





The impact of demographic information on students' preferable extracurricular activities for English learning

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ABSTRACT

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The study aims to explore the potential of extracurricular activities (ECAs) in enhancing English learning among Vietnamese higher education students, given the government's emphasis on English language reforms. In Southwest Vietnam, a comprehensive survey consisting of 20 questions was carried out among 1,032 students at a higher education establishment. The aim was to ascertain their favored ECAs and to explore how students' demographic details, particularly their gender, field of study, and academic year, influenced these preferences. Results showed students were fond of ECAs for English learning, with female students expressing a higher preference for participation. Students' majors and years in university significantly influenced preferences for specific activities, while no significant difference was found in the overall perception of ECAs. The study concludes that understanding students' preferences and demographic influences can help design more effective ECAs for English learning in Vietnamese higher education institutions. The findings offer insights for developing tailored ECAs to address students' unique needs and preferences, thereby improving English language learning outcomes in Vietnamese higher education institutions.

Contribution/Originality: This original study explores the potential of extracurricular activities (ECAs) to enhance English learning among Vietnamese students, focusing on preferences and demographic influences. The research reveals gender differences in preferences and the impact of students' majors and years in university. It offers practical implications for developing the quality of tailored ECAs in Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization requires all countries in the world to find an international language used for communication purposes. English was chosen as the language of communication in many international communities of which Vietnam is a member. Therefore, the development of Vietnamese people's English competencies received great attention from people in this country (Nguyen, 2018). That concern was translated into action as the Vietnamese government had continuously improved English teaching and learning over the years. The most notable was probably the National Foreign Language Project, also known as Project 2020. The project was designed with the aim of maximizing the development of foreign language competence, especially English skills and knowledge, of Vietnamese people in order to develop their abilities to communicate in English, contributing to economic

development and linkages with other countries in the region and the world. However, the English ability of Vietnamese students has not been perceived as significantly improved (Thao & Mai, 2022). Especially in the context of higher education institutions, students' foreign language ability is insufficient. However, some of the reforms in Project 2020 also offer to help Vietnamese students improve their English communication skills; among them, extracurricular activities (ECAs) for language learning were considered quite potential.

The potential of ECAs for English learning is demonstrated through their benefits to English learners. Specifically, many studies show that participating in ECAs for English learning helps learners develop communication skills in English in real-life contexts or helps learners achieve higher scores in their formal studies (e.g., (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Nguyen, 2019; Zakhir, 2019)). Although the above studies have highlighted the potential of ECAs in developing learners' language competence, they lack data decisive for the success of ECAs for English learning, which is an activity that students love to participate in. Undoubtedly, students' interest significantly impacts learners' motivation for a certain activity in their learning (O'Keefe, Horberg, & Plante, 2017). Therefore, learning about students' favorite ECAs should not be taken lightly. As a matter of course, this research was conducted to find out what ECAs students would like to participate in to develop their English competencies. In addition, the study also examined the impact of factors such as student gender, majors, and time in the university environment on their choice of ECAs for English learning.

Investigating the impact of demographic factors like gender, major, and university tenure on students' choices of ECAs is vital. Insight into gender disparities can inform the development of ECAs, considering a boy's and a girl's divergent interests, learning approaches, and participation rates, thereby fostering gender-sensitive programming. Disciplinary focus considerably shapes ECA selection as students frequently opt for ECAs congruent with their academic field or that enrich their scholarly pursuits. Furthermore, university tenure influences ECA preferences as students' needs and inclinations evolve over time, leading to different preferences for freshmen and seniors. In essence, these factors illuminate the heterogeneity in ECA preferences, facilitating the creation of more efficacious, inclusive, and bespoke English learning ECAs. Acknowledging these subtleties assists educators and administrators in augmenting student involvement, enhancing educational outcomes, and fostering a more vibrant and supportive academic milieu. Since then, the research results would bring great reference values for organizing ECAs for English learning to suit different groups of students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. ECAs

Many researchers use specific examples or specific extracurricular activities to talk about ECAs instead of defining precisely what it is. Activities such as academic competitions, on-stage performances, social fraternity, and others are considered ECAs by Lariviere (2016). As the list mentioned by Lariviere, diversity leads to complexity in defining ECA. However, some researchers also try to simplify the conceptualization of ECA. Specifically, Bartkus, Nemelka, Nemelka, and Gardner (2012) argued that ECAs as a supplement for students' knowledge that are difficult for students to absorb during formal classes. Based on that, ECAs help students develop their maturity, self-confidence, intelligence, and morality (Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, & Ball, 2012; Simoncini, Caltabiano, & Lasen, 2012). In addition, Metsäpelto and Pulkkinen (2014) found that participating in ECAs can reduce students' stress after formal study activities because they can enjoy comfortable moments with friends without worrying about problems like grades or exams. Similar to the above statements, this study defines ECAs as non-formal study activities that allow student participants to enhance skills and knowledge they can hardly learn in their classrooms. Since then, ECAs have been organized for students to develop thoroughly, especially knowledge and skills related to English proficiency.

2.2. Related Studies

A few studies have been done regarding issues surrounding ECAs for English learning. Harisiswana (2017) conducted a case study to examine the effectiveness of the English Club on the English learning of 11 students. Through data obtained from in-depth interviews, Harisiswana (2017) concluded that English Club is an effective extracurricular activity for developing the English competence of foreign language learners. Similarly, a case study by Kirkpatrick (2012) also showed the potential of ECAs for students' English learning. However, Kirkpatrick also pointed out issues around organizing ECAs so that students are more interested in partaking in those ECAs. One of the important reasons, found in this study, leading to the negative attitude of students towards ECAs for English learning was time constraints. In other words, participating in ECAs consumed too much time.

A study in Vietnam conducted by Nguyen (2019) with the participation of 3,000 students showed a positive signal of ECAs for English learning in this context. Data obtained from surveys and interviews confirmed that the Vietnamese students were very interested in ECAs for English learning. However, similar to the study of Kirkpatrick (2012), ECAs would take up a lot of students' time, which made them hesitate to participate in these activities. Therefore, they preferred to participate in short-term events rather than long-term activities.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Research Design

This study was designed according to the quantitative research method. According to Bloomfield and Fisher (2019), quantitative research allows researchers to collect data from a large number of participants to generalize the findings. Consequently, this investigation intends to provide a comprehensive elucidation of the research problem. The primary objective of this study was to offer a detailed analysis of the variety of ECAs students expressed an interest in, utilizing data amassed from a substantial cohort. Thus, this methodological approach was deemed most appropriate. Moreover, the study scrutinized the influence of students' demographic variables - gender, academic discipline, and tenure in the university - on their predilections for specific ECAs.

3.2. Participants

Participants of this study were 1,032 university students in a higher education institution in the Southwest of Vietnam. Student information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Information of participants.

Variables	Sub-variables	Number of participants
Gender	Male	460
	Female	572
Major	Non-English majors	842
	English majors	190
Tenure in university	First year	77
	Second year	459
	Third year	297
	Fourth year	199

As mentioned, all participants were studying at a higher education institution in the Southwest of Vietnam. This higher education institution is well known for its outstanding teaching and training achievements in the Mekong Delta region, especially in organizing ECAs for English learning. Therefore, the students participating in this study were all confirmed to have participated in at least one extracurricular activity dedicated to learning English held there.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

A questionnaire comprising 20 items equivalent to 20 ECAs for English learning was used to collect data. In this study, the ECAs for English learning are referenced from previous studies (e.g., (Harisiswana, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Nguyen, 2019)), and the activities were organized at the research site and referenced through the materials the staff of the research site provided to the research team. Specifically, there are a total of 20 activities, presented in Table 2.

Table 2. ECA Descriptions.

Codes	ECA	Brief descriptions
ECA01	English singing contests	Students participate in an English singing competition. They can sing solos, duets, or in groups.
ECA02	Role-plays	Students perform a short play together in English. They can write their own script or base their script on an existing movie or play.
ECA03	Composing poetry in English	Students write poetry in English. They choose a topic related to their curriculum to write a short poem of about 8 to 10 lines.
ECA04	Composing English short stories	Students write a short story in English on the assigned topic.
ECA05	Composing English songs	Students compose an English song themselves or use the melody of an existing song to write lyrics.
ECA06	Photo contests with photo description in English	Students choose a favorite photo or take a photo themselves, describe it, and explain why they like it.
ECA07	English magazines design	Students design a magazine in English about updated topics.
ECA08	Debates in English	Students participate in debates on one or more social issues. They defend their point of view so that they can convince the jury during the debate.
ECA09	Quizzes about culture and customs of English-speaking countries	Students participate in a quiz about the cultures and customs of English-speaking countries around the world. They need to learn about the special things about those countries in order to be able to answer the questions in the competition.
ECA10	Presentations on Vietnam tourism in English	Students present special points about Vietnam's tourism and how to develop tourism in Vietnam.
ECA11	Presentations on local culture in English	Students present cultural highlights of Vietnam to introduce the country to foreigners.
ECA12	Watching movies with late-discussions	Students watch the film, and then discuss its plots and its values to them.
ECA13	Outdoor activities using English	Students participate in activities outside the classroom such as going around the university campus, the Faculties/Institutes and introducing them in English.
ECA14	Big events including lots of different activities in English	Students participate in a big game activity in teams. In the event, there are many mini-games that students have to participate in together. All require students to communicate, discuss and complete assigned tasks in English.
ECA15	Cultural festivals of English-speaking countries	Students learn about English-speaking cultures around the world by participating in a festival simulator event.
ECA16	English speaking clubs	Students join English speaking clubs to share learning experiences, discuss the assigned topics and connect with each other.
ECA17	English exam preparation clubs	Students join a club that specializes in problem solving and exam preparation. At the same time, they share tips or strategies to do well in international exams.
ECA18	Book café (Drinks, books, and discussions)	Students go to cafes where a variety of books are prepared, including books for learning such as textbooks, English workbooks, to books for entertainment such as comic books written in English, cookbooks, etc.
ECA19	Foreign language corner	Students participate in small groups to practice their English skills, share effective learning strategies, and the likes.
ECA20	Traveling to experience English cultures	Students travel to English-speaking regions to learn about the culture there.

All questions used a five-point Likert scale to measure students' preference for activities ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." In addition, a research team member with extensive experience in organizing ECAs for university students has contributed to the questionnaire with some of the activities that this person has organized. The questionnaire is designed to be bilingual, including English and Vietnamese. After the validity of the questionnaire has been verified through the comments of many subjects who are interested in ECAs, including the management team of English courses at a university, the research team, and students who have participated in ECAs, it is presented on the Google Forms platform to conduct pilot data collection. Specifically, the research team sent the questionnaire to 30 students who were confirmed to have participated in ECAs to learn English. Scale test, a specialized SPSS-supported test that functioned to check reliability through Cronbach's Alpha, was run. The results showed that the questionnaire was completely reliable and could be used for official data collection ($\alpha=.92$). However, some respondents suggested that the "Others" question should be added so that participants could suggest ECAs that the research team might have missed because of the diversity of these activities might be beyond their understanding. Respecting the contributions of pilot participants, the research team added "Others" to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then sent to the official participants of this study via email.

3.4. Data Analysis

After two months, the questionnaire was sent to the students, and the data were transferred to the processing and analysis stages. The data obtained from the questionnaire were completely analyzed on the latest version of SPSS. Specifically, after the data were retrieved from Google Forms, a Scale test was used to verify the reliability of the official results. Not much different from the pilot study results, the results showed that the questionnaire results were completely reliable ($\alpha=.90$). From there, descriptive and comparative tests were performed. First, a Descriptive Statistics test was run to measure the average mean scores of the items to see which ECA the sample enjoyed the most. Then, a series of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were run to compare and see if there was any significant difference between the preferences of male and female students, English majors and non-English majors, and students with different college years. The difference was significant if the p-values were less than or equal to 0.05. In addition, ETA-square values were also used to test the effect size for outcomes with significant differences. According to Cohen (1988), the effect size (η^2) is divided into three levels, including small (from 0.01 to 0.06), medium (from 0.06 to 0.14), and large (> 0.14).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Students' Preferable ECAs

The results in Table 3 were analyzed from a Descriptive Statistics test describing the order of ECAs that the students preferred.

Table 3. Students' preferable types of ECAs (N=1,032).

Item	ECAs	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)
ECA20	Traveling to experience English cultures	1.00	5.00	3.98	0.86
ECA12	Watching movies with late-discussions	1.00	5.00	3.86	0.86
ECA17	English exam preparation clubs	1.00	5.00	3.80	0.86
ECA18	Book café (Drinks, books, and discussions)	1.00	5.00	3.77	0.87
ECA13	Outdoor activities using English	1.00	5.00	3.71	0.90
ECA09	Quizzes about culture and customs of English-speaking countries	1.00	5.00	3.70	0.91
ECA15	Cultural Festivals of English-speaking countries	1.00	5.00	3.68	0.88
ECA14	Big events including lots of different activities in	1.00	5.00	3.67	0.89

Item	ECAs	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)
	English				
ECA19	Foreign language corner	1.00	5.00	3.66	0.87
ECA06	Photo contests with photo description in English	1.00	5.00	3.63	0.92
ECA16	English speaking clubs	1.00	5.00	3.61	0.88
ECA10	Presentations on Vietnam tourism in English	1.00	5.00	3.59	0.89
ECA11	Presentations on local culture in English	1.00	5.00	3.53	0.88
ECA07	English magazines design	1.00	5.00	3.49	0.92
ECA01	English singing contests	1.00	5.00	3.47	0.94
ECA08	Debates in English	1.00	5.00	3.31	0.93
ECA02	Role-plays	1.00	5.00	3.23	0.90
ECA04	Composing English short stories	1.00	5.00	3.13	0.89
ECA05	Composing English songs	1.00	5.00	3.12	0.93
ECA03	Composing poetry in English	1.00	5.00	2.98	0.87
Total		1.00	5.00	3.55	0.63

The results showed that students were relatively interested in the ECA mentioned in the questionnaire ($M=3.55$). Specifically, students liked ECA20 the most ($M=3.98$), followed by ECA12 ($M=3.86$), ECA17 ($M=3.80$), ECA18 ($M=3.77$), ECA13 ($M=3.71$), ECA09 ($M=3.70$), ECA15 ($M=3.68$), ECA14 ($M=3.67$), ECA19 ($M=3.66$), ECA06 ($M=3.63$), ECA16 ($M=3.61$), ECA10 ($M=3.59$), ECA11 ($M=3.53$), ECA07 ($M=3.49$), ECA01 ($M=3.47$), ECA08 ($M=3.31$), ECA02 ($M=3.23$), ECA04 ($M=3.13$), ECA05 ($M=3.12$), and ECA03 was not much favored ($M=2.98$). Students liked various ECAs, such as traveling to experience cultures, discussing issues in movies, forming English groups to exchange and learn, and preparing for English exams.

However, there was a common point in the opposite direction when all three activities using the creative ability, including composing short stories, music, and poetry in English, received less than positive responses from students. Based on the above results, it can be seen that both external and internal factors influenced the results that the students liked or disliked the ECAs mentioned in this study. In particular, the lack of opportunities to communicate in English and learn about English-speaking cultures encouraged the desire to experience the real world through traveling to English-speaking regions and countries. On the contrary, composing a work of art such as poetry, music, or short stories requires the students to have innate artistic talents. That, however, might not apply to all students.

4.2. The Impact of Students' Gender on their Preferable ECAs

Table 4 presents the results of a One-Way ANOVA test used to test the impact of students' gender on their preferable ECA.

Table 4. The impact of gender on students' preferable ECAs.

ECAs	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Structural equation modeling (SEM)	p	η^2
English singing contests	Male	460	3.41	0.974	0.045	0.11	X
	Female	572	3.51	0.912	0.038		
Role-plays	Male	460	3.16	0.937	0.044	0.03	0.07
	Female	572	3.28	0.871	0.036		
Composing poetry in English	Male	460	3.00	0.930	0.043	0.63	X
	Female	572	2.97	0.811	0.034		
Composing English short stories	Male	460	3.16	0.942	0.044	0.41	X
	Female	572	3.11	0.844	0.035		
Composing English songs	Male	460	3.16	0.995	0.046	0.21	X
	Female	572	3.09	0.878	0.037		

ECAs	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Structural equation modeling (SEM)	P	η^2
Photo contests with photo description in English	Male	460	3.51	0.951	0.044	0.00	0.11
	Female	572	3.72	0.892	0.037		
English magazines design	Male	460	3.38	0.930	0.043	0.00	0.11
	Female	572	3.58	0.907	0.038		
Debates in English	Male	460	3.24	0.955	0.045	0.03	0.07
	Female	572	3.37	0.901	0.038		
Quizzes about culture and customs of English-speaking countries	Male	460	3.64	0.917	0.043	0.06	X
	Female	572	3.75	0.909	0.038		
Presentations on Vietnam tourism in English	Male	460	3.52	0.916	0.043	0.02	0.07
	Female	572	3.65	0.870	0.036		
Presentations on local culture in English	Male	460	3.45	0.915	0.043	0.02	0.08
	Female	572	3.59	0.844	0.035		
Watching movies with late-discussions	Male	460	3.83	0.868	0.040	0.47	X
	Female	572	3.87	0.857	0.036		
Outdoor activities using English	Male	460	3.62	0.947	0.044	0.01	0.08
	Female	572	3.77	0.862	0.036		
Big events including lots of different activities in English	Male	460	3.65	0.917	0.043	0.52	X
	Female	572	3.69	0.866	0.036		
Cultural festivals of English-speaking countries	Male	460	3.59	0.902	0.042	0.00	0.10
	Female	572	3.76	0.862	0.036		
English speaking clubs	Male	460	3.58	0.924	0.043	0.44	X
	Female	572	3.63	0.837	0.035		
English exam preparation clubs	Male	460	3.75	0.927	0.043	0.11	X
	Female	572	3.84	0.807	0.034		
Book café (Drinks, books, and discussions)	Male	460	3.72	0.899	0.042	0.08	X
	Female	572	3.81	0.846	0.035		
Foreign language corner	Male	460	3.58	0.907	0.042	0.02	0.07
	Female	572	3.71	0.834	0.035		
Traveling to experience English cultures	Male	460	3.89	0.898	0.042	0.00	0.10
	Female	572	4.06	0.823	0.034		
Total	Male	460	3.49	0.677	0.032	0.02	0.08
	Female	572	3.59	0.586	0.025		

Based on the results, the difference between male and female students in their interest in participating in ECAs was significant ($p=0.02$; $\eta^2=0.08$). More specifically, the analysis results show that the female students were more interested in participating in ECAs for English learning than what male students did (Male=3.49; Female=3.59). This difference might come from specific contextual factors in Vietnam and gender psychology. The impact of the unique context in Vietnam on young people and the psychological differences between female and male students should be discussed in depth to explain the results.

4.3. The Impact of Students' Major on their Preferable ECAs

The results of the One-Way ANOVA run to examine the influence of students' majors on their ECAs are shown in Table 5.

Unlike the impact of gender on students' interest in participating in ECAs for English language learning, students' majors did not make a significant difference between English-major students and non-English-major ones ($p=0.06$). However, in some specific activities such as debates in English, presentations on Vietnam tourism in English, outdoor activities using English, cultural festivals of English-speaking countries, book cafes (drinks, books, and discussions), and traveling to experience English cultures, English majors showed more interest than non-English majors. Foreign language competence could be perhaps the most significant influence on participation in ECAs devoted to learning English.

Table 5. The impact of students' major on their preferable ECAs.

ECAs	Major	N	Mean	SD	SEM	p	η^2
English singing contests	English-Major	190	3.55	0.962	0.070	0.18	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.45	0.936	0.032		
Role-plays	English-Major	190	3.30	0.948	0.069	0.21	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.21	0.892	0.031		
Composing poetry in English	English-Major	190	3.03	0.937	0.068	0.40	X
	Non-English Major	842	2.97	0.849	0.029		
Composing English short stories	English-Major	190	3.21	0.958	0.070	0.18	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.12	0.872	0.030		
Composing English songs	English-Major	190	3.07	0.995	0.072	0.43	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.13	0.918	0.032		
Photo contests with photo description in English	English-Major	190	3.69	0.971	0.070	0.27	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.61	0.913	0.031		
English magazines design	English-Major	190	3.55	0.940	0.068	0.31	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.48	0.918	0.032		
Debates in English	English-Major	190	3.47	0.974	0.071	0.01	0.10
	Non-English Major	842	3.28	0.913	0.031		
Quizzes about culture and customs of English-speaking countries	English-Major	190	3.69	0.999	0.072	0.89	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.70	0.895	0.031		
Presentations on Vietnam tourism in English	English-Major	190	3.71	0.917	0.067	0.05	0.08
	Non-English Major	842	3.57	0.885	0.030		
Presentations on local culture in English	English-Major	190	3.59	0.873	0.063	0.28	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.51	0.879	0.030		
Watching movies with late-discussions	English-Major	190	3.84	0.968	0.070	0.80	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.86	0.836	0.029		
Outdoor activities using English	English-Major	190	3.93	0.920	0.067	0.00	0.15
	Non-English Major	842	3.66	0.892	0.031		
Big events including lots of different activities in English	English-Major	190	3.75	0.885	0.064	0.21	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.66	0.890	0.031		
Cultural festivals of English-speaking countries	English-Major	190	3.88	0.913	0.066	0.00	0.13
	Non-English Major	842	3.64	0.871	0.030		
English speaking clubs	English-Major	190	3.69	0.886	0.064	0.13	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.59	0.874	0.030		
English exam preparation clubs	English-Major	190	3.76	0.874	0.063	0.53	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.81	0.861	0.030		
Book café (Drinks, books, and discussions)	English-Major	190	3.89	0.910	0.066	0.04	0.08
	Non-English Major	842	3.74	0.860	0.030		
Foreign language corner	English-Major	190	3.76	0.934	0.068	0.07	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.63	0.853	0.029		
Traveling to experience English cultures	English-Major	190	4.11	0.956	0.069	0.02	0.09
	Non-English Major	842	3.95	0.836	0.029		
Total	English-Major	190	3.62	0.625	0.045	0.06	X
	Non-English Major	842	3.53	0.630	0.022		

4.4. The Impact of Tenure in University on Students' Preferable ECAs

Table 6 shows the results obtained from the One-Way ANOVA test used to analyze the differences between students attending university in different periods.

The overall results show the minimal impact of years in university on the students' interest in participating in ECAs for English learning ($p=0.17$). However, when looking at each activity separately, there are still a few activities, including presentations on Vietnam tourism in English, presentations on local culture in English, outdoor activities using English, cultural festivals of English-speaking countries, foreign language corner, and traveling to experience English cultures received different favors from the students ($p<0.05$). As inferred, different experiences through studying in a university environment at different times and periods might still have partly influenced students' interest in these activities.

Table 6. The impact of tenure in university on students' preferable ECAs.

ECAs	Year	N	Mean	SD	SEM	p	η^2
English singing contests	1 st	77	3.64	0.872	0.099	0.33	X
	2 nd	459	3.45	0.966	0.045		
	3 rd	297	3.43	0.946	0.055		
	4 th	199	3.50	0.898	0.064		
	Total	1032	3.47	0.941	0.029		
Role-plays	1 st	77	3.44	0.910	0.104	0.15	X
	2 nd	459	3.23	0.901	0.042		
	3 rd	297	3.18	0.923	0.054		
	4 th	199	3.20	0.869	0.062		
	Total	1032	3.23	0.903	0.028		
Composing poetry in English	1 st	77	3.13	0.833	0.095	0.41	X
	2 nd	459	2.99	0.878	0.041		
	3 rd	297	2.94	0.870	0.050		
	4 th	199	2.97	0.843	0.060		
	Total	1032	2.98	0.866	0.027		
Composing English short stories	1 st	77	3.38	0.960	0.109	0.09	X
	2 nd	459	3.13	0.887	0.041		
	3 rd	297	3.10	0.859	0.050		
	4 th	199	3.10	0.902	0.064		
	Total	1032	3.13	0.889	0.028		
Composing English songs	1 st	77	3.23	0.872	0.099	0.31	X
	2 nd	459	3.14	0.944	0.044		
	3 rd	297	3.04	0.931	0.054		
	4 th	199	3.15	0.929	0.066		
	Total	1032	3.12	0.933	0.029		
Photo contests with photo description in English	1 st	77	3.70	0.812	0.093	0.64	X
	2 nd	459	3.59	0.954	0.045		
	3 rd	297	3.65	0.954	0.055		
	4 th	199	3.66	0.849	0.060		
	Total	1032	3.63	0.924	0.029		
English magazines design	1 st	77	3.57	0.850	0.097	0.16	X
	2 nd	459	3.44	0.933	0.044		
	3 rd	297	3.58	0.945	0.055		
	4 th	199	3.45	0.880	0.062		
	Total	1032	3.49	0.922	0.029		
Debates in English	1 st	77	3.44	0.939	0.107	0.25	X
	2 nd	459	3.26	0.924	0.043		
	3 rd	297	3.32	0.930	0.054		
	4 th	199	3.39	0.924	0.066		
	Total	1032	3.31	0.927	0.029		
Quizzes about culture and customs of English-speaking countries	1 st	77	3.58	0.951	0.108	0.07	X
	2 nd	459	3.66	0.915	0.043		
	3 rd	297	3.81	0.911	0.053		
	4 th	199	3.67	0.894	0.063		
	Total	1032	3.70	0.914	0.028		
Presentations on Vietnam tourism in English	1 st	77	3.60	0.877	0.100	0.01	0.08
	2 nd	459	3.49	0.873	0.041		
	3 rd	297	3.70	0.924	0.054		
	4 th	199	3.68	0.873	0.062		
	Total	1032	3.59	0.892	0.028		
Presentations on local culture in English	1 st	77	3.45	0.867	0.099	0.03	0.07
	2 nd	459	3.45	0.858	0.040		
	3 rd	297	3.61	0.909	0.053		
	4 th	199	3.61	0.868	0.062		
	Total	1032	3.53	0.878	0.027		
Watching movies with late-discussions	1 st	77	3.86	0.942	0.107	0.40	X
	2 nd	459	3.82	0.850	0.040		
	3 rd	297	3.93	0.855	0.050		

ECAs	Year	N	Mean	SD	SEM	p	η^2
	4 th	199	3.84	0.865	0.061		
	Total	1032	3.86	0.861	0.027		
Outdoor activities using English	1 st	77	3.90	0.954	0.109	0.01	0.08
	2 nd	459	3.64	0.917	0.043		
	3 rd	297	3.81	0.841	0.049		
	4 th	199	3.63	0.922	0.065		
	Total	1032	3.71	0.904	0.028		
Big events including lots of different activities in English	1 st	77	3.68	0.924	0.105	0.08	X
	2 nd	459	3.63	0.870	0.041		
	3 rd	297	3.78	0.882	0.051		
	4 th	199	3.61	0.919	0.065		
	Total	1032	3.67	0.889	0.028		
Cultural festivals of English-speaking countries	1 st	77	3.83	0.849	0.097	0.01	0.09
	2 nd	459	3.61	0.908	0.042		
	3 rd	297	3.80	0.841	0.049		
	4 th	199	3.63	0.883	0.063		
	Total	1032	3.68	0.884	0.028		
English speaking clubs	1 st	77	3.69	0.815	0.093	0.19	X
	2 nd	459	3.56	0.883	0.041		
	3 rd	297	3.69	0.870	0.050		
	4 th	199	3.56	0.890	0.063		
	Total	1032	3.61	0.876	0.027		
English exam preparation clubs	1 st	77	3.75	0.905	0.103	0.36	X
	2 nd	459	3.76	0.859	0.040		
	3 rd	297	3.87	0.850	0.049		
	4 th	199	3.80	0.874	0.062		
	Total	1032	3.80	0.863	0.027		
Book café (Drinks, books, and discussions)	1 st	77	3.77	0.887	0.101	0.20	X
	2 nd	459	3.74	0.896	0.042		
	3 rd	297	3.86	0.850	0.049		
	4 th	199	3.70	0.833	0.059		
	Total	1032	3.77	0.871	0.027		
Foreign language corner	1 st	77	3.68	0.966	0.110	0.03	0.06
	2 nd	459	3.60	0.867	0.040		
	3 rd	297	3.78	0.841	0.049		
	4 th	199	3.59	0.865	0.061		
	Total	1032	3.66	0.869	0.027		
Traveling to experience English cultures	1 st	77	4.12	0.888	0.101	0.04	0.11
	2 nd	459	3.92	0.880	0.041		
	3 rd	297	4.07	0.827	0.048		
	4 th	199	3.94	0.845	0.060		
	Total	1032	3.98	0.861	0.027		
Total	1 st	77	3.62	0.564	0.064	0.17	X
	2 nd	459	3.51	0.657	0.031		
	3 rd	297	3.60	0.599	0.035		
	4 th	199	3.53	0.632	0.045		
	Total	1032	3.55	0.630	0.020		

5. DISCUSSION

The environment for practicing English listening and speaking in Vietnam is very limited. Learners in this context can only practice those English skills in school. Therefore, to increase the opportunity to practice the skills, the students in this study positively responded to ECAs for English learning ($M=3.55$). This result is quite similar to the study of [Nguyen \(2019\)](#) when it is confirmed that students in higher education institutions in Vietnam are interested in participating in ECAs for English learning. In addition, the current study shows that the ECAs for English learning that students prefer are multifarious. However, the students preferred community-oriented activities, allowing them to join a group with other participants. It can be said that Vietnamese students, or even

Vietnamese people, are significantly affected by collectivism (Vu, Finkenauer, Huizinga, Novin, & Krabbendam, 2017). In other words, they love working together as well as in group activities.

In contrast, individual activities are often not much favored, which has been proven in this study. Activities such as composing poetry, songs, or stories received fewer positive responses from students than other group activities. In addition to being individual activities, these activities require students not only to have knowledge of English but also to have a remarkable aptitude for the arts (Chamcharatsri, 2013). Therefore, those activities only attract a small percentage of gifted students or students interested in the field.

The effect of gender on students' preference for ECAs for English language learning was most apparent as the female students preferred to participate more than male students. In contrast, the students' majors and years in university had no transparent impact on their preferred ECAs in general. However, significant differences were also found in a few different activities.

The fact that female students are more interested in participating in ECAs devoted to learning English than male students may be due to the difference in gender psychology between men and women or the impact of the living environment on them. Specifically, some studies in Vietnam were conducted to test students' learning ability and found that female students are often linguistically superior to male students in this context (e.g., (Demie, 2001; Tran & Nguyen, 2020)). Therefore, participation in activities focusing on using English is often more welcomed among female students. In addition, the activities listed in this study require students to use English to communicate quite a bit. Therefore, female students may have more advantages. The above statement was made based on the research results of a few previous studies (e.g., (Briton & Hall, 1995; Kaplan, 2016)) that suggested that gender significantly impacts human communication ability when women often prefer to communicate more than men.

In addition to the influencing factors derived from gender psychology, the context of Vietnam may also be the cause affecting students' preference for participating in ECAs. The development of online games in the context of Vietnam is witnessing a phenomenon that has a considerable impact on the learning quality of students, especially male students (Son, Yasuoka, Poudel, Otsuka, & Jimba, 2013). In particular, the number of male students addicted to online games is always reported to be much larger than female students. Therefore, the attendance of male students in classes has been a problem that stakeholders have to find a way to solve. As so, it is unsurprising to find out that male students do not want to spend time on ECAs for English learning.

Students majoring in or not majoring in English all have almost similar needs in practice for ECAs for English learning. In other words, realizing the importance of English for their future career will motivate students to participate in activities to improve their English ability (Le & Le, 2022). Therefore, it is understandable that both non-English majors and English majors in this study were interested in participating in ECAs devoted to learning English at an equivalent level. However, the analysis results also show that some activities receive different responses from students in both majors and non-language majors. These activities are English-intensive and require participants to have a certain level of English proficiency. Self-efficacy dramatically impacts one's desire to do something (Lap, Lien, & Thao, 2022). Therefore, English language majors outperform non-major students in their interest in these activities.

Similar to the impact of students' majors, their study time in the university environment did not significantly affect their overall interest in ECAs for English learning. Even so, some activities differ in student interest due to their years in the university environment. Interestingly, first-year and third-year students were generally more interested in ECAs devoted to learning English than second and fourth-year students. Psychological issues and curriculum need to be discussed to understand the difference.

The first year in university is considered when university students desire to learn new things when changing the learning environment from high school to university. Therefore, they want to experience new activities organized in the new environment where they will spend time for the next four or more years. After that, the

second year will be when they re-evaluate their ability and the value of ECAs to their learning, so the motivation to participate in ECAs for English learning may be reduced. For third-year students, ECAs in general and activities for English learning, in particular, are no longer a matter of academics but also of the connection between students and students, teachers, and school. They want to spend the little time left in college to gain more schooling skills before entering their fourth year with the foundations for preparing for graduation. As mentioned, the fourth year will be when students focus on studying and completing graduation projects such as theses or mini projects. As a result, the time and motivation to participate in ECAs may decrease. The change in motivation to participate in ECAs for English learning has not been studied so far. However, motivation is a factor that significantly influences one's decision to participate or not to participate in an activity (Todd Maddox & Markman, 2010). Besides, study program has also been shown to be a determinant affecting students' willingness to participate in ECAs.

6. IMPLICATIONS

Based on the research results, universities in Vietnam or other countries in the region can refer to organize ECAs for their students. Thereby enhancing students' interest in learning English and giving them more opportunities to practice English outside the classroom, it is essential to organize ECAs for English learning in countries where English is a second language unobtainable. Since the research results show that students are highly interested in participating in ECAs for English learning, more investments should be considered in organizing activities, from the quality of people to financial problems. Universities need a team of staff who can organize ECAs for English learning well enough to help students learn effectively when participating in these activities. Quality goes hand in hand with investment. Therefore, for the quality of the administrative team to be well qualified, investments in professional development and finance need to be made to support them. In addition, this study contributes to enriching literature in English language teaching in general and ECAs for English language learning in particular. From there, future researchers interested in this topic can refer to building their theoretical framework.

This study has yielded significant results in examining students' interest in each extracurricular activity for English learning. Data from a large number of students allowed the results to generalize the research issues. However, the lack of in-depth data, which could be obtained from student interviews or reflection papers, failed to explain why students liked or disliked any extracurricular activity. Therefore, the discussions were for reference only and somewhat subjective. As so, it was difficult to explain the findings convincingly. The students' perspectives on ECAs for English learning are considered the main research objective of the study, but the teachers' perspectives should also be clarified. Besides, this study has not clarified the impact of ECA on students' perceptions of learning English, their motivation to learn English, and their learning performance before and after participating in the ECAs. Therefore, seeing students' preferences for activities to tell their impact on their English learning seemed almost unconvincing. Future studies are expected to collect data from multiple data collection instruments to unpack the research topics in depth. Therefore, instead of using only one tool as a questionnaire, as in this study, other tools, such as interviews and reflection papers after students participate in ECAs for English learning, should be used. In addition, the teachers' perspectives on the impact of each type of ECAs also needs to be clarified so that improvements can be made, contributing to enhancing the quality of activities. A study conducted to evaluate and compare the impact of two or more ECAs on students' English language learning will yield substantial results. At the same time, the impact of ECAs on students' cognition, motivation, and academic performance should be presented in the same study to wholly clarify the impact of the activity.

7. CONCLUSION

In the context of burgeoning globalization, English language proficiency has emerged as a crucial prerequisite for international discourse, necessitating nations such as Vietnam to place substantial emphasis on ameliorating

their populace's command over the English language. Nevertheless, despite comprehensive endeavors, inclusive of the aspirational Project 2020, the mastery over English among Vietnamese students leaves much to be desired, especially within the purview of higher education. This investigation aims to confront this challenge by scrutinizing the efficacy of ECAs in enhancing English language proficiency, and assessing the multifarious determinants that modulate student participation in these endeavors. Our findings substantiate the advantages of ECAs, corroborating their role in fostering pragmatic communication skills and bolstering scholastic performance. Nevertheless, the triumph of ECAs hinges on student interest and engagement, aspects that are profoundly shaped by gender, academic major, and duration of tenure at the university. The study unveiled that students predominantly favor ECAs of a communal nature, consonant with the collectivist ethos ingrained within Vietnamese culture, whereas solitary, creativity-intensive activities engender lesser enthusiasm. This reveals an exigency for more collective and inclusive endeavors that cater to a wider spectrum of student interests. Remarkably, gender surfaced as a significant determinant, with female students expressing more avidity towards ECAs compared to their male peers. This could be ascribed to gender-specific psychological variables or contextual influences unique to Vietnam, such as the pervasive inclination towards online gaming among males. In contrast, a student's major and the temporal length of their university tenure exerted a more nuanced influence on their generic interest in ECAs. However, students majoring in English and those in their nascent or concluding years of university exhibited more interest in certain specific activities, elucidating the subtleties of these factors in shaping ECA predilections. In sum, this investigation proffers valuable insights that can inform the development of more efficacious and inclusive English learning ECAs, thereby augmenting English language proficiency and contributing to the actualization of Vietnam's language development objectives.

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