ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM IN THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGY: A CONCURRENT TRIANGULATION MIXED METHOD STUDY

Research article

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Abstract

The hegemony of technology and its dominance over education caused the necessity to make changes in the philosophy of language teaching. With the introduction of technology and extensive use of distance education thanks to pandemic, this philosophy change has increased the importance of students' out-of-class language learning activities. Therefore, in this mixed method research, which is conducted at an English Preparatory department of a state university situated in Turkey, it is aimed to investigate students' resources and strategies that they use for English outside the class (EOC) activities. For this purpose, a 34-question five-point Likert type scale was conducted to 242 students, and both focus group interviews with seven students and individual semi-structured interviews with five students were conducted in order to obtain the EOC strategies and sources. According to the results, it is revealed that the students mostly employ EOC activities for their listening skill, and least for speaking skill, and using EOC activities has a significant relationship with academic achievement, gender, and section. Also, students started to use many different technological social media websites, online applications, and techniques. As a result, with the changing educational philosophy and spending time more outside the school, all stakeholders should be aware of the massive transformation in language education and plan their instruction accordingly.

Keywords: Language learning, English outside, technology, mixed method, ANOVA

1. Introduction

Due to the pandemic, education all over the world has undergone transformation from face-to-face to distance education which is a new dimension for most of the institutions. Teachers and students have made the transition to distance education, which can be described as teaching / learning process at any time and any place using technological tools; therefore, time and place has lost its importance as in face-to-face education (Littleton & Whitelock, 2005). This has led to innovations in many fields in education, from teaching methods used by the teacher to the English learning activities or materials used by students.

There used to be consensus on that foreign language teaching was done in the classroom; however, with the technology and internet infrastructure that has entered our lives in recent years, distance, individual and learning approaches have become quite common in foreign language learning by moving away from the classroom environment (Coskun & Mutlu, 2017). While the main source in face-to-face education is the teacher and the printed source books, with the development of technology and distance education, students have acquired many different EOC activities. Contrary to the recent developments, Chan (2003) pointed out that teachers see themselves more responsible for teaching and learning process inside the classroom and less responsible for EOC activities, and this implies the necessity for the change

in language teaching philosophy. Therefore, it is proposed that (Voller, 2014) teachers need to guide their students in more EOC activities and be more autonomous learners. It has been stated that student effort to learn and practice the language autonomously outside the school is an effective strategy in accelerating language education and making it more efficient by increasing their willingness (Goodwin-Jones, 2011; Nunan & Richards, 2015). In addition, these strategies carried out by students to increase their use of foreign languages in their social and daily lives outside the classroom affect the language development of students in a positively (Cotterall, 1998; Lai & Gu, 2011; Esch, 2014; Sylvén, 2004; Koral & Mirici, 2021). As a result of the above-mentioned issues, EOC learning processes has gained great importance to be successful in language education. Therefore, in this study, EOC activities regarding four language skills and their usage are investigated.

2. English Outside the Classroom

The use of English language learning outside the classroom is mostly explained as Extramural English (EE) and Extracurricular Activities (EA). However, there is a sharp distinction between these two phenomena. EA consist of activities that are somehow linked to the educational settings such as speaking clubs and language courses. EE, on the other hand is defined by Sandqvist (2009) as 'English learners come in contact with or are involved in outside the walls of the classroom' (p. 1). Also, Benson (2001) makes a similar definition as "any kind of learning that takes place outside the classroom and involves self-instruction, naturalistic learning or self-directed naturalistic learning' (p. 62). It is a process in which the classroom has no connection with learning a foreign language, and it is started and progressed naturally and voluntarily with the language in the student's own life outside the classroom walls. As it can be understood from these definitions, the important issues for EE are self-management and the operation of natural learning processes. While the teacher usually initiates learning in EA, in EE, there is no guidance or direction of the teacher, and the student has his or her own autonomous learning motivation (Sylvén and Sundqvist, (2017). In summary, while EA has a disciplined link with school, EE has no ties to school or classroom (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016).

Regardless of naming the phenomena as Extramural English, or Extracurricular Activities, in this study, we prefer to use English outside the classroom (EOC) in order for a comprehensive glance to the issue and not to limit the activities used by the students by drawing sharp borders around these activities. Especially in recent years, many studies have been carried out about English outside the classroom. For example, Beuprez (2021) studied teachers' views on the effect of EE on student achievement. Csnadi (2020), on the other hand, investigated the impact of EE on students' communication desires. Similarly, Lee and Lu (2021) studied foreign language motivation and willingness to learn in EE and the digital context. On the other hand, Derwanto (2021) conducted research on how foreign language students' EE activities can be used together with e-portfolio. Similarly, Leffler (2021) examined the use of online EE activities in formal education for students. In another study, Emilsson (2021) examined the contribution of EE to students' receptive vocabulary knowledge. In a similar study, Kolenovic and Nadjafi (2021) examined the contribution of EE to students' vocabulary acquisition. Ali (2021) researched how and in what ways English language education can benefit from EE applications. In another study (Hlebnikovs, 2018), students' beliefs about EE were investigated. On the other hand, there are also several studies conducted on EA activities. For instance, Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002) investigated the relationship between EA activities and levels of academic achievement. In another study, Dumais (2006) studied the relationship between participation to EA activities and socio-economic status. Similarly, Singh (2021) researched the relationship between EA activities and attitudes towards the school.

Judging by the studies mentioned above and examining the participants of the studies in detail, most of them have been conducted on K-12 education. Therefore, comprehensive studies conducted on university students and young adults are required. Moreover, these studies mostly focused on a specific language skill of EOC such as vocabulary, language motivation or the relationship between academic achievement and EOC activities. In addition, how EOC is used in four language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing all together has not been studied much from the student's point of view. Lastly, in the age of technology and distance education, the context of EOC activities has changed. While EOC activities used to consist of reading books and keeping a diary, these activities have changed due to technology integration. For this reason, in the present study, it is aimed to conduct a comprehensive study on university students EOC use regarding four language skills conducting both qualitative and quantitative procedures in the digital age. Therefore, answers to the following research questions were sought in this study.

1) Which EOC activities do students use most and least according to the scale?

a. For which language skill do students use EOC activities more according to the scale?

2) Is there a statistically significant difference between the demographics and EOC activities used for language skills?

3) How do students describe the activities they use for EOC?

3. Method

In this study, mixed method in which both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis procedures are employed (Creswell, 1999), is used. There are many variations of mixed method research design in the literature (Patton, 1990; Morse, 1991; Steckler et al., 1992). However, concurrent triangulation design (Creswell, 2004) for mixed method is preferred in the current study since quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures are implemented in order to validate and crosscheck the findings of each data collection and analysis methods. Figure 1 below shows the research design of the current study.
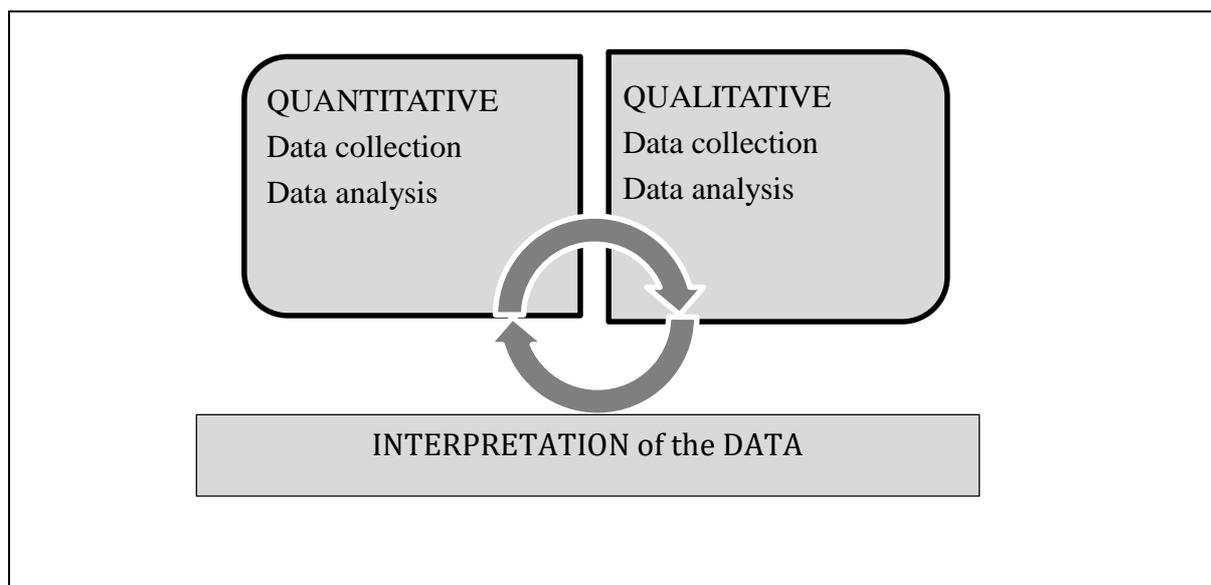

Figure 1. Concurrent triangulation mixed method design (adapted from Creswell, 2004)

According to Creswell (1999), this is the most familiar mixed method type of design, and in this design, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses are performed concurrently. The importance is usually given equally to both methods. The results of one data collection method are checked with the other data collection method so that an in-depth understanding of the research questions can be understood clearly. In the end, the data from the two methods are then interpreted together (Creswell, 2004).

3.1. Research Context

This study was carried out at an English preparatory department of a state university in Turkey, and the school has been giving education for more than 30 years. The institution, which always provided face-to-face education until the beginning of pandemic in February 2020, has started to give English education through distance education. This unexpected incident has become quite new for the school, teaching staff and students.

In the school where the study was carried out, English language education via distance education is given during an academic year consisting of two semesters. Each semester consists of 15 weeks and an academic year consists of 30 weeks. Teaching 20 hours per week, a total of 600 hours of English language distance education was given. At the school, students are grouped into two after the placement test at the beginning of the semester. Students who do not know English at all are placed in group A; students who have a little more than the beginning level of English are put in group B. In addition, there are both day and evening groups at the school. Also, there are two types of enrollments at school; compulsory and optional. The students of the major departments, in which more than 30% of the courses are given in English are called compulsory, and the students of the departments in which less than 30% of the courses are taught in English are called optional. Even if optional students fail the preparatory education in their first year, they can pass to their major department at the end of an academic year, while students in the compulsory group must repeat the English education for another year if they fail in the first year.

3.2. Sampling and Participants

Two types of sampling were used in this study. Convenience sampling was used for the survey and random sampling was used for interviews. For convenient sampling, the scale was sent to those who were eligible and convenient to participate in the study from the preparatory department students who received English language distance education for a year. A total of 242 students whose demographic information can be seen in Table 1 below replied to the scale. For the interviews, twelve students were selected randomly, and interviews were conducted with them. Seven students stated that they wanted to participate in the focus group interview and five students stated that they wanted to participate in individual interviews.

Table 1. *Demographics of the students participated to the scale*

		N	%			N	%
Gender	Female	154	63,6	**Level**	A	200	82,6
	Male	88	36,4		B	42	17,4
	Total	242	100,0		Total	242	100,0
Enrollment type	Compulsory	157	64,9	**Section**	Day	223	92,1
	Optional	85	35,1		Evening	19	7,9
	Total	242	100,0		Total	242	100,0
GPA	0-59 btw	28	11,6	**Online Attendance Rate**	%0-49 btw	31	12,8
	60-79 btw	110	45,5		%50-79 btw	66	27,3
	80-100 btw	104	43,0		%80-100 btw	145	59,9
	Total	242	100,0		Total	242	100,0

Of the students participating in the scale, 154 (63.6%) are female and 88 (36.4%) are male. 200 (82.6%) of the participants are in A level, 42 (17.4%) of them are in B level, and 157 (64.9%) are compulsory and 85 (35.1%) are optional. 223 (92.1%) students are in day group while 19 (7.9%) are in evening group. 28 students' (11.6%) GPA is between 0-59, 110 students (45.5) have a GPA of 60-79, and there are 104 students (43%) with a GPA between 80-100. Finally, when the online attendance rates of the students participating in the research are examined, it is seen that 31 students (12.8%) rate is between 0-49%, 66 students (27%) rate is between 50-79%, and 145 students' rate is between 80-100% (59.9%).

3.3. Data collection tools and procedures

In order to obtain valid and reliable results, three data collection tools are used. These are the 34 items five-point Likert type scale developed by Coskun and Mutlu (2017), focus group interviews and semi-structured individual interviews.

3.4. Scale

In this study, the 34-item 'Extramural English Use Scale' consisting of four sub-dimensions: reading, writing, speaking and listening, developed by Coşkun and Mutlu (2017) was used. The scale was designed as a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often) and 5 (always) items. A form consisting of six questions was added to the beginning of the scale in order to determine the demographic characteristics of the individuals participating in the research. In this form, multiple-choice questions were asked about participants' gender, enrollment type, GPA, level, section and online attendance rate in English preparatory education.

3.5. Interviews

By examining the literature, 15 questions were written first. These questions were analyzed by two field experts, one of whom is an expert in English language teaching, and the other is an expert in assessment and evaluation field, and ten questions were decided in the end. Then, piloting was done with two students and final version of the interview questions was obtained. The interview questions can be seen below.

1. How often do you use English outside of class?

2. Do you use EOC activities for the lesson or to follow social life or current issues?

3. What do you do to improve your speaking ability outside the class?

4. What do you do to improve your listening ability outside the class?

5. What do you do to improve your reading ability outside the class?

6. What do you do to improve your writing ability outside the class?

7. What do you do to improve your grammar skills outside the class?

8. What do you do to improve your pronunciation outside of class?

9. What do you do to improve your vocabulary outside the class?

10. How much time do you spend learning and practicing English outside the class?

In order for a collective understanding of the data collection tools and data resources, Table 2 below is established. In the table, data collection tools, the number of participants, and data collection purposes are shown. It is understood that scale is used to both interpret the results and cross-check the qualitative data. Also, focus group interviews were conducted in order to interpret the results and cross-check the quantitative data. Lastly, five students were

interviewed individually to interpret the results and cross-check the data gathered from other two data collection tools.

Table 2. *Data collection tools and resources*

Data collection instrument	Data Resources	N	Purpose
Scale	Students	242	Interpret the results Cross-check the qualitative data
Focus group interviews	Students	7	Interpret the results Cross-check both quantitative results
Individual interviews	Students	5	Interpret the results Cross-check both qualitative and quantitative results

Since this study is a concurrent triangulation mixed method, multiple data collection tools and data analysis were used. In order to make an effective interpretation, a disciplined data collection and analysis process is managed. In the study, the scale was applied to the students at the end of the academic year, and both focus-group and individual interviews were applied to the students concurrently. The data collection process can be seen in Figure 2 below.
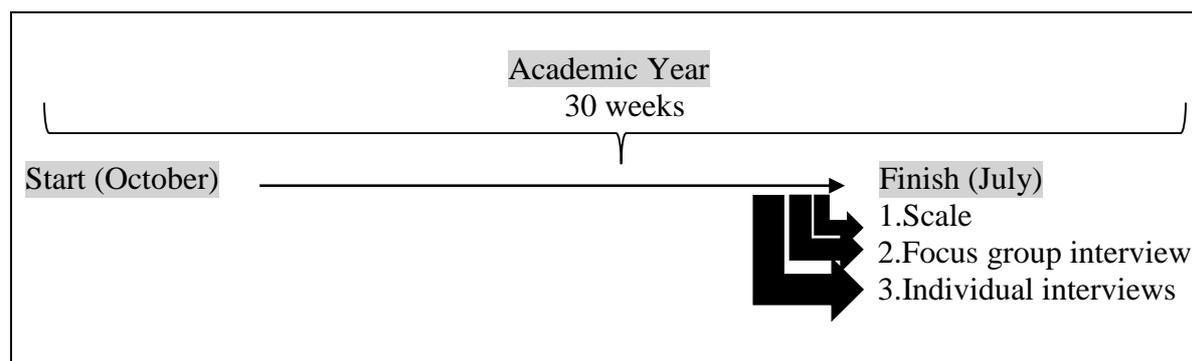

Figure 2. Data collection procedure

3.6. Data Analysis

Different data analysis methods were applied for the quantitative and qualitative sections. The minimum, maximum and average values of the scales and sub-dimensions used in quantitative part of the study were examined; Cronbach Alpha, the most widely used method, was used to measure reliability levels. The data collection process started by applying the questionnaire form to 242 students, that includes 34 questions, each of which is a five-point Likert type, and six questions asking about demographic characteristics of the participants. The data collected were analyzed with the help of SPSS 26.0 package program. First of all, with the help of the Skewness-Kurtosis coefficients, it was examined whether the data provided the assumption of normality, and it was seen that the Skewness-Kurtosis coefficient for each item was in the range of ± 2. The fact that the Skewness-Kurtosis and coefficients are between $+2$ and -2 emphasizes the normal distribution of the data (Pallant, 2001). For this reason, parametric techniques were used in the analysis of the data.

Independent sample t-test was used to examine the difference between the average scores obtained from the general and sub-dimensions of the scale according to gender, enrollment

type, level group and section. ANOVA was also used to examine the difference according to GPA and online attendance rate. In addition, chi-square analysis was used to examine the relationship between students' GPA and demographic characteristics. In the interpretation of the results obtained, the level of statistical significance was accepted as 0.05.

For the qualitative data, different data collection and analyses procedures from the quantitative data are applied. According to Roulston (2014) there are three basic steps in qualitative data analysis; reduce the data, reorganize it, and interpret it. However, in this study, a more detailed data analysis procedure is applied. According to Graue (2015), there are four main steps for analyzing the qualitative data: collecting the data, reducing the data, displaying the data in figures or charts, and drawing a comprehensive conclusion (see Figure 2 below).

1st Step
-Collect the data

2nd Step
-Reduce the data

3rd Step
-Display in figures

4th Step
-Draw a comprehensive conclusion
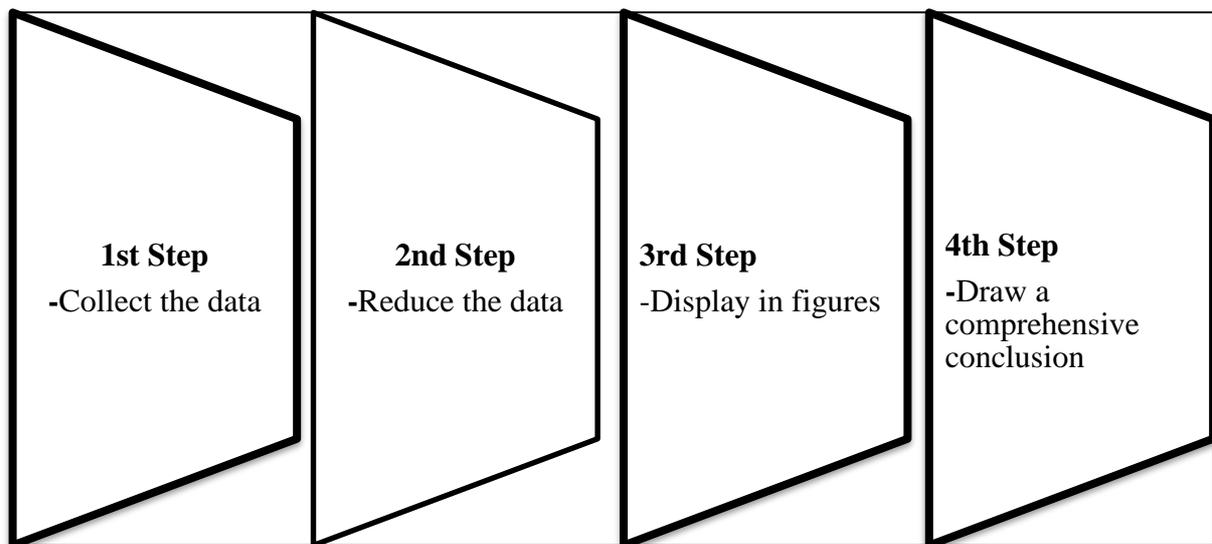
Figure 2. Analyzing interview data (adapted from Graue, 2015)

As it is understood from the figure above, initially, we collected the data, then the reduction of the data to examine phenomena of interest that is EOC activities in this study is done. Later, in the third step, we displayed the results in figures, and finally the interpretation is done for the in-depth understanding of the phenomena.

4. Results

4.1. EOC activities students use most and least, and EOC activities used for each language skills.

The results showing EOC activities of the students participating in the study are shown in Table 1 below. In this table, the mean scores for EOC activities in the scale used by the students more and less frequently are indicated.

Table 3. *Mean scores and reliability analysis of the scale items used in the study*

	N	Min	Max	$\overline{X}$	s.d.	Cr. Alpha
Reading	242	1,00	4,60	2,93	0,61	
R1. I read English literary texts such as story-novels.	242	1,00	5,00	2,55	0,91	
R2. I read English comics.	242	1,00	5,00	2,13	1,07	
R3. I read English newspapers and magazines.	242	1,00	5,00	2,06	1,04	
R4. I read English texts on Social Media (eg Facebook).	242	1,00	5,00	3,74	0,97	
R5. I read English texts on different websites.	242	1,00	5,00	3,34	1,07	
R6. In social life, I read English texts that I do not understand and can learn new words.	242	1,00	5,00	3,13	1,04	0,744
R7. On the Internet, I use an English search engine.	242	1,00	5,00	3,21	1,28	
R8. I play video games online because I think it contributes to my English reading skills.	242	1,00	5,00	2,77	1,40	
R9. I use smartphone apps that I think contribute to my English reading skills.	242	1,00	5,00	3,52	1,03	
R10. I read the English information and user manuals of the products.	242	1,00	5,00	2,79	1,18	
Writing	242	1,00	4,25	2,26	0,64	
W1. I keep a diary in English.	242	1,00	5,00	1,49	0,93	
W2. I share comments in English on foreign social media sharing platforms.	242	1,00	5,00	2,40	1,32	
W3. I write e-mails in English outside of class.	242	1,00	5,00	1,56	0,81	
W4. I text my friends in English (SMS/WhatsApp).	242	1,00	5,00	2,86	1,15	
W5. Outside the class, I correspond with native speakers in English.	242	1,00	5,00	2,22	1,26	0,695
W6. Outside the class, I write stories or essays in English.	242	1,00	5,00	1,80	0,96	
W7. I play online video games that I think contribute to my English writing skills.	242	1,00	5,00	2,53	1,35	
W8. I use smartphone apps that I think contribute to my English writing skills.	242	1,00	5,00	3,24	1,15	
Speaking	242	1,00	4,00	2,24	0,66	
S1. Outside the class, I talk to native English speakers via the internet.	242	1,00	5,00	2,26	1,26	
S2. Outside the class, I speak English with my friends.	242	1,00	5,00	2,46	1,04	
S3. In my social life, I speak English with tourists.	242	1,00	5,00	2,15	1,14	
S4. Outside the school, I attend an English-speaking course or club.	242	1,00	5,00	1,49	1,07	
S5. I attend international programs or courses to improve my English-speaking skills.	242	1,00	5,00	1,42	0,94	0,651
S6. I play online video games that I think contribute to my English-speaking ability.	242	1,00	5,00	2,60	1,43	
S7. I use smartphone apps that I think contribute to my English-speaking ability.	242	1,00	5,00	3,31	1,22	
Listening	242	1,78	4,78	3,35	0,57	
L1. I watch English series or movies with Turkish subtitles.	242	1,00	5,00	4,05	1,13	
L2. I watch English series or movies with English subtitles.	242	1,00	5,00	3,17	1,19	
L3. I watch English channels.	242	1,00	5,00	3,21	1,14	
L4. I watch videos or clips in English (e.g., YouTube)	242	1,00	5,00	3,85	1,04	
L5. I listen to the English radio.	242	1,00	5,00	2,03	1,26	0,730
L6. I listen to English music.	242	1,00	5,00	4,24	0,96	
L7. I listen to the lyrics of English songs and try to learn their meanings.	242	1,00	5,00	4,02	0,99	
L8. I play online video games that I think contribute to my English listening skills.	242	1,00	4,00	2,65	0,65	
L9. I use smartphone applications that I think contribute to my English listening skills.	242	2,00	4,00	2,90	0,60	

When the mean values of the items and sub-dimensions of the EE scale used in the study were examined, among the items that make up the reading dimension, while "R4. I read English

texts on Social Media (eg Facebook)" has the highest mean score (*M*=3,74), "R3. I read English newspapers and magazines." item has the lowest average score (*M*=2,06). According to this result, while students use social media extensively among EOC activities to improve their reading skills, they do newspaper-magazine reading activities the least.

Secondly, among the items that make up the writing dimension, while "W8. I use smartphone apps that I think contribute to my English writing skills" has the highest score (*M*=3.24), "W1. I keep a diary in English." item has the lowest average score (*M*=1,49). According to this result, while the students use smartphone applications the most among the EOC activities in developing their writing skills, they apply the activities of keeping a diary the least.

Thirdly, among the items that make up the speaking dimension, while "S7. I use smartphone apps that I think contribute to my English-speaking ability" has the highest score (*M*=3,31), "S5. I attend programs or courses abroad to improve my English-speaking skills" item has the lowest average score (*M*=1,45). According to this result, students mostly use smartphone applications among EOC activities to improve their speaking skills as well as to improve their writing skills.

Fourth, among the items that make up the Listening dimension, while "L6. I listen to English music" has the highest average (*M*=4,24), "L5. I listen to the English radio" item has the lowest mean score (*M*=2.03). According to this result, while the students mostly use listening to music activity among EOC activities to improve their listening skills, they use radio listening activities the least.

Finally, when the average scores of the sub-dimensions are examined, it is seen that the 'Listening' dimension has the highest average (*M*=3,35) and the 'Speaking' dimension has the lowest average (*M*=2,24). According to this result, while the students are trying to improve their listening skills the most with the help of EOC activities, they make the least effort for speaking. After listening skills, 'Reading' takes the second place (*M*=2,93) and 'Writing' takes the third place (*M*=2,26). In this analysis, the Cronbach alpha values obtained as a result of the analysis performed to measure the reliability level of the scale and its sub-dimensions. Since this value is higher than 0.60, it can be said that the scale used in the research is reliable.

4.2. Statistical relationship between the demographics and EOC activities used for language skills.

Within the scope of the research, firstly, difference analyses were made. Independent sample t-test was used to examine the difference in the mean scores obtained from the general and sub-dimensions of the Extramural English Scale according to gender, enrollment type, level group and section, and ANOVA was used to examine the difference according to GPA and online attendance rate. The difference was statistically significant for the variables (p value) less than 0.05, and it was not found significant for the variables that were greater than 0.05 (see Table 4).

Table 4. *The average scores of the participants according to their demographic characteristics*

		Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening	General
Gender	Female	2,83	2,16	2,13	3,36	2,67
	Male	3,08	2,44	2,45	3,33	2,87
	Total	2,93	2,26	2,24	3,35	2,74
Sig.		**0,002**	**0,001**	**0,000**	0,726	**0,005**
Enrollment type	Compulsory	2,91	2,27	2,24	3,35	2,74
	Optional	2,96	2,25	2,25	3,33	2,74
	Total	2,93	2,26	2,24	3,35	2,74
Sig.		0,487	0,764	0,970	0,791	0,933
Level	A	2,91	2,25	2,24	3,32	2,73
	B	2,99	2,32	2,26	3,45	2,80
	Total	2,93	2,26	2,24	3,35	2,74
Sig.		0,481	0,512	0,841	0,189	0,394
Section	Day	2,89	2,22	2,20	3,33	2,71
	Evening	3,31	2,73	2,72	3,58	3,12
	Total	2,93	2,26	2,24	3,35	2,74
Sig.		**0,004**	**0,001**	**0,001**	0,065	**0,001**
GPA	0-59btw	**2,66**	**1,94**	1,96	**3,10**	**2,47**
	60-79btw	**2,86**	2,22	2, 29	**3,28**	2,70
	80-100btw	**3,06**	**2,40**	2,27	**3,48**	**2,85**
	Total	2,93	2,26	2,24	3,35	2,74
Sig.		**0,003**	**0,002**	0,059	**0,002**	**0,002**
Online attendance rate	%0-49btw	2,90	2,15	2,30	3,38	2,73
	%50-79btw	2,82	2,15	2,21	3,31	2,67
	%80-100btw	2,98	2,34	2,24	3,36	2,78
	Total	2,93	2,26	2,24	3,35	2,74
Sig.		0,200	0,085	0,841	0,805	0,370

When the levels of EOC use and the average scores obtained from the sub-dimensions of the individuals participating in the research are examined, the following results are obtained

- For gender, the mean scores of males' EOC use levels in general and in sub-dimensions as reading, writing and speaking skills are higher than females. As a result of the independent sample t-test, this difference was found to be statistically significant.

- For enrollment type, no statistically significant difference was found.

- For the level group, the level of EOC use in general and the average scores of all the sub-dimensions of the students in group B were higher than the students in group A. However, as a result of the independent sample t-test, it was seen that this difference was not statistically significant.

- For section, the level of EOC use in general and the average scores of all the sub-dimensions of the students in evening section were higher than the students in day education. As a result of the independent sample t-test, this difference was found to be statistically significant.

- For GPA, as the students' GPAs increase, it is seen that the level of EOC and the average scores of reading, writing and listening skills, which are sub-dimensions, also increase. As a result of the ANOVA test, this difference was found to be statistically significant. In order to determine between which GPAs the difference was, a post-hoc multiple comparison test was conducted. Accordingly, individuals with a GPA of 80-100 have higher levels of EOC and their sub-dimensions of reading, writing and listening skills are higher than students with a GPA of 0-59, and this difference is statistically significant. However, the average scores of reading and listening skills of individuals with a GPA of 80-100 are higher than those with a GPA of 60-79, and this difference was also statistically significant.

- For the online attendance rate to the courses; no statistically significant difference was found.

Finally, chi-square analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' GPAs and demographic variables. It was stated that there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables with sig (p value) less than 0.05, and there was no significant relationship between the variables with a sig (p value) greater than 0.05. The results are given below in Table 5.

Table 5. *Crosstab for the relationship between students' GPAs and demographic characteristics*

			GPA				Sig.
			0-59btw	60-79btw	80-100btw	Total	(p-value)
Gender	Female	N	19	60	75	154	
		%	12,3%	39,0%	48,7%	100,0%	
	Male	N	9	50	29	88	**0,025**
		%	10,2%	56,8%	33,0%	100,0%	
	Total	N	28	110	104	242	
		%	11,6%	45,5%	43,0%	100,0%	
Enrollment type	Compulsory	N	16	63	78	157	
		%	10,2%	40,1%	49,7%	100,0%	
	Optional	N	12	47	26	85	**0,017**
		%	14,1%	55,3%	30,6%	100,0%	
	Total	N	28	110	104	242	
		%	11,6%	45,5%	43,0%	100,0%	
Level	A	N	22	91	87	200	
		%	11,0%	45,5%	43,5%	100,0%	
	B	N	6	19	17	42	0,819
		%	14,3%	45,2%	40,5%	100,0%	
	Total	N	28	110	104	242	
		%	11,6%	45,5%	43,0%	100,0%	
Section	Day	N	25	100	98	223	
		%	11,2%	44,8%	43,9%	100,0%	
	Evening	N	3	10	6	19	0,556
		%	15,8%	52,6%	31,6%	100,0%	
	Total	N	28	110	104	242	
		%	11,6%	45,5%	43,0%	100,0%	
Online attendance rate	% 0-49 btw	N	13	16	2	31	
		%	41,9%	51,6%	6,5%	100,0%	
	% 50-79 btw	N	6	47	13	66	
		%	9,1%	71,2%	19,7%	100,0%	**0,000**
	% 80-100 btw	N	9	47	89	145	
		%	6,2%	32,4%	61,4%	100,0%	
	Total	N	28	110	104	242	
		%	11,6%	45,5%	43,0%	100,0%	

As a result of chi-square, which was conducted to examine the relationship between the GPAs of the students participating in the research and their demographic characteristics, a significant relationship was found between the genders of the individuals and their GPAs. Accordingly, while the majority of females have a GPA of 80-100, the majority of boys have a GPA of 60-79. Moreover, there was a significant relationship between the enrollment type of the students and their GPAs. While most of the compulsory students in the preparatory class have a GPA of 80-100, the majority of the optional students have a GPA of 60-79. Finally, there was a statistically significant relationship between the online attendance rate of the students and their GPAs. Most of the students (61.4%) whose online attendance rate is between 80-100% have a GPA between 80-100. When the obtained rates are examined, it is seen that the GPAs increase as the class participation rate goes up.

4.3. Students' descriptions of the activities to improve EOC strategies.

In order to understand main phenomena that is EOC in this study, themes and categories has been established. Two themes as sources and strategies emerged. These themes emerged from several categories that can be seen in Figure 3 below. It is clear that students benefit from various social media sources such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other websites, and they us media tools such as movies, dialogs, podcasts, documentaries and commentaries as the main sources for their EOC activities. On the other hand, they use translation, note-taking, repetition, and meeting new people on the internet as their strategies.
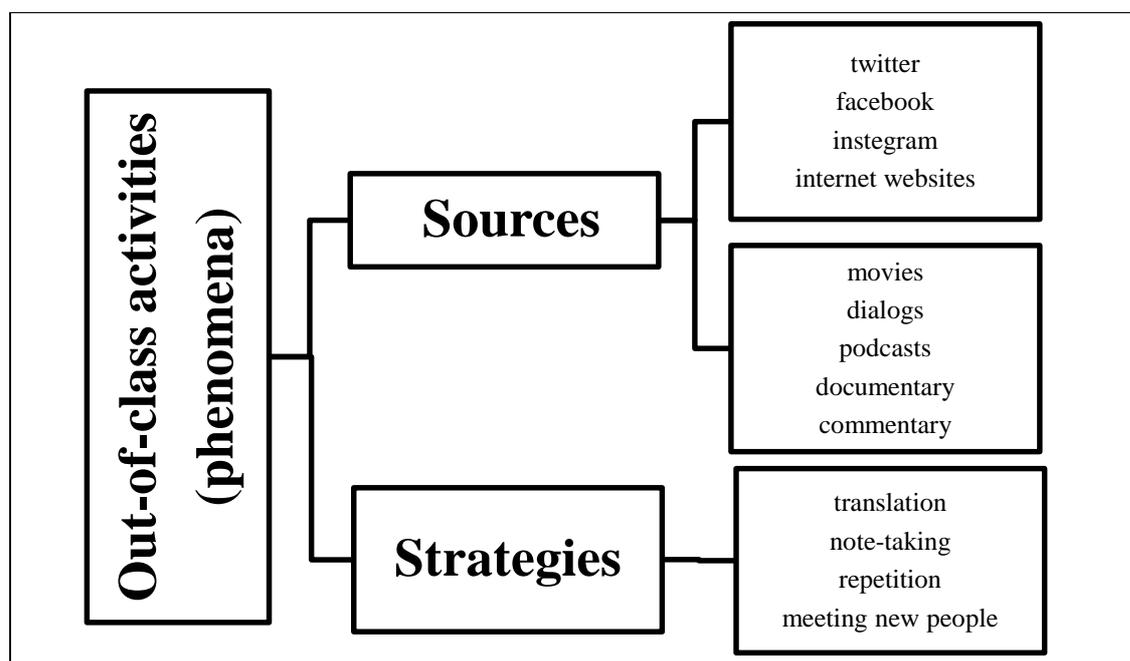

Figure 3. Presentation of the interview results

Several students stated that they use social media applications such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook in English. They follow foreign accounts, that they read the stories or comments in these accounts and try to understand them. Moreover, one student stated that he uses podcasts for his listening and pronunciation skills. He explains that he first tries to listen it, then read the scripts aloud in front of a mirror. In addition, some students stated that they used to watch series with Turkish subtitles, but as the knowledge of English progressed, students started watching with English subtitles and then without subtitles. In this regard, a student stated that

while watching an English series with English subtitles, he repeated the words and tried to predict the next reaction or sentence. In addition, some students stated that they watch documentary channels because the language spoken there is clearer and more understandable.

Moreover, several students stated that because they are interested in sports, they especially listen to the comments before and after the matches and try to understand them. Other students pointed out that they listen to English songs according to their own taste, and sometimes they follow the scripts of these lyrics. For meeting new people on the internet, students stated that they signed up for some websites in order to make new friends on the internet, and that they were trying to improve their ability to talk to new people they met. Also, all students stated that they use the smart phone application quiet a lot. In addition, some students stated that they use translation very often in their daily life; for example, when they go to the market, they translate what the cashier says into their own language, and they also try to read the product information on the back of the market products.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the use of EOC activities of students who study English through distance education at a higher education was investigated. First, EOC activities that the students use was obtained via the scale, and it was seen that they improved their listening skills the most and then reading and writing skills, respectively. In addition, it was revealed that students use EOC activities for speaking skills at least. This result goes parallel with the findings of Coskun and Mutlu (2017) that in their study, students engage in listening and reading activities more than writing activities. Zhang et al. (2021) also mentioned the superiority of listening activities towards others. The reason for this might be that as reading and listening are receptive skills and more EOC activities can be found on the internet (Henry et al., 2018), they may be much easier to practice.

Moreover, while students use social media too much among EOC activities to improve their reading skills, it was seen that they did the newspaper-magazine reading activities least which is similar to the findings of Avello et al. (2019) Among the EOC activities, students mostly use smartphone applications to improve their writing skills. It was also revealed that they use keeping diary least. It is seen that students use smartphone applications the most among EOC activities to improve their speaking skills as well as to improve their writing skills. On the other hand, it has been revealed that they apply the activities of participating in foreign programs or courses in the least way due to the difficulties of the opportunities. Finally, parallel to the finding of Nguyen, (2018) it was determined that while the students mostly used listening to music among the EOC activities to improve their listening skills, it was seen that they applied the radio listening activities, which are used in the least way.

When the distribution of the EOC activities performed by the students in improving their English language skills according to demographic characteristics is examined, the average scores of males' EOC activities use levels and their sub-dimensions of reading, writing, and speaking skills were higher than females. This result is contradictory with the findings of Sundqvist and Sylvén (2014) that in their research, female participants' average scores to EOC activities are higher than male participants. The reason might be about the age-range of the participants in these studies. While we conducted this research on university students, Sundqvist and Sylvén (2014) conducted their research on young learners. In addition, the level of EOC activities and the average scores of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of the students in evening education were higher than the students in day education. Finally, parallel to the findings of Gerber, (1996) Massoni (2011), Bakoban and Alijarallah, (2015) and Aychan (2021), as the GPA of the students increased, it was observed that the level of using EOC activities and the average scores of reading, writing and listening skills also increased.

When the relationship between the GPA of the students participating in the research and their demographic characteristics is examined, parallel to the findings of Wilson (2009), it is seen that the female students' GPA is higher than male students; compulsory students' GPA is higher than optional students, and students' whose online attendance rate are higher having higher GPA scores than those with lower course attendance rates.

According to the qualitative data obtained, similar to the findings of Reda (2019), it is found out that students use EOC activities such as translation, note-taking, listening to podcasts, foreign music, short dialogs, watching English movies and series with English subtitles, and taking notes that they hear in such activities, repeating the words and phrases and translating them into their native language, watching documentaries and commentaries and trying to understand them. Such activities are also found in Zhang et al. (2021) that students use them commonly outside the school. Moreover, students use Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook application which are mentioned in Sandqvist (2020), follow English accounts, and read the stories and comments below the posts. These results go parallel with the findings of Sunqvist (2011) that it is pointed out that English as a second or foreign language dominated the media which especially teenagers use more often.

Several issues can be inferred from the results of this study. In order to become more autonomous language learners, appropriate strategies can be taught to the students from the very beginning of their education which is also mentioned in Shamsudin et al. (2014), El-Batri et al., (2019) and Hansson and Broqvist (2019). Moreover, it can be emphasized to the students that language learning is everywhere in life, receptive EOC activities such as listening and reading, and translation which does not require any materials to do can be used extensively. Since social media came into everyone's lives, language practice outside the classroom for students has become as close as a phone and an application that they may download to their phones. However, how to use technology and such applications should be taught by the teacher. It can also be inferred that students have their individual, social and educational motivations; therefore, they can be encouraged to find EOC activities according to their own motivation and taste which is also mentioned in Gilman (2001) and Holloway (2002). Barbee (2013) states that students use social media applications that they enjoy more than those they think would be more useful. Therefore, it can be concluded that students' own preferences are more important than what is useful. Moreover, teachers may help learners discover their own learning strategies. For instance, while extrovert students should be guided to meet new people on the Internet and to practice speaking, introvert students may be directed to use more receptive and passive EOC activities.

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