

## Learning Guides in Speaking English in Out-Of-Class Activities for Vietnamese First -Year Students in Thai Nguyen University

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### Abstract

**Background:** In Thai Nguyen University, students are facing two problems when they learn English. First, university students continue to make some basic errors in pronunciation, spelling, morphology and syntax. Second, they are unable to express themselves confidently and efficiently either when dealing with 'academic topics' or 'common everyday topics'. The students' major difficulty arises from the fact that they cannot use English correctly and appropriately out the classroom when required to do so. This means that the difficulty is related to the students' deficiencies in communicative competence and self-expression. The key tasks in transcending the artificial boundaries in out-of-class learning activities are to break down the barriers between various units (e.g., academic departments, administrative services, student affairs) and to create situations in which students examine the connections between their studies and life outside the classroom and to apply what they are learning. The researcher still believes that something can still be done to upgrade English language performance in out-of-class activities if only more meaningful measures are taken with focused attention. This is the stance that the researcher takes in conducting a study on out-of-class activities of Vietnamese first-year students in Thai Nguyen University in the hope of proposing learning guides for out-of-class activities.

**Materials and Methods:** The subjects of the study comprised of four hundred college students selected through random sampling out of 8,844 total population of the five colleges in Thai Nguyen University. The students were currently enrolled in a first -year English course or had taken a first-year English course in the previous semester. The sample size was determined using the Slovin's formula with 0.05 margin of error and each college was represented by the obtained sample size using stratified proportional allocation. The study is a survey on English language performance and the extent of participation in out-of-class activities for Vietnamese first-year students in Thai Nguyen University. As such, the study made use of the descriptive method of research.

**Results:** It was found out that joining contest and clubs are considered communication barrier in speaking English. This indicates that students were not confident joining the mentioned activities since they can communicate well especially to foreign students. Students in non-English speaking countries may be under the impression that they lack access to an authentic English environment. Outside the classroom, most students are immersed in a first-language environment with limited exposure to English. Out-of-class activities can be devised to show students that they are surrounded by English if they make a little effort to pay attention to the language as it is used in their daily lives.

**Conclusion:** The level of English language performance of first-year students of Thai Nguyen University was on the average only. There was a moderate extent of participation on entertainment as a form of out-of-class activities. A proposed learning guide was formulated to enhance students English speaking.

**Key Word:** learning guides, out-of-class activities, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnamese first-year students

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Date of Submission: 17-06-2021

Date of acceptance: 02-07-2021

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### I. Introduction

English language is a global language which is used for communication with native-speakers and non-native-speakers in the world, especially in the education sector, all university students need it in their studies in order to search information and obtain knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Due to requirements including increasing foreign companies, expanding international trading relations and the growing tourist industry and number of students undertaking overseas study, English is now taught not only in general education levels and university levels but also in most foreign language centers. This means that the needs and requirements of English language learners have changed. In the past, students only wanted to be good at grammar and gain as much vocabulary as possible so that they could read, understand and even write in English. Nowadays, English is needed for daily communication and employment.

Students who enter university lacking the English competency necessary to pursue their studies

effectively can suffer anxiety, frustration, de-motivation and an inability to engage with the learning process. Professional courses that involve work placements, such as education, pharmacy and nursing, can be particularly problematic and result in high levels of student stress and even expulsion if they are unable to meet the communicative demands involved. Students facing these kinds of situations may ultimately opt to withdraw from their studies, a decision which can carry with it the stigma of —failure within their families and/or cultures and thus represent a source of real trauma<sup>2</sup>.

In Thai Nguyen University, students are facing two problems when they learn English. First, university students continue to make some basic errors in pronunciation, spelling, morphology and syntax. Second, they are unable to express themselves confidently and efficiently either when dealing with 'academic topics' or 'common everyday topics. The students' major difficulty arises from the fact that they cannot use English correctly and appropriately in and out the classroom when required to do so. This means that the difficulty is related to the students' deficiencies in communicative competence and self-expression.

The university can enhance student learning by using its existing resources more effectively. The key tasks in transcending the artificial boundaries between out-of-class learning activities are to break down the barriers between various units (e.g., academic departments, administrative services, student affairs) and to create situations in which students examine the connections between their studies and life outside the classroom and to apply what they are learning. Key steps are for universities to address the importance of out-of-class experiences explicitly in the institution's mission, develop a common understanding of the desired outcomes of undergraduate education and the combination of institutional conditions and student experiences most likely to produce these outcomes, assess regularly the impact of out-of-class environments on students<sup>3</sup>.

## II. Material And Methods

**Study Design:** The study is a survey on English language performance and the extent of participation in out-of-class activities for Vietnamese first-year students in Thai Nguyen University.

**Study Location:** This study was conducted in Thai Nguyen University. It is a multi-disciplinary and multi-level university model. The study was conducted in five colleges namely: College of Education, College of Information Technology, College of Agriculture and Forestry, College of Sciences, and College of Economics and Business Administration.

**Study Duration:** From June 2019 to June 2020

**Sample size:** 400 students.

**Sample size calculation:** The sample size was determined using the Slovin's formula with 0.05 margin of error and each college was represented by the obtained sample size using stratified proportional allocation.

**Subjects & selection method:** The subjects of the study comprised of four hundred college students selected through random sampling out of 8,844 total population of the five colleges at Thai Nguyen University. The students were currently enrolled in a first-year English course.

**Procedure methodology:** The English Test was developed by a group of English lecturers at the Centre for Human Resource Development for Foreign Language Studies of Thai Nguyen University. It has undergone validation to determine its content validity, and established its reliability at .01 degree of error. For the purpose of this study, the obtained scores were grouped arbitrarily to delineate the level of language performance in English of Thai Nguyen University first- year college students. Presented below is the grouping of scores with the corresponding verbal interpretations.

Ranges	Verbal Interpretations
Below 4	Poor
4 - 5.5	Low Average
5.6 - 6.9	Average
7- 8.4	Moderately Good
8.5 - Above	Good

The questionnaire was validated through the help of the adviser, competent statistician and other expert to the field. The structured type of questionnaire was drawn therefrom, where the respondents just put a check on a prepared answer sheet. To conduct the study, the researcher sought permission from President of Thai Nguyen University. The approved letter of permission was presented to the deans of different colleges of Thai Nguyen University for their cooperation. Immediately upon approval, the researcher went from one college to another to personally administer the test to ensure that it was properly conducted. She asked the help of the

registrar by giving her schedule for evaluation. It took her three weeks to finish administering the test to the target respondents.

Retrieval of the questionnaire was made afterwards. The distribution of the questionnaires was facilitated on the day that the researcher distributed the questionnaires. Aside from the questionnaire, the researcher conducted also an interview to some of the students as well as with the faculty. The researchers, who failed to meet some respondents during the actual distribution, were scheduled for another appointment to conduct interview.

The primary data used in this study were the responses of the respondents to the prepared questionnaires, which they were requested to answer. The secondary data provided the answers to the simple interview conducted. They were gathered by the researcher through proper communication addressed to the proper authorities. These two sets of two data from which the researchers got 100% retrieval rate were then tabulated, interpreted and analyzed to obtain the needed conclusions for this study.

**Statistical analysis:** Weighted mean was used to determine the levels of language performance of the students and the extent of participation of using English in out-of-class activities. The hypotheses of the study were treated using 0.05 level of significance to further give an in-depth analysis to the data gathered.

### III. Result

#### 1. Level of English Language Performance of the Students

The English language performance of the students were determined through a teacher made test and was developed by a group of English lecturers at the Centre for Human Resource Development for Foreign Language Studies of Thai Nguyen University. Language competence refers to the knowledge of a language, cognitive aspect in learning a language, and of course the ability to use that language to produce meaningful production and language performance. Competence is used to describe the learner's capacity to produce a language. Students' competencies show that perceptions and judgments of students about their own learning abilities, skills, or competencies, affect their academic roles, performances, and proficiencies particularly in learning foreign language in the classrooms.

In assessing the performance, the obtained scores were grouped subjectively to describe the level of language performance in English of Thai Nguyen University first -year students in grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing. The equivalent of the scores using a scale was presented below.

**Table no 1:** Level of English Language Performance of the Students

Component	Rating
Grammar	1.31
Reading	0.90
Vocabulary	1.34
Writing	2.59
<b>Total Performance</b>	<b>6.15</b>

The over-all performance was 6.15 and rated as Average only. It was found out from the result that among the four skills, writing got the highest rating, followed by vocabulary and grammar. This only shows that students of Thai Nguyen University excel more on writing. They were able to express their ideas in English rather than other skills. This also proves that writing is one way of providing variety in classroom activities. It provides a learner with physical evidence of his achievements and he can measure his improvement. It helps students to consolidate their grasp of vocabulary and structure, and complements the other language skills. It can also foster the learner's ability to summarize and to use the language freely. Similarly, vocabulary is the cornerstone of English skills. Without a large vocabulary, even the best understanding of English grammar will not allow one to speak English. Memorizing vocabulary may not be a favorite activity, but there are plenty of creative ways to make it more fun.

Advanced writing skills are an important aspect of academic performance as well as of subsequent work-related performance. However, American students rarely attain advanced scores on assessments of writing skills. In order to achieve higher levels of writing performance, the working memory demands of writing processes should be reduced so that executive attention is free to coordinate interactions among them<sup>4</sup>.

This only shows that English proficiency requires students to learn four skills, namely receptive skills (which involve listening and reading) and productive skills (which involve speaking and writing). Generally, students who are confused in learning grammar find speaking class to be more interesting as teachers focus more on meaning rather than on form. Both Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) syllabuses basically have the same principle in relation to this matter.

## 2. Extent of Participation of Students in Out-of-Class Activities

Tables below show the extent of participation of the students in different out- of- class activities. Students of Thai Nguyen University were given a chance to participate to different activities such as contests, clubs, sports, games and entertainment.

### 2.1. Out- of -Class Activities in Terms of Contests

Table no 2 shows the extent of students' participation in out-class activities like contests.

**Table no 2:** Extent of Participation of Students in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Contests

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Do you participate in any English speaking contests?	1.53	Rarely	4
2. Do you participate in an English choral recitation contest?	1.51	Rarely	5
3. Do you participate in an English contest online?	1.83	Rarely	2
4. Do you watch English music contest on TV?	3.10	Sometimes	1
5. Do you participate in English expository writing contests?	1.58	Rarely	3
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>1.91</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	

It was found out that the over-all assessment was 1.91 and verbally rated as rarely. However, only watching English music contest on TV got the highest mean score of 3.10 and rated sometimes. This indicates that watching English music contest helps students to relax their mind through lyrical inspiration of their favorite and meaningful songs. Through this, they can also be able to practice how to read and pronounce words. According to stateuniversity.com, as the development of the well-rounded individual is a principal goal of extracurricular activities in college and university campuses, the numerous experiences these activities afford positively impact students' emotional, intellectual, social, and inter-personal development. By working together with other individuals, students learn to negotiate, communicate, manage conflict, and lead others.

However, other items were verbally interpreted as ‘rarely’. This indicates that students are not eager to join different English contests. There are many reasons that this is true to their part since there are so many rules to remember in writing and reciting words. There are different ways to spell each word, with this said, this means there are different definitions which is only more to remember. From punctuation through verb congregation and even syllabication, there are so many rules that must be learned. It is hard enough for a foreign student whose English is not their native language to sit down and try to put their thoughts down on paper without have to remember hundreds of relentless rules in English.

### 2.2. Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Clubs

Table below presents the extent of participation of students to different clubs organized in the campus.

**Table no 3:** Extent of Participation of Students in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Clubs

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Do you join in English clubs?	1.38	Never	3,5
2. Do you mingle with other club members who are foreigners?	1.40	Never	2
3. Do you accept officer ship to English clubs?	1.52	Rarely	1
4. Do you join in English club activities?	1.38	Never	3,5
5. Do you spearhead English clubs?	1.24	Never	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>1.38</b>	<b>Never</b>	

It was observed that students never participate on any club as revealed by the composite mean of 1.38. Rarely accept officer ship to English clubs got the highest weighted mean of 1.52, this shows that student clubs that focus on a specific language do more than simply allow students to practice their vocabulary and accents. Holding a position in English clubs provide them the benefit of interacting to different people. They also provide a forum to learn more about other countries and their traditions. Extracurricular involvement allows students to link academic knowledge with practical experience, thereby leading to a better understanding of their own abilities, talents, and career goals.

However, all of these opportunities are lost due to non-participation of respondents to the aforementioned activities. This is now the challenge of Thai Nguyen University English mentors – how to encourage students to actively participate in out-of-class activities that will help them become proficient and competitive in the use of the English language.

### 2.3. Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Sports

Table below shows how the students participate in out-class activities like sports in the school. Participation in extracurricular activities and leadership roles in these activities are positively linked to attainment of one's first job and to managerial potential. In addition, joining out of class activities such as sports will help them to be more fluent in writing and speaking English language.

**Table no 4:** Extent of Participation of Students in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Sports

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Do you play sports with foreigners?	1.66	Rarely	3
2. Do you participate in a football team with foreigner students?	1.55	Rarely	4
3. Do you exercise in the gym with a foreigner?	1.85	Rarely	2

4. Do you watch international sport programs on TV?	3.29	Sometimes	1
5. Do you discuss about sports with foreigners?	1.45	Never	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>1.96</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	

As seen from the result, the respondents rarely participate on sports which were given by the obtained composite mean of 1.96. Among the items enumerated, watch international sport programs on TV ranked first with weighted mean value of 3.29 and verbally interpreted sometimes. This indicates that the students are very eager to learn about their foreign friends by learning and watching their native sports. In this way, they can interact with them by sharing same ideas and thoughts. Communication is a two-way process; part of the job as a coach is to teach players communication skills and how to use them appropriately. From this, the respondents will able to understand and learn how to communicate well. Not only students will gain communication skills through playing sports with foreigners but they will be also be able to take a glimpse of other cultures that can help them develop communication competence in English.

Similarly, expressing ideas in English is also considered as one of the reasons why they watch international sports program. This is also a good way of immersing oneself to the language specifically English as watching international sports program exposes one on the sound and athletic verbiage courtesy of sportswriters and sportscasters. Further, this can introduce learners to sports world and thus be introduced to the concepts, vocabulary and structures of English through athletic means.

However, other activities pertaining to sports such as exercise in the gym with a foreigner, play sports with foreigners and participate in a football team with foreigner students were rarely joined by the respondents. This only indicates that students rarely joined with their foreigner friends in sports. Discussion about sports with foreigners was never been performed by respondents. This may be due to a language barrier that occurs when they communicate with the foreigners. That is why they find it is hard to talk to them and speak fluently in English. Another is the typical Asian character of being timid when with foreigners especially Westerners.

#### **2.4. Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Games**

Table no 5 shows the extent of participation of the students in out-class activities in terms of games. The effectiveness of teaching via games is very high as games provide a unique way to reinforce theory discussed in the classroom. In particular games have been shown to be more effective in communication skills of the students as well as if they are embedded in instructional programs that include debriefing and feedback.

**Table no 5:** Extent of Participation of Students in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Games

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1. Do you play computer games?	3.40	Sometimes	1
2. Do you play English cross - word puzzle?	2.14	Rarely	3
3. Do you take part in English conversation games?	1.86	Rarely	4
4. Do you organize a game for foreigner?	1.58	Rarely	5
5. Do you use the internet to play online computer games?	3.21	Sometimes	2
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.44</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	

Table no 5 shows that the over-all assessments of the respondents in out-class activities in terms of games were 2.44, verbally interpreted as rarely. Playing computer games topped the ranked with a mean value of 3.40, followed by the use of internet to play online computer games. This indicates that students love to play computer games. This helps them to increase their English proficiency level since majority of the computer games are expressed in English language. One such key function of the computer is to act as a communication tool reinforced by the increasing use of the computer for electronic mail, instant messaging, chat room use, the Web and other communicative use. It is also evident that there is significant amount of variability in the way the computer is being embraced as tool for communication within the academic setting. Different uses of the computer in academia and pedagogy include a variety of options from simple computerized slide shows to complex synchronous online teaching environments<sup>5</sup>.

At the same time, the fact that use of computers for communicative purposes has been fraught with some difficulties is evidenced on the anxieties and difficulties related to the use of computers for communication in the academic setting. These trends suggest that the computer has taken on a very critical function as a tool for communication as the digital technologies of electronic mails, instant messaging and the Internet in general have opened up opportunities for enhanced communication options between students, teachers and institutions<sup>5</sup>.

On the other hand, playing English cross - word puzzle (2.14), taking part in English conversation games (1.86) and organizing a game for foreigner (1.56) got the lowest mean score and were rarely participated by the respondents. These items are understandably rarely participated in by the respondents as they are more difficult to do and to handle. These activities need a higher level of language skill in English such as vocabulary, structure and social aspect of the same. As such, Thai Nguyen University English faculties are challenged to create activities that will entail students to do similar things so as to give them appetite to the items shown in the table. It will take creativity and resourcefulness on the part of the English mentors to immerse their students on such activities that will enhance English speaking competencies through cross-word puzzle, English conversation games and even organizing games for foreigners.

## 2.5. Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Entertainment

Table below shows the extent of participation of the students in out-of-class activities in terms of entertainment. Result shows that students of Thai Nguyen University were able to manage their academic performance by joining to different activities in relation to communication skills and improving English language.

**Table no 6:** Extent of Participation of Students in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Entertainment

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Do you exchange English few words with foreigners through face-book or Skype?	2.68	Sometimes	3
2. Do you going to English movies?	2.99	Sometimes	2
3. Do you listen to English music?	3.49	Sometimes	1
4. Do you listen to English news on the radio?	2.33	Rarely	4
5. Do you read English stories?	1.66	Rarely	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.63</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	

Table no 6 reveals that the respondents sometimes participate in out-of-class activities in terms of entertainment, with a composite mean of 2.63. Among the items cited, listen to English music got the highest mean score of 3.49 and verbally interpreted sometimes. It was followed by going to English movies and exchange English few words with foreigners through Facebook or Skype with 2.99 and 2.68 respectively. English is one of the most studied languages all across the world; most of the countries teach and use it as a second language. Thus, listening to music can enhance a person's skills such as listening, reading, writing and speaking as well as areas on vocabulary, grammatical structures, ending with rhythm, stress, fluency and pronunciation.

In relation to this, songs can be very helpful as far as learning pronunciation is concerned. They provide the authentic language with all its "traps" (such as connected speech, different pronunciation of the same sound, or difficult pronunciation of some words) laid for learners, who should be exposed to it as much as possible to strengthen their ability to understand it. In the same situation, a teacher in Japan noticed that those of her students who often sang English songs at karaoke clubs seemed to have better pronunciation, better listening skills, better speaking fluency and better English vocabulary skills than those who did not participate in karaoke singing<sup>6</sup>. That is why Thai Nguyen University students must be encouraged more to listen to English songs not only for entertainment purposes but also for learning purposes as mentioned on a study done. Exposing them to such inside the classroom may be carried over outside classroom.

On the other hand, listen to English news on the radio and read English stories got the lowest mean value and verbally assessed as rarely only. The students hardly devote time reading English stories since they find it hard to understand it and their comprehension is not very good. But it must be emphasized to them that repeated exposure to these activities will give them higher understanding of the language and thus will make them more proficient and competitive users of the English language.

## 2.6. Summary Table on the Extent of Participation of Students in Out-of- Class Activities

Table no 7 shows the extent of participation of the students to the above mentioned out of class activities.

**Table no 7:** Extent of Participation of Students in Out-of-Class Activities

Out-of-class Activities	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Contests	1.91	Rarely	4
2. Clubs	1.38	Never	5
3. Sports	1.96	Rarely	3
4. Games	2.44	Rarely	2
5. Entertainment	2.63	Sometimes	1
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.06</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	

It can be gleaned from the table that students participate in out-of-class activities but not to a degree that will create impact since in general they seldom use different activities in English speaking. However, it was found out that entertainment got the highest mean value of 2.63 and verbally interpreted sometimes. On the other hand, other activities such as games, sports, contests and clubs were occasionally participated in by the students. Correlations are found between out-of-class experiences and educational gains among university students; these gains include complexity of cognition such as critical thinking and intellectual flexibility, growth in knowledge acquisition and application, humanitarianism, interpersonal and intrapersonal competence, and practical competence.

Out-of-class activities can also foster language acquisition among English Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It noted significant out-of-class learning of English based on a study with 208 student teachers and 20 primary teachers in Hong Kong. Successful language learners were found to engage in various English activities outside the classroom. The immense benefits of out-of-class activities should lead institutions to use available resources to create opportunities inside and outside of school to accelerate students' learning<sup>7</sup>.

However, the teacher is not free of responsibility while students are engaged in out-of-class work. Instead, the teacher needs to provide students with assistance in acquiring the necessary materials and approaches to accomplish the task goal. This kind of learner-centered learning may be easier in theory than in practice.

This scenario is exactly what Thai Nguyen University English environment wants to produce, proficient and globally competitive Vietnamese speakers in English. That is why, this is the tall order of Thai Nguyen University English mentors, to embrace a totally new paradigm in teaching English and to practice activity-based learning so that students will be able to experience real-life situations in the use of the language. Through this, students are expected to improve their English language use skill, become more confident, proficient and even fluent speakers of English.

### 3. Communication Barriers in Out-of- Class Activities

Communication is an important part of teaching because the students have to be able to understand the message that the teacher is trying to convey. Students also have to be able to communicate effectively with each other. Many of these factors exist in day-to-day life as well that can act as barriers to effective communication.

#### 3.1. Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Contest

Table below presents the problems encountered in out-class activities in terms of joining English contests.

**Table no 8:** Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Contest

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I participate in English speaking contests.	3.39	Difficult	3
2. I participate in an English choral recitation contest.	3.41	Difficult	2
3. I participate in an English contest online.	3.02	Difficult	4
4. I watch English music contest on TV.	3.00	Difficult	5
5. I participate in English expository writing contests.	3.42	Difficult	1
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	

As seen from the result that students find it difficult to join contest in English. This was observed from the obtained composite mean of 3.24 and with the verbal interpretation of difficult to all items. Participating in English expository writing contests ranked first with mean value of 3.42. This indicates that students spent shorter time joining out- of -class activities especially English contest. Others find it difficult also participating in an English choral recitation contest, participating in English speaking contests, in an English contest online and watching English music contest on TV. This can be inferred to the fact that the respondents do not have enough background in English that is why they are hesitate to join some contests. In addition, some students are not fluent and lack comprehension in understanding English.

#### 3.2. Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Clubs

Table below presents the problems encountered in out-of-class activities with regards to clubs. Club participation is a way to plug into the university in a way that allows you to connect with others and to make a positive impact on the university and greater community. However, students are dither to join English clubs when they can communicate fluently using an English language.

**Table no 9:** Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Clubs

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I join in English clubs.	2.48	Less Difficult	5
2. I mingle with other club members who are foreigners.	2.53	Difficult	3
3. I accept officer ship to English clubs.	2.99	Difficult	2
4. I join in English club activities.	2.50	Difficult	4
5. I spearhead English clubs.	3.34	Difficult	1
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	

Table reveals that spearheading English clubs was the most difficult part in joining clubs. This was observed from the obtained mean value of 3.34 and verbally interpreted “difficult”. This indicates that students lack self-confidence in communicating to foreign students. This may happen since most of their communication skills are very poor and they are often too shy to even attempt to strike up a conversation. This also proves why they find it difficult to accept officer ship to English clubs, mingle with other club members who are foreigners and join in English club activities. However, joining in English clubs was found less difficult since it obtained the lowest mean score of 2.48. This indicates that joining English clubs is not that difficult because acting as a member in any club does not entail full responsibility of communicating to all.

#### 3.3. Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Sports

Table below presents the problems encountered in out-of-class activities with regards to sports.

**Table no 10:** Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Sports

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I play sports with foreigners.	2.47	Less Difficult	4
2. I participate in a football team with foreigner students.	2.48	Less Difficult	3

3. I exercise in the gym with a foreigner.	2.49	Less Difficult	2
4. I watch international sport programs on TV.	2.03	Less Difficult	5
5. I discuss about sports with foreigners.	2.96	Difficult	1
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.49</b>	<b>Less Difficult</b>	

Based from the table above, joining sports was less difficult as revealed by the composite of 2.49. This indicates that joining this out-of-class activity was easy for them since aside from the sports that they learned from other countries, friendship was also gained by them. However, discussion about sports with foreigners was the only item that was verbally interpreted “difficult” with 2.96 mean score. This only supports that the Vietnamese students are shy that is why they rarely open a conversation with other people particularly foreign students. Other items were assessed as less difficult which shows that Vietnamese students love sports. Student sports tournaments give them place to experience sporty atmosphere and develop strong relationship. In addition, watching international sports give them the time to learn English words and understand its meaning.

### 3.4. Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Games

Table below shows the problems encountered in out-of-class activities with regards to games. Games develops and instructional skills as well as teamwork. This can hone communication skills of students. However, difficulties were also observed in doing this activity.

**Table no 11:** Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Games

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I play computer games.	1.71	Less Difficult	4
2. I play English cross - word puzzle.	2.02	Less Difficult	3
3. I take part in English conversation games.	2.43	Less Difficult	1
4. I organize a game for foreigner.	2.25	Less Difficult	2
5. I use the internet to play online computer games.	1.65	Less Difficult	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.01</b>	<b>Less Difficult</b>	

The table reveals that the students in Thai Nguyen University experienced fewer problems in joining games. This was observed from the obtained composite mean of 2.01. In addition, all items enumerated were all verbally interpreted as less difficult. In the previous study, investigating classroom practice as well as the influence of activities in English on students’ linguistic and cultural awareness and attitudes were done. From another study, it was reported that most time was spent on listening to music, followed by watching TV, playing computer games, and using the Internet. Very low values were reported for reading books or reading magazines in English, on average less than one hour for each of the reading activities <sup>8</sup>.

### 3.5. Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Entertainment

Table below shows the problems encountered in out-of-class activities with regards to entertainment. Out-of-class project and activities work addresses multiple needs and interests of students and creates a variety of authentic English language inputs. Engaging students in out-of-class projects offers the significant benefit of expanding the student learning environment. Realizing that their normal surroundings and activities offer meaningful opportunities to learn English is likely to spark interest and increase motivation to learn. Out-of-class activities are also linked with real life applications; this connection is key to fostering more authentic language usage.

**Table no 12:** Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities in Terms of Entertainment

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I exchange English few words with foreigners through face-book or Skype.	2.00	Less Difficult	4
2. I go to English movies.	2.49	Less Difficult	3
3. I listen to English music.	1.98	Less Difficult	5
4. I listen to English news on the radio.	2.94	Less Difficult	1
5. I read English stories.	2.85	Less Difficult	2
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>Less Difficult</b>	

As shown from the table, all items were verbally interpreted “less difficult” and this was revealed from the over-all composite mean of 2.01. This indicates that students love to explore new things by engaging themselves to entertainment. This entails them to practice their communication skills by listening to different activities such as listening to news, music and the like. Thus, this shows the potential value of incorporating out-of-class activities for enriched learning outside of school and for autonomous learning. It was stated in another study that non-English speaking countries such as China, Japan, and Vietnam are witnessing an increasing need for international communication and collaboration and have recognized the impact of English as a universal Language Education in Asia, for that, there will be more incorporation of English in the environment <sup>7</sup>.



### 3.6. Summary Table on the Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities

Table below shows the difficulties encountered in out-of-class activities.

**Table no 13:** Summary Table on the Difficulty Encountered in Out-of-Class Activities

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Contest	3.24	Difficult	1
2. Clubs	2.77	Difficult	2
3. Sports	2.49	Less Difficult	3
4. Games	2.01	Less Difficult	5
5. Entertainment	2.45	Less Difficult	4
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	

Based from the result of the study, it was found out that joining contest and clubs are considered communication barrier in speaking English. This indicates that students were not confident joining the above activities since they can communicate well especially to foreign students. Students in non-English speaking countries may be under the impression that they lack access to an authentic English environment. Outside the classroom, most students are immersed in a first-language environment with limited exposure to English.

Out-of-class activities can be devised to show students that they are surrounded by English if they make a little effort to pay attention to the language as it is used in their daily lives. Students need to develop the ability to acquire information that is available both inside and outside the classroom context. In school learning tends to be symbol-based, while out-of-school learning is more directly connected to events and objects in the physical worlds, with the result that learning well in schools is not sufficient preparation for functioning well outside of school and thus language learning can take place at any time and in any place, including the home and the community<sup>6</sup>.

### 4. Learning Guides in Speaking English for Out-of- Class Activities

With the findings of this study, the learning guides in speaking English in out-of-class activities for first-year students in Thai Nguyen University was conceptualized by the researcher.

**Table no 14:** Out-of-Class Activities for Teachers

NUMBER	ACTIVITIES
1	Developing a portfolio of out-of-class activities
2	English family immersion
3	Book clubs
4	Blogging
5	Foreign Student's Day
6	English Movie Exposure
7	English Tutorial for Community Kids
8	The English Band
9	Conduct an Annual English Camp
10	Launching Online English Competitions
11	Launching of English Sports Festival
12	Conducting more active and innovative activities

In education, student engagement in different out-of-class activities has grown in popularity resulting to an increased understanding that certain intellectual, emotional, behavioral, physical and social factors play the important role in the learning process. Students on their part are willing to participate in routine school activities, such as attending classes, submitting required work, and following teachers' directions in class that includes participating in the activities offered as a part of the school program and student participation in school activities.

Students learn more when they are actively involved in their educational activities and get the opportunity to think about and apply what they learn in different settings. Through collaborating with others to solve problems and do things together or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with situations and problems they will encounter in the workplace, the community and their personal lives.

Out-of-class activities are those which are sponsored and usually held in school premises but not inside the classroom. They often involve some commitment outside of the regular school hours where students get to enjoy what do they really want to do outside of class hours and experience different activities. For many students, extracurricular activities present an opportunity to practice social skills and to experiment in activities that represent a career interest.

## IV. Discussion

The English language performance of the students was determined through a teacher made test. In assessing the performance, the obtained scores were grouped subjectively to describe the level of language performance in English of the Thai Nguyen University first year college students in grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing. The over-all performance was 6.15 and rated as Average only. It was found out from the result that among the four skills, writing got the highest rating, followed by vocabulary and grammar. It can be gleaned from the table that students participate in out-of-class activities but not to a degree that will create

impact since in general they seldom use different activities in English speaking. However, it was found out that entertainment got the highest mean value of 2.63 and verbally interpreted sometimes. On the other hand, other activities such as games, sports, contests and clubs were occasionally participated in by the students. Based from the result of the study, it was found out that joining contest and clubs are considered communication barrier in speaking English. This indicates that students were not confident joining the mentioned activities since they can communicate well especially to foreign students. Students in non-English speaking countries may be under the impression that they lack access to an authentic English environment. Outside the classroom, most students are immersed in a first-language environment with limited exposure to English. Out-of-class activities can be devised to show students that they are surrounded by English if they make a little effort to pay attention to the language as it is used in their daily lives.

## V. Conclusion

The level of English language performance of first-year students of Thai Nguyen University was on the average only. There was a moderate extent of participation on entertainment as a form of out-of-class activities. Joining contest and clubs was deliberate as communication barriers in terms of out-of-class activities. A proposed learning guide was formulated to enhance students English speaking.

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Van Thi Quynh Hoa. "Learning Guides in Speaking English in Out-Of-Class Activities for Vietnamese First -Year Students in Thai Nguyen University." *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 11(3), (2021): pp. 57-66.