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## **OUT-OF-CLASS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG UPPER-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL STUDENTS**

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**Summary.** This article discusses a small scale research project that investigated how students learn and use English outside the classroom. It was conducted during the 2019–2020 academic year and completed by administering a questionnaire to 47 students enrolled in the B2-level English language course offered at Vytautas Magnus University in the fall semester of 2019. The data were collected through an online survey. The participants were asked to choose the ways which helped them to learn English outside of the classroom and to comment on them based on how useful they were in terms of learning English. The students were also asked to indicate the frequency of such out-of-classroom (OOC) activities, in other words, how often they engage in the chosen OOCs. The results showed that most of the activities that the research participants engaged in outside the classroom were related to popular culture and their free time activities that were fun and entertaining rather than consciously chosen activities with the purpose of learning English. These activities helped to expand vocabulary and listening, but they did not help to practice speaking and writing (productive skills).

**Keywords:** EFL; out-of-classroom language learning; receptive skills; productive skills; university students.

### **Introduction**

In a world where smart phones and smart watches, tablets, computers, and the Internet are used at all times of the day, life itself is very different from what it used to be without them. The way we communicate, work, buy and sell, search for information and other daily activities have changed. Undoubtedly, learning is one of such activities that have changed, since students now have immense opportunities to reach materials and resources from all over the world in a split second and can therefore study not only when they are inside a classroom but also anywhere outside the classroom. In fact, Benson claims that “the tendency has been towards a blurring of the distinction between ‘classroom’ and ‘out-of-class’ applications, leading to new and often complex understandings of the role of autonomy in language teaching and learning” (2006, p. 22). As a result, there is a growing body of research on the topic.

A lot of recent research has been carried out on out-of-class English language learning in Europe and Asia: in Finland (Moncrief, 2011), Sweden (Henry, 2014), Armenia (Sargsyan & Kurghinyan, 2016), Hong Kong (Hyland, 2004; Chan, 2016), Indonesia (Sulistiyo, 2016), Japan (Doyle & Parish, 2012; Lee et al., 2011), Malaysia (Maros & Noor Sazai, 2016), Taiwan (Guo, 2011), Thailand (Tantarangsee et al., 2017), and Turkey (Orhon, 2018). These studies on out-of-class language learning differ in the way their data was collected, and their research participants differ not only in terms of their nationalities and study cycles but also in their opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. The terminology that is used in the aforementioned studies also varies. Maros and Noor Saazal have summarised the variations as follows:

*When dissected, the out-of-class learning, activity, practice, language use and learning strategy discuss similar doings such as watching movies, reading newspapers, surfing the net, talking to friends or native speakers, listening to radio, and the list goes on (Maros & Noor Saazal, 2016, p. 480, italics in original).*

However, little or no attention has been given to the kinds of ways students, university students in particular, learn English outside the classroom in Lithuania. This is the reason why the present article aims at discussing a small-scale research project on this topic that has been carried out at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania.

### **Literature Review on Out-of-class English Language Learning**

Learning a language is a complicated task, but learning a foreign language is even more challenging. While language learning has traditionally taken place inside the standard classroom environment, a shift is taking place in which language learning takes place outside of the classroom. Pitkanen et al. explain what has led to the change from mostly in-class to out-of class activities that help one's learning in this way:

Globalization, the Internet and various new forms of

information technology and social media have dramatically changed our students' linguistic environment in recent decades. Language use, functions, situations and contexts extend outside the classroom more than ever before. [...] Furthermore, while language skills may be developed in language courses led by professional language teachers, this learning activity extends to a variety of academic and everyday activities (Pitkanen et al., 2011, p. 7).

Teachers usually know what exactly their students do in the classroom when they can observe them, but they lack knowledge of what is happening in terms of language learning (if any) when they are not around. Therefore, research on English and other language out-of-class learning activities is important. Moncrief has described learning as follows:

It can be generally agreed that there is no universally correct way to learn a language that can be seen as most suitable for every individual. Different students naturally develop and incorporate different ways of studying, thinking as well as encompassing different personalities. We as language teachers, however, are concerned with the methods and ways our students learn as well as the promotion of the development of their language skills overall. To this end, much is known about what goes inside a classroom setting, while little is known about how students learn languages *outside* the classroom. (Moncrief, 2011, 107–108, italics in original)

This article concerns only English as a foreign language and its learning activities outside of a classroom. Such activities not only help learning but also fulfil students' need for authenticity in order to see and experience where and how the language is used in the real world (Orhon, 2018, p. 2). In fact, "the internet technology and the media and the use of English in face-to-face as well as virtual social networks provide greater opportunities for meaningful and authentic language use than are available in the classroom" (Richards, 2014, p. 2). That is, real-life application can be seen as a greater motivation factor for learning both inside and outside the classroom. According to Henry, "many of the things students do in their leisure time that are English-mediated, such as digital gaming, can often provide them with meaningful, positive and identity-confirming experiences" (Henry, 2014, p. 7). This applies not only to school, but also the university context, in which some

classroom activities can be seen as lacking authenticity and perceived by young adults as too artificial. On the other hand, some scholars doubt that students can learn without the guidance of their teachers (Benson, 2001, p. 43).

In Hong Kong, Chan (2016) explored "how [highly proficient secondary] students can make better use of popular culture, out-of-class learning and foster greater autonomy in the local context" (2016, p. 1918). The research used semi-structured interviews and language learning journals and "found that the case participants mainly engaged in self-initiated, interest-driven out-of-class learning", while learner autonomy was developed in relation to "English-medium popular culture activities" (Chan, 2016, p. 1918, 1921). In other words, Chan's research shows that the English learners used those out-of-class activities that were related to their pastime in terms of popular culture. However, particular skills that these activities practiced were not specified by Chan.

Sargsyan and Kurghinyan (2016, p. 29) carried out a research on Armenian EFL students in order to find out how often they used English outside the classroom and in which ways they did this. It was revealed that almost a half of these students used English very often outside the classroom, and this use was mostly related to their activities on social media, searching (supposedly for information on the Internet), listening to music and watching films (not specified whether with or without subtitles) and videos, and travelling (Sargsyan & Kurghinyan, 2016, p. 44). It is possible to conclude that most of these out-of-class English learning activities were related to receptive rather than productive skills.

Orhon (2018, p. 1) did a study on the language learning activities that EFL students of various levels enrolled in the English Preparatory Program at one Turkish university engaged in outside the classroom. Orhon tried to look at whether there was any difference in out-of-class English language learning activities based on gender, type of language education or language proficiency level of the participants, but no such difference was detected (Orhon, 2018, p. 1). However, it was noticed that the Turkish learners of English "were mostly engaged in receptive activities [such as listening and watching] but not in productive activities" (Orhon, 2018, p. 11).

These findings are similar to those of Sargsyan and Kurghinyan (2016), but in contrast to Orhon's (2018) study, Henry (2014) found gender-related out-of-class English learning differences among school students in Sweden. Male participants spent more time on such interactive activities as computer games and at the same time improved their vocabulary and oral skills outside the classroom (Henry, 2014, p. 4), while more female than male participants thought they learned English in class more than outside the classroom (Henry, 2014, p. 15).

In Thailand, Tantarangsee et al. (2017, p. 754) were interested in 3<sup>rd</sup> year English major students' use of the Internet connection for out-of-class English activities, so they focused on how much time the students spent on it and which social media-based activities they mostly were engaged in. The study shows that most students spent 6-8 hours on the Internet per day, and the activities related to the use of English included cartoon watching, the use of online dictionaries, reading of forums and blogs, and watching documentaries (Tantarangsee et al., 2017, p. 753). Based on these activities the researchers concluded that receptive skills, such as reading and listening, were mostly in operation (Tantarangsee et al., 2017, p. 756). In addition, Lee et al. reached the same conclusion, since the research participants, who were students at one Japanese University, "favored receptive and non-interactive activities over more communicative language contact situations, [...] which the researchers (being also language teachers) could not help but find slightly disappointing" (2011, p. 15). In short, the research suggests that both students who study English as their speciality subject and those who do not tend to focus on receptive skills through out-of-class activities that they carry out.

Unlike the discussed research that included the students of the countries in which the studies were conducted, the research by Maros and Noor Saazal included international students (250) doing their master's and PhD studies in an institution in Malaysia and concerned OCLL (out-of-class language learning) strategies, since a lot of international students arrive to study in Malaysia and their studies are delivered in English (Maros & Noor Saazal, 2016, p. 478). The findings by Maros and Noor Saazal demonstrate that the international students, who had had quite sufficient English skills,

learned English “through watching television programme[s] or movies, and 2) utilise[d] tools mainly technology-affiliated in advancing themselves in the language” (Maros & Noor Saazal, 2016, p. 478). According to the two scholars, watching, the preferred skill, can actually be seen as a receptive skill that involves three skills – “visual, listening and reading” (e.g. subtitles) (Maros & Noor Saazal, 2016, p. 485). This once again shows the focus on receptive skills in out-of-classroom English activities.

Sulistiyo’s research included non-English department students from universities in Indonesia (Sumatra Island) and was based on a questionnaire on activities of learning English inside and outside the classroom (2016, p. 1). The study showed that talking to friends in English (no. 1), listening and watching TV, and using English with foreigners were the most helpful activities to learn English outside the classroom, while reading was found the least preferred (Sulistiyo, 2016, p. 19–20). These results are not in line with most of others, since both productive (mostly speaking) and receptive activities are included in order to learn English outside of classroom, but on the other hand, it is not known how frequently the students actually used them, because even though they marked them as useful, it does not say whether they actually personally learned through these activities.

However, speaking was emphasised in the research by Lee, Browne and Kusumoto (2011) that used language contact profiles of students in one Japanese university. The university is in quite a unique situation, because a half of its students are Japanese and the other half international. Therefore, the research results do not seem surprising, since many students reported practicing speaking in English outside the classroom on the campus, while the students living outside of the campus did not engage in out-of-class speaking activities (Lee et al., 2011, p. 15).

In Moncrief’s research in Finland, “[r]eading, watching television and movies and speaking English were the most frequently mentioned ways in which students developed their English language skills, with writing being the least frequent activity” (Moncrief, 2011, p. 111). The answers provided by research participants that included types of activities are listed in terms of frequency of mention and grouped as follows:

- Reading (books, magazines)
- Watching/ listening (TV, movies [without subtitles], radio)
- Speaking (with foreigners, exchange students, friends, boyfriend or girlfriend, tourists, relatives)
- Personal (travel (and/ or study abroad) and games (video))
- Internet (unspecified) (Facebook, Internet TV and radio)
- Professional (job)
- Writing (email, chat)
- Don't use outside of academic setting. (Moncrief, 2011, p. 113)

Even though the first two places in terms of frequency of out-of-class activities are dedicated to receptive skill practice, speaking (a productive skill) is quite high as well. According to Richards, "it has been observed that young people in northern European countries, such as Finland and Denmark, have good listening skills and are often quite fluent in English compared to their counterparts in countries such as Portugal and Italy" because in Scandinavia films on TV and in the cinemas "are shown in their original language with subtitles, while in many other countries they are dubbed, hence denying young people exposure to comprehensible input in English" (Richards, 2014, p. 2). This might be the reason why watching/listening activities take the second place in the list of the most frequent out-of-class English learning activities in Moncrief's study.

Just like Moncrief's (2011) investigation in Finland, Hyland's research in Hong Kong reveals reading to be the most useful and helpful activity to learn English outside the classroom (Hyland, 2004, p. 189). It also showed that there was "a tendency [of English learners] to focus on those activities which did not involve face-to-face contact, what one could term *private* rather than *public*; using language in their own private domain rather than the public domain" (Hyland, 2004, p. 189). The private learning is seen by Hyland as "less threatening" and "easier for the student to control" (Hyland, 2004, p. 197). It is interesting to point out that watching TV or listening to the radio were perceived as less helpful because they were seen as "potentially relaxing activities" (Hyland, 2004, p. 189).

In contrast, Doyle and Parish did a research on learner preferences for out-of-class activities with what they called motivated students of intermediate level of English in Japan (2012, p. 196). Their investigation

noticed that the learners most frequently preferred "easier, leisure-type approaches – listening to music or songs, watching movies with and without subtitles", while talking to foreigners and/or others who speak English well was less popular (Doyle & Parish, 2012, p. 197–198). In addition, it was found that "the higher the level of the student, the greater the repertoire of ways to learn English" (Doyle & Parish, 2012, p. 200). This may also mean that the higher the language proficiency of students, the bigger the number of skills practiced outside the English classroom. Orhon (2018, p. 12) also came to the same conclusion in his research with students of English in Turkey.

In Taiwan, Guo asked learners of English "to observe and take notes on written English on display" in what was called English Detective Activity (2011, p. 246). The activity improved their vocabulary and "expanded students' awareness of the English language available to them outside the classroom" (Guo, 2011, p. 252). This was a very different research from those that have been discussed here so far, since it aimed not at finding out whether/how students learn English outside their classroom but at showing particular ways in which they can actually do it.

To sum up, different research on out-of-classroom English language learning show that students usually focus on receptive rather than productive skills, since their activities include reading on the Internet, watching films with or without subtitles, and listening to music. Depending on the country, students may have different opportunities to practice spoken English outside of their classroom. Therefore, productive skills are often not focused on by the students equally.

This study aims to investigate how Lithuanian university upper-intermediate level students learn and use English outside their classroom, since research in this area in Lithuania is non-existent.

## **Methodology**

The present study will investigate how out-of-classroom English language learning activities of Lithuanian university students fits in the context of the previously discussed research, since it aims at investigating how



Lithuanian university students learn and use English outside the classroom.

A pilot study on out-of-classroom English language learning was conducted with nine English B2 students at Vytautas Magnus University in May 2019. The students filled out a survey on their out-of-class English language learning using a survey tool on the Internet. The participants of the pilot study chose the activities they used and explained how they helped them to learn English but did not indicate how frequently they engaged in those activities, since they were not asked to. In the light of received responses, the survey was improved in terms of the frequency of usage of the chosen activities, as it could be important to the study, and administered to forty-seven English B2 students at Vytautas Magnus University in the fall semester of 2019.

The hypothesis of the study was that Lithuanian university students most frequently participated in out-of-class English language learning activities that involved receptive rather than productive language skills. A variety of research in Asia has confirmed it (Sargsyan & Kurghinyan, 2016; Tantarangsee et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2011), but in Finland, which is culturally closer to Lithuania, the students improve both receptive and productive skills almost equally frequently outside of their classroom (Moncrief, 2011).

The questionnaire was of two parts: one on demographic data (e.g. sex, study cycles, etc.), and the other one on 17 activities of learning English outside the classroom. The participants were asked to choose the ways which help them to learn English outside of a classroom, explain how they were helpful to them (which skills were improved) and indicate how often they engage in these activities. The list of activities was provided because it is useful: "a questionnaire could act as an awareness-raising instrument for informing learners of a broader range of ways to learn outside class" (Doyle & Parish, 2012, p. 199). The activities were not numbered and appeared with a box to provide space for explanations on the usefulness of these activities. Every activity has a separate question about the frequency of use and a box to indicate the frequency (the options for frequency were not given).

Of 47 students, 85.1% were Lithuanian female students while 14.9% were male students. Most of the respondents, 95.7% to be precise,

were in their first study cycle (most of the bachelor's degree students were freshmen (83%) and sophomore (12.8%), but none of the juniors and seniors participated in the study), while master's students involved in the research comprised only 4.3%. Of these students, 70.2% were 18–19 years old, 23.4% were 20–21 years old, 4.3% were 22–23 years old, and only 2.1% were over 23 years old. The students were studying English as an obligatory study subject for non-English department students.

## Results and Discussion

The research was planned to be qualitative rather than quantitative, since except for the part of the questionnaire on demographic information, the questions were open-ended. However, in the analysis, it was possible to observe certain tendencies that could be presented in numbers, especially in relation to the frequency of certain English language learning activities outside the classroom.

The results of this study are in line with many others that were conducted in other countries and discussed here earlier, as they showed that students focused on receptive rather than productive skills outside of their English classroom. The research participants in the present study often knew the benefits of certain out-of-classroom English language learning activities, but it did not mean that they actually engaged in these activities. The most popular frequently used and the least frequently used out-of-classroom activities will now be discussed (they can be seen in Table 1).

**Table 1**

*The Most Popular Activities in English Outside the Classroom*

<b>Activities in English outside the classroom</b>	<b>Percentage of students engaging in them every day</b>
Using social media	over 87%
Listening to music/ the radio	around 77%
Reading books, magazines, blogs, etc.	over 36%
Watching films, TV shows, the news, etc.	over 25.5%

The most frequent out-of-classroom English language learning activity was related to the use of social media, since more than 87% of all research participants used it every day. As indicated by the research participants, by using social media they mostly improve their vocabulary and sometimes grammar. Here are some examples of their explanations (language here and elsewhere is not corrected, except for spelling) provided by different research participants:

**Table 2**

*Social Media and Skills It Improves*

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"Social media helps me to expand my vocabulary and my slang knowledge."
"This is also good for my vocabulary, grammar improvement."
"Instagram. Making posts helps to work on grammar, reading posts helps to expand vocabulary."
"That helps me in discovering always new words and ways of saying."

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However, the ways how the students use social media in the learning of English outside the classroom are rather passive, since they are related to following famous people who speak English. Here are some examples:

**Table 3**

*Activities on Social Media*

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"I've subscribed to quite a few pages and people on social media, they are usually using English in their posts, so it helps me to find out new things, new ways of expressing yourself."
"Following celebrities or famous pages that use English to communicate with people all across the world."
"I follow a lot of foreigners on Facebook or Instagram. So I'm always surrounded by their thoughts in English."
"I am following some famous people on Instagram who speak in English and post photos with their opinion about something as well as post stories where they are talking in English so I can hear native people speaking."
"I follow a lot of English pages there."
"Seeing and using the same words every day in my Facebook page helps me to understand and remember the words I didn't know before."
"Most of the information on social platforms I see is in English."

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Some of these explanations of how social media helps to learn English refer to situations when students surround themselves with English, which in turn helps to improve their English skills.

The second frequent activity was listening to music or the radio or singing in English. Almost 77% of English B2 students did this every day, while over 8.5 % did this often. In other words, over 85.5% improved some of their English skills this way. Usually listening, pronunciation and vocabulary were improved this way although some other skills were indicated at times as well. The examples of explanations are the following:

**Table 4**

*Listening to Music or the Radio or Singing in English*

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"I learn the lyrics and it helps me to expand my vocabulary."
"It helps me to remember various words."
"Listening to music and singing helps to pronounce words and helps to learn new words."
"It helps me to find out a lot of new words and to improve my pronunciation skills."
"I can learn new word and improve my listening."

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The third frequent activity was watching films, TV shows, the news, etc. with or without subtitles. Over 25.5% of respondents did this every day, approximately 15% – once a week, over 6% – always did this, almost 11% – often, over 8.5% – several times a week, and only over 6% never did this. Thus, around 66% engaged in such watching activities and improved their vocabulary and listening/ pronunciation or even spelling, if they watched films with subtitles, at the same time. Some examples of provided explanations are given below:

**Table 5**

*Films, TV Shows, the News, etc. with or without Subtitles*

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"In my opinion, it helps me to enrich my vocabulary and learn new phrases."
"It helps to expand vocabulary and fix spelling."
"This improves listening skills."
"It helps me to find out a lot of new words and to improve my pronunciation skills."

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The next popular activity was travelling to English speaking countries or other countries. Over 40% did this once or twice a year, but over 4% did this rarely, while over 23% had never travelled abroad. However, those who had, usually said they had improved their speaking in English and sometimes vocabulary:

**Table 6***Learning English while Travelling*


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"Well travelling helps you to learn how to speak fluently, because when you watch films or listen to music you don't talk. Travelling helps you to make sentences in your head a little bit faster than you are used to."
"It helps me to practice English by talking with foreign people."
"It helps me to improve my speaking skills."
"Going to English-speaking countries just makes me learn words that people that live there use daily, and daily slang, which I won't be able to learn anywhere else."

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It seems that the participants of this research had very different opportunities to travel abroad. Therefore, the improvement of English skills using this way of out-of-classroom language learning varied greatly depending on financial and other possibilities.

The last most popular activity was reading books, magazines, blogs, etc. in English, which was indicated as an everyday activity by more than 36% of students, while approximately 15% read in English several times a week. Usually vocabulary was learned while reading:

**Table 7***Learning English while Reading*


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"Reading books - I can improve my vocabulary and learn useful expressions."
"Usually I read blogs which help me to learn new words and some kind of phrases."
"I can find out quite a few new words."
"I like to read blogs, often I find new or unusual[...] words. It helps me to improve my English vocabulary."

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Other activities that the questionnaire listed were not popular in terms of learning English outside the classroom. Over 38% never and almost 15% rarely communicated with native speakers of English, while only over 8.5% did this every day. Almost 32% never and over 19% rarely made foreign friends. It also meant that they did not practice spoken or written English through communication with other people in English, and their communication in English was limited to their English classroom. However, those who did communicate with native speakers of English learned new vocabulary, grammar and improved their communication skills, but if this communication was online, grammar, vocabulary and writing skills were improved:

**Table 8**

*Communicating with Native Speakers of English*

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"This helps me to learn writing like native speakers of English do, also this is good for vocabulary, grammar."
"I believe that talking with people online in English is the best way to learn English."
"It helps me not to forget my speaking skills, makes me search for new words and learn them."
"It helps me practice using grammar and new sentence structures."

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Sometimes speaking with friends or other people in English even though they can speak your native language can serve as a way to practice English. Nevertheless, over 38% had never done this outside their English classroom, while almost 15% did this sometimes, almost 11% – rarely, over 8.5% – several times a week, and only over 6% – often. Those who did speak with other Lithuanians in English explained how this was helpful as follows:

**Table 9**

*Communicating with Non-native Speakers of English*

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"It helps to improve communication skills, because it's sometimes hard to think fast in English, so it helps to improve that."
"I can learn some new words from my friends, or he can correct me if I am saying something wrong so I can learn from my mistakes."
"We can improve English speaking skills together."
"This improves our talking [=speaking] and pronunciation skills."

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The out-of-class English language learning activities the learners found helpful may have depended not only on students' interests but also on "differing demographic variables" (Orhon, 2018, p. 11). At VMU, the research participants had great opportunities to practice speaking English with students from almost all over the world, not only with other Lithuanian students. The question to ask was whether the students were actually interested in this and used the opportunities they were provided with. This research showed that many research participants either had not discovered these opportunities yet or simply did not use them.

Unlike listening to music, which was a popular out-of-classroom English language learning activity, listening to audiobooks or podcasts in English was not popular, since almost 47% had never done this, almost

13% rarely did this, almost 11% did this once a month, and approximately 11% did this once a week. Naturally, those who did listen usually improved their listening skills and sometimes vocabulary:

**Table 10**

*Listening to Audiobooks or Podcasts in English*

"It helps me to improve my listening skills."
"You can hear how native speakers say certain words."
"It improves your listening skills and helps you understand other people in English."
"It helps me to learn new words from different subjects."

According to Aydın, podcasts are "authentic speech recordings [...] posted on web sites" and "create various opportunities for language learners," since "learners can listen to recorded podcasts as authentic listening input" (Aydın, 2014, p. 404). However, the participants of this research were not in favour of this out-of-classroom English language learning activity.

Changing the language of one's phone/tablet computer/personal computer seemed to be an easy way to have more exposure to English, but over 40% of students had never done this, while only over 21% always did this. It helped them learn English vocabulary related to phones and computers:

**Table 11**

*Changing the Language of Electronic Devices*

"It is one of the easiest ways how to improve vocabulary for me."
"It helps me to improve my vocabulary."
"It helps to expand vocabulary, to understand words of technical themes."
"It helps to learn new words."

According to Aydın, "Technological advances can increase opportunities for language learners, with more possibilities of being exposed to the linguistic input both in the classroom and outside of formalized instruction" (Aydın, 2014, p. 400). However, using English language learning applications was marked by over 72% students as the activity they had never used outside the classroom to learn English, even though the research participants could

be referred to as digital natives who had grown up with technologies, while others used them rarely or sometimes. The applications that they did use were the following: Duolingo, Quizlet, and Memrise.

Almost 77% of research participants indicated that they had never played video games in English. In contrast, this was a very popular activity in Sweden (Henry, 2014), where many male students practiced different English skills this way. The majority of the participants in this research were female students, which may have contributed to such a low popularity. In addition, the age of research participants may also have been an important factor which led to the mentioned result. Those participants who did play video games mentioned such games as Minecraft, Counter-strike, Age of Empires, and Life is Strange. They improved their vocabulary and communication skills while communicating with other players while playing these games.

One more activity of low popularity was related to online discussion forums on various topics, since almost 77% had never joined such forums in English, while only over 2% did this every day and over 6% did this rarely. By joining various discussion forums the research participants usually said they improved their vocabulary, reading and writing skills, but only a small number of students did it. Furthermore, subscribing to a word of the day in various webpages in English was the third least popular, since over 87% of the research participants had never done this, and only approximately 13% had tried this English learning activity that helped to learn new vocabulary.

The second least frequent English activity outside the classroom was joining a language club. Over 91% had never engaged in English club activities. VMU does have one such club, but as the majority of the research participants were first year students, they had not yet had the chance to join it and hopefully will in the future. The same reason could be given to explain why almost 77% of the participants had never attended cultural events/lectures/seminars/talks in English. In their answers many students explained that they would definitely attend such events in English in the future. The least popular out-of-classroom activities are presented in the table below.



**Table 12***The Least Popular Out-of-classroom Activities in English*

<b>Activities in English outside the classroom</b>	<b>Percentage of students who never engage in them</b>
Communicating with native speakers of English	around 32%
Speaking with friends or other people in English even though they can speak your native language	over 38%
Listening to audiobooks and podcasts	almost 47%
Changing the language of your phone/ tablet computer/ personal computer	over 40 %
Playing (video) games	almost 77%
Joining discussion forums	almost 77%
Subscribing to a word of the day	over 87%
Joining a language club	over 91%

Studying abroad or in a study programme taught in English in Lithuania can also help to learn English, but only five students (out of forty-seven) had studied in such programmes, while only two students had studied abroad (e.g. in summer camps, etc.). This was the least frequently chosen out-of-classroom English language learning activity, but this might change in the future, since most of the research participants were first and second year students at VMU.

Other ways of English language learning outside the classroom that were not mentioned in the questionnaire but the students used were living in a foreign country, online courses, speaking with themselves, and playing board games in English. Moreover, there were English language learning activities that were not mentioned in the questionnaire and the students had not used yet but would like to. These were working abroad, and reading food and other product labels written in English.

Despite the research findings, it is important to point out that they have limitations. Even though the research participants were Vytautas Magnus University students, 83% of them were freshmen and had brought their out-of-classroom English language learning habits from their high schools, so the university had had very little to do with them. Only further research into the topic could reveal whether studying at university has

significant impact on studying English outside the classroom and the habits change. For example, this could be investigated if the same students participated in a research like this again when they are in the second year of their studies (A1–C1 levels of English are usually studied during the first two years of studies at Vytautas Magnus University).

### **Conclusion**

In five most popular and frequent out-of-classroom English language learning activities, VMU students of English B2 usually improve their vocabulary, while the second often improved skill is listening, which is known as a receptive skill. However, even though listening to the English language is frequently practiced, not all activities are equally popular, since unlike listening to music, listening to audiobooks and podcasts is never practiced by almost a half of all the research participants.

Speaking and writing, known as productive skills, are very rarely mentioned by the participants of this research, as the activities they frequently engage themselves in are rather passive (except for travelling), for instance, watching films, listening to music or the radio, socializing not face to face but on social media, reading books, magazines and other resources. Communication with native speakers of English and making foreign friends are not popular out-of-classroom activities even though they could help improve speaking skills. In addition, speaking in English with friends who know their native language is also not popular, so speaking is not often practiced either. In other words, speaking, as a productive skill, seems to be the most undeveloped skill outside the classroom. Writing is mentioned from time to time, but there is no single specific activity indicated by the students that helps them to improve it.

It is also important to pay attention to the use of technologies in the learning of English outside the classroom. Almost three quarters of all research participants have never used English language learning applications, almost the same number of students has never joined online discussion forums and even more students have never subscribed to a word of the day on any webpage. Therefore, it is possible to assume that even though most

of the research participants have grown up with technologies, such as mobile/smart phones and computers, they do not use them for learning English outside the classroom. It is also possible to conclude that most of the activities that the research participants engage in outside the classroom are related to popular culture and their free time activities that are fun and entertaining rather than consciously chosen with the purpose of learning English, even though some of them do improve certain English skills.

Knowing which activities students engage in outside the classroom and learn English at the same time is helpful to their teachers, since it provides ideas not only how teachers can guide their students' out-of-class language learning activities but also how they could bring more out-of-classroom activities into the classroom to make learning more authentic, engaging and motivating. As speaking and writing are not often practiced outside the classroom, more focus should be dedicated to them in university classrooms. Moreover, since students usually expand their vocabulary outside the classroom, it should be used in speaking and writing activities in the classroom in order to keep it active.

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### **Appendix: Questionnaire**

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Age:

- 18-19
- 20-21
- 22-23
- Over 23

Study cycle:

- Bachelor
- Master

Year of studies:

- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th

OUT-OF-CLASS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING  
AMONG UPPER-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL STUDENTS

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*You will find a list of ways of learning English outside the classroom. Please choose only those that you use and explain how they help you to learn English and how often you use them (the questions were not numbered but each question had a separate answer box).*

Reading books, magazines, newspapers, blogs, etc. Which ones? How do they help you to learn English?

How often do you do this?

Using social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you do this?

Communicating with native speakers of English (online). Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you do this?

Making foreign friends. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you do this?

Listening to audiobooks or podcasts in English. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you do this?

Watching films, TV shows, the news, etc. with or without subtitles in English. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you watch films, TV shows, the news, etc. with or without subtitles in English?

Listening to music/ the radio or singing in English. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you listen to music/ the radio or sing in English?

Changing the language of your phone/ tablet computer/ personal computer into English. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you make such changes?

Subscribing to a word of the day in various webpages in English. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you learn those words?

Using English language learning applications. Which ones? Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you do this?

Travelling to English-speaking countries or other countries. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you do this?

Playing (video)games. Which ones? How do they help you to learn English?

How often do you do this?

Joining a language club. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you participate in their activities?

Joining online discussion forums in English on various topics that interest you. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you do this?

Attending cultural events/ lectures/ seminars/ talks in English by visiting lecturers/ professors at VMU. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you do this?

Sometimes speaking with your friends in English even though they can speak your native language. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

How often do you do this?

Studying abroad or in a study programme taught in English but in your own country. Please explain how this helps you to learn English.

Is there a way that you use to learn English but it has not been mentioned here? Please write it in the box.

Please indicate other ways of learning English that you know but you have not used them yet.

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**ANGLŲ KALBOS MOKYMASIS NE AUDITORIJOJE:  
PAŽENGUSIŲJŲ LYGIO STUDENTŲ ATVEJIS**

**Santrauka.** Šiame straipsnyje aptariamas tyrimas, kuriuo siekta sužinoti, kaip universiteto studentai mokosi anglų kalbos ne auditorijoje. Tyrimas atliktas 2019 m. rugsėjį, o jame dalyvavo 47 VDU studentai, besimokantys bendrosios anglų kalbos B2 lygiu. Tiriamieji užpildė internetiniu įrankiu parengtą klausimyną, kuriame pažymėjo veiklas, padedančias jiems mokytis anglų kalbos ne universiteto auditorijoje, ir paaiškino, koku būdu ir kaip dažnai tos veiklos padeda tobulinti anglų kalbos įgūdžius. Rezultatai rodo, kad dauguma veiklų, kurios padeda studentams mokytis anglų kalbos ne universiteto auditorijoje, yra susijusios su populiariąja kultūra ir laisvalaikio leidimo būdais, o ne specialiomis veiklomis, skirtomis mokytis. Ne auditorijoje labiausiai tobulinamas žodynas ir klausymas (supratimo gebėjimai), o kalbėjimo ir rašymo anglų kalba įgūdžiai nelabai tobulinami arba visai netobulinami, todėl jiems daugiau dėmesio turėtų būti skiriama auditorijoje.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** anglų kalbos mokymasis; mokymasis ne auditorijoje; anglų kalbos įgūdžių tobulinimas; VDU.