

THE USE OF ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO STUDENTS' LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES IN REAL-LIFE CONTEXTS

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Abstract

This study looks at how English Education students at a State Islamic University in Indonesia use English outside their classes. The research uses stories from students to understand their experiences. The researcher talked to ten students in interviews to learn about their reasons for using English, the problems they face, and how they try to improve. The study finds three main ideas. First, students have different reasons for using English, such as personal interest or outside pressure. Second, they have problems like feeling nervous and not knowing enough words. Third, they try to solve these problems by watching English videos, using social media, and studying with friends. Many students said they want to get better at speaking English and that using digital platforms helps them feel more comfortable and less afraid. This study gives useful ideas about learning English outside the classroom. It shows that motivation is important and that using English in daily life helps students learn better. It also connects to learning theories like Self-Determination Theory and explains how technology helps students practice English. The study suggests that teachers should think about these outside experiences when teaching English. It also encourages more research on different student groups and ways to help students with language problems.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of learning English extends beyond academic settings. In today's globalized world, English is essential for various professions, including business, technology, and tourism, as well as for everyday activities such as accessing information online, communicating on social media, and traveling internationally. Because of this, it is important for students to practice English outside the classroom. Learning English in real-life situations helps students improve their language skills and grow as individuals. Now, teachers do not only focus on teaching English in school. They also want students to use English in different places, like at home, with friends, or online. Using English in real life helps students become more confident and better at communication (Richards, 2015).

Using English outside of school is crucial for language learning, as it allows students to practice speaking, listening, and understanding new words in everyday life. Research shows that talking to native speakers, joining English clubs, or watching English movies helps students learn more than just studying in class (Lee & Dressman, 2017). These activities help students learn new phrases, slang, and cultural meanings that are not always taught in school. When students take part in activities outside of class, they improve their English skills and can use what they learn in real conversations (Radha & Ali, 2024).

In the world today, English is a common language that helps people from different countries talk to each other (Ehrenreich, 2010). Many countries now teach English as a second or foreign

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language because it has many benefits. In Indonesia, for example, learning English is important for school and getting a good job (Marzulina et al., 2019). The internet also helps students learn English because they can watch videos, play games, and join online groups that use English. This gives them more chances to practice the language in real-life situations (Tafuzi, 2024).

Digital media, like social media and online games, is changing the way people learn English. These platforms give students new ways to use the language (Atmojo, 2022). For example, research shows that students who watch English movies or play online games in English become better at the language (Ahmed & Veronis, 2019). In workplaces, companies also use English to help employees work together better. Because of this, learning English is not only important for school but also for work and daily life.

Many studies have looked at how students use English outside the classroom. Research by Lee and Dressman shows that digital media helps students improve their English skills (Lee & Dressman, 2017). Online activities allow students to practice English by talking to others and studying by themselves. Tafuzi also studied how joining English clubs and other activities helps students become better at using the language (Tafuzi, 2024).

Different research methods have been used to study English learning outside school. Some researchers interview students, give surveys, or watch how students use English in real life. For example, Radha and Ali talked to university students about their experiences in English clubs. They found that these activities made students more confident and better at speaking English (Radha & Ali, 2024). Other studies show that social media and video games help students learn English naturally (Atmojo, 2022).

Talking to people in real life is also very helpful for learning English. Conversations with friends, work experiences, and travel help students practice what they have learned in class. Research shows that speaking English in everyday situations helps students improve their skills and understand different cultures (Ehrenreich, 2010). However, most studies only look at the results of learning English outside of school. They do not always focus on students' personal experiences.

Even though research shows that learning English outside school is helpful, there are still gaps in the studies. Many studies use numbers and statistics, but they do not explain students' personal stories or feelings about learning English. Also, there are not many studies that focus on students' experiences in non-English-speaking countries like Indonesia. Most research looks at places where English is spoken more often (Marzulina et al., 2019). Because of this, it is important to study how students in different countries learn English in their daily lives.

There are still many things that researchers do not know about how students learn English outside school. Many studies talk about the benefits of learning English informally, but they do not focus on students' personal experiences. It is important to understand how students feel about learning English and what helps them the most. Many studies focus on test scores and skill levels, but they do not explain how students' backgrounds and emotions affect their learning.

Most research does not explore how students' interests and daily activities influence their English learning. For example, cultural background and personal hobbies can change the way students use English (Bucay & Rosil, 2024). This study will use personal stories to learn more about how students use English outside of class. By listening to students' experiences, teachers and researchers can better understand how to help learners improve their English.

This research will focus on students' personal experiences with English. It will study how students learn English in their daily lives and what motivates them to use the language. The study will also look at the challenges students face and how they overcome them. A narrative approach will be used to collect students' stories and give them a chance to share their learning experiences (Manokaran et al., 2013). This will help researchers understand the real-life difficulties and successes of students learning English outside the classroom.

By looking at students' personal experiences, this study will provide new ideas about how people learn languages. It will help teachers create lessons that match students' real-life experiences. Understanding what motivates students to use English in their daily lives will also help educators develop better ways to teach the language. This research will also help improve English teaching methods by focusing on students' actual needs and experiences.

The main goals of this research are to explore students' experiences with English outside of school, find out what challenges they face, and understand what motivates them to use the language. By listening to students' stories, this study will help show how these experiences affect their skills, confidence, and identity (Sirisrimangkorn, 2021). This research will also give new ideas about how language learning happens outside of formal education.

This study is important for teachers, education leaders, and students. For teachers, the research will help improve teaching methods and create lessons that better match students' real-life experiences. If teachers understand how students use English outside of school, they can make learning more interesting and useful. For education leaders, this research can help them develop better language programs that include real-world language learning opportunities.

This study will also help improve the way English is taught. Instead of only using traditional methods, teachers might include more real-life and interactive learning activities. This can help students stay motivated and make learning more enjoyable. The study will also explore how students take charge of their own learning by using English in their daily lives.

In conclusion, this research will explore how students learn English outside the classroom. By collecting students' personal stories, this study will fill gaps in previous research and give valuable insights into how to improve English teaching. The next section will discuss past research on learning English and explain how this study connects to existing ideas in language education.

METHOD

This study used the qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2013). It focused on Narrative Inquiry, which helped to study students' personal experiences with the English language outside the classroom. Narrative Inquiry was a type of qualitative research that looked at personal stories. It helped researchers understand how people gave meaning to their lives through their stories. Wells stated that qualitative research was useful when researchers wanted to learn about people's experiences, beliefs, and relationships (Wells, 2011). This method was suitable for studying identity and language use. It helped researchers collect rich, detailed information about how students used and experienced English in different situations.

The reason for using Narrative Inquiry in this study was that it helped reveal students' real experiences and emotions about using English. By using Narrative Inquiry, this study aimed to understand students' experiences better. Students shared stories about how they used English in real life. This method helped uncover how students felt about their language skills, the challenges they faced, and why they used English outside of class (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). This research method aligned well with the study's goals.

The study took place at one of the State Islamic Universities in Indonesia. In Indonesia, English was usually taught as a foreign language, and students used it in different informal situations. The study employed purposive sampling, meaning researchers selected participants who met specific study requirements. Participants had to be students in an English Education program and needed to use English outside the classroom. The study included students with different levels of English skills and language backgrounds to provide a complete picture of students' experiences. There were 10 students in the study, which was a sufficient number to collect all necessary information. When no new ideas or themes emerged in the data, it indicated that the study had enough participants. The students' experiences helped researchers understand how they learned English informally, what problems they encountered, and what successes they achieved.

The main method of data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews. This type of interview was effective for qualitative research because it allowed deep discussion while maintaining flexibility. Semi-structured interviews enabled students to talk about their experiences and thoughts regarding using English in different situations.

The study used thematic analysis, which involved identifying common themes and patterns in students' stories. Thematic analysis was useful for recognizing important ideas in qualitative research. The study examined different topics, such as how students learned English, their emotions, their challenges, and their motivations. This approach helped researchers gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences.

To ensure the study was trustworthy, researchers followed four key principles: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility ensured that the data was accurate. This was achieved by spending sufficient time with participants and collecting detailed information. Transferability meant that other researchers could learn from the findings. The study provided clear descriptions of the participants and their backgrounds so others could compare the results to their own contexts. Dependability required maintaining a record of all research steps, demonstrating that the study followed a transparent process. Confirmability ensured that the results were based on real data rather than personal opinions. Researchers ensured that all conclusions were drawn from students' stories.

Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained permission from the university's ethics board. All participants were treated with respect, and their names and personal information were kept confidential. These steps ensured that the research was ethical and fair.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study interviewed ten English Education students from a State Islamic University in Indonesia. It found three main ideas about using English in daily life: reasons for using English outside class, problems with speaking English, and ways to solve these problems. These ideas came from interviews, showing how personal interests, social life, and learning English are connected. The results help answer the research questions by explaining why students use English, the difficulties they face, and how they deal with these challenges.

Surprisingly, the study also showed that technology, especially social media and online games, helps students use English more. Many students said they often use English while playing online games or chatting on social media. These activities give them chances to practice English and feel part of a community. This finding suggests that new ways of learning, like digital platforms, are important for improving language skills.

Motivation for Using English Outside the Classroom

Students had different reasons for using English, such as social, school-related, and online influences. Some said they used English because they liked it and wanted to talk with others. For example, Participant 3 said, "I use English when chatting with my online gaming friends because it helps me practice without pressure." This shows that informal places like online games make it easier for students to practice English.

Students had different reasons for using English, such as social, school-related, and online influences. One key factor in their motivation is enjoyment, as explained by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Many students said they liked learning English because it connected them to the world. Participant 7 shared, "I love watching English movies, and it motivates me to learn the language better." This shows that students learn English because they enjoy it, not just for school. This agrees with (Zhang et al., 2016), who said enjoying learning is important for language success.

Students were also influenced by their friends and society. Participant 6 said, "My friends often encourage me to speak English since they believe it will help in our future careers." This supports the L2 Motivational Self System, which says outside influences help students learn English (Dornyei, 2001). The study shows that both personal interest and outside encouragement help students want to speak English more.

Challenges in Using English in Real-Life Contexts

Even though students wanted to use English, they had some difficulties. Many said they felt nervous and lacked confidence. Participant 5 admitted, "I want to speak more English, but I feel nervous because I might say something wrong." This fear of making mistakes stops students from speaking English confidently. This problem is common in language learning, as research on language anxiety has shown.

Another big problem was a small vocabulary. Some students found it hard to express their thoughts. Participant 8 said, "Sometimes I have ideas in my head, but I can't find the right words to

say them in English." This is similar to what Noels et al. found, which is that not knowing enough words makes learning a language harder and more frustrating (Noels et al., 2019).

Students also said they missed getting feedback when speaking English with friends. Participant 9 explained, "When I speak English with my friends, I don't get the feedback I need to correct myself." This shows a difference between classroom learning and real-life practice. Research suggests that feedback is important for improving language skills (Kidd et al., 2018).

Strategies for Overcoming Language Barriers

Students used different ways to improve their English. One common way was using digital content. Participant 2 said, "To improve my English, I started watching English YouTube videos with subtitles and repeating the sentences." Some students joined study groups to practice speaking English without fear. Participant 1 shared, "Joining a speaking club was a game changer; I can practice speaking with others who feel the same way." This method helped reduce anxiety and created a supportive environment. Research also shows that studying with others helps students learn better (Leuf & Cunningham, 2001).

Technology also helped students learn English. Participant 4 said, "I use language apps to learn new vocabulary while I'm commuting." Research by Salleh also found that using digital tools helps students learn better (Salleh et al., 2019). The study suggests that technology gives students flexible ways to practice English in different situations.

Critical Discussion of Findings

This study aligns with past research regarding the reasons students learn English and the challenges they encounter. The motivations provided by students reflect concepts from the L2 Motivational Self System and Self-Determination Theory. Specifically, students expressed a desire to learn English not only for academic purposes but also to make friends and prepare for future careers. This indicates that English learning is impactful for both social interactions and professional opportunities. The connection between motivation and practical English usage suggests that students' personal goals drive their language learning efforts, influencing their use of English beyond the classroom context (Gelete & Dhaba, 2023).

Simultaneously, challenges such as anxiety and limited vocabulary hinder students from effectively communicating in English. These barriers illustrate that classroom instruction may not suffice; students require additional support for real-world practice. Concerns about making mistakes and lacking sufficient vocabulary inhibit their confidence in speaking. If students feel uncomfortable using English outside the classroom, their language acquisition may be impeded. Hence, it is crucial to assist students in overcoming these obstacles to enhance their English proficiency (Damayanti et al., 2022).

The methods through which students improve their English indicate a proactive approach to their learning experiences. The integration of technology and social media fosters opportunities for practice. Research indicates that when students take control of their learning processes, their autonomy increases, and they become more independent learners. They engage with various resources, digital tools, and English-language content (Wen-ying & Liu, 2016). In today's digital age, numerous learning opportunities exist beyond the conventional classroom. By leveraging online platforms and social media, students can tailor their English learning experiences (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2008; Prentice et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the study emphasizes that English education in countries such as Indonesia should offer students more opportunities to utilize English in everyday contexts. Teachers and educational institutions are encouraged to incorporate more online and informal learning opportunities, which can build students' confidence in speaking English in real-life scenarios. Increased chances for authentic English conversations may enhance their proficiency and fluency. Educators can facilitate this by organizing activities like English clubs, discussion groups, and digital learning initiatives, which would improve students' English skills for academic, social, and professional contexts (Chirkov, 2009).

However, this study has limitations. The sample comprised a small group of students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should include a broader range of participants from diverse backgrounds to validate the results. Additionally, longitudinal studies

could provide insights into how students' experiences evolve over time. Exploring a larger cohort of students might yield a better understanding of language acquisition. Tracking students' progress over extended periods could reveal patterns in English learning, aiding educators and institutions in developing more effective English programs.

In conclusion, this study contributes to our understanding of how students use English outside the classroom, highlighting their motivations, challenges, and improvement strategies. By considering their experiences, it becomes evident that informal learning plays a significant role in English acquisition. The study further proposes innovative teaching approaches that align better with students' needs. If educators and institutions prioritize informal learning, students may enjoy a more enriching English learning experience. Given the importance of English for global communication, we should explore fresh avenues to support students in their language learning endeavors, both in academic and everyday contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how English Education students at a State Islamic University in Indonesia use English outside the classroom. Using a narrative inquiry approach, it examined their motivations, challenges, and strategies. By analyzing students' stories, the research provides insights into their daily English use.

Students use English for various reasons, such as personal interest, social influence, or career goals. These motivations align with theories like Self-Determination Theory and the L2 Motivational Self System. As a result, students practice English through social media, school projects, and daily interactions, aiding natural language acquisition.

However, students face challenges like nervousness, low confidence, and limited vocabulary. These emotional barriers, common in language learning research, highlight the need for supportive learning environments. Educators can help students feel more confident using English in real life. To overcome these difficulties, students adopt different strategies. They watch videos, listen to music, join study groups, or use language apps. Research shows that modern learners prefer technology-based methods, which can enhance English skills, especially in non-English-speaking environments.

This study highlights how students learn English beyond the classroom, but further research is needed. Future studies could involve more participants, track progress over time, and explore innovative teaching methods. Understanding students' real-life language use will help create better, more inclusive learning experiences.

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