



## An Investigation of Out-of-Class Language Activities of Tertiary-Level EFL Learners<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The area of language teaching and learning is constantly changing due to emerging educational, technological and social trends or innovations all around the world, so there is no universally correct way to learn a language for everyone. That's why it is not possible for a classroom context to address everyone's needs sufficiently during the class hour, so learners must carry on their learning beyond the classroom as well. The present study seeks to explore language activities that EFL learners are engaged outside the class in order to support their language learning process and their attitude towards out-of-class language learning. A total of 109 students who had different proficiency levels and who were studying at the School of Foreign Languages, Pamukkale University participated in the study. Data was collected through a questionnaire. The results of the analysis revealed that learners were mostly engaged in listening and watching activities which were considered as the most helpful activities as well. While no significant differences with respect to gender were found in learners' out-of-class language learning attitudes, the type of language education (compulsory or elective) and language proficiency level were determined to be effective. In conclusion, it can be recommended that out-of-class language activities carried out most frequently and considered most helpful by learners are incorporated into curriculums of language teaching institutions.

**Keywords:** out-of-class language activities, out-of-class language learning, learner autonomy

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## Introduction

In the era of globalization, everything is globalizing, from economies of countries to the social lives of people. In this rapidly changing world, English is also becoming a global language that is spoken by millions of people all over the world for different reasons, which makes it the most widely used lingua franca. Therefore, in many parts of the world people are struggling to learn the English language through formal or informal education no matter how old they are. The area of language teaching and learning is constantly changing due to trends or innovations appearing in educational, technological and social areas around the world and countries are trying to keep up with these innovations. Turkey is one of the countries that experience frequent shifts in its language education policy since language education is not very satisfying. Students begin learning English at primary school and keep learning until they graduate from high school; however, they still cannot use it efficiently. The Ministry of National Education in Turkey (MONE) has taken some initiatives to improve this situation like designing curriculums, revising teaching methods, providing course materials to students, providing in-service training to teachers (Sarıçoban, 2012). Unfortunately, the results have been disappointing yet.

In addition to all these works carried out by the MONE, there is one more thing to be considered for language education to be successful, which is the autonomy of learners, described as “a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action” (Little, 1991, p.3). Learners must be autonomous in order to reach proficiency in a second or foreign language, because they have a huge responsibility for their language learning. Especially in a country like Turkey, where language learners do not have practice opportunities outside their classrooms and their learning is mostly limited to classrooms, it is a must for learners to carry on their learning individually outside the class by conducting different language activities to reach a high level in the language they are learning. At this point, the concept of out-of-class learning, which are defined as “*any kind of learning that takes place outside the classroom and involves self-instruction, naturalistic learning or self-directed naturalistic learning*” (Benson 2001, p.62). Especially in this technology era, in which everything is within our reach, learners have many opportunities to support their learning process outside the class.

Also, since each individual has many differences in many ways, there is no universally correct way to learn a language for everyone. It is not possible for a classroom context to address everyone’s needs sufficiently in the class, so learners must carry on their learning beyond the classroom as well. Another reason why classroom teaching or learning is not enough for someone to learn a language fully is the authenticity issues. No matter what a teacher does in class, it is somewhat limited in terms of authenticity that can be achieved in class. However, learners must need exposure to real language use in authentic situations, and out-of-class language learning (OCLL) has a huge role in providing authenticity to learners. They can see examples of authentic language use outside the class thanks to multimedia tools or projects. Another essential thing is learners should see learning as a lifelong process and be equipped with necessary skills to continue their learning beyond the borders of a formal educational institution, only in this way they can be productive members of the society (Benson, 2001). Therefore, learners must be taught how they can go on their learning when there is no teacher around them. English as a foreign language (EFL) learners have a variety of out-of-class language activities like watching TV programs, videos, and DVDS, listening to music, surfing the internet, reading books, newspapers and magazines, speaking with natives or non-natives on the internet etc. (Hyland, 2004; Lai and Gu, 2011).

Many studies have been carried out in the literature on learners' out-of-class language learning. Learners' beliefs have been a focal theme in much research. Hyland (2004) investigated the out-of-class English language learning activities done by student teachers and their beliefs regarding these activities in Hong Kong through questionnaires, interviews and learner diaries. The results indicated that most of the students spent considerable time studying and practicing English beyond the classroom, but much of this time was devoted to receptive activities like listening and reading. Also, the students preferred to be engaged more private activities instead of public activities involving face-to-face contact. Another research conducted on learner beliefs is by Manfred (2012) who aimed to examine learners' beliefs about language learning and out-of-class language-learning activities of young adult ESL learners in Hong Kong. Manfred (2012) put forward that learners are instrumentally motivated to keep learning outside the class in order to learn English well, and activities for receptive skills were more popular than the ones for productive skills, which is similar to the findings of Hyland (2004). Maros and Saad (2016) very recently carried out a study with 250 international students in Malaysia in order to investigate their strategies outside the class to maintain their language learning process and concluded that students mostly watched TV programmes or movies and made use of technology-related tools to develop their proficiency in English.

Another recurring theme in studies found in the literature on OCLL is autonomy. Since OCLL and autonomy are very close concepts, their relation was examined in a variety of studies. Moncrief (2011) conducted a study with 37 students enrolled in advanced English Academic and Professional Skills courses to investigate how students continue learning English autonomously outside of a classroom setting through two questionnaires. The results of the study indicated that autonomy is significant in motivating learners and provides them with flexibility and personalized way of learning. Guo (2011) aimed to explore the effect of out-of-class English Detective Activity on students' language awareness in Thailand. The results indicated that students' awareness of the English language that is available to them outside the class and their degree of autonomy in learning increased. Chan, Spratt, and Humphrey's (2002) study conducted on autonomous learning with 508 undergraduate students at university indicated that learners most frequently took part in independent out-of-class activities using English and were mostly involved in sending emails, surfing the net and watching movies.

Another closely-related area to OCLL which is examined frequently is proficient in English. Studies conducted on out-of-class language activities suggest that they contribute to learners' proficiency in different ways. Bialystock (1981) conducted a study investigating the factors that contributed to learners' language proficiency and concluded that OCLL, especially in communicative situations, in the target language were helpful for the development of learners' language skills and enabled learners to carry out the language tasks successfully. Chan (2016) carried out a study in order to explore how students can use popular culture and out-of-class learning to contribute to their language learning. As a result of the study, it was revealed that OCLL and proficiency were interrelated and participants primarily did self-initiated and interest-driven out-of-class learning and so increased their school performance.

### **Purpose of the study**

The study aims to explore which language activities learners are mostly engaged in outside the class, which language activities they find most useful for their language learning process and also how they feel about out-of-class language learning. While examining their attitudes towards out-of-class language learning, the effect of gender and type of their language learning (compulsory or elective language course) is also investigated.

### **Significance of the study**

The present study aims to investigate out-of-class language activities of tertiary-level EFL learners across differing language proficiency levels. In Turkey, there are lot of studies examining classroom contexts in the literature in order to understand the failure experienced in the field of language teaching to students, but not much is known about what learners do outside the classroom to improve their languages. Knight (2007) suggests that more research should be conducted in order to provide a better understanding of learners' out-of-class English learning. This study aims to shed light on the issue of out-of-class language learning, which is of paramount importance for Turkish learners. The context of this study was chosen as the preparatory class learners on purpose, since it is believed that learners who have intensive language education at preparatory class at university must study beyond the classroom in order to support their learning process, because in-class learning hours are not sufficient most of the time. Very few studies in the literature provide information about the relation between proficiency level and learners' OCLL attitudes. To contribute to this area of research, an analysis was conducted between them. Also, no information was found with respect to the relation between the type of English study (compulsory or elective) and OCLL attitudes. With an attempt to fill this gap in the literature, these two variables were examined in detail as well.

### **Research questions**

- Q1. What language activities are mostly conducted outside the class by the students to support their language learning?
- Q2. Which of these language activities are considered most helpful by the students?
- Q3. Does the frequency of out-of-class language activities that students carry out differ based on gender?
- Q4. Does the type of English study, compulsory or elective, affect the students' out-of-class language learning behaviour?
- Q5. Do the students' out-of-class language learning attitudes differ as students' language proficiency increases?

### **Methodology**

The present study investigated the out-of-class language activities carried out by tertiary-level EFL learners with differing proficiency levels and the OCLL attitudes of these learners. Data of the study were collected quantitatively through a questionnaire.

### **Setting and participants**

The study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages at a medium-size state university in the 2016-2017 academic year. The English Preparatory Program of the school lasts one year and comprises four modules each of which carries on for eight weeks in an academic year. Learners are administered a proficiency exam at the beginning of the academic year and placed in a level according to their exam results. Six language levels including beginner, elementary, low-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate and low-advanced are taught in an academic term. However when they start the academic year,

students are placed in a class among the three levels -beginner, elementary, low-intermediate-according to their exam results, and they proceed to an upper level every eight weeks if they are successful in the ending-module exam for that specific module. If students are able to pass the intermediate class, they have an option to continue their language education in upper-intermediate and then low-advanced classes. If they do not prefer to study English more, they can graduate from the School of Foreign Languages with an intermediate-level degree in English and proceed to their own departments. Two types of learners study at the preparatory program in general; the first group study English because they cannot pass the proficiency exam but knowing English at intermediate level required by their departments while the second group prefer to study English for a year themselves, not as a requirement.

A total of 109 EFL students aged 18-23 ( $M= 18.88$ ,  $SD= 1.09$ ) and enrolled at the School of Foreign Languages took part in the study. Among them, 54% of the participants (59) were male while 46% of them (50) were female. The participants of this study included learners from a range of disciplines with differing English proficiency-levels. A total of 43 participants were elementary level students, 31 of them were low-intermediate learners and 35 of them were at the intermediate level. All the participants had been studying English at the School of Foreign Languages at Pamukkale University for four months; therefore, they all had some exposure to English and must have been doing English studies outside the class when the study took place. When the disciplines of the participants were examined, it was revealed that the 70% of the students (76) were studying at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and 30% of them (33) were enrolled at the Faculty of Engineering. Another significant point about the participants is the type of their English studies that is whether they study English compulsorily or electively. The descriptive analysis indicated that 70% of the participants were studying English compulsorily while 30% of them were learning English electively. The participants were not selected among the researcher's own classes to ensure reliability. They were included in the study through convenience sampling method.

### **Instrumentation**

Data was collected through a questionnaire developed by the researcher after revising the questionnaires used in similar studies (Hyland, 2004; Pearson, 2004; Moncrief, 2011; Manfred, 2012; Ferdous, 2013). The questionnaire had four different sections (see Appendix). The first section "Personal Information Form" seeks to obtain demographic information of the participants. Students are asked to answer some demographic questions with respect to their language proficiency, gender, age, departments, whether they have a personal laptop and whether they learn English compulsorily or not. The second section includes 20 items and investigates the learners' OCLL attitudes to support their language learning process. This section of the questionnaire had five-point likert scale, requiring participants to respond to each of the 20 statements considering their own out-of-class language learning and to decide whether they "strongly agree", "agree", "not sure", "disagree", and "strongly disagree" with the statements. The assignment of the points to the answers of the statements was as follows: "strongly disagree" weighed one point, "disagree" weighed two points, "not sure" weighed three points, "agree" weighed four points, and "strongly agree" weighed five points. Negatively-worded items were scored reversely.

The next section of the questionnaire comprises 19 items and aims to reveal the language activities that learners are mostly engaged with outside the class. This section had four-point likert scale and the participants were asked to indicate how often they carried out each language activity outside the class by rating it as "never", "sometimes", "often", and "always" which were assigned one point, two points, three points and four points, respectively. The final section of the questionnaire includes the same activities in the second

part; however this part aims to reveal how helpful each of these activities is considered by the learners. This section of the questionnaire had also four-point likert scale from “not helpful at all” to “very helpful” where learners rated the usefulness of language activities outside the class. Assigning points to the answers were done the same as the third section, from one point to four points.

In order to ensure reliability, the questionnaire was piloted by the researcher with 14 students with similar features, and the Cronbach’s alpha of .930 obtained for the overall questionnaire indicates a very high reliability. The reliability analysis was performed for each section as well, and Cronbach’s alpha was found as .711 for the second section, which indicates a good internal consistency, .878 for the third section indicating a high internal consistency, and .926 for the final section indicating a very high internal consistency.

### **Procedures for data collection and analysis**

The data were collected in December 2016. Questionnaires were administered to the students taking part in the study by their class teachers in normal class hours. Although 130 questionnaires were distributed, only 109 of them were included in the study since some of the students did not want to attend the study or some of the students did not complete the questionnaire after the first section. Data were analyzed by means of SPSS 16. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the first and the second research questions. An independent samples t-test was conducted to answer the third and fourth research questions. Finally, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to answer the fifth research question.

Tests of normality were conducted to reveal whether the data was normally distributed or not. Assessing normality was done in several stages. Firstly, descriptive statistics, especially the mean values of the questionnaire (M=2.846) and 5% trimmed mean value (M=2.844) were examined. The difference between these two values was not significant at all. Then, standard deviation (SD= .38) was examined, and it was found normal. So it can be stated that the scores were not far from the mean value, which is a sign of normality. Secondly, results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov ( $p>0.05$ ) and Shaphiro-Wilk ( $p>0.05$ ) statistics were analyzed; Table 1 indicates that both values were higher than the significance value indicating normal distribution.

Table 1  
Test of Normality

<b>Kolmogorov-Smirnov</b>	<b>Shapiro-Wilk</b>
.20	.70

However, it is important to look at other findings to check whether the data is normally distributed or not like mean value, %5 trimmed value, standard deviation, histogram and Normal Q Q plot (displayed in Figure 1. below). The scores appear to be reasonably normally distributed in histogram, which is also supported by the results of normal QQ plot. The scores in the line looks pretty straight suggesting a normal distribution as well. In conclusion, when all the normality tests were analyzed, it was revealed that data was normally distributed; therefore it required the use of parametric tests.

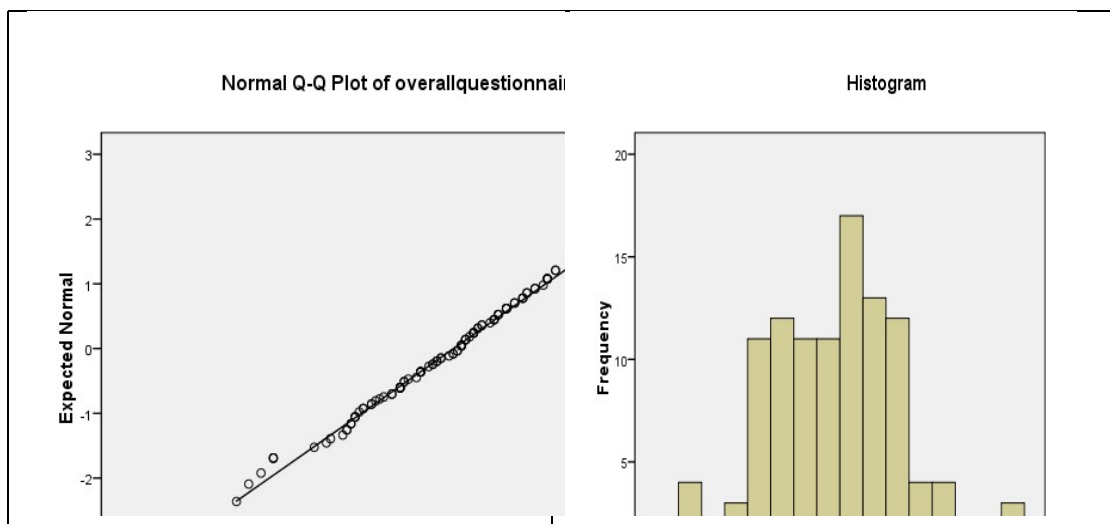


Figure 1. Normal Q Q plot and Histogram for the questionnaire

### Findings

Findings of the present study are presented in the same order with the research questions.

#### *Most frequent out-of-class language activities*

This study initially aimed to investigate which language activities are done most by the participants of this study outside the classroom. Descriptive statistics revealed that students mostly listen to songs in English. Descriptive statistics are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequency of the out-of-class language activities done by the students

	<b>Language activities</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
1	read newspaper and magazines in English	109	1,65	,750
2	read academic books and articles in English	109	1,56	,738
3	read novels, comics and short stories in English	109	2,08	,873
4	write e-mails in English	109	2,32	1,079
5	personal writing in English	109	2,22	,985
6	write articles and blog in English	109	1,50	,812
7	write in English in different websites	109	2,22	1,022
8	read news online in English	109	2,32	1,062
9	watch TV programs, videos or movies in English	109	3,00	1,089
10	discuss films or books with friends in English	109	2,06	1,074
11	watch films in English at the cinema	109	2,41	1,099
12	listen to news in English	109	1,94	,993
13	listen to songs in English	109	3,20	1,034
14	speak with fellow students in English	109	2,28	,989
15	chat with a native speaker of English	109	1,94	,891
16	do project work with friends in English	109	1,91	,918
17	talk on the phone in English	109	1,59	,760
18	speak with family members in English	109	1,44	,751
19	play video games in English	109	2,42	1,300

As Table 2 illustrates, the frequency of many activities were really low. The mean values of the activities indicate that learners only sometimes carry out many language activities outside the class. The most common activities that are done outside the class include listening to songs in English (M=3.20, SD=1.03) followed by watching TV programs, videos or movies in English (M=3.00, SD=1.08). Table 2 also displays that the least frequent out-of-class language activity that learners were engaged in was speaking with family members in English (M=1.44, SD= .75) followed by write articles of blogs in English (M=1.50, SD=.81). These results show that learners mostly carry out individual activities which do not require face-to-face communication or even communication.

The results also showed that the activities learners carry out very infrequently include the ones where they have to use the language for production, indicating writing and speaking activities. The activities they mostly do include free-time activities to be done in order to spend fun time like watching TV, listening to music, playing computer games, watching films at the cinema. It can be stated that learners are not very interested in language activities specifically targeting only language development like writing articles, reading books or doing project work.

#### *Most helpful out-of-class language activities*

Another objective of this study is to examine how useful the students found OCLL for their learning process. Descriptive statistics revealed that students mostly found the activity of watching TV programs, videos or movies in English as the most useful one for their language learning. Descriptive statistics are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Perceived Helpfulness of the out-of-class language activities

	<b>Language activities</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
1	read newspaper and magazines in English	109	2,93	,900
2	read academic books and articles in English	109	2,94	,965
3	read novels, comics and short stories in English	109	3,04	,881
4	write e-mails in English	109	2,93	,940
5	personal writing in English	109	2,99	,908
6	write articles and blog in English	109	2,61	,999
7	write in English in different websites	109	3,13	,914
8	read news online in English	109	3,18	,935
9	watch TV programs, videos or movies in English	109	3,35	,917
10	discuss films or books with friends in English	109	3,13	,914
11	watch films in English at the cinema	109	3,04	,999
12	listen to news in English	109	3,06	,895
13	listen to songs in English	109	3,28	,840
14	speak with fellow students in English	109	3,05	,896
15	chat with a native speaker of English	109	3,02	,882
16	do project work with friends in English	109	2,64	,918
17	talk on the phone in English	109	2,68	,980
18	speak with family members in English	109	2,54	1,135
19	play video games in English	109	2,83	1,113

As can be seen in Table 3, the students considered many of the activities as helpful for themselves and very few of them as a bit helpful and none of the activities were found “not helpful at all” by the students. The results show that students found ‘watching TV programs,



videos or movies in English' the most helpful activity (M=3.35, SD=.91) followed by listening to songs in English (M=3.28, SD=.84). The least helpful activities include speaking with family members in English (M=2.54, SD=1.13) followed by writing articles or blogs in English (M=2.61, SD=.99). These results indicated that learners found activities which they could take pleasure while carrying out the activity as the most helpful ones. Activities including interaction with others in English were rated as the least helpful activities on the whole. Also, out-of-class writing activities were not favoured by the students as helpful activities.

*Learners' OCLL attitudes*

Learners' OCLL attitudes were explored via a questionnaire of 20 items. When the total OCLL attitudes of all the participants were analyzed, it was seen that the students had positive OCLL attitudes (M=3.43, SD=.49). This result showed that the students were actually involved in OCLL at moderate level.

*Gender effects on students' OCLL attitudes*

The first variable the effect of which on OCLL attitudes was examined was gender. In order to find out whether there was a gender difference in the students' OCLL attitudes, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

OCLL attitudes according to gender

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t value	df	Sig.
OCLL attitudes	Male	59	3,47	,46	.084	883	107	.379
	Female	50	3,38	,52				

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the students' attitudes towards out-of-class language study scores for male and female participants. The results in Table 3 indicate no significant differences between males (M=3,47, SD=.46) and females (M=3.38, SD=.52),  $t(107)=883, p=.379$  (two-tailed).

*The effect of the type of English study on students' OCLL attitudes*

In order to find out whether there was a difference of type of language study in students' attitudes towards language learning to be carried out outside the class, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

OCLL attitudes according to type of language study

	Type	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t value	df	Sig.
OCLL attitudes	Compulsory	76	3,52	,43	.293	2.946	107	.004
	Elective	33	3,22	,57				

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare students' OCLL attitudes for the students studying English at the preparatory school compulsorily and the ones studying electively. The results in Table 5 indicate significant differences between students having compulsory language education (M=3.52, SD=.43) and the ones having elective language education (M=3.22 SD=.57),  $t(107)=-.293$ ,  $p=.004$  (two-tailed) with a moderate effect size of  $r=.28$  (Cohen,1988), reflecting a more positive attitude towards language learning outside the class for the students learning English compulsorily.

*OCLL attitudes according to language proficiency level*

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore possible differences between the students' attitudes towards OCLL at different proficiency levels. There were three groups of participants groups based on their proficiency (group 1: elementary; Group 2: pre-intermediate; Group 3: intermediate). Table 6 illustrate the results of the one-way between-groups analysis of variance.

Table 6  
Group differences in OCLL attitudes

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>OCLL attitudes</b>	Between Groups	4.222	2	2.111	10.079	.000
	Within Groups	22.203	106	.209		
	Total	26.425	108			

As can be seen from Table 6, there are significant differences between the groups in their attitudes towards language study outside the class. A further post hoc Bonferroni test results in Table 7 reveals where the differences appear.

Table 7  
The effect of students' proficiency levels on their OCLL attitudes

	N	M	SD	F	Sig.	Group differences
Elementary	43	3,34	,38	10.079	.000	Ele<Int p<.05
Pre-intermediate	31	3,24	,61			Pre<Int p<.05
Intermediate	35	3,71	,37			
Total	109	3,43	,49			

As Table 7 illustrates, the analysis indicated significant differences ( $F=(2.107)=10.079$ ,  $p=.000$ ) between the groups with a small effect size  $\eta^2=.01$  (Cohen, 1988). In order to find out between which groups the differences were seen, bonferroni post hoc analysis was conducted as illustrated in Table 6. Bonferroni analysis revealed differences between the intermediate learners (M=3.71, SD=.37) and elementary students (M=3.34, SD=.38) and intermediate learners and pre-intermediate learners (M=3.24, SD=.61) on attitudes towards out-of-class language study. The students with the highest attitude mean score were the ones that hold positive attitudes towards studying beyond the classroom walls.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study was set out to investigate out-of-class language activities that EFL learners carry out in order to contribute to their language learning process. The study also attempted to explore any possible type of English study related differences on OCLL attitudes. The primary findings of the research include 1) students were mostly engaged in listening to music in English and watching TV programs, videos or movies in English outside the class; 2) students found watching TV programs, videos or movies in English as the most useful out-of-class activity for their learning process, which was followed by listening to music in English; 3) although there were no gender effects on learners' OCLL attitudes, the type of English study had close relation to their attitudes towards OCLL in favour of the students studying English compulsorily; 4) proficiency level was revealed to affect students' attitudes towards OCLL with a small effect size  $\eta^2 = .01$  (Cohen, 1988) and intermediate students had more positive attitudes towards OCLL than both elementary and pre-intermediate students.

The findings of the study regarding the frequency of OCLL were in line with some other studies many of which were conducted in the context of Hong Kong (Manfred, 2012; Pearson, 2004; Yap, 1998). Manfred (2012) investigated learners' beliefs about language learning and out-of-class language learning activities of young adults ESL learners in Hong Kong and found out that the most popular activities done outside the class included watching films and TV and listening activities (songs, radio, etc.) in addition to reading activities. Another researcher who examined the out-of-class language activities is Yap (1998). The researcher found that rather than productive activities learners mostly preferred reading newspapers and watching TV programs in English. Manfred (2012) also revealed that watching films was the most popular out-of-class language activities. However, the present study revealed contradicting results with some studies in the literature. Hyland (2004) examined student teachers' out-of-class English language learning activities in Hong Kong and suggested that speaking with family members is the most frequently rated activity for out-of-class language studies. This is a very interesting result, since the same activity was rated as the least significant activity in the context of the present study. This could be related to parents' language knowledge in Turkey, or in general the differing demographic variables. Unfortunately many parents do not know English, so it may not be possible for the students to practice within their families. Also, the idea of speaking English with parents can be quite innovative for the students, because many language learners are used to using English only within the boundaries of their classroom as Turkey is not a country where English is required in daily life. However, as Hyland (2004) states the Hong Kong context is quite different in that English is seen as an essential language to succeed in different areas like education, career opportunities, business life etc. The frequency of the activities revealed that learners were mostly engaged in receptive activities but not in productive activities. This finding was also supported by other studies in the literature. In a study conducted in a similar context by Ekşi and Aydın (2013) in order to find out language activities that preparatory school learners are engaged in outside the class, speaking and writing activities were determined to be the least frequent activities carried out by the students.

Similar to the findings of the frequency of out-of-class language learning activities, the same activities –watching TV and listening to music- were found to be the most useful activities respectively and speaking with family members was found to be the least helpful activity. Actually, speaking activities were reported to be one of the activities with low frequency. This could result from the fact that learners' practice opportunities of the speaking skill in the classroom context are very limited. Therefore, they may not know how to practice speaking skill outside the classroom context. This lack of frequency in speaking activities

could also result from the characters of the learners; however since such a construct was not within the scope of the present study, further studies may investigate their relation. Contrary to the findings of the present study, Hyland (2004) determined speaking with family members as the most helpful activity for learners' language learning outside the class.

The results of the present study revealed no significant differences in terms of gender. In a similar study by Ekşi and Aydın (2013), gender was not found to be a significant factor in determining the frequency of out-of-class language activities done by preparatory class learners at a university. Another variable that was examined whether it had any effect on learners' attitudes towards OCLL was the type of English study learners had. The results illustrated students who were learning English compulsorily had higher OCLL related attitudes, suggesting that the ones who were under pressure in order to pass the proficiency exam to start their own departments were more engaged in OCLL compared to the ones learning English as an elective course.

When learners were compared in their attitudes towards OCLL based on their proficiency in English, significant differences were found between elementary and intermediate learners and between pre-intermediate and intermediate learners. As learners' proficiency levels increased, they conducted more OCLL. Intaraprasert (2007) support this finding by suggesting that the more proficient learners were in English, the more they were involved in OCLL. This could mean that since learners' control in the language increased with their proficiency, they could carry out more varied language related learning independently, which may also contribute to their attitude towards OCLL as well. Knight (2007) similarly concluded that as English proficiency of learners increased, so did the amount of using English outside the class or vice versa.

### **Limitations of the study**

The present study has some limitations. Firstly, the research was conducted through only a questionnaire as the main instrumentation. It could have been supported by interviews or learner diaries. The limited number of the participants, 109, from three proficiency levels is the next limitation since it may not represent the whole population.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The results indicated learners had moderate attitudes towards OCLL in general. It was also revealed that as the frequency of OCLL and helpfulness of OCLL increased, learners' OCLL attitudes also enhanced, so they got involved in OCLL more often. It may be plausible to suggest that teachers must make use of these language activities that are favoured by learners most and incorporate them into their curriculum. At this point, teachers may need training in guiding learners for OCLL. In-class and out-of-class materials can also be designed to support learners' learning process. Since class hours are very limited in most preparatory schools in Turkey, it is of paramount importance to guide learners to make the best use of out-of-class language activities they have around them.

### **Further research**

As this study was limited to the use of questionnaires as data collection tools, a further study can include interviews as well to investigate whether learners are engaged in any out-of-class activities, which activities they do outside the class and their reasons more in-depth. Also, learners can be asked to keep learner diaries where they note what they do with respect to their language studies with the duration of the activity for a period of time. This way, a clearer picture can be obtained related to learners' out-of-class studies. In addition, an

experimental study can be conducted to investigate the effect of certain out-of-class language activities that learners carry out beyond the classroom on their learning process and learners' opinions about the activities can be gathered. Also, different variables can be investigated in order to reveal their effects on out-of-class language learning attitudes of learners.

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