

Out-of-class activities and ELT pedagogy: autonomous homework with a teacher

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Abstract

Homework is a topic which is not deeply covered in modern English language teaching (ELT) teacher-training materials. This study investigates the out-of-class learning opportunities independently pursued by students and categorises the activities to build profiles of different learner groups which may be compared and analysed. The categories are based on shared principles of modern ELT methodology and autonomy and the study builds on previous research relating types of out-of-class activity to positive learning outcomes. The responses to the survey reveal differences in the types of activities done by learners at different levels of language proficiency, as well as differences by age and gender. Pedagogical implications, teaching suggestions and areas for further research are discussed.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The most significant recent movements in English language teaching (ELT) in the last few decades, communicative language teaching (CLT) (Thornbury, 2006: 37) and task-based learning (TBL) (Ur, 2013), place learner experience and context at the centre of the teaching and learning process. The study of autonomy and independent learning added learners' interests and motivation to the list of necessary components in the learning process. However, teaching methodologies are naturally focused on the classroom, while the independent learning and self-study movement excludes teachers to a large degree.

Adult learners in today's ELT market have a vast array of options and products to choose from when deciding on a course of study. In addition to business English courses offered in some companies, learners can choose from face-to-face, blended or entirely online courses; they can study with a tutor or in a group; or choose one of the many multimedia all-in-one learning products available online or in bookstores. On top of all of these instructional opportunities, learners have access to countless hours of printed and audio texts which are being produced and published online every day with which to engage and gain exposure to native English use.

Homework is known to be an important part of the learning progress and long-term retention of material (Cooper, 1989; Cooper, Robinson and Patall, 2006), but its treatment in methodology descriptions and teacher training courses remains sparse. It is natural to expect that explanations of teaching methodology will focus on classroom behaviours, but with homework being an expected component of the course by a large number of teachers and learners (North and Pillay, 2002; Hallam, 2006; Vatterott, 2011), it is unusual that so little attention has been paid in teacher training materials to a component which is almost universally acknowledged as being important. At the same time, research into autonomy has shown that some students are very happy to work hard on their own, and can achieve satisfactory levels of progress without the assistance of an instructor (e.g. Jones, 1994; Mason, 2011, 2013). In fact, even relatively early in the movement, autonomy was criticised for describing something that all adults do anyway, in all facets of their lives (Candy, 1991: 159): auto-didacts teach themselves all sorts of topics from aspects of childcare and technology to investment and personal fitness. A broad definition of autonomy describes a learner taking responsibility for their learning process, which is exactly what happens any time an adult registers for language lessons. Adults choose to attend class, they choose to

participate during the lessons and they choose to do their homework. Or they choose not to do these things. There are, of course, an enormous number of factors which compete for an adult learner's time and attention, but ultimately, each learner prioritises all of these things according to their needs, goals, and motivation. While the completion of homework assignments is often expected and socially reinforced, in most cases there are no dire consequences for not doing it: students either deem the work to be a valuable use of their time or they judge it to be not worth the effort and therefore do something else.

However, might this "something else" still be applicable to the language learning process? While there may not be a one-to-one correspondence between missed homework assignments and independent learning activities, many students read news articles in English, practice grammar from a book, watch films, TV series or online videos in English, use English socially or at work, or listen to songs with English lyrics of their own free will and with no teacher instruction to do so. This is genuine engagement with the language and culture and certainly must contribute something to each learner's acquisition of the language. How should a language teacher react when a student has not completed the set grammar exercises, but she has watched the latest James Bond film instead? While there is a contrast in priorities, and a failure to reach the short-term goal of completing the exercises, perhaps the activity has helped the student make progress towards her long-term aims while also providing enjoyment and relaxation.

While there have been studies which have examined the reasons students choose not to do their assigned homework (e.g. Vatterott, 2011; Bang, 2012; Paudel, 2012), research into what activities learners actually choose to do and how they interact with classroom learning has only recently begun (Richards, 2009; Lai and Gu, 2011; Lai, Zhu and Gong, 2014). This study will investigate the types of activities that students do when they are left alone, and attempt to identify a classification system which might distinguish patterns in the behaviour of students who report success in their independent learning. By categorising activities according to different theories of teaching and learning it is hoped that analysis of the results might later be used to harness this curiosity and creativity to make better use of class time.

Chapter 2 - Theories of teaching and learning

Within the current practice of ELT, there are some similarities which can be seen in the theoretical bases of the different methodologies. Although some writers have declared a post-methods era (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), a great number of teachers still rely on teaching techniques such as CLT (Carless, 2009) and TBL (Ur, 2013). As the role of teachers has changed, so has that of students. The push for learner autonomy and independent learning at the end of the 20th century and the expansion of blended-learning courses and materials since the start of the 21st means that more consideration has been given to the types of activities and the types of learning that students do outside of the classroom. While “teacher-centred” and autonomous learning theories developed separately, many of the conditions for learning in each situation are the same. Combining these discussions with continued research into the expectations of teachers and students regarding homework as well as the efficacy of various homework practices, will provide the contextual background for the survey.

2.1 CLT, TBL and beyond: commonalities

Communicative language teaching shifted the focus of language teaching away from audiolingualism’s study of linguistic structures in isolation and onto the use of these forms for meaningful communication (Thornbury, 2006). Hymes’ (1972) definition of communicative competence added strategic, sociolinguistic and discourse competencies to grammatical competence which together make up the skills a person needs to communicate. This realisation resulted in the creation of the functional-notional syllabus (Thornbury, op. cit.), which replaced the lists of grammatical structures which learners had to master with communicative outcomes learners would need to achieve: asking for information, apologising, inviting, agreeing, disagreeing, complaining, etc. This extreme prioritisation of function over form, a very strong form of CLT, is what has today become task-based learning. The weak form of CLT, which is still used in classrooms (Carless, 2009), provides structures to learners and gives them the opportunity to use them communicatively. Conversely, TBL requires learners to perform a communicative task and then study the structures which they used or could have used to complete it (Howatt, 1984: 279). CLT has been described as an “umbrella term” (Harmer, 2007: 70; Thornbury, 2006: 36) because of the different emphases and practices which its practitioners use to improve learners’ abilities to communicate.

CLT and TBL have been well-supported not only academically and theoretically, but also commercially with the publication of large amounts of teacher-training and classroom materials branded as representing the very latest in methodological principles. This abundance of materials has led to two further teaching movements. One reaction aimed to reassert the primacy of the relationship between the teacher and learner in the learning process: Dogme was a movement formed in reaction to the tyranny of materials. Real communication was felt to have been neglected in favour of activities, photocopies and overly-managed lesson plans (Thornbury, 2000). A stronger reaction against materials and indeed methodology in general, it posits that methods themselves tyrannise teachers and restrict them from implementing practical solutions to problems in their classrooms. CLT and TBL are viewed as promoting Western values and expectations, as well as providing advantages to native-speaker teachers. Furthermore, “methods, as they were conceived of 40 or 50 years ago or so, are too narrow and too constrictive to apply to a wide range of learners in an enormous number of situational contexts. There are no instant recipes. No quick and easy method is guaranteed to provide success” (Brown, 2007: 18). Teachers in a “post-methods” system are searching for “an alternative to method rather than an alternative method” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 73). Solutions are offered by way of frameworks for principled decision-making based on macro strategies which allow teachers to include local learning contexts in the process. Kumaravadivelu’s strategies are: “maximize learning opportunities, facilitate negotiated interaction, minimize perceptual mismatches, activate intuitive heuristics, foster language awareness, contextualize linguistic input, integrate language skills, promote learner autonomy, ensure social relevance, and raise cultural consciousness (2006: 79). ELT has also experienced a period of critical self-evaluation which has forced a re-thinking of teaching practices in light of greater cultural awareness and sensitivity.

None of these approaches has managed to firmly displace any of the previous sets of practices, today they co-exist in a “complex centrifugal muddle” (Swan, 2012: 165). However, all of these systems share certain key components: input, output, cognitive effort, grammar and lexis, context and affect (Harmer, 2007: 78-79). The importance of input was highest at the beginning of the communicative revolution, when Krashen and Terrell (1983) stated that languages could be learned primarily through comprehensible input. Today input may be provided in the form of texts which have been modified to be more easily understood or to highlight certain grammatical structures, as may be the case in CLT; it may come in the form of instructions for a task and then students’ own utterances during the

completion of the task in TBL; it may come from talking *with* students as opposed to *at* them or *to* them (emphasis in original) (Thornbury, 2000); or a combination of these according to a post-methods perspective. The importance of output was stated most clearly by Swain (1985), who stated that, while input was necessary, the pressure to produce comprehensible output is the factor which develops the linguistic repertoire of the learner. The relationship between output and cognitive effort varies considerably between the weak and strong versions of CLT and whether a teacher wants to provide explicit or implicit learning opportunities. Linguistic forms can either be the object of study first and then practiced in a more personalised context or problem forms which are identified during the completion of a communicative task can be analysed afterwards. The grammar and lexis to be studied can be selected in advance, a focus-on-forms approach; or they can be treated as needs arise, a focus-on-form approach (Ellis et al., 2002). Context (referring in this case to the learners, the learners' needs and the learners' culture which the teaching is meant to support) has received greater emphasis in more recent post-method movements (Kumaravivelu, 2006; Ur, 2013), but coursebook designers have been producing class materials for a range of audiences and purposes for decades. Affect describes the emotional side of learning. Krashen and Terrell (1983) state that language acquisition is directly inhibited by anxiety and poor self-image. The components of a positive attitude toward learning are complex:

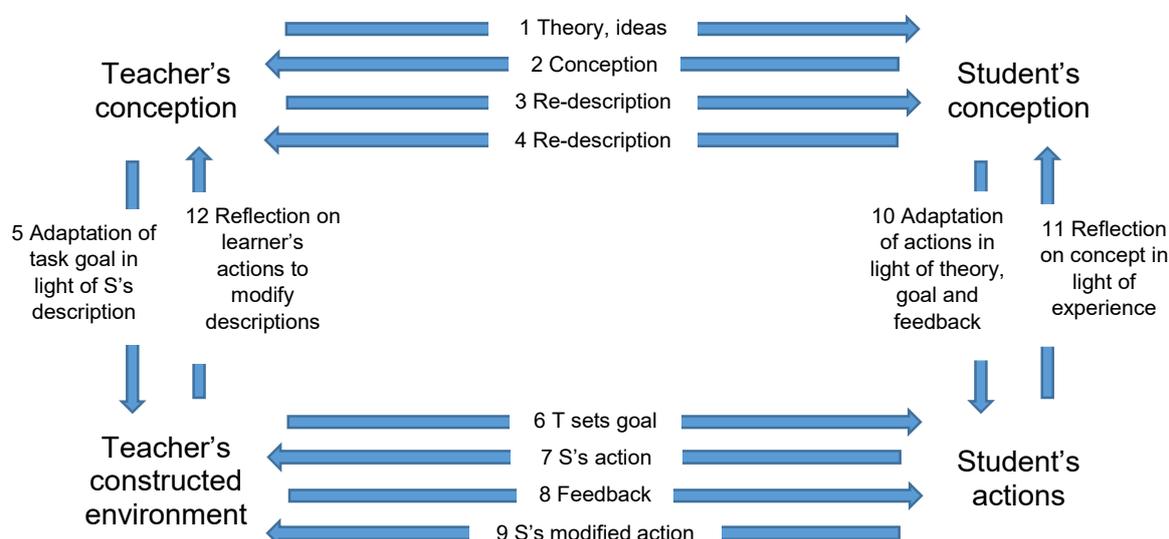
“Second language learners need to be receptive both to those with whom they are communicating and to the language itself, responsive to persons and to the context of communication, and willing and able to place a certain value on the communicative act of interpersonal exchange” (Brown, 2007: 153).

2.2 The role of the learner

So far in the discussion, learners' roles have been somewhat restricted to that of participants. Within the course, they are asked to conduct meaningful communication out of which language will emerge, but the majority of teaching-methodology discussion is framed around the role of the teacher in fostering the learning. However, learners are much more active participants than they were in the days of grammar-translation and audiolingualism (Brown, op. cit.: 130). This active participation developed into the field of learner autonomy or “the ability to take charge of one's learning” (Holec, 1981; cited in Benson and Voller, 1997: 1). Two types of knowledge can be gained: “school knowledge” and “action knowledge”. School knowledge belongs to someone else, and is used to answer questions on an exam or from a teacher. School knowledge which goes unused is eventually

forgotten. However, if this knowledge is incorporated into a learner's worldview and becomes part of the basis for new actions taken by that learner, it becomes action knowledge (Barnes, 1976: 81; cited in Barfield, 2012: 19). The process of modifying a learner's conception of the world to match a teacher's conception of the world is described in Laurillard's Conversational Framework (Laurillard, 2002: 87). She declares that teaching should "go beyond the specific experience, to offer the symbolic representation that allows the learner to use their knowledge in an unfamiliar situation" (ibid., 17). The model, diagrammed below in Figure 2.1, gives the student responsibility at each level of interaction. The goal of learning, the creation of action knowledge, cannot be achieved without this active participation.

Figure 2.1 Laurillard's Conversational Framework



The teaching and learning process can begin at any stage in the framework. A lesson in the weak CLT method might begin with the explicit presentation of a grammar point, (step 1 in the model), then proceed to the practice phase steps 6-9). A TBL lesson might begin with a task (step 6), which then raises areas for discussion (steps 1-4) and further practice (steps 6-9). Reflection by the learners and the teacher occurs between each phase of discussion and practice.

The Conversational Framework also shows that learner autonomy does not mean learning alone. "Beneath the rhetoric of 'giving students control over their learning' is a dereliction of duty. We never supposed students could do that with a real library, or a real laboratory. Why should they be able to do it with an electronic one?" (ibid., 192) However, completely

isolated study has never been the model of autonomous learning. Even at the Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues (CRAPEL), in the University of Nancy in France, one of the longest-running self-access centres in Europe, counsellors have always been provided to learners to assist them in matching the materials to their needs and interests (Gremmo and Riley, 1995). Learners profit from the collection of materials available, correcting their own work as they go, and by consulting an advisor to fine-tune the tasks they do based on their performance and descriptions of the concepts.

Not all learners have access to a professionally trained self-access centre counsellor, however. Students who work on their own will need help in “learning how to learn” (Dickinson, 1994: 40). In order to be successful, learners should be able to define their learning objectives, identify the purpose of materials they are using, use appropriate strategies, monitor their strategy use and evaluate their progress (ibid.). In addition, the learners must have motivation to study independently and have a positive attitude toward the pursuit.

All of the common elements of ELT principles are present in a self-access centre developed on the CRAPEL model. Numerous activities providing input, offering opportunities for output, requiring cognitive effort, and practising relevant grammar and lexis have been catalogued by writers such as Sheerin (1989); relevant context will be maintained by the selection of appropriate materials by the learners and counsellors; and the affective filter will be controlled by self-selection of interesting content at an appropriate difficulty level. All of these requirements can also be met with skilfully assigned homework.

2.3 Homework and out-of-class activities

Homework allows learners to work at their own pace and reflect more deeply on a learning task than they would be allowed in the classroom. It can provide opportunities to practice material from the lesson, prepare students for upcoming lessons, transfer skills to new situations or integrate skills and concepts (Cooper et al., 2006). It also brings a number of benefits: improved factual knowledge, conceptual understanding, self-discipline, attitudes to learning, study skills and problem-solving skills (Cooper, 1989). The same study also found a correlation between homework and academic achievement. Despite these demonstrated benefits, homework is given no mention in many popular coursebooks used by trainee English language teachers. There is no entry for “homework” in the indices of Brown (2007),

Hedge (2000), Harmer (2007) or Scrivener (2011). Brown and Hedge do make reference to autonomy and self-access centres as does Harmer, who also discusses the importance of preparing learners for their ongoing education after the course is over. There are four limited references to homework in Harmer (1998), a two-page unit about homework in Harmer (2012) and a three-page sub-chapter in Ur (2012), in which she states that “homework becomes an increasingly important factor in learning as students get older and/or more advanced... [it] is not only a way to provide extra opportunities for language study outside the lesson, but also an investment in the future, in that it fosters students’ ability to work on their own as autonomous learners and to progress independently of the teacher” (ibid.: 55). While Harmer (2012) mentions homework seven times outside of the unit dedicated to it, and both writers offer a small variety of homework task types as well as tips for teachers to manage the burden on themselves and learners, there is no attempt to integrate homework into a pedagogy. Homework is acknowledged as important but very little advice is given on how to use it.

At the same time, learners recognise the importance of practicing their English regularly and attempt to do so often. Especially in wealthier, developed countries with high-speed internet access, the variety of written or audio/video English texts is greater and easier to access today than at any time in the past. Studies have shown that Swedish learners who engaged in out-of-class activities had larger vocabularies, better oral proficiency (Sundqvist, 2011; cited in Lai et al., 2014) and scored higher on the National Test of English (Larsson, 2012). Out-of-class activities such as watching films, chatting on the internet or listening to music, provide abundant opportunity for input and output, cognitive processing of both meaning and linguistic structures according to the wishes of the learner, and presumably are enjoyable or they would not be done, all of the shared elements of the language teaching principles in section 2.1.

2.4 Summary

The principles of language learning are consistent through the main methods of modern ELT and autonomy: there must be input and output, cognitive effort must be expended on the learning of grammar and lexis, the lesson goals must be relevant to the learner’s context and students must be emotionally receptive to learning. As students take more responsibility for their own learning and engage in more autonomous learning opportunities, greater attention should be given to the types of activities they do and the types of activities

that lead to success. Whether these activities occur in a classroom, at home alone or under the instruction of a teacher, it should be possible to maintain the common principles of teaching and learning through all of the steps. This study will look for patterns of behaviour within groups of learners at different levels and with different attitudes toward their independent activities to investigate what this principled approach might be.

Chapter 3 - Design and implementation of the survey

The study is designed to investigate the types of activities that learners do to practice English without explicit teacher instruction. Research into this area of out-of-class learning is in its early phases and this study hopes to make a valuable contribution to the discussion. The activities in this study have been categorised into four systems related to learning activity types. These categorisations will provide added perspective on learner behaviour. By asking learners to list the types of activities they do, and comparing these with demographic data and the amount of success they feel they achieve by doing them, it may be possible to suggest successful combinations of in-class, out-of-class and homework assignments and identify topics for future research along these lines.

3.1 Target population, sample group and distribution

It is hoped that this study's findings will be applicable to a very broad population of English language learners. While this survey predominantly reached learners in western Europe who use the internet regularly, as mobile internet access continues expanding into less developed areas, in the future these regions should also be able to benefit from research in this area as well. The questions in the survey are not intended to apply only to affluent learners with internet access: they include both on- and offline activities.

Because of anticipated difficulties in reaching learners who study outside of class, the sample group for this project was extremely broad. The logistics of surveying students in classrooms is simpler than trying to question those who are no longer in a class. In order to reach as many participants as possible, invitations were sent by email directly to learners I had worked with in the past. My teaching colleagues were asked to distribute pre-written emails and photocopies inviting their students to participate. Messages were posted to learners and teachers on social networking sites and online forums, and advertisements were placed on my personal ELT website. The survey itself took place on my website and was incentivised to encourage participation: a list of resources was provided for respondents who provided an email address (this was not a required survey response field), and there was a chance to win one of three exam coaching sessions with me (a paid service which I offer through the website). This implementation of the research phase is designed to be scalable to either very large populations or to extremely targeted groups in future studies of this nature.

3.2 Description of the questionnaire

The survey has three sections and is spread over four web pages (a paper representation can be found in Appendix 1). The first two pages of the survey ask the learner “What do you do?” Instructions are given in a video embedded at the top of each of these pages with both subtitles and a transcript in order to make the purpose of the questions clear for learners regardless of their level. They are asked to select activities which they do outside of class without being instructed by their teacher. Activities are listed in groups according to the main skill they practice: reading, listening, grammar, vocabulary on page one; writing, speaking and pronunciation on page two. Example activities include: reading books for English learners, listening to the radio in English, reviewing grammar notes, making and using flashcards, writing Facebook messages in English, going on holiday to an English-speaking country, and singing English songs. Students are not asked how often they do the activities or which activities they do the most, they simply tick the boxes next to activities they do.

The second section of the survey asks respondents to reflect on these activities, they select answers to the following questions: do they believe independent activities help their learning (a lot, a little, not very much, or not at all)? Do they think they have learned more from class or independent activities? Do they talk to their teacher about the activities they do? Do they prefer activities which have an answer key, or open activities with no questions or marks? Additional space is provided for qualitative answers based on replies to the following: are there any activities they do which are not on the questionnaire? Do they have a system to their activities? Do they prefer doing activities that a teacher recommends or activities that they find themselves? Do they think there is anything missing from the independent activities they do?

The final section of the questionnaire asks for demographic information. This allows the results to be analysed by the age or gender of the respondents, the language they speak at home, the reason for their English study (work, school or pleasure), the type of school they are studying in, the amount of English lessons per week, the amount of independent study time per week and the level of the respondent. “Level” is simplified in the survey to allow respondents at all levels and from all backgrounds to make their selection easily.

Participants choose from: 1-Beginner, 2, 3-Intermediate, 4, 5-Advanced. Clarity and ease of response were felt to be the most important factors in the design of this particular question; using CEFR levels or test scores was felt to be potentially confusing or cumbersome. Level,

age, gender and first language are the only questions in the survey which require a response. Blank answers are possible for all other fields.

3.3 Categorisation of activities

Each activity in the questionnaire has been assigned a number of tags in order to build a profile of each respondent which will give some insight into the types of activities that he or she does. This information can then be compared across different demographics or based on the replies to the evaluative questions in the survey to highlight differences between groups. Four categorisation systems are used in order to allow for a range of measurements to be taken. The four systems of classification and the criteria for the different categories are shown in Table 3.1 on the following page.

The first system is based on Bialystok's (1978) model of second language learning; she describes the three crucial elements as input, knowledge and output, three common features of current teaching principles. The second system is based on Sheerin's *Self-Access* (1989), a resource book for teachers, which attempts to provide a comprehensive list of activities which can be used in the design of a self-access centre in a school. Not all activities in the questionnaire could be assigned a category in this system as there is no category which describes simple language exposure. Reading a book or watching a film cannot be classified in this system unless some sort of reflective task is also part of the activity. The third system describes the learning experiences supported by different types of media according to Laurillard (2002). Her categories can be mapped back to the Conversational Framework (see Figure 2.1 on page 5): attending and apprehending represent parts 1 and 3 of the framework, where students are exposed to theories and ideas; investigating and exploring cover steps 6-7 and 10-11, students set themselves a goal, take action, reflect on it and adapt their actions; discussing and debating represents steps 2-4, where students express their understanding of concepts and can hear re-formulations of them from experts; experimenting and practising cover steps 7-9, where students complete a task, get feedback on it and correct their work; articulating and expressing refer to steps 2 and 7, where students can either describe a concept or complete a task. The only elements of the conversational framework not covered by this map are the teacher's. Step 5 of the Conversational Framework (in which the teacher adapts the task goal based on the learner's demonstrated understanding) may occur after debating and discussing, when students set new task goals for themselves. The final

classification scheme is the work of Conole, Dyke, Oliver and Seale (2004). Their model of pedagogies is composed of six elements which form three opposing pairs: individual/social, reflection/non-reflection, and information/experience. It “articulates the key components of existing learning theories [and] displays their inter-relationships” (ibid.: 21).

Table 3.1 Categories used in the analysis of survey data

Type of activity		Original authors' descriptions*
Bialystok	Input	“Undifferentiated context in which exposure to the language occurs”
	Knowledge	“The explicit, implicit and other knowledge [...] a learner brings to a language task”
	Output	“The product of language comprehension or production”
Sheerin	Practice/testing	“Exercises, dictation, cloze tests”
	Learning/awareness-raising	“Discovery tasks, information guides, study guides”
	Reflective/creative	“Reactive listening, book reviewing, story writing”
	Social/peer matching	“Communication tasks”
Laurillard	Attending, apprehending	“Print, TV, video, DVD”
	Investigating, exploring	“Library, CD, DVD, Web resources”
	Discussing, debating	“Seminar, online conference”
	Experimenting, practicing	“Laboratory, field trip, simulation”
	Articulating, expressing	“Essay, product, animation, model”
Conole	Individual	“Where the individual is the focus of learning”
	Social	“Learning is explained through interaction with others, through discourse and collaboration and the wider social context”
	Reflection	“Where conscious reflection on experience is the basis by which experience is transformed into learning”
	Non-reflection	“Where learning is explained with reference to processes such as conditioning, pre-conscious learning, skills learning and memorisation”
	Information	“Where an external body of information such as text, artefacts and bodies of knowledge form the basis of experience and the raw material for learning”
	Experience	“Where learning arises through direct experience, activity and practical application”

*Original authors' descriptions from Bialystok (1978: 71-74), Sheerin (1989: 10), Laurillard (2002: 90), and Conole, et al (2004: 22-23)

Using these categories, the activity “writing in English on Facebook” would be tagged as Bialystok: Output; Sheerin: Reflective/Creative, Social/Peer-matching; Laurillard: Articulating/Expressing; and Conole: Social, Non-reflection, Experience. “Reading about grammar rules” is classified as Bialystok: Input, Knowledge; Sheerin: Learning/Awareness-

raising; Laurillard: Attending/Apprehending, Investigating/Exploring; and Conole: Individual, Reflection, Information. The full categorisation of all the activities in the survey can be found in Appendix 2. Each learner, therefore, will have an “activity profile” created from the totals in each category based on the activities selected. By averaging the results of learners from different levels, ages and backgrounds and plotting them on a graph, these profiles may provide a way to visually make comparisons between learners in addition to the numeric data.

Chapter 4 - Survey results and analysis

There were 459 responses to the survey, Table 4.1 provides an overview of the respondents' demographics.

Table 4.1 Demographic summary of survey responses

Level of English proficiency	3%	Level 1 - Beginner
	8%	Level 2
	34%	Level 3 - Intermediate
	22%	Level 4
	33%	Level 5 - Advanced
Gender	59%	Female
	41%	Male
Age groups	43%	13-30
	41%	31-50
	15%	51-70
	2%	71 and over
Main language of respondent	35%	German
	27%	French
	10%	Spanish
	5%	Italian
	23%	Other languages
Nationality	48%	Swiss
	7%	French
	7%	Spanish
	5%	Italian
	33%	Other nationalities
Where do you study English?	29%	High school, college or gymnasium
	23%	Private language school
	11%	At my job
	37%	I am not in class right now
How many hours of class do you have per week?	65%	Less than 2 hours per week
	35%	2 hours per week or more
How many hours of independent activities do you do per week?	22%	Less than 1 hour per week
	31%	1-2 hours per week
	23%	2-4 hours per week
	24%	More than 4 hours per week
Have independent activities helped you learn English?	61%	Yes, they help a lot.
	34%	Yes, they help a little.
	4%	They are fun, but I don't think they help very much.
	1%	No, I don't think they help at all.
Have you learned more from independent activities or from class?	42%	I've learned more from class.
	24%	I've learned more from independent studies.
	34%	I don't know, I think I've learned the same from each.

Responses come from speakers of 42 languages in 64 countries and were collected over a span of two weeks. Almost half of the participants are from Switzerland, and the two main languages of the country are most common in the responses, with 35% and 27% of the total being German and French, respectively. Almost three in five responses come from women, and the age groups from 13-30 and 31-50 each represent about 40% of the total, with 15% of responses from the 51-70 group. 37% of respondents say they are not currently in a class, 29% are in some level of public education (high school, college, university, etc.), 23% are attending a private language school and 11% have English lessons in their workplace. The majority of those in class have less than two hours of lessons per week while the number of hours spent doing independent activities is rather evenly distributed between less than one, one to two, two to four, and more than four hours per week. 95% of respondents feel that independent activities help them either a lot or a little (as opposed to not very much or not at all) and about one quarter of the participants report they have learned more English from their independent activities than from their classes. The self-reported level of the learners who participated in the survey was mostly intermediate and above. Only 11% identify as either Level 1 - Beginner or Level 2, while 34% are Level 3 - Intermediate, 22% are Level 4, and 33% are Level 5 - Advanced.

4.1 Most popular activities

The activities selected most often in the survey are “listening to songs” (84%), “watching films or TV shows” (78%), “using a translation dictionary” (75%) and “talking with English-speaking people” (68%). However, changes can be seen as learners progress through the levels of proficiency. For example, 56% of level 1 respondents listen to songs, which increases to 88% at level 5. Watching films or TV shows grows in popularity from 31% of level 1 learners to 85% at level 5. While 55% of participants selected “reading normal English books” (this item in the questionnaire is meant to contrast with the next items on the list, “reading comic books in English” and “reading books for English learners”; these “normal” English books can be an airport novel or an economics textbook), the proportion of learners who report reading normal English books increases noticeably between level 2 (16%) and level 3 (45%), and growth continues steadily up to level 5, where 78% of respondents report reading them. The use of graded readers peaks at level 2, where they are used by 42% of participants, decreasing to 21% at level 5.

Dictionary use by respondents at different levels also varies by level. 19% of level 1

learners report using an English-only dictionary but by level 5 this has only increased to 61%. The percentage of students who report using translation dictionaries is higher at every level, a summary is provided in Table 4.2. 31% of respondents at level 1 do not report using a dictionary at all, nor do 11% of learners at level 2.

Table 4.2 Use of translation and English-only dictionaries by level

	1	2	3	4	5
Translation dictionary	50%	63%	87%	74%	70%
English-only dictionary	19%	26%	33%	46%	61%

Comparing age groups reveals certain trends as well. Learners between the ages of 13 and 30 are the most likely to read blogs or online forums, watch films, TV or online videos in English, play video games in English, or write posts on blogs or Facebook. This group of respondents is also more likely to help their friends understand grammar or vocabulary, ask them about vocabulary and help them with their grammar homework than the other age groups. Table 4.3 shows the changing percentages of respondents by age group who do these activities.

Table 4.3 Younger learners help their friends more often

	Ages 13-30	Ages 31-50	Ages 51-70
Helping a friend understand a grammar rule	34%	19%	12%
Helping a friend with their English grammar homework	23%	15%	10%
Asking a friend about vocabulary	39%	35%	30%
Helping a friend understand vocabulary	29%	21%	15%

There are also a number of activities which are more popular in the older learners' group. Reading graded readers, doing grammar or vocabulary exercises and going on holiday to an English-speaking country are all most popular with respondents between the ages of 51 and 70, as is shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Activities more popular with older learners

	Ages 13-30	Ages 31-50	Ages 51-70
Reading books for English learners	21%	31%	46%
Reading information about travel or tourism	27%	38%	52%
Doing grammar practice in an exercise book	45%	48%	63%
Doing vocabulary exercises on a computer, smartphone or tablet	31%	29%	37%
Doing vocabulary exercises from a book	30%	31%	39%
Going on holiday to an English-speaking country	52%	55%	79%
Reading phonetic spellings of words	23%	31%	40%

Some activities are most popular in the 31-50 age group: reading normal English books, newspapers and news websites; listening to the radio and audio books in English; and writing formal letters. This was also the age group that was most likely to use an English-only dictionary: 52%, compared to 43% of older learners and 38% of younger learners. The popularity of listening to songs and watching films or TV shows declines as learners age: the percentage of learners who listen to songs drops from 92% to 69%, and the percentage who watch films or TV shows falls from 86% to 67%.

4.2 Learner preferences and qualitative responses

Learners report a strong preference for activities after which they can check their answers and see a score: 65% of respondents selected this answer and 18% have no preference. Only 17% say they prefer open activities with no score. This preference does not manifest in the data, as many of the activities selected across all sub-groups of learner are communicative or input-focused. 24% of learners who are currently in a class report that they discuss their activities with their teachers “always” or “usually” while 58% do this “sometimes”. This shows that students are attempting to integrate the learning they pursue in their free time with the work that is done in class. There also appears to be some desire for teachers to recommend activities, while half of the respondents had no preference where their independent activities are discovered, in the remaining students, 62% “prefer doing activities [their] teacher recommends” compared to 35% who prefer activities they find themselves. This could be another indication that the participants in this survey would like more integration of class time and free time activities.

One item which the majority of learners are missing is a system to their activities: 81% say there is no system to their independent activities. Of the students who do have a system,

reading books, listening to songs, watching films or TV series either as a means of finding new vocabulary and structures to study or just as skills practice is mentioned in 25% of the responses. One student gave a full description of her system:

“I look for material in English that is related to topics I'm interested in, and I listen to it or read it. I give myself some time to enjoy it and then I write down all the words or expressions that are new to me. I look them up in a dictionary or on the Internet to be sure of their meaning and usage, and then I try to use them in sentences, to feel like they're more 'mine'. My main practise is speaking, I imagine I have to give myself a speech, or I interview myself and then answer. It sounds funny, but it actually works very well for me, because it allows me to try out new words/expressions for the first time without being afraid of someone judging those first attempts. Also it allows me to exercise my pronunciation, and by recording myself I can see if I sound correctly.”¹

Other students mention elements of this description, such as repeating expressions, writing sentences, reading and listening for pleasure, finding vocabulary in reading or listening texts. However, this student also mentions recording herself to check her pronunciation, and assessment was a topic mentioned in 12% of the qualitative responses to the question, “Is there anything missing from your independent activities”. This corresponds with the respondents' preference for activities where they can check their answers. A further 12% of respondents to this question mention grammar practice and 28% say they would like more opportunities to speak English with other people. As another student wrote:

“I read a lot and also make lots of exercises which have the answer key. I'm adamant on this point. I've bought many wonderful books when I was studying in Oxford years ago. But I still missing the conversation and even if I learnt a lot since last July, date that I started reading every day, I fell something is missing. It must be certainly conversation.”

4.3 Higher level means more variety

There is a general pattern of a wider variety of activity types correlating with higher levels of proficiency. This relationship can be seen in Table 4.5. However, there is a great deal of variability within these data, as is shown in Figure 4.1. While the average data portray a steady trend, the chart in Figure 4.1 shows that the distribution is highly dispersed. Each participant in the study is represented by a semi-transparent dot on the chart: the more respondents report the same number of activities and level, the more saturated the colours become. The right-hand section of Table 4.5, the average number of activities done at each

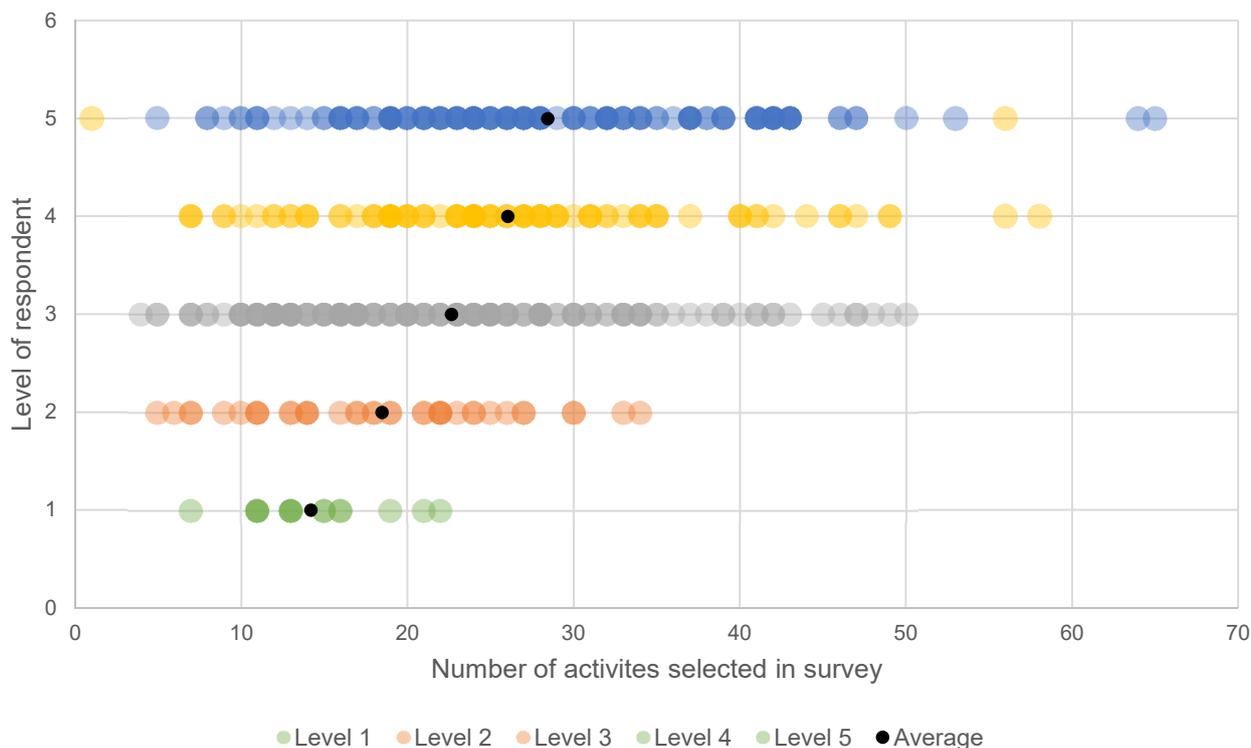
¹ Quotations from learners' qualitative responses are reproduced faithfully with no corrections, [sic] is not used so as not to distract from the respondents' main points.

level, is also plotted onto the chart as black dots. Figure 4.1 provides a reminder that, even as averages and generalisations are the main methods of analysis, there is a high degree of variability and individualisation within the data as well.

Table 4.5 Relationship between proficiency level and number of activities

Number of activities	Average level of respondent	Level of respondent	Average number of activities
1-10	3.35	1	14.19
11-20	3.33	2	18.47
21-30	3.79	3	22.65
31-40	4.11	4	26.04
41-50	4.27	5	28.45

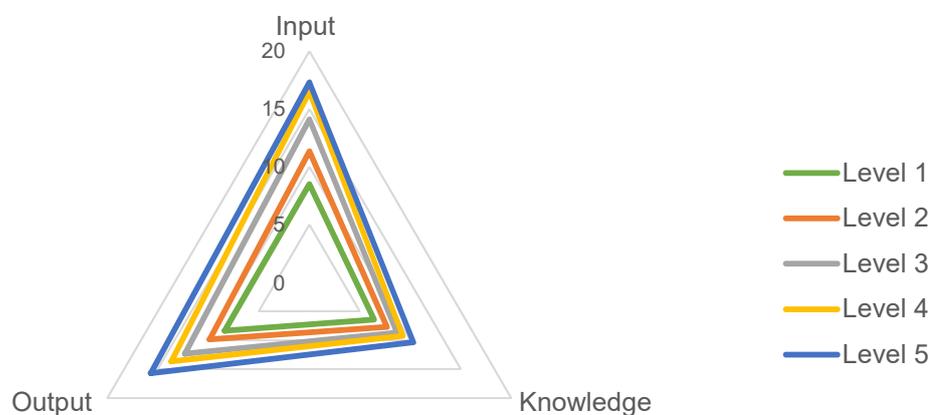
Figure 4.1 English level and number of activities per respondent



However, the use of averages and generalisations does allow some trends to be identified. The categorisation used on the activities in the survey enables the creation of “activity profiles” for specific groups of respondents across the four categorisation systems. An activity profile is created by arranging the individual categories from the classification systems into a radar graph, with each category on an axis emanating from a central zero-point. Then the average number of responses from the sample group is plotted on each axis and connected in a line. This allows variations in the type of activities done by these

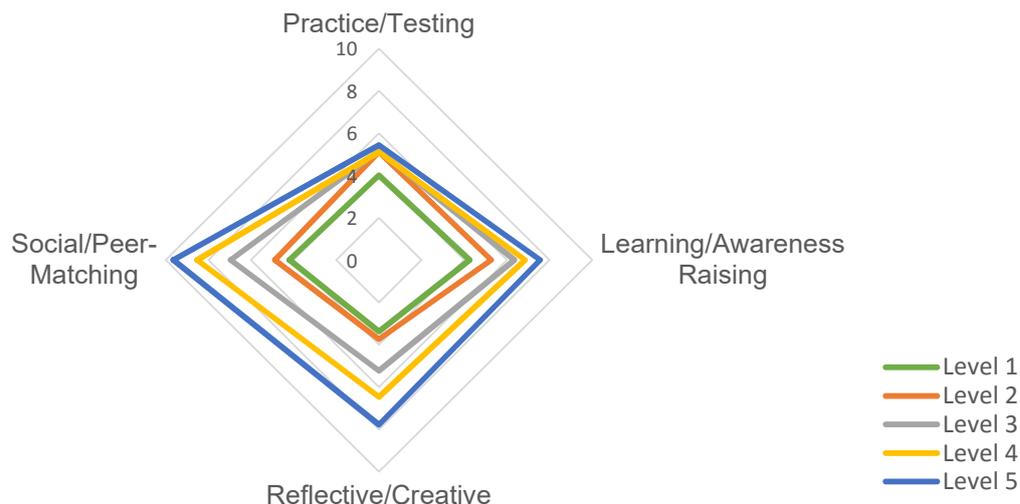
groups to be distinguished. For example, Figure 4.2 shows the Bialystok activity profile for respondents by level. The axes show the average number of activities done in the Bialystok categories of Input, Knowledge and Output. The image shows that as learners progress from level 1 (green) to level 5 (blue), not only do they do more activities in each category, but that the rate of change is different between them. The number of Knowledge activities does not increase as much as Input or Output activities. In addition, it shows that learners at level 4 do almost as many input activities as at level 5 (averages of 16.5 and 17.3, respectively), whereas the number of Knowledge and Output activities continues to grow.

Figure 4.2 Activity profile by level on the Bialystok scale



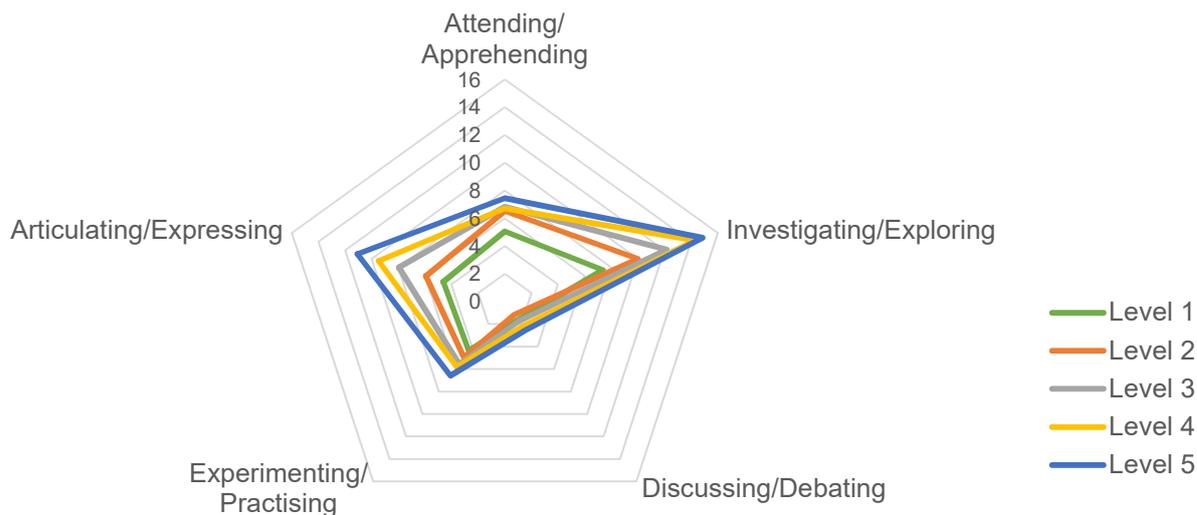
Each categorisation method reveals something different about the progression through the levels. The activity profiles in the Sheerin categorisation system shown in Figure 4.3 suggest that learners quickly identify their preferred type of practice and testing activities, while they continue to add more types of activities in the other categories as they gain proficiency. The step from level 2 (orange) to level 3 (grey) appears to be particularly significant in the adoption of Social/Peer-Matching and Reflective/Creative activities.

Figure 4.3 Activity profile by level on the Sheerin scale



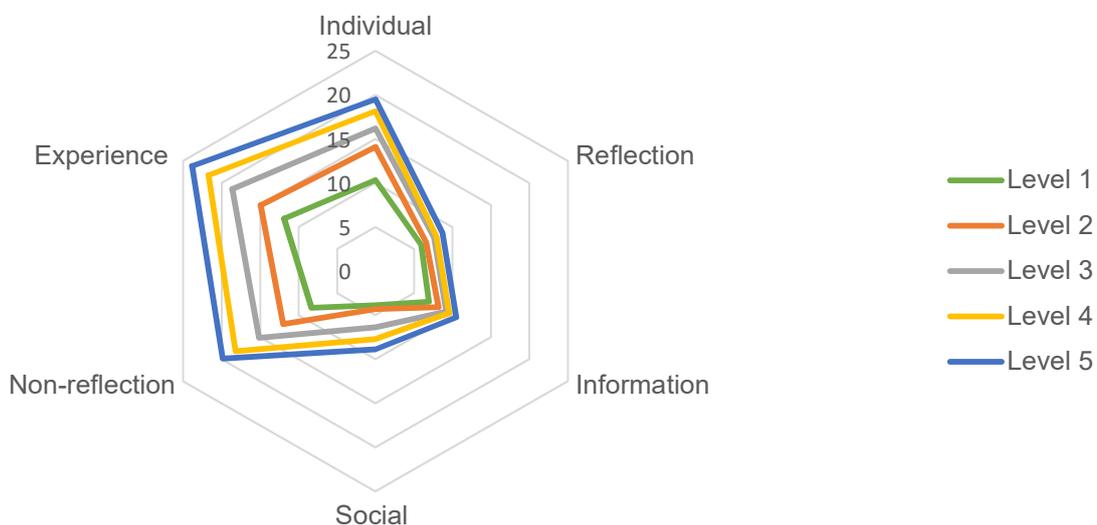
In the Laurillard categorisation (Figure 4.4), the activity profiles reveal strong growth in the number of Investigating/Exploring and Articulating/Expressing activities compared to the other categories. The number of Discussing/Debating and Experimenting/Practising activities grows very slowly from level to level while there is a jump in the number of Attending/Apprehending activities between levels 1 and 2, which then remains mostly unchanged until another small increase at level 5. By mapping the activity profile back to the TBL and CLT learning process through the Conversational Framework (Figure 2.1 on page 6), it appears that learners are describing theories and ideas and completing tasks (steps 2 and 7, performed by articulating and expressing activities) as well as finding tasks and reflecting on them (steps 6, 10 and 11, performed by investigating and exploring activities). The opportunity for feedback is limited, as shown by the low average number of Discussing/Debating activities.

Figure 4.4 Activity profile by level on the Laurillard scale



The activity profile in the Conole system shows a similar pattern of some types of activities increasing more rapidly than others. In Figure 4.5, the rate of change on the Individual, Experience and Non-reflection axes is greater than that on the Social, Information and Reflection axes. As on the Sheerin activity profile, the change from level 2 to 3 is accompanied by a jump in the number of Social activities.

Figure 4.5 Activity profile by level on the Conole scale

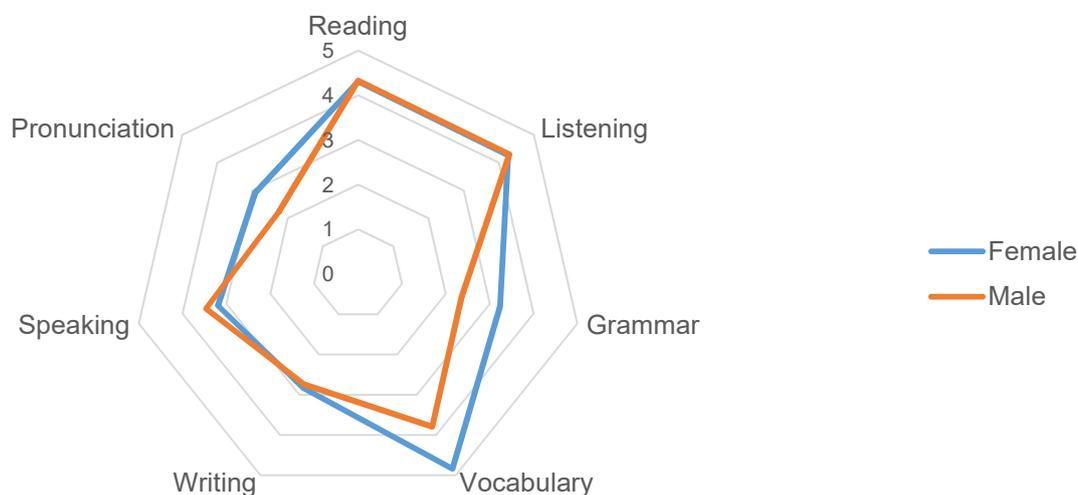


4.4 Women progress differently than men

While the average level of female and male respondents is almost identical (3.73 and 3.72,

respectively), women do a 10% greater variety of activities than men. Figure 4.6 shows that slightly more speaking activities are done on average by men (shown in orange), while women (shown in blue) are more likely to study vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Figure 4.6 Average number of activity types by gender



This trend is reflected in the other activity profiles. Figures 4.7-10 show the average number of activities in each category for female and male respondents across the four categorisation systems. Often, the scores on what may be considered the “social” or “expressive” axes are much closer than those in more analytical categories. Figure 4.7, which compares the average number of activities done by women and men in each of the Bialystok categories, shows that women average 1.8 more output activities and 2.4 more knowledge activities. The two groups do a similar number of input activities. Examining Sheerin’s categories, shown in Figure 4.8, a difference in the number of Practice/Testing activities and Learning/Awareness Raising activities is apparent (women average 1.5 and 1.4 more activities, respectively), while men average a slightly higher number of Social/Peer-Matching activities. Laurillard’s categories (Figure 4.9) show a gap in the variety of Attending/Apprehending activities (2) and Experimenting/Practicing activities (1.5), while the other three categories are relatively close. Conole’s categories (Figure 4.10) show that women average a greater number of Experience (1.2 more), Individual (2.2 more), Reflection (1.9 more) and Information activities (2.5 more) than men.

Figure 4.7 Female and male Bialystok activity profiles compared

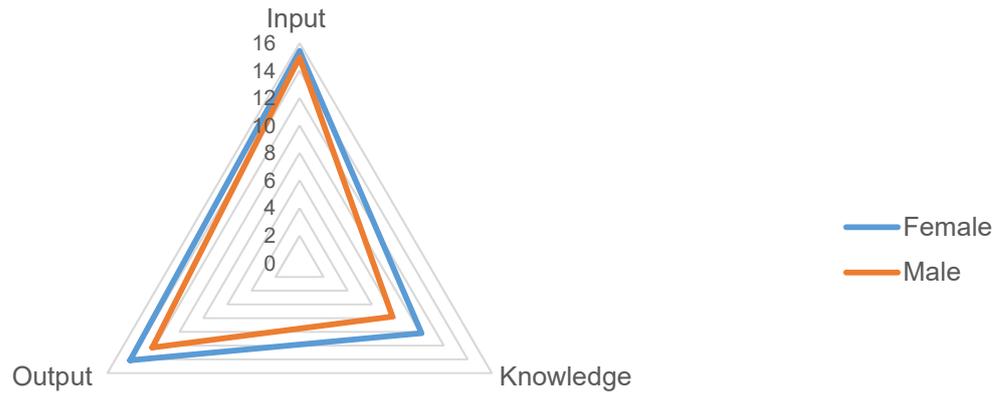


Figure 4.8 Female and male Sheerin activity profiles compared

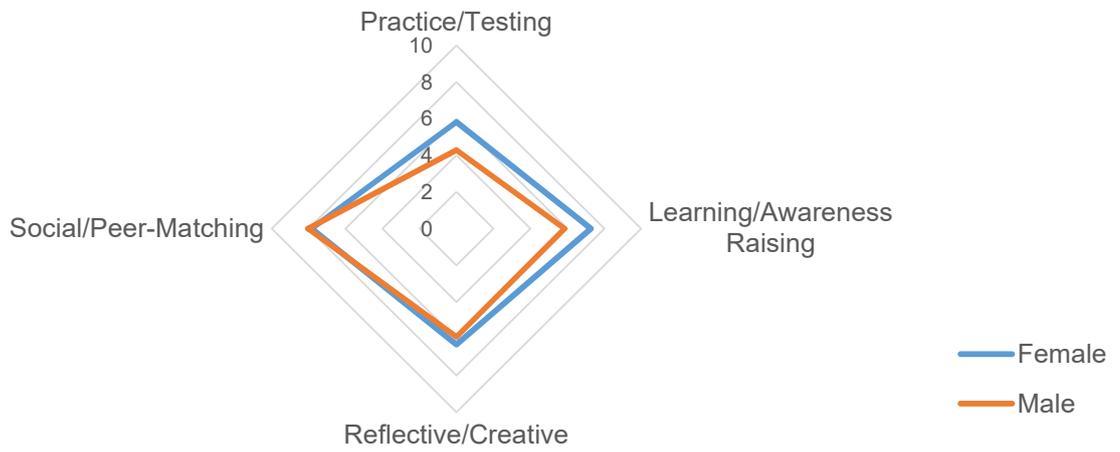


Figure 4.9 Female and male Laurillard profiles compared

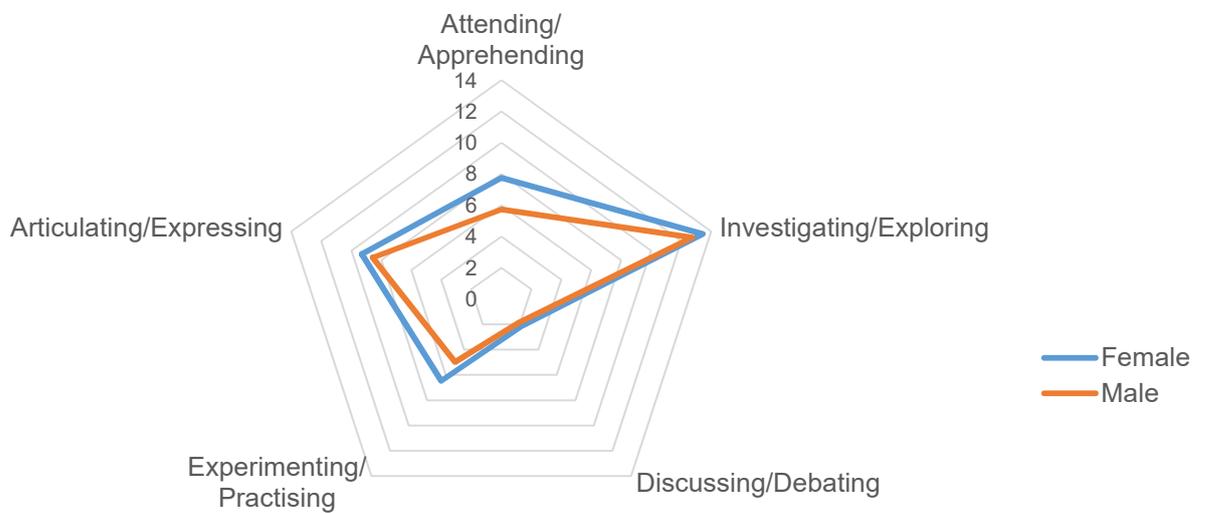
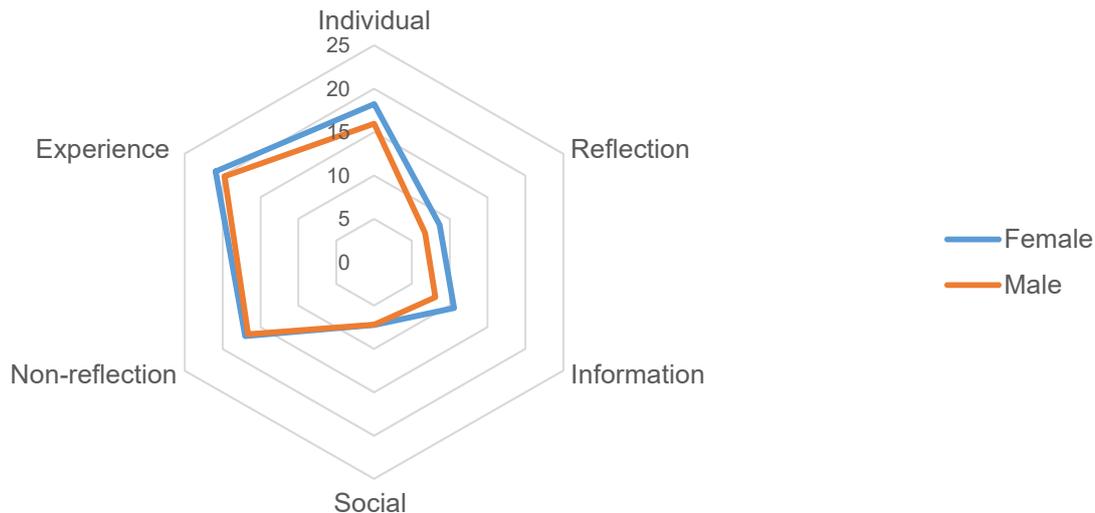


Figure 4.10 Female and male Conole profiles compared



It is also possible to see which activities are more popular in each group: more men read newspapers, news websites and Wikipedia, while women are more likely to read normal English books. Every grammar activity in the survey is more popular with women, with most activities having a difference of 3-7%. However, some activities show a much larger difference, particularly “reviewing my grammar notes” and “reading about grammar rules”, as is shown in Table 4.6. More women also report keeping a vocabulary notebook (41%) compared to men (17%). In the speaking activities, the largest differences are seen in the number of men who use Skype to speak English online (25% compared to 14% of women) and who play video games online with English speakers (19% to 5%).

Table 4.6 Difference in popularity of grammar activities by gender

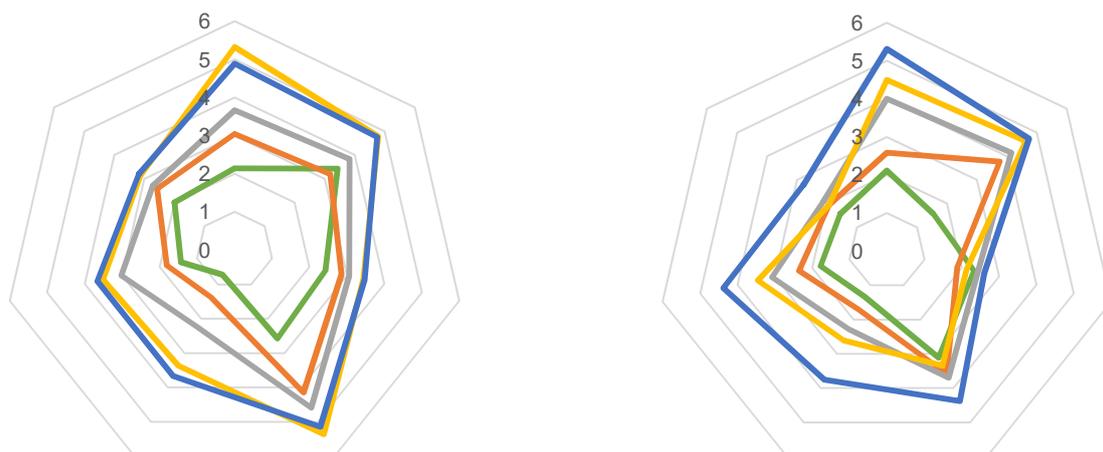
	Female	Male	Difference
Reviewing my grammar notes	31%	15%	16%
Reading about grammar rules	50%	40%	10%
Doing extra grammar exercises from my course book	23%	13%	10%
Doing grammar practice in an exercise book	53%	44%	9%
Helping a friend with their English grammar homework	21%	13%	7%
Re-writing my grammar notes	13%	6%	7%
Doing grammar practice on a computer, smartphone or tablet	35%	28%	7%
Doing grammar exercises from an old course book	20%	15%	6%
Helping a friend understand a grammar rule	27%	22%	5%
Asking grammar questions in an online forum	12%	8%	4%
Doing grammar exercises from a DVD or website connected to my course book	11%	6%	4%
Asking a friend about grammar rules	29%	26%	3%

Further differences appear when the data are analysed by both gender and level. As

learners increase in level, the rate of change in the number of activity types is quite different for men and women. The average number of activities by level for each gender are plotted in Figures 4.11-15. Female responses are shown on the left, male on the right. In each instance, there is a clear difference. For women, in all of the charts, it appears that they do almost the same number of activities at levels 4 and 5. The variety of activities they do increases rapidly through the early stages of their proficiency. Men, on the other hand, tend to increase their variety of activities more gradually until there is a sudden increase between levels 4 and 5.

The average number of activities done in the different skill areas (Figure 4.11) already displays these differences. The shape of the level 1 graph (in green) shows women do more types of listening activities and men do more types of speaking activities. Men's variety of listening activities jumps sharply at level 2 (shown in orange), while at level 3 (in grey) the variety of their reading activities increases. Level 4 (in yellow) is very similar to level 3 for men, but at level 5 (shown in blue) the variety of activities increases in almost all categories. For women, the number of vocabulary activities increases most between levels 1 and 2, while the variety of speaking activities increases the most between levels 2 and 3. Reading, listening and writing activities all increase significantly between levels 3 and 4. The variety of all activity types is mostly unchanged for women between levels 4 and 5.

Figure 4.11 Female (L) and male (R) activities by level



Axis labels clockwise from top: Reading activities, Listening activities, Grammar activities, Vocabulary activities, Writing activities, Speaking activities, Pronunciation activities

—Level 1 —Level 2 —Level 3 —Level 4 —Level 5

These differences appear again in the Bialystok profiles shown in Figure 4.12. Women

begin to increase all of their activity types between levels 1 and 2. Men, on the other hand, only appear to increase the number of input activities that they do. Women increase the number of input and output activities that they do again between levels 2 and 3. Men also increase their input and output activity variety between these levels, however the grey line in their chart is obscured by the yellow line which represents level 4. This indicates that they do the same average number of activities in all three categories at these two levels. The yellow line in the women's chart, on the other hand, is mostly covered by the blue line, which represents level 5. This shows that women have virtually identical activity profiles at levels 4 and 5 while men have identical profiles at levels 3 and 4. On the Sheerin scale, seen in Figure 4.13, women rapidly increase the number of activities they do at level 1. Especially in the category of Practice/Testing activities, which by level 2 is already the same as level 5. Men, on the other hand, do a higher number of these Practice/Testing activities at level 1 than women, but this number changes very little as the men progress through the levels. Men slowly increase the number of Reflective/Creative and Social/Peer-matching activities they do from levels 1-4, until they increase the variety of these activities by about 25% at level five (from 8 activities to 10 in each category, approximately). By contrast, the number of activities that women do at these levels remains steady at levels 1 and 2, but they add approximately two types of activities to each category at level 3 and at level 4. The number of activities they do in all categories again changes very little between levels 4 and 5. The women's activity profile in the Laurillard system (Figure 4.14) again shows the yellow line of level 4 almost completely underneath the blue line of level 5. While for men, the chart again shows a slow expansion in the number of activities until a sudden jump at level 5, especially in the Articulating/Expressing category. Finally, in Figure 4.15 which shows the Conole activity profiles, the yellow line of level 4 is almost completely invisible in the female activity profile because it so closely matches level 5. While in the men's chart, the line for level 4 mostly obscures the line for level 3. It also shows that at levels 1 and 2, men do more social activities than women.

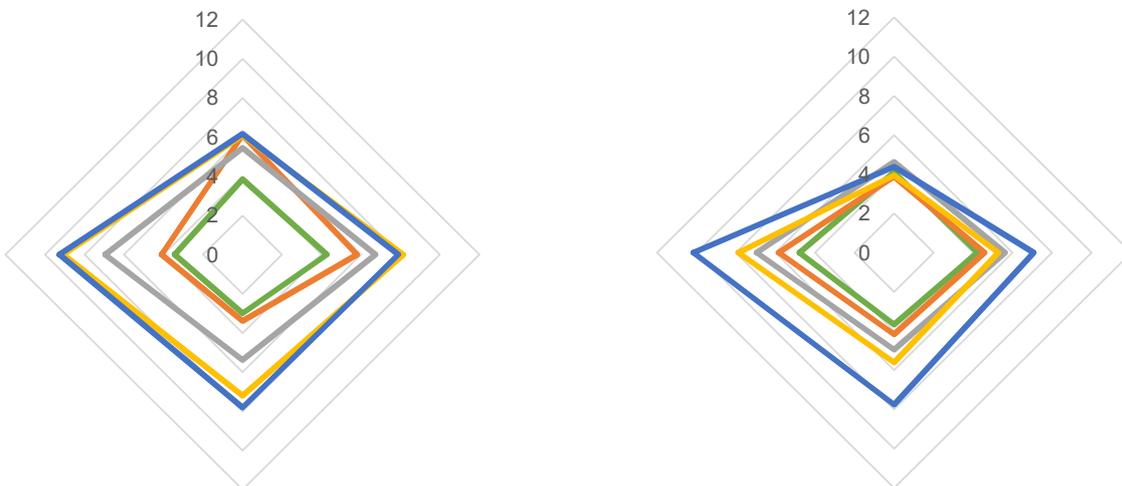
Figure 4.12 Female (L) and male (R) Bialystok activity profiles by level



Axis labels clockwise from top: Input, Knowledge, Output

—Level 1 —Level 2 —Level 3 —Level 4 —Level 5

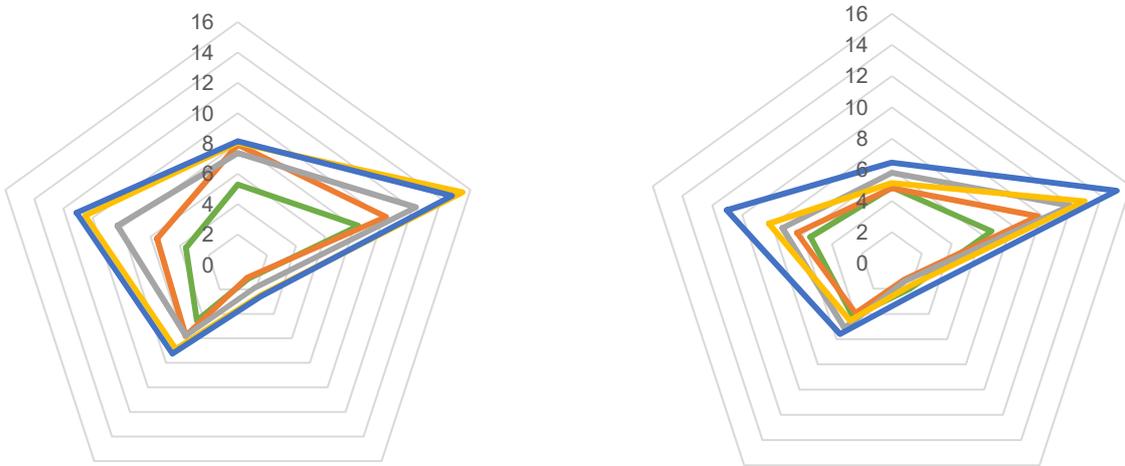
Figure 4.13 Female (L) and male (R) Sheerin activity profiles by level



Axis labels clockwise from top: Practice/Testing, Learning/Awareness Raising, Reflective/Creative, Social/Peer-Matching

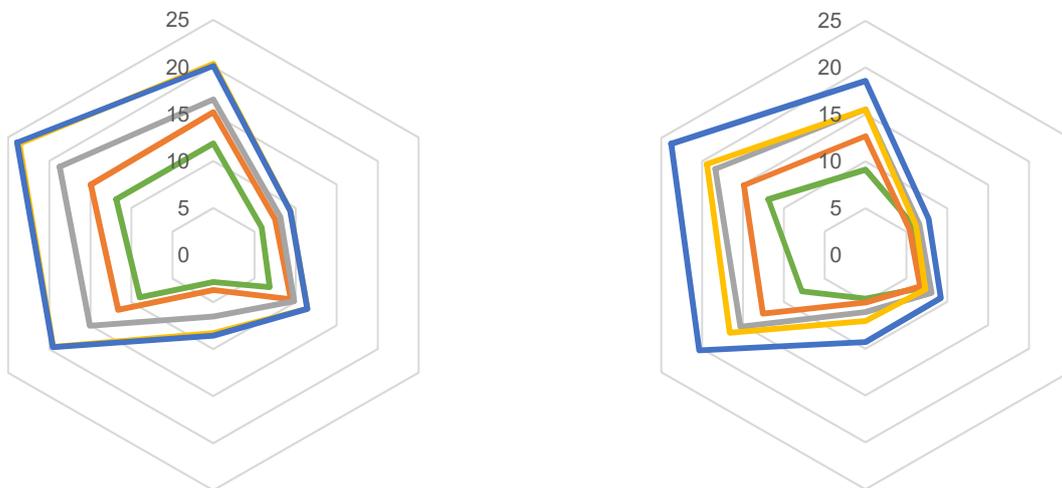
—Level 1 —Level 2 —Level 3 —Level 4 —Level 5

Figure 4.14 Female (L) and male (R) Laurillard activity profiles by level



Axis labels clockwise from top: Attending/Apprehending, Investigating/Exploring, Discussing/Debating, Experimenting/Practising, Articulating/Expressing
 —Level 1 —Level 2 —Level 3 —Level 4 —Level 5

Figure 4.15 Female (L) and male (R) Conole activity profiles by level



Axis labels clockwise from top: Individual, Reflection, Information, Social, Non-reflection, Experience
 —Level 1 —Level 2 —Level 3 —Level 4 —Level 5

Taken together, these activity profiles show two very different paths taken by female and male learners as they progress from beginner to advanced levels. In all of the activity profiles, men appear to slow down between levels 3 and 4; the number of activities they do

remains mostly the same. Women tend to keep increasing the variety of activities they do at each level from 1 to 4. The number of activities they do changes very little between levels 4 and 5, it appears they have found the activities they prefer by level 4.

4.5 Do independent activities help a little or a lot?

Not only does the number and type of activity change by level, but also learners' attitudes regarding the importance and effectiveness of independent activities in general. Figures 4.16 and 4.17 show the responses to two questions which ask participants to judge the contribution of English activities to their learning. As learners' levels increase, a greater proportion of them say that they have learned more from independent activities (33% at level 5) than they have from class (29% at level 5) and that the activities have helped "a lot" (74% at level 5) as opposed to "a little" (23% at level 5).

Figure 4.16 "Have you learned more from class or independent activities?" by level

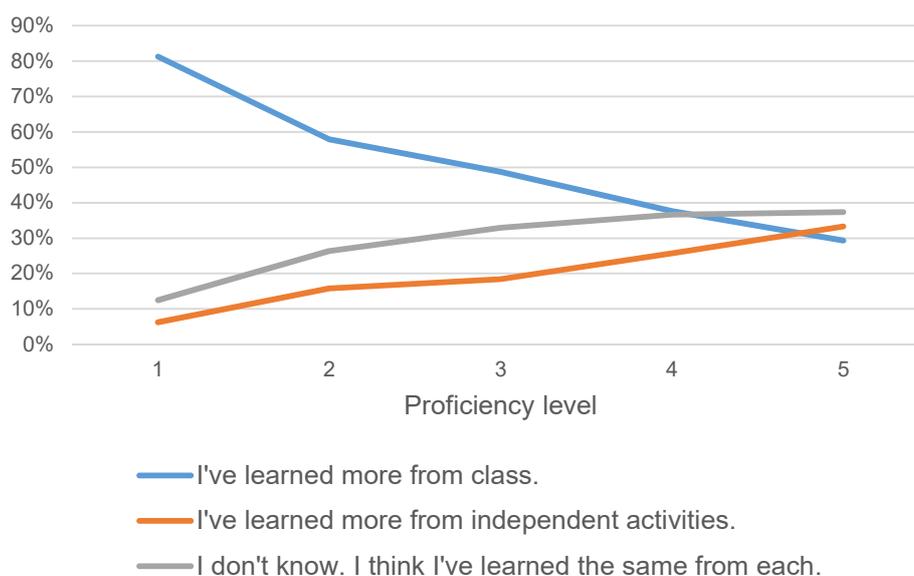
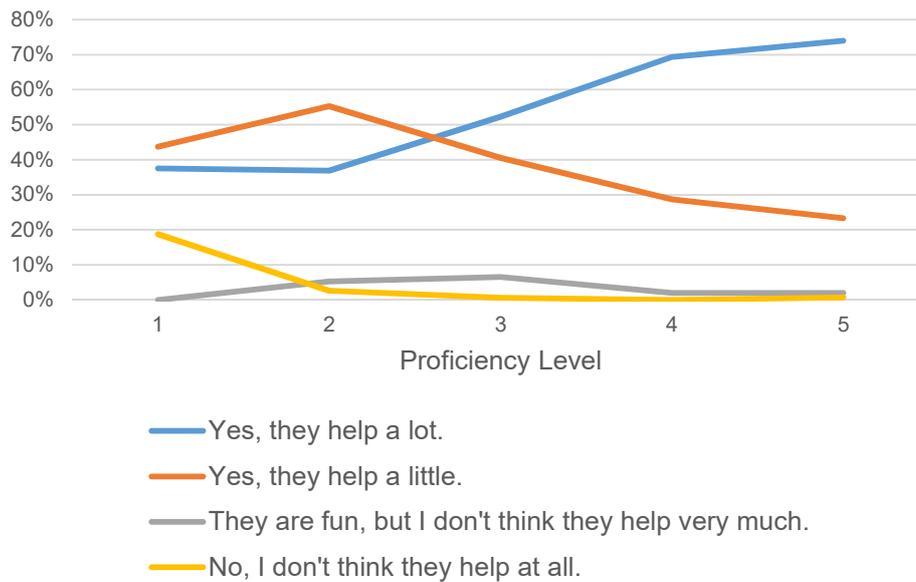
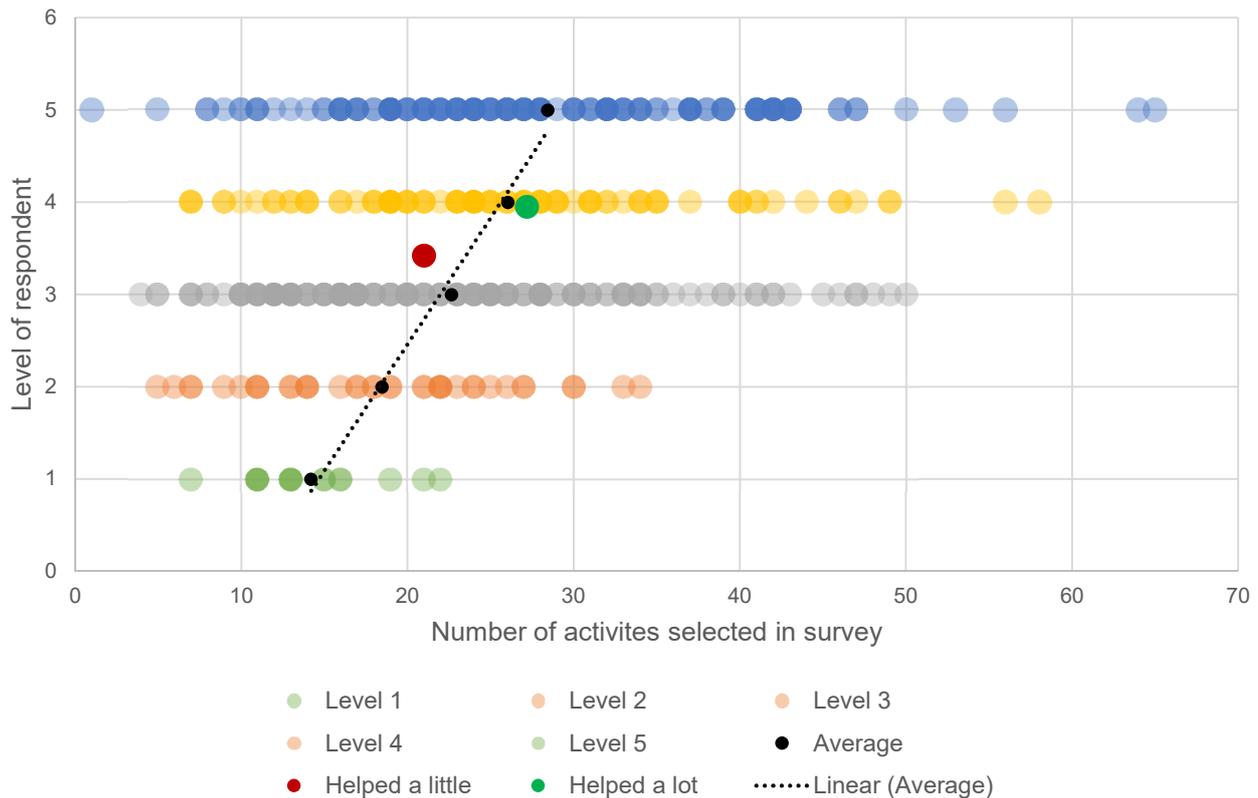


Figure 4.17 “Have independent activities helped you learn English?” by level



Overall, 34% of respondents say the independent activities help a little and 61% say they help a lot. The people who feel activities help a lot do more activities than the other group. The “a lot” group averages 27.21 activities compared to 21 in the “a little” group. The “a lot” group’s average level is 3.95 while the other’s is 3.42. Inserting these data into Figure 4.1 on page 20, which shows the number of activities done by each respondent at each level, allows these two groups to be compared with all learners. The new chart, Figure 4.18, includes a linear interpretation of the average activities done by respondents at each level. Adding the new data points shows the average of the “a lot” group is below the projected line, while the average of the “a little” group is above the projected line. According to the interpretation line, the average learner who does 21 activities would be below level 3, whereas the average learner who does 27 activities should be higher than level 4. The high level of variability already present in Figure 4.1 suggests that a relationship between variety and level is very slight. However, the position of the “helped a little” and “helped a lot” dots in Figure 4.18 refutes this even further.

Figure 4.18 "Helped a little" and "helped a lot" groups compared with all respondents



Results also show that as people age, their impression of the importance of the activities goes down as well. The percentage of learners who say they believe independent activities help a lot falls from 66% of the 13-30 group to 52% of the 51-70 group. The proportion who feel they have learned more from class changes even more. While 39% of 13-30-year-olds and 40% of 31-50-year olds feel they have learned more from class, 54% of older learners feel this way. 27% and 24% of the first two groups feel they have learned more from independent activities, but only 15% of 51-70-year-olds say this.

4.5 How students without a class differ from those in class

Students who are no longer studying with a teacher do a wider variety of activities than those who are still taking lessons. Learners without a class do more of each type of activity except for grammar than learners in a class, particularly reading and writing activities. This can be seen in Figure 4.19, which shows the average number of each type of activity chosen by the two groups. Their Bialystok profiles, shown in Figure 4.20, show that more of each type of activity are done by learners not in a class, although the number of knowledge activities is closer than input or output. The Sheerin profiles (Figure 4.21) reveal the preference of learners not in class for Social/Peer-Matching, Reflective/Creative and

Learning/Awareness Raising activities at the expense of Practice/Testing. Learners in class do more Attending/Apprehending and Experimenting/Practising activities while those not in class do considerably more Investigating/Exploring and Articulating/Expressing activities (approximately 20% more) and slightly more Discussing/Debating activities, which can be seen in their Laurillard profiles (Figure 4.22). According to their Conole profiles (Figure 4.23), learners not in class do more of all activity types, particularly Non-reflection and Experience, although both groups of learners average a similar number of Reflection and Information activity types.

Figure 4.19 Average number of activity types for learners in and not in a class

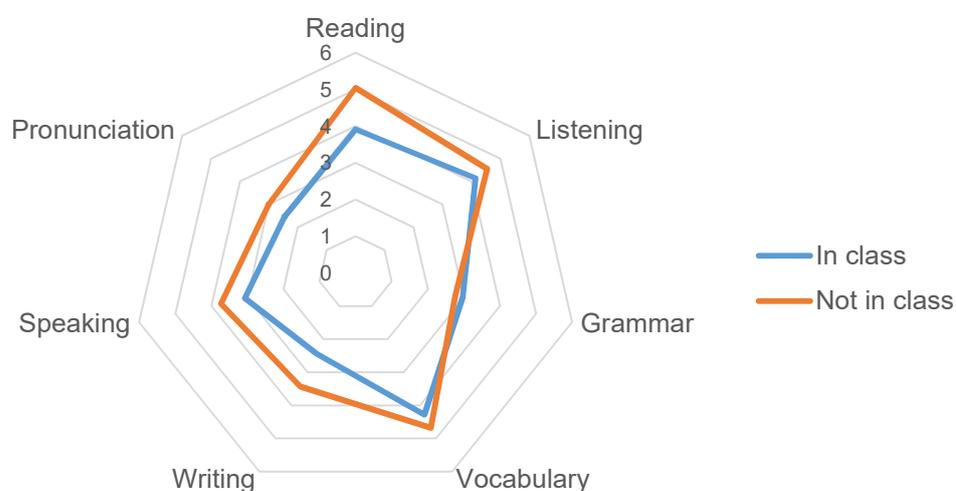


Figure 4.20 Bialystok activity profiles of learners in and not in a class

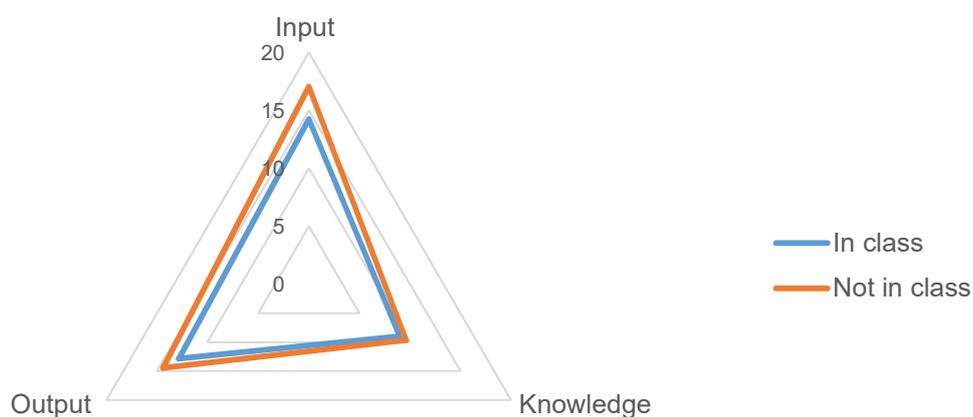


Figure 4.21 Sheerin activity profiles of learners in and not in a class

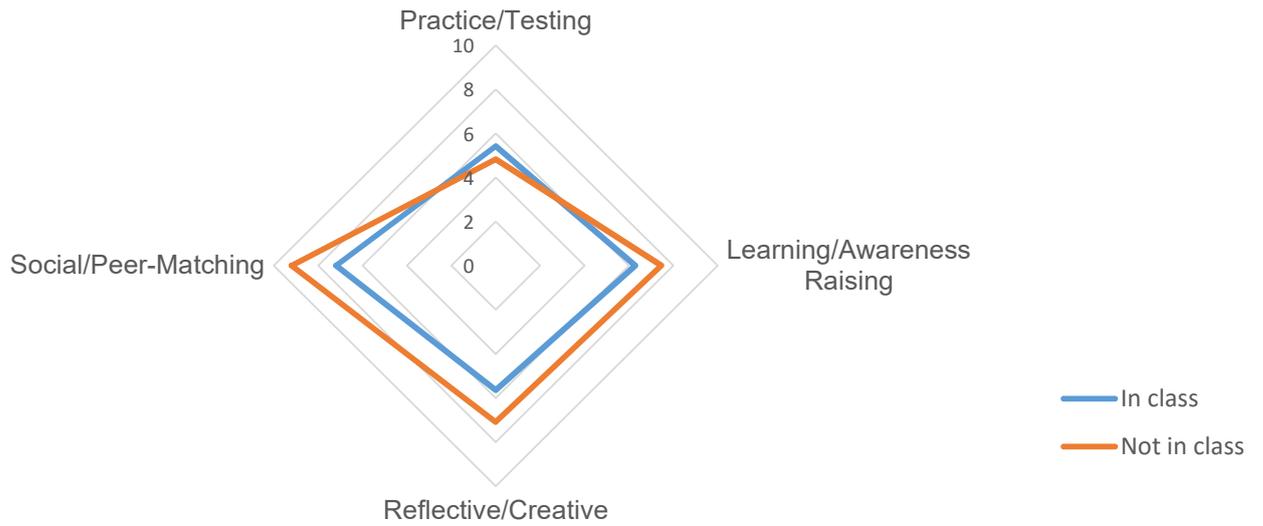


Figure 4.22 Laurillard activity profiles of learners in and not in a class

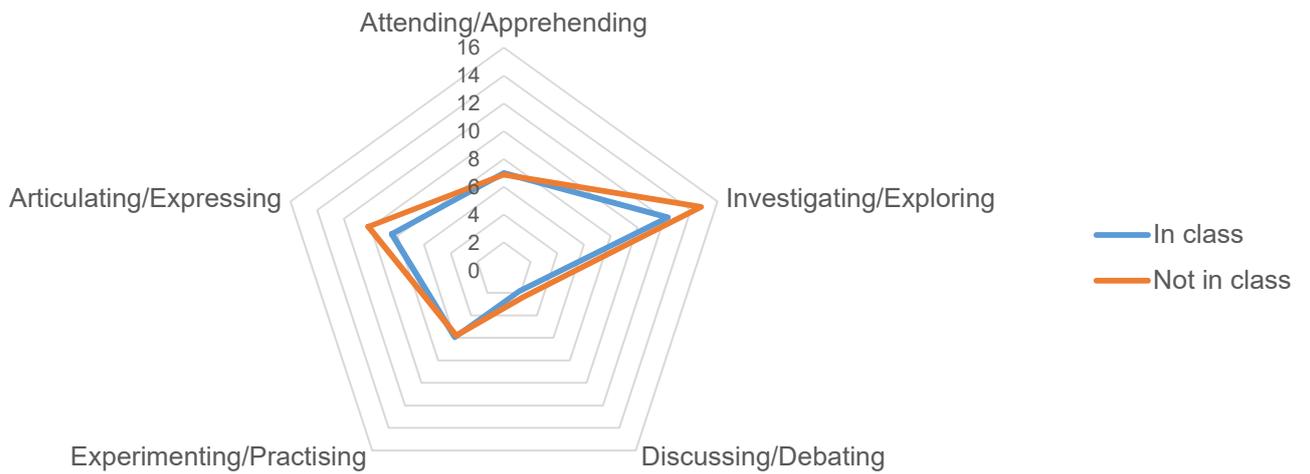
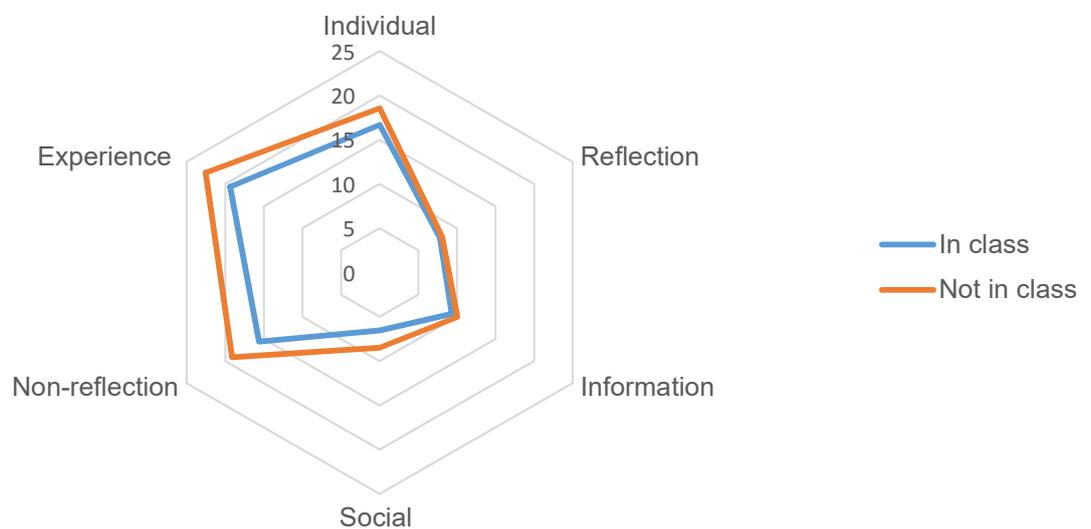


Figure 4.23 Conole activity profiles of learners in and not in a class



As shown in Figure 4.19, learners who are not in a class do a greater variety of reading and writing activities. The two reading activities with the greatest difference in the percentage of learners doing them are “reading normal English books” (72% of those not in a class compared to 46%) and “reading news websites” (66% compared to 40%). A higher percentage of learners in a class report using graded readers (33%) than those not in a class (21%). Almost all of the writing activities are done by a larger percentage of learners who are not in a class, particularly writing letters or emails to friends (77% compared to 52%), writing formal letters or emails (58% compared to 36%), and sending text messages (63% compared to 47%). The percentage of students writing practice exam essays and stories was approximately the same for each group. Grammar activities are done by similar proportions of each group, with the exception of exercises in a grammar book, which are done by 56% of learners in a class compared to 38% of those not in a class. Students who are not in a class are also more likely to use an English-only dictionary (57%) than students with a teacher (37%). Learners not in a class are also more likely to speak English with their friends (71% compared to 55%) or with native English speakers (80% compared to 61%), and to practice their pronunciation independently. “Repeating phrases you have heard”, “reading phonetic spellings of words”, and “checking dictionaries for correct pronunciation of words” are all done by a higher percentage of learners not in a class: repeating phrases 62% to 49%, phonetic spellings 37% to 25%, and checking dictionaries 55% to 36%.

Chapter 5 - Discussion of findings

The data from the survey show that while students dedicate a considerable amount of energy to a wide variety of independent activities, the relationship between the activities and their advancement in English is variable. The qualitative responses and the data from learners who are not in a class indicate that learners appear to seek opportunities for meaningful communication in their out-of-class activities, while learners who are in a class do more practice and grammar activities. This comparison may suggest new areas of pedagogical inquiry. The differences between male and female respondents reinforce existing knowledge of learner preferences for language learning and homework. Further pedagogical issues will be discussed, as well as numerous avenues for further research.

5.1 What would help learners “a lot”?

One issue presented by the data is the position of the “learned a lot” and “learned a little” groups in relation to the average activities done by learners at different levels: the students who believe they have learned a lot from independent activities are actually below the average, while those who believe they have learned a little are above it. Numerous factors will have an influence on this result, for example, the quality and length of instruction, the time elapsed since their last course, whether they are living in an English-speaking country and the student’s self-evaluation. Teachers will be encouraged that the majority of learners, especially at lower levels, report learning more from their classes than from working alone. It is possible that learners at higher levels are applying techniques they have learned from class independently, and giving themselves the credit for the work they are doing. It may also be possible that the “a lot” group does more work to achieve the same level of attainment because a larger percentage of learners in that group are not currently taking English classes (45%) compared to the “a little” group (25%). Without the assistance of a teacher, a learner must work harder to reach the next level. Because group courses cannot exclusively and consistently address individuals’ needs, it may lead to the belief that working alone is a more efficient way to make progress. Slower progress in courses at higher levels may give a negative impression of success to the participants. Furthermore, if a learner has had a good learning experience with a teacher, then comparatively they will have learned a little from their independent work. On the other hand, learners who have had poor instruction will feel they have learned a lot from their independent activities by comparison.

As mentioned in the qualitative responses, students working alone lack the means of assessing their work, selecting appropriate activities or working within a system. One category which is consistently under-represented in every group is Laurillard's Debating/Discussing category. This corresponds to one of the feedback stages of TBL, it is the learners' opportunity to compare their systems and ideas with another person. Unfortunately, by their definition, independent activities are mostly done alone. There are several social activities included in the questionnaire, but only ten which are considered Debating/Discussing. These involve more than simply expressing oneself, they involve some reflection on a text or element of language and an effort to understand it better through discussion. The fact that few of these activities are in the survey makes their study difficult, but additionally, many of them involve discussion with a friend as opposed to an expert. Without the aid of an expert, more Attending/Apprehending activities may have to be done in order to reach the same level of insight. While these learners may do a number of Experimenting/Practicing activities, they may not be the most appropriate for them. The high number of Investigating/Exploring activities suggests that learners may be searching for insight but could benefit from an experienced guide. Being able to discuss their independent activities with teachers and use their expertise in evaluating, recommending and systematising their learning, as learners expressed a desire to do in the survey, is likely to provide significant benefits. A final element which might be helpful to students is flexibility. Language learning is not easy and prolonged periods of cognitive strain can be fatiguing and frustrating. Learners' moods can change from day to day or hour to hour and teachers can help them monitor their mood and adjust their activities to better suit their state of mind. Students should be encouraged to think of themselves utilising many different types of learning instead of thinking of themselves as being a certain type of learner (Gremmo and Riley, 1995: 158). This learner's response to the survey encapsulates this flexible approach to independent study:

"I just try to do what I feel like doing at that moment. For example, if I feel either too lazy or tired to study grammar rules, compose a writing or that sort of heavy things when practising a language, I do something that can keep my attention like watching series or reading something that is of interest to me.

From my own experience, this system is working well since it allows me not to view studying English as a chore, but as something enjoyable."

5.2 Incorporating independent activities into the classroom

The classroom is the place where contact between the learner and the expert occurs. But

not all class time should be dedicated to cognitive processing according to the shared principles of ELT methodology. Class time and out-of-class time should incorporate all six of these principles, and effective instruction will balance the work that learners do on their own with the aims of the lessons. On their own, participants in this study have been shown to focus exclusively on some types of activity at the expense of others. In this study, the students who are not in a class do a wider variety of expressive and creative tasks while students in classes do more practice activities. Lai et al. (2014) found a similar relationship between learners with high levels of English proficiency and affinity and those with low levels:

“The interviewees with lower English grades and who rated themselves as having less confidence and enjoyment in learning English overwhelmingly reported having engaged in activities that reviewed what was learned in class, such as reviewing textbooks, studying grammar books and doing grammar exercises, and listening to textbook tapes. In contrast, the interviewees who had better learning outcomes reported having engaged in far fewer such activities in the past 6 months and felt that they ‘had had enough of them at school’. Furthermore, the interviews showed that interviewees with poorer learning outcomes tended to use apparent meaning-focused activities in a form-focused way. For instance, some of them reported using English language movies and songs primarily to learn grammar or chatting/emailing with relatives abroad ‘to increase vocabulary’ or ‘to practice grammar’.” (ibid.: 17)

In addition to discussing the activities with a teacher, as respondents indicate a desire to do, there may be a benefit to monitoring and suggesting activities that students can do. Training in different learning strategies and learning skills (e.g. Dickinson, 1994) could improve these benefits even further.

5.3 Age and gender differences

The differences in the behaviours of the different age groups may be a result of the changing opportunities available at the different stages of life. The proximity that younger learners tend to share with each other at high school, college and university, as well as their more established study networks, make collaboration and helping each other convenient. Older learners may have more opportunities to take holidays in English-speaking countries and a corresponding desire to read about travel or tourism. The greater use of reference and practice materials by older learners is possibly a situation similar to the learners with less confidence in the study by Lai, et al. (op. cit.), who focused on the more structural elements of language study in their free time. The behaviour by older learners in this study may be a result of low self-confidence or it may be a sign of their beliefs about language

learning and study in general, which were formed in childhood. However, their use of computers, smartphones or tablets is a sign that they may be attempting to incorporate new methods of learning into the patterns with which they are already familiar.

Hong, Wan and Peng (2011) detail a number of studies which highlight the differences between female and male homework performance. “Girls expend more effort and are more persistent in academic activities than boys ... Regarding homework, girls exhibit more desirable work habits and attitudes toward homework” (ibid.: 283). The data from this study do not challenge these findings or provide particularly novel insight into gender issues. The fact that, particularly at lower levels, men in this survey do more speaking activities while women do a wider variety of listening activities is a finding which has been highlighted by Fishman (1978) and other sociologists (Maltz and Borker, 2012).

5.4 Further pedagogical implications

One generalisation that can be made from the data is that as the level of the respondent increases, so does the variety of activities that the person does. This reflects the changes in a learner’s abilities and adventurousness as they progress; at levels 1 and 2, reading a novel is a major undertaking while at levels 3 and 4, it is possible that learners have grown bored with their existing study methods and begin to look for new things to try. Because of the faint relationship between a greater variety of activities and higher levels, teachers should consider promoting different activity types for their learners at all levels to try. This will give them opportunities to experiment with different learning strategies and the learners should begin to recognise their effort and time spent doing independent activities is beneficial. Even acknowledging the weak relationship between activities and advancement, regular practice is essential to retention and achievable goals will help learners maintain a positive attitude. Giving students time to do independent activities in class and helping them develop some sort of system or routine when they do them can also aid learning. At the same time, teachers should not be surprised when certain types of activity are just not popular with their class. Even activities like listening to songs or using a dictionary are not done by 100% of learners in any sub-group. The findings emphasise the amount of variety in learning styles and approaches by learners.

Taking a very short poll at the beginning of a course can help teachers learn more about the activities their students are already doing. Publishing the results might help validate

learners' own methods of studying and encourage them to talk with each other and the teacher about the activities. Lai et al. (2014) hypothesise that it is this discussion of the activities and their integration with the course that makes the difference:

“What might have mattered more to the quality of the outof- [sic] learning experiences was not whether the participants participated in a variety of English language learning activities outside their classroom, but whether the activities complemented the class activities by being more meaning focused and served a wide range of sociopsychological needs in language learning” (ibid.: 17).

Some learners process large amounts of input in their free time, so rather than spending class time doing a reading task, teachers could organise discussions around the content that learners choose instead. Practice/Testing activities are another source of material which can be either used in class or given for homework. Participants in the survey, especially those attending class, do a wide variety of these activities on their own and express a preference for activities where they can check their answers. The low number of Social/Peer-matching activities done by learners who are in classes might suggest that the communicative element of their learning needs is being met and a more explicit focus on forms is desired.

To accommodate and incorporate these learner desires, the task cycle must be designed with the homework in mind. The homework can be the introduction to the task, the task itself or the reflection phase, but the lesson will need to be planned around the homework in order to utilise the students' natural energy and creativity. While homework is often unpopular with students (Hong et al., 2011), making positive affective outcomes difficult, giving learners more choice can help to lower the affective filter and then all of the principles of modern English language classroom teaching can be reinforced with well-designed homework assignments. Incorporating homework time into lesson design will allow more time to complete tasks in the environment that is most appropriate for them.

5.5 Future research

This study has raised a number of questions which can be investigated further. It has also highlighted some areas in which the data-collection mechanism can be improved before further research is done. One such area is representativeness: a defined target population will perhaps allow for some tentative application of the findings of a future survey. The self-selection of participants in this survey allows the possibility that only those students who already practice independently completed the questionnaire. By surveying all students from

a class or a school, the results would include data from those who rarely study on their own.

The categorisation systems were selected based on their perceived usefulness in relating theories of learning to the activities that students do. But after performing the analysis, it appears that some of the categories overlap and they do not all seem to measure discrete information. Additionally, the categorisation of activities sometimes resulted in contradiction. For example, “writing letters or emails” was categorised as Reflective/Creative in the Sheerin system but as Non-reflection in Conole. This was the best fit according to the authors’ definitions of their terms but does not provide a clear description. In addition, the Sheerin system did not include all of the activities. As her system was designed to classify material in a self-access centre, activities like “reading a book” or “listening to songs” do not really fit into any of the categories. A more refined system might make it possible to represent all of the data in a single activity profile.

There is also no distinction for the length or complexity of activities. While “writing a letter or email” and “writing an SMS” are generally categorised similarly (both Output, Non-reflection, Articulating, Social, etc.), letters and emails are usually lengthier than an SMS and also carry a greater expectation of formality, so these requirements could be given more weight in an improved scoring system. Reading a book is a different level of commitment than reading Wikipedia. Using these categorisation systems, there is no way to distinguish using a translation dictionary from using an English-only dictionary in this survey. Nor is there a distinction between watching films or TV shows with or without subtitles. Students who study different subjects in English (such as science or business) could be accounted for, as well as the non-native speakers who teach these classes.

The list of activities might also be expanded or contracted in a number of ways that could produce different results. The activities could be grouped functionally, “I make complaints in English” “I order things in English” “I use English in English-speaking countries”; or they could be more specific “I watch English teaching videos on Youtube”, “I read fiction/non-fiction books”, “I watch films with subtitles” or “I watch TV shows with/without subtitles”. Learners could also be asked more qualitative questions regarding the reasons they choose to do particular activities and what they learn from doing them. While the questionnaire is adequate for a preliminary study, if it will be repeated or expanded, the categorisation system can be adjusted in a number of ways.

Frequency data is another element which could be added to the survey. This would increase the length of the survey but it would allow for distinctions to be made between people who watch videos online every week and those who do it once a month. Combined with a weighting system and perhaps also a longitudinal study, it might be possible to draw limited conclusions about types of activities that lead to quicker learning.

The demographic data as well as the presentation and content of the questionnaire could also be modified in future versions. Questions about the length of study or whether the respondent has ever studied or lived abroad could be included, as well as questions that would allow comparisons to be drawn between ESL and EFL. Using English at home or in the workplace (with a friend, family member or colleague) is another area which could provide useful data. The monolingual version of the survey likely introduced some uncertainty into the responses of some participants, especially at lower levels, although translation may not resolve all issues. A final category which could be modified is the “level of English”. While the learner’s own impression was the best solution for this project, including a score from a diagnostic test or pre-grouping participants by teacher evaluation would provide an objective measurement upon which further conclusions could be drawn.

As a research tool, a different sort of data could be gathered in a longitudinal study. Because this survey only captured a snapshot of people in their current age groups and levels, there is no way of knowing what these people’s behaviour was in the past. By asking students in a school or course to complete a survey periodically, it would be possible to measure how their behaviour changes over time and possibly be able to better isolate the factors that contribute to faster or deeper learning.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Input, output, cognitive effort, lexis, grammar, context and positive affect are the principles of modern English language teaching and learner autonomy. All of these areas are addressed in the independent activities which students report doing. However, the relationship between class learning and out-of-class learning requires further research. A variety of categorisation systems related to theories of learning and teaching show differences in the activities done by learners at different levels and in the ways that learners progress. The learners who feel independent activities help them a lot appear to be below average proficiency, while the learners who feel the activities help a little are above average. Students in class do more grammar practice activities than learners who study on their own.

All of these differences suggest a need to continue developing the ongoing research on integrating in-class and out-of-class learning. Learners in this survey expressed a desire to discuss their independent activities with their teachers and a preference for activities suggested by their teachers. They are also aware that they lack a system for the activities they do. Other studies have suggested benefits from integrating out-of-class learning with the work which is done in the classroom. Giving more attention to the uses of homework in ELT teacher-training programmes and developing a methodology which includes homework as a part of class time will permit further research into this area to be done. Without considering homework in the design of classroom lessons, teachers are neglecting a large part of the learning environment. By continuing to investigate the type of work learners do and the way the activities contribute to the learning process, and developing a picture of a gestalt of learning rather than episodic incidents of learning, perhaps it will be possible in the future to develop a system of teaching that incorporates and accommodates more of the students' own initiative in the learning process.

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Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

Author's note: As the survey was delivered online, it is impossible to replicate precisely on the page. Therefore, the questionnaire which follows is a representation of the online survey. A few symbols are used to represent the type of responses which were permitted (open choice, closed choice or free response) to the different questions.

Key to symbols:

- An open circle indicates an open choice, respondents were provided checkboxes and they could choose as many of the available options as were applicable
- A closed square indicates a closed choice, answers were provided in pull-down menus and respondents were only allowed to select one of the available choices. A blank option was also provided in all closed choices to minimise erroneous answer selection.
- An arrow indicates a conditional question, depending on the response to previous questions other options may appear or be hidden. The conditions are included with these questions, their answers may be open choice, closed choice or free response.

An asterisk after a question* indicates a required response. Four questions required responses in the survey: gender, age, language spoken at home, and level.

Learner activities questionnaire
Page 1 of 4: What do you do?



<Author's note: instructions were provided in an embedded Youtube video. The video had subtitles and the following transcript was also printed beneath the video which was at the top of the page>

Video transcript: Hi. Thanks for taking the survey. So what I'd like to know is: what do you do when you want to practice English but you don't have a teacher to tell you what to do? Maybe you finished your homework, or your homework is boring, or you're not in a class. But you want to practice some English. What do you do?

Please tell me just the things that you've tried in the past and you would try again. It's OK if you did it a long time ago or maybe just a couple of times. But please don't select anything that you have never done. Just tell me about the things you like doing. Thanks very much!
What do you do?

Reading activities

- Reading normal English books
- Reading comic books
- Reading English books for learners
- Reading newspapers
- Reading news websites
- Reading Wikipedia
- Reading websites for English learners
- Reading blogs, forums, Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Reading information in cities or museums
- Reading information about travel or tourism
- Reading a text and answering questions afterwards
- Reading a text for fun
- Reading a text and discussing it with a friend in English
- Reading about photographs

Listening activities

- Listening to songs
- Listening to songs and reading the words
- Listening to the radio
- Listening to podcasts
- Watching films or TV shows
- Watching videos online (Youtube, TED, etc.)
- Watching films, TV shows or videos and discussing them with friends in English
- Listening to audiobooks
- Listening to a text and reading the words
- Listening to a text and answering questions afterwards
- Playing video games in English

Grammar activities

- Doing grammar practice on a computer, smartphone or tablet
- Doing grammar practice in an exercise book
- Reading about grammar rules
- Reviewing my grammar notes
- Re-writing my grammar notes
- Asking a friend about grammar rules
- Helping a friend understand a grammar rule
- Doing extra grammar exercises from my course book
- Doing grammar exercises from an old course book
- Doing grammar exercises from a DVD or website connected to my course book
- Asking grammar questions in an online forum
- Helping a friend with their English grammar homework

Vocabulary activities

- Using a translation dictionary
- Using an English-only dictionary
- Making and using paper flashcards
- Making and using digital flashcards
- Doing vocabulary exercises on a computer, smartphone or tablet
- Doing vocabulary exercises from a book
- Doing vocabulary exercises from a DVD or website connected to my course book
- Reading a text and looking up new words in the dictionary
- Asking a friend about vocabulary
- Helping a friend understand vocabulary
- Writing new vocabulary in a notebook and practicing it
- Writing example sentences to practice new vocabulary
- Asking vocabulary questions in an online forum
- Saying new vocabulary words to try to remember them
- Playing vocabulary games on the computer
- Playing spelling games on the computer

Page 2 of 4: What do you do?

<The top of the page features the same video and transcript as page 1.>

Writing activities

- Writing letters or emails to friends in English
- Writing formal letters or emails in English
- Writing blog posts or forums posts in English
- Writing in English on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, etc.
- Writing practice essays for English exams
- Writing SMS messages in English
- Writing stories in English
- Correcting a friend's English writing
- Writing letters to a pen-pal

Speaking activities

- Talking with friends in English
- Talking with English-speaking people
- Meeting people to speak English
- Using Skype to speak English online
- Recording a voicemail message in English
- Going to a restaurant and ordering in English
- Going on holiday to an English-speaking country
- Making a presentation in English
- Having conversation practice with colleagues from school
- Playing online video games with English speakers

Pronunciation activities

- Repeating phrases you have heard
- Reading phonetic spellings of words
- Checking dictionaries for correct pronunciation of words
- Recording your voice to listen to yourself
- Recording your voice for computer analysis
- Listening to pronunciation activities
- Listening and repeating
- Playing pronunciation games on the computer
- Singing English songs

Page 3 of 4: What do you think about your activities?

Do you think your independent activities have helped you learn English?

- Yes, they help a lot.
- Yes, they help a little.
- They are fun, but I don't think they help very much.
- No, I don't think they help at all.

Do you think you have learned more English from a class or from independent activities?

- I've learned more from class.
- I've learned more from independent activities.
- I don't know. I think I've learned the same from each.

Do you think you have "a system" with your independent activities?

- Yes
- No

➤ if "Yes": Can you describe your system? How does it work? *free response*

Are there any activities you like to do that were not in the questionnaire?

- Yes
- No

➤ if "Yes": What are they? *free response*

Do you prefer doing activities that your teacher recommends or activities that you find yourself?

- Activities my teacher recommends
- Activities I find myself
- No preference

Do you talk to your teacher about the activities you do?

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Never
- I don't have a teacher

Do you prefer activities which have an answer key, or do you prefer open activities with no questions or scores?

- Activities where I can check my answers and see my score
- Open activities with no score
- No preference

Do you think there is anything missing from the independent activities you do?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

➤ if "Yes": What do you think is missing? *free response*

Page 4 of 4: Please tell me about yourself

Please select your gender *

- Male
- Female

Please select your age *

- Under 13
- Age scale from 13-99

Please select the main language you speak with your family and friends *

- (respondents select from a list of 90 languages)

Why are you learning English?

- For fun
 - For work
 - For school
 - Another reason
- if “Another reason”: You said that you are learning English for another reason, what is it? *free response*

Please select the type of school where you are studying English

- High school, gymnasium, college, or university
 - Private language school
 - I have lessons at my job
 - I am not in a class right now
- If “I am not in a class right now”: the next two questions are hidden and the respondent goes directly to “Please select which country you are from”

How many hours per week do you have English lessons?

- Less than 2 hours per week
- 2 hours per week or more

Please select the country where you are studying English

- (respondents select from a list of 211 countries)

Are you from a different country than the one where you are studying?

- Yes
 - No
- if “Yes”: Please select the country which you are from
- (respondents select from a list of 211 countries)

How many hours do you spend doing independent activities per week, on average?

- Less than 1 hour per week
- 1-2 hours per week
- 2-4 hours per week
- More than 4 hours per week

What is your level in English? *

- 1 - Beginner
- 2
- 3 - Intermediate
- 4
- 5 - Advanced

Have you ever passed an English exam (Cambridge, IELTS, TOEFL, etc.)?

- Yes
 - No
- if “Yes”: Which exams have you passed?
- Cambridge English: Key (KET)
 - Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)
 - Cambridge English: First (FCE)
 - Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)
 - Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)
 - Business English Certificate (BEC) Preliminary
 - Business English Certificate (BEC) Vantage
 - Business English Certificate (BEC) Higher
 - IELTS
 - TOEFL
 - TOEIC Listening and Reading
 - TOEIC Speaking and Writing
 - Another exam

What score did you get on your ___ exam?

- (respondents who ticked IELTS, TOEFL or TOEIC exams were asked to select from score ranges corresponding to CEFR levels)
- if “Another exam”: What is the other exam that you have passed? *free response*

Thank you very much for your help with this project, I really appreciate it! To say thanks, I've made a list of places where you can do the activities listed in the questionnaire. Please enter your email address into the box below so that I can send you this information. In addition, three people who take the survey will also win a free session of exam writing practice with me! Good luck!

Email Address *free response*

You can participate without entering your email. However, you will not receive the resource list or be able to win a free session of exam writing practice.

Appendix 2 - Categorisation of activities

		Input	Knowledge	Output	Practice/testing	Learning/awareness-raising	Reflective/creative	Social/peer matching	Attending, apprehending	Investigating, exploring	Discussing, debating	Experimenting, practising	Articulating, expressing	Individual	Social	Reflection	Non-reflection	Information	Experience	
Reading activities	Reading normal English books	x								x				x			x		x	
	Reading comic books	x								x				x			x		x	
	Reading English books for learners	x			x	x			x	x				x			x		x	
	Reading newspapers	x								x				x			x		x	
	Reading news websites	x								x				x			x		x	
	Reading Wikipedia	x								x				x			x		x	
	Reading websites for English learners	x			x	x			x	x				x		x	x	x	x	
	Reading blogs, forums, Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.	x						x		x				x			x		x	
	Reading information in cities or museums	x								x					x			x		x
	Reading information about travel or tourism	x								x					x			x		x
	Reading a text and answering questions afterwards	x	x	x	x					x		x			x		x		x	x
	Reading a text for fun	x								x					x			x		x
	Reading a text and discussing it with a friend in English	x		x				x	x	x	x			x		x	x			x
	Reading about photographs	x									x				x			x		x
Listening activities	Listening to songs	x								x				x			x		x	
	Listening to songs and reading the words	x				x			x	x				x			x	x	x	
	Listening to the radio	x								x				x			x		x	
	Listening to podcasts	x								x				x			x		x	
	Watching films or TV shows	x								x				x			x		x	
	Watching videos online (Youtube, TED, etc.)	x								x				x			x		x	
	Watching films, TV shows or videos and discussing them with friends in English	x		x				x	x	x	x		x		x	x			x	

		Input	Knowledge	Output	Practice/testing	Learning/awareness-raising	Reflective/creative	Social/peer matching	Attending, apprehending	Investigating, exploring	Discussing, debating	Experimenting, practising	Articulating, expressing	Individual	Social	Reflection	Non-reflection	Information	Experience
	Listening to audiobooks	x								x				x			x		x
	Listening to a text and reading the words	x				x			x	x				x			x	x	x
	Listening to a text and answering questions afterwards	x	x	x	x					x		x		x		x		x	x
	Playing video games in English	x					x	x		x				x			x		x
Grammar activities	Doing grammar practice on a computer, smartphone or tablet		x	x	x				x			x		x		x		x	x
	Doing grammar practice in an exercise book		x	x	x				x			x		x		x		x	x
	Reading about grammar rules	x	x			x			x	x				x		x		x	
	Reviewing my grammar notes		x			x			x					x		x		x	
	Re-writing my grammar notes		x	x		x	x		x				x	x		x		x	
	Asking a friend about grammar rules		x	x		x	x	x		x	x				x	x		x	x
	Helping a friend understand a grammar rule		x	x		x	x	x			x		x		x	x		x	x
	Doing extra grammar exercises from my course book		x	x	x				x			x		x		x		x	x
	Doing grammar exercises from an old course book		x	x	x				x			x		x		x		x	x
	Doing grammar exercises from a DVD or website connected to my course book		x	x	x				x			x		x		x		x	x
	Asking grammar questions in an online forum	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x		x		x	x		x	x
	Helping a friend with their English grammar homework		x	x		x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x		x	x
Vocabulary activities	Using a translation dictionary	x	x			x				x				x		x		x	
	Using an English-only dictionary	x	x			x				x				x		x		x	
	Making and using paper flashcards		x	x	x				x			x		x		x		x	
	Making and using digital flashcards		x	x	x				x			x		x		x		x	
	Doing vocabulary exercises on a computer, smartphone or tablet		x	x	x				x			x		x		x		x	x
	Doing vocabulary exercises from a book		x	x	x				x			x		x		x		x	x
	Doing vocabulary exercises from a DVD or website connected to my course book		x	x	x				x			x		x		x		x	x

		Input	Knowledge	Output	Practice/testing	Learning/awareness-raising	Reflective/creative	Social/peer matching	Attending, apprehending	Investigating, exploring	Discussing, debating	Experimenting, practising	Articulating, expressing	Individual	Social	Reflection	Non-reflection	Information	Experience	
	Reading a text and looking up new words in the dictionary	x	x			x			x	x				x		x		x		
	Asking a friend about vocabulary	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x		x		x	x		x	x	
	Helping a friend understand vocabulary		x	x		x	x	x			x		x		x	x			x	
	Writing new vocabulary in a notebook and practicing it		x	x	x				x				x	x		x		x		
	Writing example sentences to practice new vocabulary		x	x			x		x				x	x		x		x	x	
	Asking vocabulary questions in an online forum	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x		x		x	x		x	x	
	Saying new vocabulary words to try to remember them		x	x	x							x	x	x				x		x
	Playing vocabulary games on the computer		x	x	x					x		x		x				x		x
	Playing spelling games on the computer		x	x	x							x		x				x		x
Writing activities	Writing letters or emails to friends in English			x			x	x					x		x		x		x	
	Writing formal letters or emails in English			x			x	x					x		x		x		x	
	Writing blog posts or forums posts in English			x			x	x					x		x		x		x	
	Writing in English on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, etc.			x			x	x					x		x		x		x	
	Writing practice essays for English exams		x	x	x	x	x					x	x	x				x	x	x
	Writing SMS messages in English			x			x	x					x		x		x		x	
	Writing stories in English			x			x						x	x				x		x
	Correcting a friend's English writing		x	x		x	x	x			x	x			x	x		x		x
	Writing letters to a pen-pal			x			x	x					x		x		x		x	
Speaking activities	Talking with friends in English	x		x				x					x		x		x		x	
	Talking with English-speaking people	x		x				x					x		x		x		x	
	Meeting people to speak English	x		x				x					x		x		x		x	
	Using Skype to speak English online	x		x				x					x		x		x		x	
	Recording a voicemail message in English			x			x	x				x			x		x		x	
	Going to a restaurant and ordering in English			x				x					x		x		x		x	

		Input	Knowledge	Output	Practice/testing	Learning/awareness-raising	Reflective/creative	Social/peer matching	Attending, apprehending	Investigating, exploring	Discussing, debating	Experimenting, practising	Articulating, expressing	Individual	Social	Reflection	Non-reflection	Information	Experience	
	Going on holiday to an English-speaking country	x		x				x		x			x		x		x		x	
	Making a presentation in English			x			x					x	x	x			x		x	
	Having conversation practice with colleagues from school	x		x				x					x		x		x		x	
	Playing online video games with English speakers	x		x				x					x		x		x		x	
Pronunciation activities	Repeating phrases you have heard			x	x							x		x			x		x	
	Reading phonetic spellings of words	x	x			x			x	x				x			x	x		
	Checking dictionaries for correct pronunciation of words	x	x			x			x	x				x			x	x		
	Recording your voice to listen to yourself		x	x		x			x			x	x	x			x		x	
	Recording your voice for computer analysis		x	x	x	x			x			x	x	x		x			x	
	Listening to pronunciation activities	x	x			x				x				x			x	x		
	Listening and repeating	x		x	x				x				x	x			x	x	x	
	Playing pronunciation games on the computer		x	x	x								x		x			x		x
	Singing English songs			x			x						x	x	x			x		x
	Total number of activities per category	43	38	52	23	24	24	27	27	38	10	26	32	56	25	32	50	35	69	

Appendix 3 - Numeric data from figures in Chapter 4

Figure 4.1 English level and number of activities per respondent (page 20)

Number of activities	Number of respondents per level per range of activities				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
1-10	1	6	14	6	7
11-20	13	15	59	26	31
21-30	2	15	48	41	51
31-40		2	21	17	33
41-50			12	9	24

Figure 4.2 Activity profile by level on the Bialystok scale (page 21)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Input	8.50*	11.34	14.09	16.50	17.31
Knowledge	6.44	7.68	8.70	9.26	10.33
Output	8.38	9.87	12.31	13.66	15.70

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.3 Activity profile by level on the Sheerin scale (page 22)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Practice/Testing	4.00*	5.11	5.17	5.11	5.44
Learning/Awareness Raising	4.25	5.26	6.36	6.85	7.56
Reflective/Creative	3.38	3.74	5.23	6.48	7.78
Social/Peer-Matching	4.19	4.87	6.95	8.52	9.63

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.4 Activity profile by level on the Laurillard scale (page 23)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Attending/ Apprehending	5.06*	6.53	6.83	6.72	7.46
Investigating/Exploring	7.38	10.00	12.16	14.30	14.87
Discussing/Debating	1.63	1.16	1.72	2.20	2.53
Experimenting/Practising	4.38	4.97	5.56	5.81	6.59
Articulating/Expressing	4.63	5.92	7.95	9.47	11.07

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.5 Activity profile by level on the Conole scale (page 23)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Individual	10.31*	14.08	16.19	18.15	19.49
Reflection	5.94	6.58	7.60	7.92	8.69
Information	6.94	8.21	9.21	9.56	10.51
Social	3.88	4.32	6.38	7.73	8.87
Non-reflection	8.31	12.03	15.14	18.20	19.88
Experience	11.88	14.92	18.62	21.72	23.85

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.6 Average number of activity types by gender (page 24)

	Reading	Listening	Grammar	Vocabulary	Writing	Speaking	Pronunciation
Female	4.31	4.26	3.24	4.84	2.83	3.19	2.92
Male	4.33	4.30	2.36	3.80	2.75	3.47	2.25

Figure 4.7 Female and male Bialystok activity profiles compared (page 25)

	Input	Knowledge	Output
Female	15.44*	10.17	14.12
Male	14.97	7.75	12.28

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.8 Female and male Sheerin activity profiles compared (page 25)

	Practice/Testing	Learning/Awareness Raising	Reflective/Creative	Social/Peer-Matching
Female	5.82*	7.27	6.32	7.83
Male	4.28	5.85	5.90	8.02

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.9 Female and male Laurillard profiles compared (page 25)

	Attending/ Apprehending	Investigating/ Exploring	Discussing/ Debating	Experimenting/ Practising	Articulating/ Expressing
Female	7.75*	13.46	2.15	6.46	9.32
Male	5.72	12.74	1.87	4.99	8.59

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.10 Female and male Conole profiles compared (page 26)

	Individual	Reflection	Information	Social	Non-reflection	Experience
Female	18.24*	8.67	10.55	7.25	17.02	20.95
Male	15.97	6.73	8.08	7.22	16.65	19.76

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.11 Female (L) and male (R) activities by level (page 27)

Female levels						Male levels				
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
2.14*	3.05	3.66	5.33	4.89	Reading	2.11	2.59	4.00	4.50	5.31
3.43	3.19	3.83	4.78	4.75	Listening	1.56	3.76	4.15	4.63	4.74
2.43	2.86	3.06	3.44	3.47	Grammar	2.33	1.88	2.43	2.13	2.61
2.57	4.14	4.59	5.36	5.15	Vocabulary	3.11	3.59	3.70	3.35	4.38
0.71	1.38	2.24	3.36	3.67	Writing	1.33	1.71	2.28	2.61	3.75
1.43	1.81	3.02	3.51	3.66	Speaking	1.78	2.35	3.08	3.46	4.38
2.00	2.57	2.71	3.13	3.19	Pronunciation	1.56	1.94	2.11	1.93	2.79
2.14	3.05	3.66	5.33	4.89	Reading	2.11	2.59	4.00	4.50	5.31

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.12 Female (L) and male (R) Bialystok activity profiles by level (page 29)

Female levels						Male levels				
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
9.14*	11.33	14.13	17.65	17.02	Input	8.00	11.35	14.02	15.11	17.72
6.14	8.86	9.26	11.13	11.25	Knowledge	6.67	6.24	7.64	7.02	8.98
7.43	10.29	12.83	15.44	16.21	Output	9.11	9.35	11.32	11.54	14.95

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.13 Female (L) and male (R) Sheerin activity profiles by level (page 29)

Female levels						Male levels				
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
3.86*	6.10	5.46	6.09	6.17	Practice/Testing	4.11	3.88	4.62	3.93	4.38
4.29	5.81	6.74	8.16	7.90	Learning/Awareness Raising	4.22	4.59	5.62	5.28	7.07
3.00	3.38	5.38	7.20	7.80	Reflective/Creative	3.67	4.18	4.94	5.61	7.75
3.43	4.10	6.96	9.07	9.27	Social/Peer-Matching	4.78	5.82	6.94	7.87	10.16

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.14 Female (L) and male (R) Laurillard activity profiles by level (page 30)

Female levels						Male levels				
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
5.29*	7.90	7.38	8.04	8.15	Attending/ Apprehending	4.89	4.82	5.79	5.15	6.46
8.29	10.19	12.27	15.47	14.74	Investigating/ Exploring	6.67	9.76	11.94	12.89	15.05
1.14	1.05	1.88	2.51	2.58	Discussing/ Debating	2.00	1.29	1.42	1.83	2.44
4.57	5.81	5.79	6.87	7.27	Experimenting/ Practising	4.22	3.94	5.13	4.54	5.61
3.57	5.57	8.28	10.51	11.09	Articulating/ Expressing	5.44	6.35	7.32	8.22	11.05

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.15 Female (L) and male (R) Conole activity profiles by level (page 30)

Female levels						Male levels				
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
11.86*	15.19	16.52	20.35	20.10	Individual	9.11	12.71	15.57	15.52	18.59
5.86	7.52	8.13	9.36	9.35	Reflection	6.00	5.41	6.58	6.20	7.72
6.86	9.43	9.80	11.44	11.42	Information	7.00	6.71	8.08	7.33	9.20
2.86	3.71	6.53	8.31	8.57	Social	4.67	5.06	6.09	7.04	9.30

9.00 11.62 15.07 19.55 19.57 Non-reflection 7.78 12.53 15.28 16.59 20.33
 11.86 14.95 18.75 23.65 23.91 Experience 11.89 14.88 18.36 19.41 23.75
 *numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.16 “Have you learned more from class or independent activities?” by level (page 31)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
I've learned more from class.	81%	58%	49%	38%	29%
I've learned more from independent activities.	6%	16%	18%	26%	33%
I don't know. I think I've learned the same from each.	13%	26%	33%	37%	37%

Figure 4.17 “Have independent activities helped you learn English?” by level (page 32)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Yes, they help a lot.	38%	37%	52%	69%	74%
Yes, they help a little.	44%	55%	41%	29%	23%
They are fun, but I don't think they help very much.	0%	5%	7%	2%	2%
No, I don't think they help at all.	19%	3%	1%	0%	1%

Figure 4.18 "Helped a little" and "helped a lot" groups compared with all respondents (page 33)

Numeric data is provided in the text preceding the figure.

Figure 4.19 Average number of activity types for learners in and not in a class (page 34)

	Reading	Listening	Grammar	Vocabulary	Writing	Speaking	Pronunciation
In class	3.91	4.15	2.97	4.29	2.44	3.07	2.46
Not in class	5.05	4.54	2.76	4.68	3.43	3.73	3.00

Figure 4.20 Bialystok activity profiles of learners in and not in a class (page 34)

	Input	Knowledge	Output
In class	14.25*	8.98	12.85
Not in class	17.08	9.63	14.41

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.21 Sheerin activity profiles of learners in and not in a class (page 35)

	Practice/Testing	Learning/Awareness Raising	Reflective/Creative	Social/Peer- Matching
In class	5.43*	6.29	5.64	7.20
Not in class	4.83	7.46	7.10	9.19

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.22 Laurillard activity profiles of learners in and not in a class (page 35)

	Attending/ Apprehending	Investigating/ Exploring	Discussing/ Debating	Experimenting/ Practising	Articulating/ Expressing
In class	6.98*	12.29	1.87	5.93	8.40
Not in class	6.88	14.78	2.37	5.80	10.17

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories

Figure 4.23 Conole activity profiles of learners in and not in a class (page 35)

	Individual	Reflection	Information	Social	Non-reflection	Experience
In class	16.69*	7.80	9.32	6.55	15.63	19.37
Not in class	18.54	8.08	10.04	8.47	19.12	22.53

*numbers show the average number of activities selected in these categories