

the second-year students at the end of their third semester. The questionnaire consisted of 6 questions which were adapted from Khalil (2018), Le (2013), Joshi (2011) and based on the researchers' teaching experience. Question 1 rated on a 5-point Likert scale ("strongly disagree" = 1, "disagree" = 2, "uncertain" = 3, "agree" = 4, "strongly agree" = 5) was used to find out their perceptions of autonomous English learning outside the classroom. The time they spent on studying English, their self-study forms, study facilities, specific self-study activities, and the problems they encountered were dealt with in questions 2-6. Items in question 5 were rated on another 5-point scale ("never" = 1, "rarely" = 2, "sometimes" = 3, "often" = 4, "always" = 5) to assess the frequency of students' activities. The questionnaire was available in the participants' mother language so that they could have accurate understanding. The collected data was statistically analysed with the help of SPSS 20. When asking the students to complete the questionnaire, the researchers made it clear that all answers would be kept confidential and only used for research purposes.

2. Participants

The sample of the study comprised 330 PTIT second-year students (D17) who were randomly chosen from A1 English groups. By the end of the third semester, PTIT students are required to demonstrate English proficiency at A1 level as described in Common European Framework of Reference. The course books are American English File 1 by Clive Oxenden & Christina Latham-Koenig, Oxford University Press 2008 and Basic Tactics for Listening by Jack C. Richards, Oxford University Press 2003. The total amount of time for English classes in the second and third semesters is 105 hours with 4 hours per week (no English classes in the first semester). At A1 level, students deal with familiar topics such as personal details, family, friends, occupation, accommodation, country, nationality, daily activities, leisure activities, ect. The program consists of activities and exercises enabling students not only to develop basic English language skills for communication purpose but also to form self-study methodology for beginners.

Results and Findings

3. Students' perceptions of learner autonomy in English learning outside the classroom

Table 1. Students' perceptions of learner autonomy in English learning

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. English learning involves a lot of self-study outside the classroom.	4.15	.526
2. A lot of English learning can be done without a teacher.	3.86	.798
3. Students should set goals of their learning.	3.92	.657
4. Students should seek for English self-study materials.	4.08	.265
5. Students should make good use of their free time to study English.	4.09	.726
6. Students should practice English outside the classroom.	4.06	.239

7. Students have to be responsible for finding their own ways of learning English.	3.94	.457
8. Students have to evaluate their progress in learning English.	3.36	.752
Grand mean	3.93	

The grand mean of 3.93 shows that there was a positive attitude towards learner autonomy in English learning. The majority of students showed their agreement or strong agreement with all of the given items. Specifically, the highest percentage of students (95%) agreed that English learning involves a lot of self-study outside the classroom (mean = 4.15). Therefore, they thought that they should make good use of their free time to study English, look for self-study materials and practice English outside the classroom, with means of 4.09, 4.08 and 4.06 respectively. It is notable that the percentage of students shared the opinion about their responsibility for evaluating their progress was the smallest (47%, mean = 3.36). This can be explained that students found it hard to self-assess their proficiency and the teacher could grade their ability more properly.

4. Time for English self-study

Students were asked about the average amount of time spent on studying English outside the classroom per day. The results are presented in the tables below.

Table 2. Average amount of time for English self-study per day

Amount of time	Number of responses	Percentage
Less than 15 minutes	197	59.7
From 15 to 30 minutes	88	26.7
From 30 minutes to 1 hour	38	11.5
More than 1 hour	7	2.1

It can be seen from the table that students did not invest a reasonable amount of time in autonomous English learning. Students who spent an average of less than 15 minutes studying English per day accounted for the largest proportion (59.7%). 26.7% of students confirmed that they studied English from 15 to 30 minutes. Spending from 30 to 60 minutes on this activity was chosen by 38 students (11.5%). And only 7 students (2.1%) reported that they used more than an hour for English per day.

5. Students' work forms

Question 3 was designed to get information about students' work forms outside the classroom.

Table 3. Students' work forms

Work forms	Number of responses	Percentage
Mostly individual work	225	68.1
Mostly pair/ group work	15	4.5
Both forms	90	27.4

68.1% of students chose to study English individually, 4.5% mainly studied with friends, and 27.4% worked in both forms. The above data indicates that most students preferred independent working and studying. However, the characteristic of learning

a foreign language is learning to communicate, so cooperation should be promoted.

6. Self-study facilities

Self-study facilities including the Internet, CDs/VCDs, TV, newspapers/magazines, and books were mentioned to ask students about the things they mostly used to help them study English.

Table 4. Self-study facilities

Self-study facilities	Number of responses	Percentage
Internet	303	91.8
CDs/VCDs	2	0.6
TV	5	1.5
Newspapers/magazines	0	0
Books	20	6.1

Table 5: Specific English self-study activities

Items	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		Mean
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1. I set daily/weekly goals of my English learning.	181	54.8	87	26.4	52	15.8	6	1.8	4	1.2	1.68
2. I revise previous lessons.	45	13.6	96	29.1	135	40.9	36	10.9	18	5.5	2.65
3. I preview lessons before class.	75	22.7	182	55.2	34	10.3	12	3.6	27	8.2	2.19
4. I practice using new words to develop my vocabulary.	0	0	72	21.8	232	70.3	20	6.1	6	1.8	2.88
5. I do grammar exercises.	0	0	151	45.8	116	35.2	48	14.5	15	4.5	2.78
6. I watch/listen to English programs on the Internet/TV to improve my listening skill.	0	0	47	14.2	186	56.4	79	23.9	18	5.5	3.21
7. I practice English speaking skill with my friends/foreigners.	32	9.7	131	39.7	152	46.1	15	4.5	0	0	2.45
8. I attend English clubs and extra-curricular activities.	314	95.2	11	3.3	5	1.5	0	0	0	0	1.06
9. I practice writing in English.	28	8.5	202	61.2	86	26.1	10	3.0	4	1.2	2.27
10. I ask my friends for help with my English learning.	31	9.4	64	19.4	182	55.2	34	10.3	19	5.8	2.84
11. I ask my teacher for help with my English learning.	87	26.4	68	20.6	139	42.1	25	7.6	11	3.3	2.41
12. I seek for tests and try to complete them.	123	37.3	116	35.2	74	22.4	12	3.6	5	1.5	1.97
Grand mean											2.37

The grand mean 2.37 proves that generally students did not perform necessary English self-study activities frequently. The mean of 1.68 for the item 1 shows that most of the students did not set goals of their learning although this is an important step to control and adjust the learning. Responses to items 2 and 3 indicate that students did not spend much time on

review of the previous lessons and preparation for the new ones. The means were quite low, 2.65 and 2.19 respectively. Activities for expanding vocabulary and perfecting grammar knowledge were not of their interest either. The highest mean value 3.21 for item 6 implies that students were interested in watching English programs on TV or the Internet the most. For practicing speaking skill, 46.1% sometimes spoke English with friends or foreigners, 39.7% rarely did it and 9.7% never tried this activity. Another notable result is that almost all of the students (95.2%) never joined any English clubs or extra-curricular activities which are beneficial for them to improve their language skills. For item 9 related to writing skill, the highest percentage of students, 61.2%,

It is apparent from the above figures that the vast majority of students used the Internet to learn English (91.8%) while the percentage of students who bought reference books was only 6.1%. The reason was that most students had a smartphone or/and a computer with Internet access. They could easily exploit a lot of e-lessons that matched their levels and interests. In addition, there is a wide variety of English reference books, audio files and videos shared on the Internet for students to download. Thanks to this convenience in supporting English study, Internet was chosen in preference to books, TV, CDs/VCDs, and newspapers/magazines.

7. Specific self-study activities

Items on specific English self-study activities outside the classroom in question 5 were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (“never” =1, “rarely” = 2, “sometimes” = 3, “often” = 4, “always” = 5).

admitted that they rarely wrote anything in English. Regarding items 10 and 11, asking friends or teachers for help with their English learning, the means 2.84 and 2.41 reflects the low adoption of this activity. The mean value for the final item 1.97 marks that hardly did students do English tests although this is necessary for them to self-evaluate their English proficiency.

8. Factors affecting students’ self-study

Question 6 required students to choose one or more of the problems that affected their English self-study. They could also raise their own difficulties according to their actual self-study situation.

Table 6. Problems affecting students' English self-study

Problems	Number of responses	Percentage
1. No appropriate method.	231	70
2. Lack of time	101	30.6
3. Lack of determination	205	62.1
4. Lack of appropriate materials	81	24.5
5. Lack of necessary equipment (e.g. computer, headphones, ...)	11	3.3
6. Lack of teachers' guidance	140	42.4
7. No suitable self-study space	34	10.3
8. Others	8	2.4

Among the issues that affected English self-study activities, the lack of appropriate methods was the one faced by the most students (70%). In the second place, students lacked determination to study English outside the classroom (62.1%). Many of them also thought that their teachers did not provide sufficient guidance on autonomous English learning (42.4%). Percentages of students who lacked time and suitable materials were not very high, 30.6% and 24.5% respectively. The learning space and equipment factors were not big problems affecting students' learning because only 10.3% thought their self-study space was not suitable and 3.3% lacked equipment needed. In addition to given problems, 8 students (2.4%) admitted that they did not manage their time effectively because social networking sites like Facebook, Zalo or addictive online games easily distracted them from learning activities. From the above results, it is obviously seen that both subjective and objective factors affected students' autonomous learning outside the classroom.

Conclusion

The results of the research indicate that PTIT students were well aware of the necessity of autonomous English learning but they have not made their big efforts to practice the language outside the classroom. The amount of time they invested in English was not sufficient to help them reach the objectives. A large number of students did not know how to study efficiently and to exploit learning materials and facilities to develop their language skills. They also had some problems which negatively affected their autonomy. Therefore, students need encouraging and orienting to get better results in the autonomous English learning process.

Recommendations

For students, firstly, they should dedicate more time to studying English. The survey results show that a lot of students spent less than 15 minutes a day on this foreign language, while the module syllabus clearly states that 4 periods in class per week require 8 periods studying at home, equivalent to 1 hour of self-study a day. Besides, it is a good idea for them to have detailed plans and goals for their English learning. Then, in the implementation process, they could make necessary adjustments to suit their personal circumstances. Another important suggestion is that students should actively participate in English clubs and extra-curricular activities held both inside and outside the institute to improve their language skills. Additionally, it is advisable to make the most of their facilities, especially computers and the Internet, to learn English. It seems that with a variety of online materials and programs, autonomous English learning has never been so convenient.

For teachers, they need to help students develop their ability to take responsibility for their own learning. This can be done by giving them assignments which foster self-study sub-skills such as information searching and analysing, time management, problem solving, self-evaluation, ect. It is necessary for teachers to check and give timely feedback on their performance as well. This assessment is of great significance to students because it can help them adopt the most effective learning strategies and approaches. During students' learning process, teachers should serve as advisors rather than formal instructors. Based on their own expertise and experience, they could give students advice on self-study methods and material selection so that the expected outcome can be reached more easily. Finally, teachers need to coordinate with the Youth Union and English clubs of the institute to organize activities and contests to create an English environment and to raise students' interest in the language.

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