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Tertiary students' preferences on extracurricular activities for English learning: Voices from the field of Advanced Program in Biotechnology

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ABSTRACT

In Vietnam, where English plays a vital role in the country's development, extracurricular activities for English learning are considered an effective reform for enhancing citizens' English proficiency. Previous studies have showed the positive impact of extracurricular activities on language learners' outcomes. Yet, almost none of them has investigated students' voices about what, how, when, and where they want these activities to be organized. This current study was employed to fill that gap in the field of biotechnology (advanced program). A 77-item questionnaire was sent to 148 students who learned biotechnology in an advanced program at a tertiary institution in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The results indicated the students preferred mental activities ($M=4.00$) to others. Moreover, they would like to travel to experience cultures from English-speaking countries ($M=4.11$). Further extracurricular activities were encouraged to be organized on their university campus ($M=3.63$). The students also preferred short-term activities at weekends to those that were organized over a long period. The study proposed a model for further extracurricular activities at the end of this writing.

1. INTRODUCTION

English plays an essential role in the development of Vietnam since it is the international language of numerous organizations, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) or Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, that Vietnam is a member. Therefore, teaching English is a field the Vietnamese government has paid much attention to. For example, Project 2020 was implemented to develop Vietnamese people's English competency. Among many essential reforms for enhancing the quality of Vietnamese human resources, two got significant attention from the research team. First, higher educational institutions are encouraged to design advanced programs for some majors that use English as a medium for instruction in the classroom. Students of these programs will learn

their discipline subjects in English. Moreover, in the project, extracurricular activities in higher education contexts are also expected to provide students with more chances to improve their English knowledge and skills. As a result, many higher educational institutions have organized extracurricular activities to develop their students' English. As a piece of evidence, a considerable number of researchers have conducted their studies to investigate the effects of extracurricular activities on students' achievements in learning English (e.g., Harisiswana, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Nguyen, 2019; Zakhir, 2019). Almost none of them have explored in-depth students' preferences in organizing extracurricular activities, especially issues such as time, place, length, or preferred extracurricular activities. Accordingly, this current study was conducted to hear from students,

especially those who learn advanced programs, about their preferences for extracurricular activities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

It is difficult to define precisely the term "Extracurricular activities." The main reason is that researchers usually use examples of the activities to share their viewpoints with their readers (Lunenburg, 2010). The variety of extracurricular activities also makes this term more challenging to define. Based on the existing literature, examples of these activities include academic competitions, on-stage performances, social fraternity, and so on (Lariviere, 2016). More often, extracurricular activities are those students take part in outside the mainstream of the normal curriculum (Bartkus et al., 2012). Most extracurricular activities are used to develop students' communication skills and widen their social networks and other talents. According to Simoncini and Caltabiano (2012), students are expected to show off a particular skill or talent in extracurricular activities under their educators' guidance. Moreover, extracurricular activities are promising to enhance the student participants' maturity, self-confidence, intelligence, and morality (Holt et al., 2012). As above-mentioned, this study defines extracurricular activities for English learning as the out-of-the-mainstream curriculum of educational activities in which the learners are involved to develop their language skills or linguistics competence.

As stated above, the benefits of extracurricular activities for English learning require educators to provide their students with more chances to take part in these activities. To organize a successful extracurricular activity, the research team is keen on several factors, including what kinds of extracurricular activities should be organized for particular groups of students, how many activities a year are enough for them, where and when the events are appropriate for students, who should be responsible as host for the activities, and so on.

2.2. Related Studies

Harisiswana (2017) conducted a study to explore the impact of a particular extracurricular activity – English Club – on students' development in their learning outcomes. A case study approach was administered to collect data from 11 students. The findings collected from the students through in-depth interviews showed a positive impact of

English Club as an extracurricular activity on students' learning outcomes.

Another case study to measure the impact of extracurricular activities on students' English learning was employed by Kirkpatrick (2012) in an international university in Thailand. The author collected data from several sources, including students, staff members, teacher assistants, and administrators. The results showed the students were not very much interested in the activities as they were perceived to waste the students' time. The students suggested a need analysis to help the event organizers understand what kinds of extracurricular activities the students would like to attend. Even though the students did not show high motivation to partake in the activities, they encouraged the school to keep them available as they were aware of the positive impact of the activities.

The study by Nguyen (2019) aimed to explore Vietnamese university students' needs for extracurricular activities for English learning. Moreover, the author would like to use the study's findings to propose further extracurricular activities. A mixed-methods design was employed using a questionnaire and interviews to collect data from 3000 university students. The study found that those students perceived the available extracurricular activities as helpful for their communication skills and academic and professional English. In addition, the students preferred short-term activities to those with long projects. Several particular activities, such as Eloquence and Writing Composition, Company tour and Exhibition fair, speaking clubs., were perceived to be valid for other events.

Previous studies have reached their objectives to dive deep insight into the understanding of extracurricular activities for English learning. However, most of them focused on the impact of extracurricular activities on students' learning outcomes or cognition. As so, though the effectiveness of these activities in students' English learning is well-presented, the query on how to organize an excellent extracurricular activity for English learning, especially for non-English-major students, is still unclear. As a result, this current study was conducted to fulfil the gap.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design

This current study was conducted quantitatively using a questionnaire to collect data. Using quantitative design helped the researchers collect

data from a significant sample, enabling them to generalize the findings. As so, students’ preferences for extracurricular activities were promisingly well-explored.

3.2. Participants

Participants included 148 non-English-major students learning biotechnology (advanced programs) in a higher educational institution in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. None were first-year students since the study aimed to learn about those who had experience taking part in extracurricular activities in the university context. Among 148 participants, 62 were females, and 86 were male students. All the participants voluntarily took part in the current study.

3.3. Instrument

A questionnaire was used to collect data on students’ preferences for extracurricular activities. In order to explore as much information as possible about the research topic, both Likert-scale items and open-ended questions were included. With the purpose of exploring the voices of the students, the questionnaire was designed according to the use of Wh-word questions or information investigating questions such as what (categories, activities, prizes.), who (participants, organizers, sponsors), where, when, how often, how long, why, etc. In addition, the options in some items like extracurricular activities or the organizing time of the extracurricular activities were created based on references to previous studies (Harisiswana, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Nguyen, 2019; Zakhir, 2019) and on one researcher’ experiences in organizing extracurricular activities for students.

The questionnaire was delivered to the participants via Google Forms. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, it was piloted with fifty participants, and the alpha was high enough to show the instrument’s reliability ($\alpha=.92$). Regarding the validity of the questionnaire, the research team discussed it with experts in the field of curriculum development who have a bulk of years organizing extracurricular activities for English learners. Then, it was sent to the students in an advanced program in biotechnology at a tertiary institution in the Mekong Delta to collect data. A total of 148 students responded to the questionnaire. The reliability of the actual questionnaire was also checked to allow the research team to be confident in the results collected ($\alpha=.89$).

The data were analyzed by SPSS 20. As stated, the pilot was first administered by using a Scale test. Then, a set of Descriptive Statistics tests was used to calculate the mean scores of the students’ respondents. All values presented in this current study were rounded to the second number after the comma (for example, 4.234 = 4.23 or 3.936 = 3.94).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Students’ Preferable Categories of Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

Table 1 displays the results of a Descriptive Statistics test used to measure the mean scores of the students’ respondents regarding their preferable categories of extracurricular activities for English learning.

Table 1. Students’ preferable categories of extracurricular activities for English learning

<u>Items</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Q1.2. Mental activities	2.00	5.00	4.00	.72
Q1.1. Artistic activities	1.00	5.00	3.95	.92
Q1.3. Physical activities	1.00	5.00	3.66	1.00

Based on the results presented in Table 1, it was easy to say the students preferred taking part in mental activities (M=4.00) or artistic ones (M=3.95) to those requiring physical work (M=3.66). Physical activities for English learning can be understood as activities in which the student participants will use their movements to complete the required missions. These activities, besides giving students a chance to practice their English while doing missions, help improve students’ physical health through physical work. However, according to Gómez-López et al. (2010), many factors affect students’ willingness to take part in those activities. The internal barriers, such as self-interest, awareness of the activities’ use, or student laziness, show dominance as decisive factors in one’s engagement. Therefore, the students seemed unwilling to take part in physical activities. The mental activities and artistic ones, otherwise, were more positively reacted. Mental activities, cognitive activities, can help students foster their cognition like critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, communication skills (Gelder, 2005; Heppner et al., 1983; Bosco et al., 2018). Several previous studies have showed the importance of these skills in English learning (e.g., Chen et al., 2021; Khan, 2017; Rao, 2019). The students of this current study preferred this cluster of activities to physical activities. Regarding the mean scores, the

artistic activities seemed not much lower than the highest for mental activities (M=3.95 & M=4.00). The students were more interested in the artistic activities than the physical ones. According to Pasaribu et al. (2017), language learners require more artistic activities in their learning as they want to learn the target language and satisfy their interests simultaneously. As so, the activities are more interesting than those focusing on practicing language only.

4.2. Students’ Preferable Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

As shown in Table 2, the most preferable activity was “Traveling to experience English/French cultures” (M=4.11). In the Vietnamese context, one of the most significant barriers to language learning is lacking opportunities for exposure to the language (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022). It is acceptable to say that nothing can help students increase their exposure to the target language than putting them into the cultures where people speak that language. As a result, the students’ interest in traveling to experience English/French cultures is not too surprising. However, this kind of extracurricular activities is difficult for any higher education institutions in Vietnam because of the financial limit (Do, 2019). The importance of the networks of

domestic universities and others from Western countries is, therefore, highlighted. According to Messer and Wolter (2007), student exchange programs are encouraged to help students increase their exposure to new cultures as well as develop their language proficiency.

Otherwise, “Composing poetry in English/French” (M=2.89), “Composing English/French short stories” (M=3.05), and “Composing English/French songs” (M=3.06) were the least preferable activities. The results highlighted students’ lack of interest in creating artistic products, such as stories, songs, and poetry. Not only do they require students’ language proficiency, composing the above-mentioned artistic products requires students to have sufficient knowledge of musical instruments for songs (Swanwick, 2002) or adequate understanding of poetry-made rules for a complete poem (Aviram, 1994). The students could be not confident in themselves for those things. Recently, parody-acting has attracted a significant number of students (Ludke, 2020). Therefore, it can be a considerable idea for the program manager to organize the contest, requiring students to make a parody of a song, a movie, or a play, instead of composing a new artistic product.

Table 2. Students’ preferable extracurricular activities for English learning

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q2.20. Traveling to experience English/French cultures	2.00	5.00	4.11	.82
Q2.12. Watching movies with late-discussions	2.00	5.00	3.93	.80
Q2.17. English/French exam preparation clubs	1.00	5.00	3.84	.81
Q2.13. Outdoor activities using English/French	2.00	5.00	3.79	.81
Q2.18. Book café (drinks, books, and discussions)	1.00	5.00	3.78	.85
Q2.15. Cultural Festival of English/French speaking countries	1.00	5.00	3.72	.93
Q2.14. Big event including lots of different activities in English/French	1.00	5.00	3.71	.93
Q2.19. Foreign language corner	2.00	5.00	3.66	.80
Q2.9. Quiz about culture and customs of English/French speaking countries	1.00	5.00	3.63	.98
Q2.7. English/French Magazines design	1.00	5.00	3.63	.95
Q2.6. Photo contest with photo description in English/French	1.00	5.00	3.61	.94
Q2.16. English/French speaking clubs	1.00	5.00	3.57	.87
Q2.10. Presentation on Vietnam tourism in English/French	1.00	5.00	3.51	.88
Q2.11. Presentation on local culture in English/French	1.00	5.00	3.49	.89
Q2.1. Singing contest in English/French	1.00	5.00	3.39	1.00
Q2.8. Debate in English/French	1.00	5.00	3.24	.91
Q2.2. Role-plays	1.00	5.00	3.20	.91
Q2.5. Composing English / French songs	1.00	5.00	3.06	.96
Q2.4. Composing English/French short stories	1.00	5.00	3.05	.87
Q2.3. Composing poetry in English/French	1.00	5.00	2.89	.85

The results related to students' preferable extracurricular activities for English learning are displayed in Table 2.

4.3. Students' Preferable Frequency for Organizing Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

Table 3 displays the results of a Descriptive Statistics test on students' preferable frequency for organizing extracurricular activities for English learning.

Table 3. Students' preferable frequency for organizing extracurricular activities for English learning

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q3.3. Once a semester	1.00	5.00	3.56	.94
Q3.2. Monthly	1.00	5.00	3.46	.98
Q3.4. Twice a semester	1.00	5.00	3.46	.94
Q3.5. Once a year	1.00	5.00	3.20	1.03
Q3.1. Weekly	1.00	5.00	2.94	.96

For the results presented in Table 3, the students preferred taking part in extracurricular activities once a semester (M=3.56) to other options of the frequency for organizing extracurricular activities for English learning. Two out-of-the-classroom events a year were considered sufficient for the students. On the contrary, once a week seemed too much for the students to take part in extracurricular activities (M=2.94). Similarly, Stevenson (1994) found it suitable for some extracurricular activities to be organized at a specific frequency level depending on these activities. In the research context, organized activities require students a bulk of time to invest in their products. Students nearly cannot engage in these activities weekly as they have their own learning schedule. According to Luu and Hoang (2022), Vietnamese students' learning schedule is always too busy for them. Therefore, activity organizers must know the students' workload to plan a high-quality extracurricular activity that students can enjoy as much as they can with no worries about their official school time.

4.4. Students' Preferable Time for Organizing Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

In Table 4, the results of the Descriptive Statistics test on students' responses to time they are likely to take part in extracurricular activities for English learning.

Table 4. Students' preferable time for organizing extracurricular activities for English learning

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q4.1. Weekends	1.00	5.00	3.57	1.04
Q4.5. Summer time	1.00	5.00	3.57	1.04
Q4.2. At the beginning of the semester	1.00	5.00	3.24	.92
Q4.8. Weekend evenings	1.00	5.00	3.18	1.09
Q4.3. In the mid-semester	1.00	5.00	3.03	.93
Q4.7. Weekday evenings	1.00	5.00	3.02	1.01
Q4.4. At the end of the semester	1.00	5.00	2.99	1.02
Q4.6. Holidays	1.00	5.00	2.77	1.20

The results show that the students preferred taking part in extracurricular activities on weekends and summer time (M=3.57) to other times. During these times, the students would neither go to school to learn nor worry about their learning schedule. It is expected to give an excellent chance to invest full efforts in the activities and enjoy their moments. In the same vein, Antovska and Kostov (2016) found it suitable for the activities organized in the students' spare time when they just stay at home and sleep. Interestingly, the students, according to the mean score of the item "Holidays" (M=2.77), refused to take part in extracurricular activities during their holidays. It can be inferred that the students had spent much of their time learning during their official school days. They, therefore, wanted to relax during their holiday seasons. In case holidays are chosen to organize extracurricular activities, they should be a reading event, as Arua and Arua (2011) found that students usually spend their holidays reading books to serve their leisure and academic purposes simultaneously.

4.5. Students' Preferable Place for Organizing Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

Table 5 shows the results of the Descriptive Statistics test on the students' preferable place for organizing extracurricular activities for English learning.

Based on the results, the students would like to take part in extracurricular activities organized outside the classroom and on the university campus (M=3.63). To those organized in the classroom, the students seemed not much interested (M=3.15). Instead of moving to other locations, such as those out of university or those out of the city, the students would like to be inside their campus to participate in extracurricular activities. Moving to other places

might cost a lot of money and energy. Moreover, the campus setting might be a significant motivator for students' willingness to stay at the university instead of moving elsewhere. Askehave (2007) highlighted the positive impact of a beautiful campus setting on students' learning experiences. Higher educational institutions with beautiful campuses should use their fantastic setting to organize extracurricular activities for English learning. Backtracking to the results related to students' preferred activities, the findings seemed inconsistent. However, this inconsistency can be explained that the students

would like to travel to learn more about other cultures where the people speak the target language, even traveling on their own campus. For instance, activity organizers can plan a culture tour where students can move around the campus and experience different cultures in the world. The study by Plangpramool and Khirin (2013) showed that a study tour would help students acquire a significant understanding of cultural aspects, develop their morality and foster their self-confidence in expressing their ideas.

Table 5. Students' preferable place for organizing extracurricular activities for English learning

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q5.2. Outside the classroom - on the campus of the university	1.00	5.00	3.63	.85
Q5.3. Out of university 's campus but in the city center	1.00	5.00	3.51	.93
Q5.5. Out of the city	1.00	5.00	3.47	1.12
Q5.4. The suburban areas	1.00	5.00	3.44	1.01
Q5.1. In the classroom	1.00	5.00	3.15	.90

4.6. Students' Preferable Length of an Extracurricular Activity for English Learning

The results of the Descriptive Statistics test on students' preferable length of an extracurricular activity for English learning are manifested in Table 6.

The results displayed in Table 6 showed that the shorter an extracurricular activity lasts, the more the students prefer it. The students preferred participating in a shortly-organized extracurricular activity in a morning, an afternoon, or an evening (M=3.59) to others that last a day (M=3.50), some days (M=3.26), or a week (M=3.03). The findings are similar to those of Kirkpatrick (2012) and Nguyen (2019), which showed that students prefer participating in a short-term project to a long-term one. As stated in previous sections, the students would not have much time to participate in extracurricular activities because of their heavy learning schedule. Accordingly, the activities that last too long would not be in the same vein as the students' interests. The current findings differed from those found in the study by Rudela (2015), which encouraged activity organizers to bravely shorten students' learning time and lengthen their experience in the events. According to Rudela (2015), doing so would help students maintain their learning motivation as well as increase their satisfaction with the school setting. Similarly, Zaff et al. (2003) highlighted the positive association between students' participation in extracurricular

activities and their positive learning outcomes. Therefore, it is strongly encouraged to rearrange the students' school schedule, which is considered "enough" for students to learn effectively and be involved in outside-the-classroom activities (Murtaugh, 1988).

Table 6. Students' preferable length of an extracurricular activity for English learning

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q6.1. A/an morning / afternoon / evening	1.00	5.00	3.59	.82
Q6.2. A day	1.00	5.00	3.50	.94
Q6.3. Some days	1.00	5.00	3.26	.98
Q6.4. A week	1.00	5.00	3.03	1.06

4.7. Language Skills/ Knowledge Students Expect to Develop When Participating in Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

For the language skills/knowledge the students expected to develop when taking part in extracurricular activities for English learning, a Descriptive Statistics test was run to measure the average mean scores the students responded to the items in this cluster. Table 7 displays the results.

Among all language skills and knowledge, the students aimed to develop their speaking skills the most (M=4.26). Moreover, the high mean scores of "Lexicon knowledge" (M=4.23) and "Listening" (M=4.20) showed the students' expectations for improving their range of vocabulary and listening

abilities. Conversely, improving reading and writing skills was not highly expected (M=3.83 & M=3.84, respectively). Miller and Meece (1999) stated that several language learners feel bored when learning to write and reading. Therefore, students' unwillingness to deal with reading and writing tasks is understandable in a special event like an extracurricular activity. Otherwise, speaking and listening skills and lexicon knowledge were more expected. In the study by Vo et al. (2018), most Vietnamese students are insufficient in those skills. The participants of this current study were not English-major students. Therefore, their weaknesses in speaking and listening skills are also predicted. As so, extracurricular activities were expected to be an excellent opportunity for the students to meet their academic needs (Harisiswana, 2017).

Table 7. Language skills/knowledge students expect to develop when participating in extracurricular activities for English learning

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q7.2. Speaking	3.00	5.00	4.26	.66
Q7.7. Lexicon knowledge	2.00	5.00	4.23	.69
Q7.1. Listening	3.00	5.00	4.20	.68
Q7.5. Pronunciation	2.00	5.00	4.12	.73
Q7.6. Grammatical knowledge	1.00	5.00	3.91	.86
Q7.4. Writing	1.00	5.00	3.84	.85
Q7.3. Reading	1.00	5.00	3.83	.80

4.8. Students' Preferable Organizers of Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

A Descriptive Statistics test was run to measure the mean scores of the students' responses to the cluster investigating their preferable organizers of

extracurricular activities for English learning. Table 8 displays the results of the test.

According to the test results, the students preferred working with lecturers to others, since the mean scores related to lecturers as the organizers were the highest (M=4.01 & M=3.84). It can be inferred that the students significantly trusted their teachers' abilities that could help them wholly experience the activities. Undoubtedly, most teachers would be more experienced than their students, and the experiences promisingly provide them with better solutions to the problems occurring during the activities (Mahdi & Al-Dera, 2013). Unexpectedly, the students were not interested because senior students would be the organizers of extracurricular activities (M=3.45). According to Lindblom-Ylänne et al. (2003), working with other students is more comfortable for students than working with their teachers because the generation gap will be reduced. However, in case senior students are chosen as the organizers, it also means the students will organize the extracurricular activities in their final school year. Becoming a successful organizer of an event requires the students to be creative, confident, well-organized, and more (Almalki et al., 2017). The more responsibility one takes, the more time one must sacrifice for their work. However, time for senior students is limited because they have to prepare for graduation. As a result, the students did not highly agree to choose senior students as the organizers of extracurricular activities. Therefore, lecturers, especially those from departments in charge of teaching foreign languages, are encouraged to take on the role of organizer of extracurricular activities. Higher education institutions should provide lecturers responsible for organizing extracurricular activities with sufficient support, such as reducing their workload, training on their knowledge about extracurricular activities, or complimenting their good works.

Table 8. Students' preferable organizers of extracurricular activities for English learning

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q8.1. Lecturers of the School of Foreign Languages	1.00	5.00	4.01	.82
Q8.2. Lecturers of the students' departments / faculties / schools	2.00	5.00	3.84	.83
Q8.4. Students who are good at foreign languages (regardless of cohort)	1.00	5.00	3.77	.83
Q8.5. Youth Union of the School of Foreign Languages	1.00	5.00	3.59	.86
Q8.6. Youth Union of the students' faculties / schools	1.00	5.00	3.53	.88
Q8.7. Youth Union of the university	1.00	5.00	3.51	.83
Q8.3. Senior students	1.00	5.00	3.45	.83

4.9. Students’ Perceptions of Suitable Participants for Involvement in Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

To check the students’ perceptions of who should be recruited to be participants for extracurricular

activities for English learning, a Descriptive Statistics test was run and its results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Students’ perceptions of suitable participants for involvement in extracurricular activities

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q9.4. Both English-major and non-English-major students	1.00	5.00	3.85	.89
Q9.2. Non-English-major students of Advanced and High-quality programs	1.00	5.00	3.80	.88
Q9.3. Students majoring in foreign languages (e.g., English and French)	1.00	5.00	3.70	.85
Q9.1. Students not majoring in foreign languages	1.00	5.00	3.68	.82

From the results presented in Table 9, it is easy to see that the students perceived extracurricular activities for English learning as a good chance for both English-major students and non-ones to improve their English skills/knowledge (M=3.85). It is similar to the study by Thai and Doan (2018) as extracurricular activities for English learning are helpful for language learners not a particular student who learns foreign language majors like English Studies, French Studies, Interpretation and Translation, or Teaching English as a Foreign Language. However, students from different majors/programs may have distinct levels of language competence. It, therefore, may cause some unfair and unsatisfactory experiences during the activities. Minimizing the differences is a fundamental mission that the activity organizers should complete. A pair, including an English-major student and a non-English-major one, will be a considerable solution to the problem. According to Hyde (1993), such a pair could help weaker students learn from their more competent friends. Moreover, extracurricular activities should establish some scenarios that those from non-English majors could use to their knowledge of their majors. As so, they are expected to increase their self-efficacy, which Bong and Clark (1999) showed as one of the most significant motivators to maintaining students’ engagement in a particular activity.

4.10. Students’ Preferable Prizes for Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

A descriptive statistics test calculates the mean scores of students’ responses to the prizes after participating in extracurricular activities for English

learning and achieving good results. The test’s results are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10. Students’ preferable prizes for extracurricular activities for English learning

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q10.1. Monetary prizes	1.00	5.00	3.95	.80
Q10.3. Extra points for Personal Training Section	1.00	5.00	3.94	.85
Q10.2. Awards in the form of presents/ gifts	1.00	5.00	3.86	.76
Q10.4. Extra points for the foreign language courses	1.00	5.00	3.79	.95

The test’s results indicated the students preferred monetary prizes (M=3.95) and extra points for the personal training section (M=3.94) to others, such as awards as presents/gifts (M=3.86) and extra points for the foreign language courses (M=3.79). Usually, students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities by rewards as extra points in their learning curriculum (Holland & Andre, 1987). However, the results show that the students in this current study did not want their participation in extracurricular activities to affect their grades in language courses. Using extra points as rewards for their participation in extracurricular activities may cause some stress to them because of peer pressure (Nguyen et al., 2021) instead of providing them with a good time for learning and relaxing as well (Darling et al., 2005). Otherwise, it would be more encouraging for the students to obtain extra points for Personal Training Section, which illustrates how actively university students take part in events organized during their school time. This kind of

point does not show how good a student is in his/her learning but how much the student contributes to the development of society. Therefore, it is also crucial to students' curriculum vitae, which is a part of future success (Vivek, 2020). The students' expectations for obtaining extra points for Personal Training Section are explainable.

According to the students' respondents, monetary prizes were preferable to gifts/presents. Money may be more convenient than gifts or presents because the students can buy whatever they want. Otherwise, the differences in human psychology may differ from one another (Buss, 1991). As a result, the gifts or presents that may be chosen carefully would not mean they meet students' interests. Therefore, the students were more likely to get monetary prizes than others.

4.11. Students' Preferable Funding Sources for Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

Table 11 displays the results of a descriptive statistics test on the students' preferred funding sources for extracurricular activities for English learning.

Table 11. Students' preferable funding sources for extracurricular activities for English learning

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q11.1. University	3.00	5.00	4.05	.76
Q11.4. Sponsors	3.00	5.00	4.00	.78
Q11.2. Departments / Faculties / Schools that the students study	3.00	5.00	3.86	.75
Q11.3. Sponsoring Unions and Associations	2.00	5.00	3.82	.77
Q11.6. Students' partial contribution	1.00	5.00	3.24	1.03
Q11.5. Students' full contribution	1.00	5.00	2.80	1.05

Undoubtedly, the students would not want to spend money organizing extracurricular activities for English learning after paying the bulk of the tuition fee (M=2.80). As known, the advanced program the students were learning requires them to pay a very high cost because they would learn in high-quality conditions (Tran et al., 2018). Therefore, additional payments would encounter an adverse reaction. Conversely, they tended to think of the role that their higher education institution/university should take to help maximize their experiences in the learning

process, including extracurricular activities (M=4.05). According to Peach (2005), university support plays an essential role in students' success. Therefore, instead of asking the students to pay additional money for extracurricular activities, the school should provide them with sufficient funding, which could be deducted from the tuition fees. In case the money from students' tuition fees is limited, most students supported finding external sponsors (M=4.00). To visualize this idea, the university must have a strong relationship with external organizations to organize student activities (Broström et al., 2019). It is difficult to do, but it is not impossible either. The human resources external organizations will employ in the future are those learning in the universities. Therefore, developing the quality of their future employees with a small amount of money would not be a big problem for any wise employers.

4.12. Students' Preferable Policies of Extracurricular Activities for English Learning

To organize a good extracurricular activity, students' preferable policies also need sufficient attention. Therefore, Table 12 manifests the results of a Descriptive Statistics test on the students' responses to the policies of extracurricular activities for English learning to check what policies they preferred to others.

Table 12. Students' preferable policies of extracurricular activities for English learning

Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q12.1. Voluntary participation	3.00	5.00	4.24	.67
Q12.3. Group participation	1.00	5.00	3.80	.85
Q12.5. Face-to-face participation	1.00	5.00	3.80	.86
Q12.4. Individual participation	1.00	5.00	3.41	.86
Q12.7. Off-and-online combination	1.00	5.00	3.40	1.00
Q12.6. Online participation	1.00	5.00	3.12	1.02
Q12.2. Mandatory participation	1.00	5.00	2.61	1.03

Regarding the policies of extracurricular activities for English learning displayed in this current study, there are three different aspects. First, the students preferred voluntary participation (M=4.24) to mandatory participation (M=2.61). Mandatory participation may help increase the number of students taking part in the events, but it does not guarantee to increase students' motivation to learn (Burch et al., 2017). On the contra, what comes from

one’s inside will help improve their willingness to take part and their desire to cooperate with others (Nosenzo & Tufano, 2017). Therefore, students’ needs should be well-unpacked before planning an extracurricular activity to help increase their intrinsic motives (Kirkpatrick, 2012). When people realize the need to do things, they will complete their work better than they are forced to do (Deci et al., 2001).

The second dimension is that the students preferred group participation (M=3.80) to individual participation (M=3.41). For group activities, the students are expected to build their teamwork, communication skills, and social network necessary for their future jobs (Christison, 2013). Individual work seemed challenging to the students of this current study because they were not English-major students. Therefore, the majority of the students would encounter a massive number of challenges because of their shortcomings in language knowledge. According to Dörnyei and Tseng (2009), struggling in interaction because of shortcomings in the language would reduce students’ motivation to take part in interactional tasks. Therefore, it is acceptable to say the students would lose significant motivation to take part in extracurricular activities for English learning if they found it difficult to communicate during the events. As stated, the activities should be organized by building pairs in which there is an English-major student and another from a science major, biotechnology, as an example. As so, they can utilize their own strengths to help each other deal with the missions.

Lastly, face-to-face participation was the preferable way that the students would like to participate in extracurricular activities (M=3.80). Otherwise, the students seemed uninterested in off-and-online participation (M=3.40) and online participation only (M=3.12). As explained in the previous sections, the students were likely to have opportunities to communicate with and learn from others (Hyde, 1993). Therefore, it is acceptable to say nothing is better for students to have these chances than face-to-face participation.

5. CONCLUSION

This current study was conducted quantitatively to provide 148 biotechnology-major students who learned an advanced program in a tertiary institution in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam with a chance to suggest their future extracurricular activities for English learning. Regarding the use of a questionnaire, the results showed many ideas for extracurricular activity organizers to consider. Figure 1 displays the summary of the study’s findings.

Based on the figure, further extracurricular activities should be organized on a weekend morning, afternoon, or evening. The university’s campus should be used as a place for students to engage in their activities—the structure of a festival for students to act out as people from different countries in the world. Moreover, the students should be recruited in pairs or groups, including both non-English-major students and English-major ones as the team’s members. Some missions requiring students to speak English and answer quizzes are encouraged.

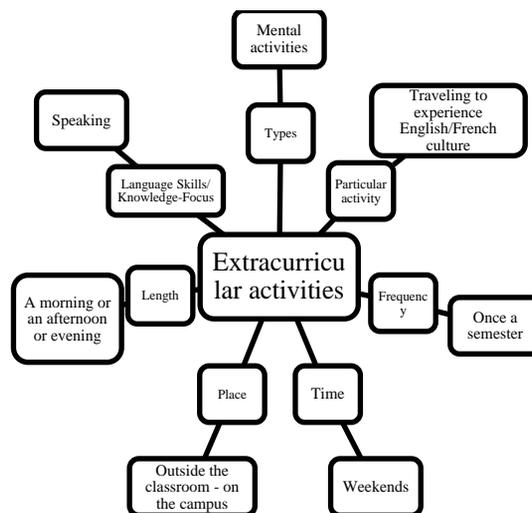


Figure 1. Summary of the study’s findings

6. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The current study provided significant findings on organizing a successful extracurricular activity for English learning. However, there are still some limitations that further research can fulfil. First, this current study was conducted quantitatively; it, therefore, helped generalize the findings, but it somewhat failed to explore an in-depth understanding of the students' thoughts. As so, a study using qualitative methods or mixed methods is recommended. In addition, this current study unpacked non-English-major students' voices only. English-major students should be given an

opportunity to share their ideas about extracurricular activities for English learning. Experienced experts who used to organize extracurricular activities could be a valuable source for further events. This current study proposed a particular model for organizing extracurricular activities for English learning according to the non-English-major students. It, therefore, is recommended to implement the proposed event and check its impacts on students' motivation to learn, learning outcomes, and so on.

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