

## Impact of Extra-Curricular Reading Materials on the Development of EFL Learners' Motivation



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Extra-curricular materials, motivation, concepts

### Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the impact of extra-curricular resources and materials on the development of EFL learners' motivation and ability to understand basic concepts of language. The IELTS pre-test and post-test scores of forty EFL learners, selected conveniently and homogenized through a Level Assessment (OPT) test, were compared to achieve this purpose. In addition, the participants who were randomly divided into experimental and control groups completed a motivation questionnaire, also called the academic motivation scale. This questionnaire was used to assess the participants' motivation to learn English through extra-curricular materials used outside a classroom. The obtained results indicated the effectiveness of using extra-curricular materials on motivation. The results also confirmed the recent findings that using extra-curricular materials is a useful way to improve the understanding of the learners' basic English language concepts and the development of their motivation.

### تأثیر مطالب خواندنی فوق برنامه بر رشد انگیزه زبان آموزان زبان انگلیسی

هدف از این مطالعه بررسی تأثیر منابع و مواد فوق برنامه بر رشد انگیزه و توانایی زبان آموزان زبان انگلیسی برای درک مفاهیم اساسی زبان بود. نمرات پیش آزمون و پس آزمون آیلتس چهل زبان آموز زبان انگلیسی که به راحتی انتخاب شده و از طریق آزمون ارزیابی سطح (OPT) یکسان شده بودند، برای دستیابی به این هدف مقایسه شدند. علاوه بر این، شرکت کنندگانی که به طور تصادفی به دو گروه آزمایش و کنترل تقسیم شدند، پرسشنامه انگیزشی را که مقیاس انگیزش تحصیلی نیز نامیده می شود، تکمیل کردند. این پرسشنامه برای ارزیابی انگیزه شرکت کنندگان برای یادگیری زبان انگلیسی از طریق مواد فوق برنامه مورد استفاده در خارج از کلاس استفاده شد. نتایج به دست آمده حاکی از اثربخشی استفاده از مواد فوق برنامه بر انگیزش بود. نتایج همچنین یافته‌های اخیر را تأیید کرد که استفاده از مواد فوق برنامه راهی مفید برای بهبود درک مفاهیم پایه زبان انگلیسی زبان آموزان و همچنین توسعه انگیزه آنها است.

واژه های کلیدی: مطالب غیر آموزشی، انگیزه، مواد آموزشی، مفاهیم

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## Introduction

The ability to learn non-English language subjects plays an important role in the daily lives of high school students and creates more motivation for them to learn more. This skill can develop other language skills, such as English speaking, reading and writing skills. Improving English language learning skills can also develop other language skills in the classroom (Brown, 2004). Students acquire the necessary knowledge and information through the skill of learning non-English subjects and how to learn to read and write. They can recognize the correct pronunciation of words when they listen to words several times. As in children, the hearing takes precedence over speaking. According to Brown, language learning skills play an important role both in facilitating language comprehension and in the process of learning it. This skill is like a channel through which learners make their first contact with the target language and culture. (Curtain & Pesola, 1988). In recent years, language learning skills through extra-curricular reading have become a priority in the English language teaching and learning process because of their significant impact on motivating knowledge acquisition. Students have to learn more and more English. Today, the emphasis on language teaching methods is not limited to productive skills, dialect, and writing. The ability to understand learning English is a very complex process because listeners must understand the meaning of speech from the information given by the speaker (Curtain & Pesola, 1988).

It seems that people who learn English as a foreign language have a hard time hearing, even if the elements of tone and pronunciation are not fast, they feel unable to understand conversations or songs. Therefore, practicing English as much as possible by reading extra-curricular material can be a great help in motivating people to learn this language. It is difficult to learn English as a foreign language. Therefore, learners need strong and rich resources to encourage them to learn accurately and understand messages. Extra-curricular English materials are educational aids that provide learners with visual and environmental features. These features of non-teaching materials can help learners compensate for any deficiencies in comprehension and learning (Thanajaro, 2000).

Critical and thematic Exposure to English outside the classroom can help strengthen learners' ability to learn. They believe that with the rapid development of audio-visual technologies such as the Internet, satellite, social networks, etc., the need to learn English has increased. (Bahrani, & Tam (2012).

English language learning skills play an important role in the educational process and everyday communication. Because English is a foreign language in Iran, many English language learners do not have the opportunity to meet English speakers in the country to improve their English language learning skills. This fact indicates that Iranian language learners will definitely have difficulty learning English. Therefore, teachers should find solutions to improve their English language learning skills through extra-curricular study. Singleton (1989) believes that the use of extra-curricular materials increases the motivation of learners to learn English. Curricula developed solely for teaching are more enjoyable and interesting, so the use of extra-curricular materials should be considered an important criterion in developing learners' skills in improving the language learning process.

The purpose of this study is to find the answer to the question of whether the use of extra-curricular materials at intermediate levels can increase the motivation of learners or not. This study also examines the effect of these materials on learners' learning abilities. Unfortunately, in most English language classes in Iran, less attention is paid to extra-curricular learning skills, while the use of non-educational materials is useful as a learning method for language learners Singleton (1989).

Many researchers have pointed to the need to use extra-curricular activities in the classroom. The researchers believe that exposing students to extra-curricular activities provides opportunities for them to become more familiar with English texts that are used in everyday life. In this way, language learners become interested in learning English. The use of extra-curricular materials can also increase the learning ability of English learners as a foreign language. Another necessity is to use extra-curricular materials to improve social skills and learners' confidence.

## Literature Review

### Definition of non-teaching materials

Training is done with two types of training materials: Teaching materials and non-teaching materials. Curriculum refers to the types of teaching materials that are provided for teaching purposes, but there is disagreement about extra-teaching materials. Therefore, these materials are defined in different ways.

Hitler says: "extra-curricular material includes any text written by English speakers for the use of English speakers. Tomlinson defines extra-curricular material as follows "A text that is not written or spoken for language teaching Bacon, & Finneman (2019). Newspaper, poem, song,

story, an interview "Television is all examples of extra-curricular texts." In fact, he thinks extra-curricular materials are designed to convey information.

According to Bacon & Finneman (2019), extra-curricular materials are materials that English speakers provide for non-educational purposes. Taylor (2020) calls any English text, especially text that is not intended for language teaching, non-teaching materials. Gilmore (2018) considers non-educational materials to be non-educational materials that convey the true message of real writers and speakers, which can be transmitted through a variety of audio-visual programs such as cartoons, movies, news, and more.

Seguni (2009) argues that extra-curricular materials to learn more English give learners the opportunity to experience the language used in everyday life. They enable students to "process information meaningfully, be responsible for their own learning, and become independent learners." In fact, this approach can provide opportunities. Provide learners with the opportunity to experience real language in the classroom. Exposing learners to extracurricular and real-world material is essential as they prepare to communicate in real life.

### **Extra-curricular materials and motivation**

English language learning skills play an important role in everyday communication and the learning process. Developing the ability to learn English through extra-curricular study improves other skills, just as children listen first and then speak before speaking. Qader Panahi believes that "because English language learning skills are less explicit than other language skills, this feature makes it more difficult to learn." Otte (2016) also believes that engaging learners with non-teaching materials improve their listening comprehension as well as their motivation, so using raw and non-teaching materials in language classes is the best way to achieve this goal. And teachers need to pay more attention to choosing the right non-teaching materials.

Using extra-curricular materials is a way to increase students' motivation. There have been many studies on the effect of extra-curricular materials on students' ability to increase motivation and learning. Some empirical studies indicate the positive effects of using non-teaching aural materials on language learners. For example, Breen (2017) believes that the use of real language in language classes gives learners the ability to make direct contact with input data, which affects their communication in the target language.

Harmer (2018) also believes that these materials enhance students' listening and reading skills,

as well as their motivation to learn, according to Allen et al. According to Allen et al., quoting Baird & Radmond (2020), "the development of students' strategies in understanding extra-curricular texts leads to the development of writing skills and motivation in learning a second language."

Gilmore (2018) has also studied the effect of using extra-curricular texts on the development of communication skills and increasing motivation in learning so that extra-curricular materials can be used to provide comprehensible input and use in the program.

### **Extra-curricular and motivation**

Motivation as an important factor in learning has been studied many times. In the process of language learning, motivation plays an important role in the development and promotion of learning. Marzban and Dovaji (2017) believe that motivation leads to the desire to learn a language. According to Salehi (2015), a motivated learner can be independent and responsible for their own learning. In addition, many researchers and authors believe that extra-curricular texts are more interesting and engaging than textbooks and that these texts have a positive effect on students' motivation in foreign language classes. It is on this basis that Peacock states that "extra-curricular texts motivate learners because they are inherently more interesting and engaging in teaching than textbooks and fiction." Extra-curricular texts suggest that they motivate and maintain students' motivation to learn.

Many researchers give reasons for the motivating power of extra-curricular texts. McNeil (2012) and Kilickaya (2014) have shown that using extra-curricular texts and materials is a way to increase motivation to learn a language. They claim that through non-textbooks, learners can visualize themselves in the real world, and experience the real world outside the classroom. Thus, exposure to real texts in language classes can increase students' motivation and boost their self-confidence. In addition, this learning method will help develop some of their social skills.

Some empirical studies suggest that extra-curricular materials are useful in creating meaningful learning because these texts relate to the real-life needs and wants of learners and make them independently interested in continuing to learn English through extra-curricular texts.

Berardo (2019) believes that the choice of extra-curricular texts is based on these factors: content relevance, usability, and readability. He believes that content that interests learners and is appropriate, meets their needs and abilities.

## Research Questions

Based on what was mentioned above, the present study sought to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1.** Do extra-curricular activities improve EFL learners' motivation to learn English?

**RQ2.** Do extra-curricular activities develop EFL learners' ability to learn basic language concepts?

## Method

### Participants

This research was conducted on forty Iranian EFL learners in two different classes, in a language institute located in Isfahan province. The participants were conveniently selected from among seventy students and homogenized through Level Assessment (OPT) test. They were randomly divided into experimental and control groups of 20 students.

### Instruments

In this study, the three following instruments were used to collect data:

1) Oxford Placement Test, which is a normal test and belongs to the University of Oxford to determine the level of language skills of students. By performing this test, the statistical samples become homogeneous.

2) ELTS learning test, which includes two twenty-question tests as a pre-test and post-test.

3) Motivation questionnaire which is known as the academic motivation scale and was administered at the beginning and end of the training.

### Procedure

The participants were first divided into two groups. The treatment group received extra-listening materials and the control group received the in-class teaching materials in 10 sessions. Classes were held twice a week, lasting 1 hour and 45 minutes. In both groups, the students listened to audio texts. The material for the experimental group included audiomaterial the words on the *street program*, which was broadcasted daily by the BBC. The material for the control group consisted of materials in audio sections of *Four Corners 2*.

Before starting the training program, the IELTS learning test was conducted as a pre-test to measure the experimental participants' listening comprehension ability. The same test and used as a post-test to measure the effect of extra-curricular materials on learners' learning ability at the end of the course. The Motivation scale questionnaire was also used at the beginning and end of

the training course to assess the effect of extra-curricular materials on the participants' motivation. The estimated time to answer the questions was 25 minutes. The same process was done for the control group.

### **Results and Discussion**

The results of this study prove the claim of many researchers about the positive effect of using extra-curricular material on language learners' motivation and on improving their comprehension ability. Proponents of extra-curricular material believe that if teachers use extra-curricular materials in the classroom and create opportunities for the learners to experience real-world texts, they will be able to better understand written and audio texts.

According to the findings of many researchers, the use of extra-curricular materials in language classes makes learners interested in learning English. The results of this study also confirm recent findings in the use of extra-curricular materials in English language classes as a useful way to improve students' comprehension skills.

As far as the first research question of the study is concerned, the results indicate that language learners who use extra-curricular materials are more interested to learn the language and their listening skills are more developed. These findings are in line with the beliefs of Little, et al. (1989). They justify the use of extra-curricular material in the language classroom.

As for the second research question, which deals with the effect of extra-curricular materials on the learners' ability to understand the basic concepts of the English language, the obtained results were to the positive.

All in all, the findings of the present study are consistent with those of Salehi and Vafakhah (2013) regarding the improvement of the learners' understanding of basic concepts of language.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the current study confirm that the use of extra-curricular material in the English language classroom improves the learners' ability to understand basic concepts and makes them interested in learning English. Little, et al. (1989) argue that extra-curricular material actually brings learners closer to the target language culture, making learning more enjoyable and interesting.

Various methods have been used to investigate the effect of extra-curricular material on the development of motivation and auditory comprehension ability of learners. In the current study, the analysis of the data showed that most of the learners' listening problems are due to not practicing and not being exposed to extra-curricular activities. In fact, the results displayed the positive

effect of such materials on the development of the EFL learners' motivation because, through extra-curricular materials, language learners will have direct contact with the real-life language presented by English speakers.

In conclusion, it can be stated that extra-curricular reading materials can have a significant impact on the development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' motivation. Below are some ways in which this can happen:

**Increased interest in the language:** When EFL learners read materials that they find interesting, they are more likely to become engaged and motivated to continue learning the language. This interest can extend beyond the text they are reading to other areas of the language, such as grammar and vocabulary.

**Exposure to authentic language:** Extra-curricular reading materials can expose EFL learners to authentic language, which can help them develop their language skills in a more natural way. They can learn vocabulary and expressions that are used in real-life situations, which can help them communicate more effectively.

**Confidence building:** Reading materials that are appropriate to the learner's level can help them feel more confident in their ability to read and understand English. This can lead to a sense of accomplishment and motivation to continue learning.

**Diversification of learning materials:** By using extra-curricular reading materials, EFL learners can diversify their learning materials and avoid boredom. This can help them maintain their motivation and interest in learning the language.

As for motivation, extra-curricular materials can be a powerful tool for developing motivation in a variety of ways. Here are some ways in which extra-curricular materials can help to develop motivation:

**Choice:** Extra-curricular materials allow learners to have more choice and control over what they are learning. When learners have the freedom to choose what they are interested in, they are more likely to be motivated to learn.

**Relevance:** Extra-curricular materials can be tailored to the individual learner's interests and needs, making them more relevant and meaningful. When learners can see the relevance of what they are learning to their own lives, they are more likely to be motivated to continue.

**Variety:** Extra-curricular materials provide a wider variety of materials and topics, which can help to keep learners engaged and motivated. When learners have access to a range of different



materials, they are less likely to become bored or disengaged.

**Challenge:** Extra-curricular materials can provide learners with more challenging materials and tasks, which can help to develop a sense of accomplishment and motivation to continue learning.

**Autonomy:** Extra-curricular materials allow learners to work independently, which can help to develop a sense of autonomy and ownership over their learning. When learners feel that they are in control of their own learning, they are more likely to be motivated to continue.

**Interest:** Extra-curricular materials can be designed to cater to learners' interests and passions, which can help to develop motivation. When learners are working on materials that they find interesting, they are more likely to be motivated to continue.

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