ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Autonomous Out-of-class Learning Activities, Motivation, and Academic Achievement Among University EFL Moroccan Learners

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Ethical Statement
Consent forms were obtained.

Conflict of Interest
No conflict of interest is present in the conduction or the reporting of this study.

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between autonomous out-of-class learning activities, motivation, and academic achievement among Moroccan English as a foreign language learner. The study adopts a mixed-method research design. The data of the study was collected through a questionnaire distributed to 114 Moroccan students following their studies in the 4th and 6th semesters. The questionnaire was used to investigate learners' autonomous out-of-class learning activities, motivation, and academic achievement. Moreover, a follow up semi-structured interview was conducted with 10 students to shed light on their autonomous out-of-class learning activities, motivation, and academic achievement. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data. The correlation among autonomous out-of-class learning activities, motivation, and academic achievement was examined by the Pearson correlation coefficient. The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. The results showed that there was no statistically significant correlation among motivation, autonomous out-of-class learning activities, and academic achievement. However, students' views revealed that autonomous out-of-class learning activities could enhance their academic achievement.

Keywords: autonomous out-of-class learning activities, motivation, and academic achievement

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1. Introduction

Language learning is a complex process. Learners should develop language skills through practice and exposure to the target language. Therefore, they should participate in diverse learning activities. Learners have two places for practicing English. The first one is the classroom, and the second is out-of-classroom. The classroom has some drawbacks especially in the Moroccan context such as limited class hours and crowded classes. Also, the exam-oriented approach puts stress on both teachers and students in order to finish the academic year program as quickly as possible. For this reason, supplementing the classroom language with out-of-class learning is a prerequisite for learners to improve their English skills. Out-of-class learning is considered as a part of autonomy beyond the classroom (Benson, 2007).

The context of the study is crucial for a successful study. In this regard, Hyland (2004) asserted that when investigating out-of-class learning, the researcher should take the context as an important factor. In this study, the research is conducted in the Moroccan context. English in Morocco is the second foreign language after French. In addition, Morocco is a diverse linguistic landscape. Tamazight language with its three varieties (Tamazight, Tachlihiyt, and Tarifiyt) and Arabic (standard Arabic and Moroccan Arabic) are the national languages in addition to French and Spanish. Recently, English because of its high status, has gained popularity among Moroccan youth. As Bahmad (2020) claimed, "English language has made significant inroads in many areas of life in Morocco, and young people in particular are learning it in great numbers in the belief that it is the language of the future" (p. 249). Since English is a foreign language in Morocco, there are limited opportunities for practicing English. As Guo (2011) stated, "countries in which English is not a primary language often lack an authentic English environment" (p. 246).

The main research objective of this paper is to discover the relationship among out-of-class learning activities, motivation, and academic achievement. In addition, it seeks to explore the students' views on the usefulness of autonomous out-of-class learning activities in learning English. Also, the students' motivation behind engaging in out-of-class learning activities will be investigated. Moreover, the students' views regarding the impact of out-of-class learning activities on academic achievement will be examined.

In order to reach the objectives above, the following questions will be addressed:

1. Can out-of-class learning activities positively affect English learning?
2. What type of motivation can increase out-of-class learning activities?
3. Can out-of-class learning activities positively impact academic achievement?

First, it is hypothesized that EFL learners participate in out-of-class learning activities, and this might positively impact their academic achievement. Second, students might be intrinsically motivated to learn English, and it can positively impact their academic achievement. Third, intrinsic motivation might be the reason learners engage in out-of-class activities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Autonomous Out-of-class Learning Activities (AOCLA)

Learning any language is not limited to the classroom context. Many people learn different languages outside the classroom. Every individual has a specific strategy to learn a foreign language. This independent learning has been a fertile area for researchers, especially in the last two decades (Hyland, 2004; Dauksaité & Kolpakoviené, 2020; Cortina-Pérez & Solano-Tenorio, 2013; Doyle & Parrish, 2012; Sargsyan & Kurghinyan, 2016). Out-of-class learning is a part of this area of research. Out-of-class learning has other names such as language beyond the classroom, out-of-class, after-class, extra-curricular, self-access, out-of-school and distance learning, informal, non-formal and naturalistic learning, non-instructed learning and self- instruction, autonomous, independent, self-directed, and self-regulated learning (Reinders & Benson, 2017). Benson (2013), in his influential book 'teaching and researching autonomy' defined out-of-class learning as "any kind of learning that takes place outside the classroom and involves self-instruction, naturalistic learning or self-directed naturalistic learning" (p. 77). By self-instruction, Benson refers to the intentional effort by the learner to master a language. On the other hand, naturalistic learning refers to direct contact with the users of the target language or the target language texts. Self-directed learning is the opportunities created by the learner to engage in the language used either for pleasure or interest but also with the intent of learning (Benson, 2013). Most importantly, Cortina-Pérez and Solano-Tenorio (2013) divided out-of-class language learning (OCLL) into two modalities. First, oriented OCLL, a teacher-oriented learning in which the teacher provides the learners with opportunities to practice the language outside the classroom. Second, autonomous OCLL: this kind of learning is self-initiated by the learner in which he/she looks for opportunities to practice English independently outside the classroom. In this study, the focus is on autonomous OCLL. That is, the English activities initiated by learners outside the classroom.

2.2 Motivation

Motivation is the energy that pushes learners to achieve their goals (Chuter, 2019). This burning desire is a significant factor that can indicate learning success. Ryan and Deci (2000) showed the importance of

motivation when they asserted that motivation is "a critical element in cognitive, social, and physical development because it is through acting on one's inherent interests that one grows in knowledge and skills" (p. 3). A motivated learner engages in the learning process by applying cognitive and metacognitive strategies and by participating in English learning activities. In the same line, Chuter (2019) considered motivation as the feature that directs and orients learning. In other words, a motivated learner knows why, what, and how to learn. Also, motivation can enhance critical thinking and creativity (Chuter, 2019). Chuter pointed out that "motivated students are not more intelligent than unmotivated students, but their need to find out the answer to a question or to master a concept pushes their thinking" (p .3).

2.3 Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is a term used widely in education. It was defined as "the general term for performance outcomes in intellectual domains taught at school; college, and university" (Spinath, 2012, p. 1). That is, learners, after finishing a course, should have learned and acquired new skills and knowledge, then learners should be examined in order to see if they have achieved the objectives of the course or not. Similarly, Steinmayr, Meibner, Weidinger and Wirthwein (2020) defined academic achievement as "performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in schools, college, and university" (p. 1). It is apparent then that academic achievement is a concept related to educational contexts. Students are taught content and knowledge before testing their abilities to spot their academic achievement. In this study and for practical reasons, academic achievement refers to students' global grades in the two previous semesters.

2.4 AOCLA and Motivation

Motivation and autonomy are two variables that can enhance learning. In applied linguistic research, there is a debate whether autonomy precedes motivation or vice versa. On one hand, some researchers think that autonomy paves the way to motivation. In this regard, Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested that "intrinsic motivation will be operative when action is experienced as autonomous" (p. 29). That is, if the behaviour of learners is autonomous, intrinsic motivation will function in the learning task. In addition, they claimed that autonomy-supporting learning context and self-determined learning lead to intrinsic motivation. In parallel, Dickinson (1995) reviewed autonomy and motivation, and argued that:

> . . . there is substantial evidence from cognitive motivational studies that learning success and enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning, being able to

control their own learning and perceiving that their learning successes or failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors outside their control. Each of these conditions is a characteristic of learner autonomy as it is described in applied linguistics. (p. 174)

In other words, successful learning and enhanced motivation are results of learner autonomy. The more learners take responsibility for their learning the more motivation and success they can get.

On the other hand, some investigators declare that motivation precedes autonomy. For instance, Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan et al. (2002) in their article "Autonomy and motivation: which comes first?" stated that "Motivation is a key factor that influences the extent to which learners are ready to learn autonomously" (p. 245). Moreover, they found that low participation in out- of-class learning activities is due to a lack of motivation and lack of time, especially the former. In line with this, they affirmed that the "absence of motivation seemed to inhibit practice of learner autonomy" (p. 19). That is, if learners do not have the motivation, they do not take charge of their learning. Furthermore, in the Chinese context, Zhao and Chen (2014) examined the correlation between learning motivation and learner autonomy for non-English majors. Their main result was that students' study time after class significantly correlated with their learning motivation. In the same Asian context, but this time in Taiwan, Liu (2015) investigated the role of motivation in foreign language learning. What he found was that motivation and autonomy had a high level of positive correlation. An interesting finding was that engagement in learning activities had the strongest association with motivation. Liu concluded that motivation predicts autonomy.

From the above arguments and studies, it is evident that motivation and autonomy influence each other and correlate positively with English learning. The above studies were conducted in the Asian context. However, this area of research is needed in the Moroccan context. Examining the relationship between autonomous out-of-class learning activities and motivation can demonstrate significant insights about the learning process of Moroccan students.

2.5 AOCLA and Academic Achievement

Most of the out-of-classroom learning studies focused on the types of learning activities used by EFL or ESL learners (Pickard, 1996; Hyland, 2004; Orhon, 2018; Dauksaité & Kolpaviené, 2020). Other studies highlighted the relationship between out-of-classroom learning and English proficiency (Knight 2000, Sundqvist 2009, Orhon 2018, De Wilde et al., 2020). In an ESL context in USA, Knight (2000) investigated out-of-class English used by 41 adult community college students. His main result of the research indicated that there is a

significant correlation between the amount of English used outside of class and English proficiency. Knight (2000) concluded that "English use outside of the classroom can be a useful supplement to classroom instruction that can be an important part of a learner's language acquisition process" (p. 67). In the same context, Little (2007) stated that "Success in second and foreign language teaching is governed by three interacting principles: learner involvement, learner reflection, and target language use" (p. 23). All these principles push learners to use English in class and outside of the classroom. Learner involvement is the behaviours or activities used by learners, Learner reflection is the use of metacognitive strategies and thinking about the best practices in learning English, Target language use is the direct contact between learners and target language. Thus, if learners employ these principles, they have more chances for success in learning English.

One of the most extensive studies which tried to link academic achievement and out-of-classroom learning is the study of Sundqvist (2009). His research focused on out-of-school English and its impact on Swedish ninth Graders' oral proficiency and vocabulary. His main result showed that the total amount of time spent on extramural English correlated positively and significantly both with learners' level of oral proficiency and size of vocabulary. Therefore, spending more time on extramural English is crucial for developing oral proficiency and vocabulary (Sundqvist, 2009).

Another significant study was undertaken by Guo (2011). He created an English detective activity to make learners aware of the English available to them outside the classroom and to illustrate the usefulness of this exposure to the development of their language. The results indicated that the activity helped learners be aware of the importance of English in their surroundings also, led to a high degree of learning autonomy among learners.

In a recent study, De Wilde et al. (2020) investigated learners' exposure to English and the potential effect on their English proficiency. Their main finding was that gaming, the use of social media, and speaking can provide valuable input for learners. Moreover, speaking and the use of social media are considered significant predictors for overall language proficiency.

While these studies made an effort to discover the impact of out-of-classroom learning on EFL learners' language proficiency, more research is needed to investigate if out-of-classroom learning impacts the academic achievement of learners or not. In addition, the previous studies have been conducted in many countries such as the USA (Knight, 2000); Sweden (Sundqvist, 2009); Hong Kong (Guo, 2011); Belgium (De Wilde et al., 2020). Therefore, it is principal to address this topic in the Moroccan context to get more insights about out-of-class learning and its benefit on learners' academic achievement.

3. METHODS

3.1 Sample

For the questionnaire, a criterion sampling scheme (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007) was used to target students of English at the university also convenience sampling was used to select individuals that are free and willing to participate in the study. The target population of the present study was EFL students from Moroccan Universities of arts and Humanities. The sample included 114 learners. 51% of the participants were females and 49% were males. 34.2% of these students were studying in the fourth semester and 71.9% in the sixth semester. The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 30 years.

For the interview, purposeful sampling (Cresswell, 2009) and criterion sampling were used in order to choose students who practised autonomous out-of-class learning activities. Before the interview, students were informed about the purpose of the study. Also, students have been told that their answers will be kept anonymous. The sample included 10 EFL learners (5 males and 5 females). For their level, five study is in semester four and five in semester six from the faculty of arts and humanities in Beni Mellal.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire of the study consisted of four parts. In the first part, the researcher asked the participants to provide their demographic information such as gender, age group, faculty, and university level. The second part was about the frequency of out-of-class English learning activities used by EFL learners in which 16 items were presented based on a five-point Likert scale adopted from the previous research about out-of-class learning activities (Hyland; 2004; Sargsyan & Kurghinyan, 2016; Dauksaité-Kolpakoviené, 2020). The third part focused on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation for learning English among EFL learners based on the model of Vallerand et al. (1992). The last part highlighted the academic achievement of EFL students.

Though the questionnaire is an effective tool to gather quantitative data it has some drawbacks such as the researcher should ask just few questions and the questionnaire shouldn't be too long. However, this limitation can be fixed using open ended questions of the interview that can shed more light on the topic. In this study a semi-structured interview was applied to collect qualitative data. The interviews were in English because all the participants had good speaking abilities. Before starting the interview, the interviewees provided their university level. The interview consisted of 5 questions. The first question was about motivation. It was asked to discover what motivates students to learn English at the university. The following questions 2, 3, 4, and 5 focused on out-

of-class learning activities. They were asked to examine the types of activities used by EFL learners, the motivation behind using these activities, and whether these activities can impact academic achievement or not.

3.3 Data Analysis

The compiled data from the questionnaire was analysed with SPSS 26.0 software to answer the research questions. All the data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive analysis was conducted to report the mean scores and standard deviation in order to investigate the students' beliefs about out-of-class learning activities and motivational orientations. The inferential statistics used were t-tests for independent samples to determine the gender and instructional level difference among the sample concerning their out of class learning beliefs and motivation. Pearson correlations were performed to investigate the relationship among out-of-class learning activities, motivational orientations and academic performance. Independent t-tests were conducted to determine the gender and instructional level differences among the sample concerning their out-of-class learning activities, motivation and academic achievement. A correlation analysis was used to determine the correlation among out-of-class learning activities, motivational orientations and academic achievement.

After collecting the qualitative data, the audio records were saved in the computer and transcribed using the selective protocol technique. This technique "is an economic procedure for transcription. The researcher selects those parts of the (audio-recorded) interview, which are relevant for the research question" (Mayring, 2014, p. 45). The data was gathered in Microsoft word in an organized way. As Dawson (2002) argued "to be able to analyse your data you must first of all produce it in a format that can be easily analysed" (p. 112). Most importantly, records were preserved. In line with this, Seidman (2006) declared that "by preserving the words of the participants, researchers have their original data. If something is not clear in a transcript, the researchers can return to the source and check for accuracy" (p. 114). After collecting, organizing, and correcting the mistakes of the data, it was analysed through the thematic analysis technique. "Thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis strategy by which qualitative data are segmented, categorized, summarized, and reconstructed in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set (Given, 2008, p. 867)". That is, using thematic analysis, main ideas and thoughts will be captured to know more about the topic. Following this, the results were obtained, and comparisons were made between quantitative results and qualitative results.

With respect to reliability, it could be defined as "extent to which a measure, procedure, or instrument provides the same result on repeated trials" (O'Leary, 2004, p. 59). The internal consistency of the questionnaire

was measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The five- point Likert scale sections namely autonomous out-of-class learning activities and motivation were calculated to measure the internal reliability. Concerning out-of-class learning activities section, it scored a value of 0.8. the section which measured motivation scored 0.9. these scores indicated that reliability was established for this study.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Students' AOCLA, Motivation and Academic Achievement

Table 1 below shows descriptive statistics of the main variables of the study. It gives a primary idea about students' level in out-of-class learning activities, motivation, and academic achievement. The mean of three variables of the study, namely out-of-class learning activities, motivation, and academic achievement was calculated among the 114 participants. For out-of- class learning activities and motivation, the mean ranges from 1 to 5 because it is based on a five- point Likert scale. A mean of 1 indicates a low score and a mean of 5 indicates a high score. For the academic achievement, the mean is between the low score which is 3 and the high score which is 18.00. The table below reveals the mean of the variables of the study.

Table 1

Students' AOCLA, motivational orientations, and academic achievement

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening activities	114	1.00	5.00	3.44	.81
Reading activities	114	1.00	5.00	3.41	.76
Speaking activities	114	1.20	5.00	3.48	.85
Writing activities	114	1.00	5.00	3.52	.83
Intrinsic motivation	114	1.00	5.00	3.41	1.06
Extrinsic motivation	114	1.00	5.00	3.1	1.25
Academic achievement	114	3.00	18.00	12.27	1.67
Valid N (listwise)	114				

Concerning out-of-class learning activities, writing has the highest mean score in terms of language skills, (M= 3.52; SD= .83). It is followed by speaking (M= 3.48; SD=.85). Listening comes in the third rank with a mean of 3.44 and a standard deviation of .81. Finally, there comes reading with a mean score of 3.41 and standard deviation of .76. For motivation, the mean score of intrinsic motivation is higher than the mean score of extrinsic motivation (M=3.41) compared to (3.10), respectively. With regard to academic achievement, the minimum score students got is 3, and the maximum score students got is 18. The average score is 12.27. The standard deviation is 1.67.

4.2 Correlations among AOCLA, Motivation, and Academic Achievement

Table 2

Correlation among AOCLA, motivation, and academic achievement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Listening Activities	1	.30	.49	.48	-0.13	-0.11	-0.03
2 Reading Activities	--	1	.31	.49	-0.08	-0.01	0.05
3 Speaking Activities	--	--	1	.62	-0.02	0.07	0.06
4 Writing Activities	--	--	--	1	0.06	0.17	0.08
5 Intrinsic Motivation	--	--	--	--	1	.58	-0.10
6 Extrinsic Motivation	--	--	--	--	--	1	0.06
7 Academic Achievement	--	---	--	--	--	--	1

The correlations table above shows that there is no statistically significant correlation between different types of motivation and out-of-class activities as well as global grades. For instance, listening activities and academic achievement (P= -0.03), listening activities and intrinsic motivation (P= -.13), listening activities and extrinsic motivation (P= 0.11). reading activities and academic achievement (P= 0.05), reading activities and intrinsic motivation (P= 0.08), reading activities and extrinsic motivation (P= -0.01). One can say that the higher learners' engagement in out-of-class learning activities do not lead to higher academic achievement. Also, the high level of motivation does not reflect the academic achievement. Moreover, higher motivation does not associate with the participation on out-of-class learning activities. However, some relatively positive correlations were found between Out-of-class learning activities. For example, listening activities and speaking activities (p= .49), speaking activities and writing activities (p= .62). these results might suggest that the more students engage in one activity the more they get better in other activities.

Concerning the qualitative results, the main themes that were found in the analysis will be presented. First, the relationship between motivational orientations and English learning will be highlighted. Second, out-of-class learning activities used by learners will be presented. Third, the relationship between motivation and out-of-class learning activities will be displayed. Fourth, the association between out-of-class learning activities and academic achievement will be highlighted.

4.3 Students' Engagement in AOCLA

The interview was used to explore the students' views about the use of AOCLA, motivation, and academic achievement. In line with this, open-ended questions of the interview can provide more insights about the topic more than closed-ended questions of the questionnaire. Following this, thematic analysis was used in order to find main themes from participants' answers to the interview questions. From the answers of respondents, some codes and categories were recognized then gathered into themes for this study.

With respect to AOCLA, the results reflected that the majority of learners engaged in out-of-class learning activities. The themes that emerged from the respondents' answers could be translated into four language activities, namely listening activities, speaking activities, reading activities, and writing activities. Most of the participants mentioned that they engaged in listening activities followed by speaking, then reading and finally writing activities. Concerning listening activities, listening to songs is the most used activity. For instance, a female S 6 student declared: "most of the time I listen to English songs out-of-class". Also, a male S 6 learner stated: "The most used activities are watching movies and listening to the language of the native speakers". With

respect to speaking, speaking with my friends in English is the most practiced activity out of class. For example, a male S 4 student contended: "outside the classroom, I speak English with my friends because we should practice it every day in order to have a great accent". However, few participants engaged in conversations with native speakers. For instance, a male S 4 learner mentioned: "I have always virtual conversations with other people, especially in the UK or the USA. If you have a conversation with an American and you understand each other, it is a very important event, you feel proud as if you win the noble prize". With regard to reading, most participants practice reading activities, especially reading books and stories. A female S 6 student proclaimed: "I read books and short stories". Another female S 6 advanced: "reading helped me to learn new vocabulary". Similarly, a male S 4 learner argued: "reading is the most important skill to gain a lot of vocabulary. One of my dreams is to be a writer, and if I want to be a writer, I have to be a good reader. Almost I spent 1 hour per day reading because I love reading". Writing is the less used activity among the four skills. One male S 6 learner maintained: "I write short stories in English". Another Male S 4 learner asserted: "I learn new words, write them down, and associate them with other words". Also, a male S 6 interviewee declared: "I practice creative writing and personal writing. When I write, I feel good and feel free".

From the above response, students participate in different activities out-of-class, but with more focus on listening and speaking activities. That is, learners see language as a means of communication. In this way, they need to listen to the target language in order to be familiar with English and to gain new vocabulary. Also, they have to practice speaking because practice makes perfect.

4.4 Students' Views about the Usefulness of AOCLA

One of the weaknesses of the questionnaire is that the researcher cannot ask many questions or make the questionnaire too long. Therefore, the interview can help the researcher overcome this problem. In this section, the researcher asked students about the most useful activities that can improve their English. The main theme was that students mentioned various useful activities that can improve their English. The findings were classified into four categories namely, language skills.

The results showed that listening activities are the most useful activities for learners, followed by speaking and reading respectively. However, just one participant mentioned that writing is a useful activity. Concerning listening activities, a male S 6 student stated: "I think listening and speaking are the most useful ones especially the former. If you listen a lot to English when you meet a native speaker, you will automatically remember the words and the expressions that you already listened to, and you can use them". Another male S 6

learner contended that "the most useful activities are listening to music, watching movies, listening to English native speakers". Moreover, a female S 6 student mentioned that "I improve my listening skills through listening to music". Most importantly, a male S 4 learner proclaimed: "listening is useful for the learner in order to be familiar with the words and learn vocabulary". He added: "the problem in universities and high schools is that they force students to speak, but they neglect listening skills. Students should just listen, and then speaking will follow". Furthermore, a female S 6 learner advanced that "the most useful activity is listening to native speakers". With regard to speaking, few students suggested that speaking is useful for improving English. For instance, a Male S 4 maintained that "the most useful activity for me is making conversations with native speakers". Similarly, a Female S 4 asserted: "I think talking to other people in English by practicing and exchanging ideas can improve our English". With respect to reading, a scarce number of students believed that reading is a useful activity. For example, a male S 6 interviewee declared that "reading for pleasure is useful such as reading novels and short stories". Similarly, a female S 6 learner stated that "reading helped me learn new vocabulary". In parallel, a female S 6 student contended: "through reading short stories I can learn more vocabulary". The less useful activity according to the interviewees is writing. Just one participant believed that writing is a useful activity. A female S 6 student mentioned that "through writing, I can improve writing skills".

From the above results, most students thought that listening is the most useful activity because they can learn new vocabulary. However, few learners mentioned other activities, namely speaking, reading, and writing. That is, learners perceive receptive skills as more useful than productive skills.

4.5 AOCLA and Motivation

The results suggested that students engage in out-of-class learning activities because they are intrinsically motivated. The main theme in this section is that the majority of students claimed that they engaged in out-of-class learning activities because of intrinsic factors. For instance, two students one a male S 6 and a female S 4 both proclaimed: "I love English". Moreover, a Male S 6 participant advanced that "The desire to learn English" is what motivates him to participate in out-of-class learning activities. In addition, a Female S 6 learner argued that "out-of-class learning activities are funny, fill my free time, and improve my English".

However, few interviewees engage in out-of-class learning activities for extrinsic purposes. For instance, a male S 4 student maintained that "watching others speak the language such as university professors who have an amazing accent, motivate me, they are like a model for me. I always see highly qualified people as an example for me. The previous president of the USA Barack Obama is an amazing speaker. So, these people encourage me

to move on and keep learning". Moreover, a male S 4 learner asserted that "I want to get good marks". To sum up, most students engage in out-of-class activities because they like English. Also, some respondents mentioned that AOCLA are funny, fill their free time, and can improve their English.

4.6 AOCLA and Academic Achievement

The quantitative results showed that there was no statistically significant correlation between out-of-class learning activities and academic achievement. However, in the interview results, the majority of interviewees agreed that out-of-class learning activities can enhance academic achievement. the first theme in this context is students' strong belief that reading can enhance academic achievement. For instance, a male S 4 student declared: "reading can improve academic achievement because it gives you the ability to analyse passages, texts, novels, and short stories. It gives you different insights and perspectives". The second theme is that students believed that learning vocabulary out-of-class can help them do better in exams. For example, a male S 6 learner stated that "definitely, if you watch movies and speeches of politicians, and you hear some expressions or vocabulary, you will remember them when you need them. If you have an exam, you will recall those expressions, and you will write them down. If you are in an oral exam, you will be familiar with the language and how native speakers use language". Moreover, a male S 6 student contended: "Yes, if you have to write an essay, you will be already familiar with vocabulary that you learned outside the classroom". The third theme is that some students thought that making mistakes out-of-class can enhance their academic achievement. For instance, a male S 4 student mentioned: "Yes, we can make mistakes outside the classroom. But when we go to the class, we have already overcome those mistakes". The fourth theme is that by engaging in out of-class activities, students can be familiar with English. therefore, they can understand the teacher at the university. In this context, a female S 6 learner proclaimed that "out-of-class learning activities help me understand the teacher". The fifth theme is that learners viewed practicing writing out-of-class as a crucial activity for improving their academic achievement. For example, a female S 4 student advanced that "out-of-class learning activities can improve vocabulary, confidence in speaking, and writing skills". Also, a female S 6 student argued: "of course, out-of-class learning activities can enhance academic achievement. For instance, when I write diaries, I improve my writing skills, and then I can get good marks. The classroom is not enough. Therefore, I have to practice English outside the classroom". Therefore, the main themes that impact academic achievement are reading, watching movies, vocabulary, making mistakes out-of-class, speaking confidently, and writing. Also, out-of- class learning activities can help learners understand the teacher.

However, a few students claimed that out-of-class learning activities cannot improve academic achievement. For example, a male S 4 student maintained: "It depends on the things that students focus on. For me, out-of-class learning activities cannot improve my grades. I am not focusing on the academic side. I am just focusing on the aesthetic side such as pronunciation, accent, vocabulary, making conversation, and the ability to communicate. But I neglect the academic side outside the classroom because it requires reading documents and articles". Moreover, a female S 6 learner asserted that "In my experience, no, sometimes I get addicted to the activities, and I forget my studies". Thus, out-of-class learning activities may not enhance academic achievement if students focus on fun activities or get addicted to out-of-class activities and forget the academic tasks.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Can AOCLA positively affect English learning?

Results showed that learners viewed autonomous out-of-class learning as a useful activity that can improve English learning. This finding indicated that learners, from their experiences, perceive that AOCLA can benefit them in many different ways. For instance, students mentioned various advantages of AOCLA. As proposed in the literature review, AOCLA can provide learners with input, interaction, and output opportunities and the chance to develop communicative competence (Krashen 1985, Nunan 2015, Canale and Swain 1980, Bialystok 1978).

Concerning input, learners can learn new vocabulary out-of-class. As Krashen (1982) contended "people acquire second languages only if they obtain comprehensible input and if their filters are low enough to allow the input in" (p. 4). In line with this, one can say that out- of-class environment might provide learners with new vocabulary as well as a context where anxiety is minimized.

With regard to output, learners have more out-of-class opportunities to produce language either in the spoken or written form. In the same trend, Nunan (2015) argued that:

> Beyond the classroom, learners have opportunities for authentic input, comprehensible input as is called, but also authentic output, opportunities to get closer to the kind of language that we use for authentic communication because that is in fact what they are going to be doing with the language that they are learning (p. 3)

That is, learners' main goal is to be able to speak the language. Therefore, out-of-class is an environment full of speaking opportunities.

As regards interaction, the internet nowadays provides endless platforms and applications to interact with English speakers across countries. In this way, learners will not only practice speaking English but also learn about different cultures. Thus, they can gain cultural awareness. In line with this, Canale and Swain (1980) maintained that learners should participate in meaningful communicative interaction with advanced speakers of the language in order to be familiar with the use of daily life English.

The majority of respondents mentioned that they speak English with their friends or classmates out of class in order to develop communicative competence. Since the classrooms are crowded and students have a limited number of hours at university, they might practice English out of class. In this way, they will maximize their exposure to the target language and also might improve their communicative competence. In line with this, Bialystok (1987) acknowledged that "communicational exposure is an important way of improving proficiency by increasing the learner's experience with forms and meanings that can become incorporated into his own use of the language" (p. 75). Therefore, the more learners expose themselves to English, the more proficiency they get.

5.2 What type of motivation can increase AOCLA?

This section seeks to detect the motivation behind engaging in AOCLA. Students showed higher intrinsic motivation to engage in out-of-class learning activities. That is, learners like English and find it an interesting language. Also, by engaging in OACLA, learners can improve their English. This finding might also suggest that intrinsic motivation can push learners to expose themselves to the English language. That is, intrinsic motivation is a quality within learners, if maintained for a long time, may keep students interested in learning English. Therefore, they can be lifelong learners which is a feature needed in the 21st century. Students at the university are considered adult learners. For this reason, they should love what they do and be open to learn new ideas.

In relation to the literature review, motivation is a significant factor that paves the way to learner autonomy. In line with this, Spratt et al. (2002) contended that "motivation is a key factor that influences the extent to which learners are ready to learn autonomously" (p. 245). That is, the higher motivation learners possess the more autonomous they become. Also, they argued that "absence of motivation seemed to inhibit practice of learner autonomy" (p. 19). Most importantly, Zhao and Chen (2014) found out that students' study after class was significantly correlated with learning motivation. Therefore, motivation is a crucial factor that can push learners to practice autonomous out-of-class learning activities. However, further research is needed to explore possible ways to maintain high motivation over a long time. Learning a language is a long process and students should be long-term and lifelong learners in order to achieve English learning proficiency.

5.3 Can AOCLA positively impact academic achievement?

This section is devoted to discussing the relationship between AOCLA and academic achievement. The quantitative results showed that there is no statistically significant relationship between AOCLA and academic achievement. This finding is inconsistent with previous studies (see Knight, 2007; Sundqvist, 2009; De Wilde et al., 2020). The incompatibility between this study and previous studies might suggest that context may play a crucial role in shaping the results. Previous studies were conducted in the USA and Europe while the present study was conducted in Morocco. Moreover, one can say that AOCLA is not the only factor that attribute to the academic success of students. Other variables can impact academic outcomes. For instance, learning strategies, study skills, hard work, intelligence, aptitude among others. Also, engaging in AOCLA does not guarantee success at the academic level. First, because out of class learning activities (watching movies, listening to music, watching videos…) are most of the time informal while the university relies on formal language. Second, according to the findings of this study, learners engage mostly in fun activities such as listening to songs and watching movies, these activities might not contribute to the success of students at the university. Third, this research did not focus on whether learners engaged in out-of-class learning activities for the intent of fun or learning. Therefore, it could be suggested for further research.

Even though, out of class learning activities still remain a powerful factor in learning English. for instance, they can provide a lot of vocabulary and give a chance for students to speak English authentically with friends or native speakers. In the interview, the majority of learners suggested that AOCLA do enhance their academic achievement in different ways. For instance, through listening and reading, learners can acquire new vocabulary. Also, students might benefit from out-of-class environment by practicing writing and speaking activities. In this way, their communicative competence will improve. Also, out-of-class is a context that might help learners be familiar with the English language. Therefore, OACLA can positively complement classroom learning. Nevertheless, more research is needed to discover which activities can enhance academic achievement and how learners can manage their learning out-of-class. Also, educators and teachers should direct and show students effective ways and activities in learning outside the class. Most importantly, longitudinal studies can shed more light on the practices of learners outside the classroom.

6. IMPLICATIONS

Based on the discussed results of this study the following implications were formulated:

1. When measuring academic achievement, all the language skills should be taken into consideration not just writing or reading.

2. AOCLA provides students with unlimited input and output opportunities. It complements the classroom-based learning.

3. Teachers should direct learners toward effective ways for learning English in out-of- class context.

4. Students should be aware that they are adult learners and should take responsibility for their learning.

5. Students should engage in activities outside the classroom that can enhance their academic achievement.

6. Students should balance between the four language skills and give them equal stance.

7. Students should try to develop all language aspects, namely grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

7. CONCLUSION

Using a mixed method approach in this study was not an easy path. This approach is time consuming and needs a huge effort especially when gathering and analysing data. However, combining quantitative and qualitative data expanded the understanding of research questions. The first question manifested that learners' views showed that AOCLA are useful in learning English in many different ways. For the second question, results showed that students had intrinsic motivation to engage in AOCLA. Nevertheless, intrinsic motivation does not positively correlate with academic achievement. for the third question, the result manifested that AOCLA do not positively correlate with academic achievement. All in all, this research succeeded in filling a research gap and introduce this topic in the Moroccan context. Most importantly, the results of this study were surprising because they contradict the results of other studies. However, this study might pave the way to other studies that deal with this topic in more detail. In addition, as mentioned before, this research did not focus on whether learners engaged in out-of-class learning activities for the intent of fun or learning. Therefore, it could be a fertile topic for further research. Most importantly, since AOCLA and motivation do not predict academic achievement in this study, further studies might investigate the predictors of academic achievement in the Moroccan context.

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APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello dear participants (s4 and s6), this questionnaire investigates the relationship between autonomous out-of-class learning activities, motivation, and EFL learners' academic achievement.

Please read each question carefully and answer as honestly as you can in order to guarantee the success of this investigation. It generally takes few minutes to complete the questionnaire.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask the researcher.

N.B: your responses are completely anonymous and confidential. Thank you so much for your help.

1) Please tick your gender
   - ☐ male
   - ☐ female
2) Please tick your age group
   - ☐ 18-24
   - ☐ 25-30
   - ☐ 30-beyond
3) Please tick your faculty
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, Beni Mellal
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, Meknes
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, Rabat
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, Casablanca
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, Oujda
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, Agadir
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, Marrakech
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, Kenitra
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, Fez
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, Tetuan
   - ☐ Faculty of arts and humanities, E.L. Jadida
4) Please tick your university level
   - ☐ S4
   - ☐ S6
5) How frequently do you carry out the following English learning activities outside the classroom?

	usually	Often	sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Reading English books					
2. Reading English short stories					
3. Reading English essays					
4. Reading articles					
5. Listen to English songs					
6. Listen to English podcasts					
7. Listen to English audiobooks					
8. Watch English movies					

9. Write essays in English					
10. Personal writing					
11. Chat in English					
12. Take notes in English					
13. Speak with friends in English					
14. Talk with English native speakers via the internet					
15. Join English clubs					
16. Participate in English study groups					

6)   Approximately how many hours per week do you spend on out-of-class English activities?
   ☐ Less than 2 hours
   ☐ Less than 4 hours
   ☐ Less than 6 hours
   ☐ more than 6 hours

7)   Pease read the following statements and choose the answer that best matches your opinion:

	Strongly disagree	disagree	Somewhat agree	agree	Strongly agree
1. I study English to get good marks					
2. I study English to get a more prestigious job lateron					
3. I study English to get the job that I like					
4. I study English because it is the language that can improve my life					
5. I study English to learn new things					

6. I study English to learnabout subjects that interest me					
7. I study English because it is an interesting language					
8. I study English to discover new Ideas					

8) What global grades you got in the two previous semesters? (for example, 12-14)

………………

APPENDIX B: THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your university level?
2. Why did you choose to study English at the university?
3. What activities do you usually carry out in English outside the classroom?
4. Which of the activities you have mentioned are most useful for improving your English?
5. What motivates you to participate in out-of-classroom learning activities?
6. Do you think out-of-classroom learning activities can improve your academic achievement?