-class learning has been found to benefit language learning. However, in the Thai context, where English is a foreign language (i.e., an EFL context), students have very limited opportunities to encounter and use English outside the classroom (Kirkpatrick, 2012) and the low level of exposure to English outside the classroom is one of the main challenges to learning English in Thailand (Dhanasobhon, 2006; Noom-ura, 2013). Therefore, there is a need for research on

how English learning is achieved outside the classroom in Thailand.

Previous research conducted on out-of-class English learning in Thailand includes studies by Chusanachoti (2009) and Chen and Intharaksa (2018), who explored students' preferences for modes of out-of-class English learning. The findings showed that students' overall preference level for out-of-class English learning activities was at the 'neutral' level. The findings of the study suggested that students should practice different kinds of out-of-class English learning activities. This paper presents additional findings from the same study relating to students' perceptions of the benefits of and difficulties entailed in out-of-class English learning. The findings presented in this paper would provide some new insights into the learning of English beyond the classroom and has implications for educators, particularly teachers at universities who might be better able to guide and support students about English learning outside the classroom.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Learner autonomy*

Learner autonomy has been an established aspect of language learning for many years (Benson, 2007). According to Little (1991), autonomy in learning is 'a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action'. Holec (1981) explained that an autonomous learner should be able to set objectives, define contents, choose methods, monitor procedures and evaluate the learning outcome. Chan (2011) conducted a study in Hong Kong to investigate the relationship between learner autonomy and out-of-class English learning among tertiary students and found that students who had a higher level of autonomy preferred to take part in English learning activities outside the classroom.

### *2.2 Out-of-class language learning*

Benson (2013) suggested that out-of-class language learning included any kind

of learning activities occurring outside the classroom which could be classified into three categories: *self-instruction*, *naturalistic learning* and *self-directed naturalistic learning*. *Self-instruction* refers to learning activities in which learners seek resources to practice the target language by themselves. Such activities include practicing pronunciation and learning vocabulary. *Naturalistic learning* refers to language activities in which learners experience direct communication with users of the target language, such as speaking with foreigners and talking to language teachers. *Self-directed naturalistic learning* relates to activities in which learners engage for interest or pleasure and also with the intention of learning the target language, such as listening to songs and reading newspapers.

### *2.3 Benefits of out-of-class language learning*

Previous researchers have found that there are benefits from out-of-class English learning to learner autonomy and the development of English proficiency, and that it promotes positive affective factors (Cheng, 2015; Chusanachoti, 2009; Hyland, 2004; Lai, Zhu and Guo, 2015; Pearson, 2004; Wu, 2012). Guo (2011) also found that out-of-class English learning was able to help students pay more attention to English usage in real life and increased their English ability. Further, Richards (2015) explained that out-of-class language learning activities can provide opportunities for learners by increasing linguistic and communicative ability, improving the accuracy and fluency of English, providing extended contact with English, making use of diverse learning resources and developing the use of communication strategies.

### *2.4 Difficulties in out-of-class language learning*

The difficulties involved in out-of-class language learning have been described by a number of scholars (Bailly, 2011; Benson and Reinders, 2011; Cheng, 2015; Guo, 2010; Little, 2009; Nunan, 2016; Pearson, 2004; Reinders, 2014). Firstly, according to Benson and Reinders (2011), students have difficulty in conducting out-of-class

language learning because of insufficient knowledge and improper instruction from teachers. Secondly, Nunan (2016) pointed out that one of the difficulties of out-of-class learning is that it is time consuming, and that learners tend to devote inadequate time to learning outside the classroom. Moreover, Guo (2011) in a study of college students in Taiwan found that the students had little motivation to conduct English activities out-of-class because that was not part of the formal curriculum.

### *2.5 Related studies on out-of-class English learning*

Many studies have been conducted relating to learning English outside the classroom in different EFL contexts. Lai, Zhu and Gong (2015) studied the quality of out-of-class English learning by 82 Chinese middle school students, who completed a questionnaire. The findings showed that the more participants conducted varied out-of-class English learning activities, the more they enjoyed learning English and had greater confidence in learning English. The study found that the three factors that most affected students' out-of-class English learning were their grades, their confidence and their enjoyment of the activities. The study suggested that teachers should help students to employ out-of-class learning activities to practice English and increase students' confidence.

Cheng (2015) investigated the experiences and perceptions of out-of-class English learning of 164 EFL students' in Taiwan. The findings showed that out-of-class English learning was useful and necessary for students. The students preferred to engage in listening and reading activities outside of the classroom and the findings revealed that successful language learners spent more time conducting out-of-class learning than the average language learner.

In Thailand, Chusanachoti (2009) explored how learners engaged in English learning activities outside the classroom to learn and practice English. A qualitative approach was used to collect data. The results of the study showed that the participants routinely engaged in out-of-class activities including watching movies,

listening to English songs and searching for information on the Internet and revealed that out-of-class English activities improved learners' knowledge and proficiency of vocabulary, sentence structure, and pronunciation.

In an earlier paper relating to the broader study from which the findings presented in this paper are drawn, Chen and Intharaksa (2018) investigated the out-of-class English learning preferences of 348 Thai university students using a questionnaire employing items based on a 5-point Likert scale. The findings showed that the overall students' level of preference for out-of-class English learning activities was at the 'neutral' level. Among the 24 out-of-class English learning activities with which the questionnaire dealt, listening to and singing English songs was the activity that students most enjoyed. Moreover, the students preferred out-of-class English learning activities in the *self-directed naturalistic learning* category rather than those in the *naturalistic learning* and *self-instruction* categories.

From the above review, previous studies have mainly focused on learners engaging in out-of-class English learning activities, the quality of out-of-class English learning and students' preference and perceptions of out-of-class English learning, with studies being conducted in Taiwan (Cheng, 2015), China (Lai, et al, 2015) and Thailand (Chusanachoti, 2009). The current paper reports further findings of the study reported on by Chen and Intharaksa (2018) and aimed to investigate the benefits of and difficulties in out-of-class English learning among Thai university students, about which there have been no previous reports, by answering the following research questions:

1. What are students' perceptions of the benefits of out-of-class English learning?
2. What are students' perceptions of the difficulties involved in out-of-class English learning?

### **3.Methodology**

#### *3.1 Subjects*

The population of this study was all 3,672 third-year undergraduate students in a southern Thai university. Using the technique of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 348 students from 16 faculties, aged 21-22, were randomly selected for this study.

#### *3.2 Instruments*

In this study, a 5-points questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. The questionnaire, which was piloted and revised, was divided into three sections. The first section collected demographic information about the students. The second section was comprised of 16 items concerning the students' perceptions of the benefits of out-of-class English learning. The third section consisted of 15 items relating to the students' perceptions of the difficulties entailed in and their concerns relating to out-of-class English learning. A 5-point Likert scale consisting of 5 = *Strongly agree*, 4 = *Agree*, 3 = *Uncertain*, 2 = *Disagree*, 1 = *Strongly disagree* was used to measure the students' level of agreement with the statements in the items, which were adapted from Bailly (2011), Benson and Reinders (2011), Cheng (2015) and Hyland (2004).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit more information about the students' perceptions. The information from the semi-structured interviews is used in this paper to discuss and support the findings from the questionnaires, and helped the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the university students' perceptions of the benefits of and difficulties entailed in learning English outside the classroom.

#### *3.3 Validity and reliability*

The questionnaire was created in English and translated into Thai with the help of a translator. Three experts in this field reviewed its content validity using an item-objective congruence (IOC) index. The IOC index was 0.92, showing that the questionnaire had satisfactory validity. The Thai questionnaire was piloted with 35,



third-year students at the university in question who were not participants in the study. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to examine the reliability of the questionnaire and the coefficients for the sections relating to benefits and difficulties were 0.91 and 0.86, respectively. Taken together these indicators confirmed that the items in the questionnaire were acceptable.

### 3.4 Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was administrated during January and February, 2018. The return rate of the questionnaires was about 88 %. After that, one student from each faculty, or sixteen participants in all, took part in semi-structured interviews which were conducted in Thai and the content of which were transcribed and translated into English by a translator then analyzed for content and summarized by the researcher.

The data from the questionnaires was statistically analyzed using the SPSS program. The mean scores for level of agreement were interpreted as follows: 4.21-5.00 as strongly agree, 3.41-4.20 as agree, 2.61-3.40 as uncertain, 1.81-2.60 as disagree and 1.00-1.80 as strongly disagree.

## 4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 summarizes the mean scores of the students' perceptions of the benefits from learning English beyond the classroom ranging from the item attracting the highest level of agreement to the lowest.

**Table 1.** Students' perceptions of benefits of out-of-class English learning

No.	Benefits	Mean	S.D	Level of agreement
	Out-of-class English learning...			
1	helps me develop autonomous learning ability.	4.18	.75	Agree
3	helps me improve my listening skills.	4.15	.77	Agree
2	helps me increase my interest in learning English.	4.11	.78	Agree

8	helps me acquire more vocabulary.	4.09	.81	Agree
4	helps me improve my speaking skills and communication ability.	4.04	.82	Agree
14	gives me exposure to a variety of out-of-class English learning resources and materials.	3.99	.83	Agree
5	helps me improve my reading skills.	3.98	.87	Agree
16	is challenging, interesting and different from learning in class.	3.91	.82	Agree
15	is flexible and convenient to engage in.	3.90	.86	Agree
13	makes me more active in English learning.	3.88	.88	Agree
12	helps me get more world knowledge of, for instance, arts, culture and history etc.	3.80	.95	Agree
9	helps me prepare better before going to an English class.	3.74	.89	Agree
11	helps me develop strategies for learning English.	3.71	.92	Agree
6	helps me improve my writing skills.	3.56	.94	Agree
7	helps me increase my grammar knowledge.	3.40	.92	Uncertain
10	helps me get English-related certificates.	3.09	1.05	Uncertain
	Average	3.85	.63	Agree

Table 1 shows that the mean student perception of the benefits of out-of-class English learning was at the *agree* level ( $\bar{x} = 3.85$ ,  $SD = .63$ ) indicating that the students agreed that out-of-class English learning is beneficial. Among the 16 items, 14 items were scored at the *agree* level by the students with only 2 items at the *uncertain* level. This finding was consistent with that of Cheng (2015), which indicated that out-of-class English learning was beneficial and necessary for students.

Item 1 ‘*Out-of-class English learning helps me develop autonomous learning ability*’ ( $\bar{x} = 4.18$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) received the highest mean score. As one student stated in the interview, “It automatically forces me to do something to improve my language skills since it is relevant to my needs and interests.” This finding that the students perceived that out-of-class English learning helped them become more autonomous learners is supported by the studies of Bayat (2011), Chan (2011) and Hyland (2004), which emphasized that engaging in out-of-class learning leads to the development of

autonomous learning. Benson (2007) claimed that the relationship between learner autonomy and learning beyond the classroom is complex. Language learning in daily life is the basis of exercising autonomy but conducting out-of-class learning requires some degree of autonomy, which varies from person to person (Benson, 2011). According to Lai, Zhu and Guo (2015), learners with good learner autonomy had a more intense belief in seeking opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.

Item 3 '*Out-of-class English learning helps me improve my listening skills*' ( $\bar{x} = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) was ranked second highest. One explanation for this is that listening-related activities such as listening to English songs are easier to conduct outside the classroom. Previous research relating to out-of-class English learning activities has shown that listening to English songs is the most popular learning activity (Chen and Intharaksa, 2018; Cheng, 2015; Sun, 2016; Tokan, 2016). As Table 1 shows, learning English outside the classroom was perceived as helping the students to improve their listening skills ( $\bar{x} = 4.15$ ), vocabulary knowledge ( $\bar{x} = 4.09$ ), speaking skills ( $\bar{x} = 4.04$ ) and reading skills ( $\bar{x} = 3.98$ ). One student explained, "My listening and reading skills improved, especially my ability to pronounce certain words. There are some words I used to mispronounce but after learning from native English speakers, I have never made the same mistake again." Based on the interviews, the students agreed that out-of-class English learning gives them more opportunity to practice their listening, speaking and reading skills.

Item 2 '*Out-of-class English learning helps me increase my interest in learning English*' ( $\bar{x} = 4.11$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) was ranked third highest. As one student stated, "Learning outside the classroom makes me feel happy every time I do it. It's interesting. Sometimes, you meet good new people and friends." Another student added, "There is no pressure at all. I can choose whatever I want to learn, which makes my learning more effective and enjoyable." Out-of-class English learning activities can be framed to incorporate learners' interests which can increase their learning opportunities outside the classroom (Cheng, 2015) and Coskun's (2016) view

was that entertainment and pleasure facilitate language learning.

On the contrary, item 10 ‘*Out-of-class English learning helps me get English-related certificates*’ ( $\bar{x} = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) received the lowest mean score. One possible explanation for this is that students focus on other purposes rather than getting certificates when engaging in out-of-class English learning. One student stated, “I engage in out-of-class English learning for pleasure and in order to improve myself.” Similarly, Item 7, ‘*Out-of-class English learning helps me increase my grammar knowledge*’ ( $\bar{x} = 3.40$ ,  $SD = .09$ ) and item 6, ‘*Out-of-class English learning helps me improve my writing skills*’ ( $\bar{x} = 3.56$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) were ranked the second and third lowest. This might be because these kinds of learning activities are not easy to conduct in daily life. Shen, Tseng, Kuo, Su and Chen (2005) found that writing was the most difficulty language skill for college students to develop outside the classroom. Chen and Yeh (2004) explained that learners had problems with vocabulary and grammar when writing and because of these difficulties, learners do not want to do writing activities outside the classroom. Students have been found to prefer to engage in receptive activities such as listening and reading rather than productive activities like writing (Hyland, 2004; Lai, Zhu and Gong, 2014).

**Table 2.** Students’ perceptions of difficulties of out-of-class English learning

No.	Difficulties	Mean	S.D	Level of agreement
6	I need to engage in out-of-class English learning with teachers or peers’ help.	3.38	1.01	
3	I am not sure how to assess my progress.	3.28	.98	
2	There is not a good English learning environment to engage in out-of-class English learning.	3.23	1.08	
15	I lack the vocabulary to engage in out-of-class English learning.	3.18	1.16	
5	I lack knowledge and guidance about how to engage in out-of-class English learning.	3.14	1.10	

1	I lack motivation to engage in out-of-class English learning.	3.11	1.07	
9	I don't have enough time to engage in out-of-class English learning.	3.09	1.12	Uncertain
14	I lack the ability and experiences to tackle problems encountered when engaging in out-of-class English learning.	3.09	1.12	
8	It is difficult to sort out the information I need among a vast amount of information online.	3.03	1.08	
10	My English proficiency is not good enough to allow me to engage in out-of-class English learning	3.00	1.15	
12	Out-of-class English learning is more time consuming than learning in class.	2.99	1.06	
11	I have little interest in engaging in out-of-class English learning.	2.85	1.13	
7	I am not familiar with autonomous learning.	2.74	1.12	
13	In-class English learning is more important than out-of-class English learning.	2.73	1.07	
4	English self-access learning resources and materials are insufficient.	2.66	1.03	
Average		3.03	.75	Uncertain

As shown in Table 2, the mean level of students' perceptions of the difficulties in and concerns relating to out-of-class English learning were at the *uncertain* level ( $\bar{x} = 3.03$ ,  $SD = .75$ ). Among the 15 items, item 6 '*I need to engage in out-of-class English learning with teachers or peers' help*' obtained the highest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). The students interviewed added that they liked to ask friends who had higher English proficiency for help. One possible explanation is that students might not know how to deal with out-of-class learning. This might imply that students need to take more responsibility for their learning and adapt to the more self-directed learning necessary in a university. Chan (2011) pointed out that students lacked awareness that they could become independent learners. The finding of the present study is in line with that of Cheng (2015), which showed that most unsuccessful

learners needed to rely on their peers or teachers to guide their learning outside the classroom because out-of-class English learning is not as organized as that in classes.

Item 3 '*I am not sure how to assess my progress.*' was ranked second highest ( $\bar{x} = 3.28$ ,  $SD = .98$ ). One student stated, "I don't know my English proficiency level so I cannot find the right learning resources relevant to my needs." This is in accordance with the finding of Bailly (2011) that students did not know how to assess their learning and measure their progress without external help when learning outside the classroom. Item 2 '*There is not a good English learning environment to engage in out-of-class English learning.*' was ranked third highest ( $\bar{x} = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). One student claimed, "There is very little chance that I would actually interact and communicate with foreigners." This finding is partly in line with that of Ferdous (2013), whose study revealed that one of the obstacles that students face when using English outside the classroom is a lack of an adequate English environment.

On the other hand, item 4 '*English self-access learning resources and materials are insufficient*' ( $\bar{x} = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) obtained the lowest mean score showing that the students felt that there are sufficient learning resources outside the classroom in self-access learning facilities. As one student explained in the interview: 'I can choose to learn from whatever type of media attracts my attention, such as videos, articles and news.' Item 13 '*In-class English learning is more important than out-of-class English learning*' ( $\bar{x} = 2.73$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) obtained the second lowest mean score, which indicates that out-of-class English learning is generally considered important. One student stated, "Language used outside the classroom can be applied in real-life situations with more authentic examples of language use compared to those learned in class." Item 7 '*I am not familiar with autonomous learning*' ( $\bar{x} = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ), obtained the third lowest mean score showing that students were familiar with the concept of autonomous learning. This finding was consistent with Item 1 '*Out-of-class English learning helps me develop autonomous learning ability*' shown in Table 1 as being perceived by the students as being of the greatest benefit. This

finding also revealed that students realized the need for and the importance of autonomous learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Eaton, 2010).

As Table 2 shows, of the 15 items relating to perceived difficulties and concerns, Items 6, 3 and 2 were ranked as the three highest and items 4, 13 and 7 were ranked as the three lowest. Interestingly, although item 6 '*I need to engage in out-of-class English learning under teachers or peers' help*' was perceived as presenting the greatest difficulty and item 4 '*English self-access learning resources and materials are insufficient*' was considered as presenting the least significant difficulty, all the 15 items were ranked at the *uncertain* level, which indicated that students were less sure about the difficulties of out-of-class English learning. This may be because students' frequency of practice of out-of-class English learning activities was not at a high level so they may not experience many difficulties (Chen & Intharaksa, 2018; Sun, 2016). Another possible explanation is that there were other difficulties not listed in the questionnaire such as fear of making mistakes and shyness. One student stated, "The most difficulty thing for me, is that I am shy. For example, when I have questions about certain things, I tend to stay quiet instead of asking someone for clarification."

## **5. Conclusion and Implications**

This survey study was conducted to explore students' perceptions of the benefits and difficulties of out-of-class English learning using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that out-of-class English learning was perceived as being beneficial and useful especially in developing autonomous learning, practicing listening skills and increasing interest in learning. The findings also indicated that students were less certain about the difficulties they faced but that they perceived various difficulties such as needing help from others, assessing learning progress and lacking a good learning environment as the most difficult issues they faced.

The findings of the study provide an overview of students' perceptions relating

to the benefits and difficulties of out-of-class English learning. From the findings, a number of pedagogical implications can be drawn. Firstly, for those students who perceive the need for teachers' or peers' help when engaging in out-of-class English learning, teachers could help students to cultivate independent learning habits. For example, teachers could assign meaningful homework linked with the use of English, which encourages students to practice English by themselves in their own time. Moreover, teachers could help students to build their confidence in learning English so that they develop positive attitudes towards engaging in out-of-class English learning.

Secondly, those students who find it difficult to assess their learning progress need more guidance relating to the strategies needed in conducting out-of-class English learning. For instance, teachers should introduce and explain metacognitive strategies, including planning, self-monitoring and self-evaluation in language learning (Benson, 2001), which could help students to monitor and evaluate which stage they are at in out-of-class English learning.

Moreover, autonomous learning is necessary for students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and fostering learner autonomy is a long-term process. Students should be aware that English learning can happen at any time both in and out of the classroom and students should take full charge of their own learning. Universities and their various faculties should also provide sufficient basic facilities such as Internet access and computer rooms to allow students to practice English outside the classroom.



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### **List of Publication and Proceeding**

Chen, B., & Intharaksa, U. (2018). How do Thai University students prefer out-of-class English learning. *Proceedings of 8<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences on 29-30 November 2018*, Phuket: Prince of Songkla University, 113-120.

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