

The idiosyncrasies of out-of-class language learning: A study of mainland Chinese students studying English at tertiary level in New Zealand

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Introduction

Current pedagogy suggests that there is no universally correct way to learn a language that can be regarded as optimal for every individual. Yet teachers are often concerned about the progress of language learners. They are concerned about what their learners are doing, and its efficacy for language development. Indeed, when language students call upon their teachers for advice, one starting point for giving counsel is to review the range of strategies the learner is using and the learning activities the learner typically engages in. How does this fit within the broader perspective of research into second language learning and teaching?

Much more is known about what second language learners and teachers do inside classrooms than what learners do outside the classroom to develop appreciation of the target culture and fluency in the target language. There is evidence, however, that exposure to authentic language and opportunities to use the language in natural situations are keys to out-of-class language learning that forms part of an in-country language learning experience.

In this instance, out-of-class language learning behaviour became a focus of concern because of the large numbers of international students seeking to develop English language proficiency in New Zealand. The lack of firm data about what students did outside the classroom was the prime rationale for research conducted at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). It sought to describe the out-of-class language learning of mainland Chinese students studying English in a twelve-week English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course conducted at the English Language Institute.

The study proposed that learners studying a language abroad in immersion situations are presented with a rich range of language learning opportunities outside of class. The study further proposed that choices and decisions learners make about learning opportunities determine the extent of their out-of-class language learning. It was thought that an appreciation of the factors informing the decisions that shaped the out-of-class language learning behaviour of international students would contribute to a broader understanding of differences in the development of individual second language skills, and the different levels of fluency and overall proficiency learners achieve. The insights offered through an increased understanding of out-of-class language learning, aid the implementation of learner autonomy as a goal, and contribute to the effectiveness of guidance given to learners by teachers.

Definition

Out-of-class learning, as it relates to language learning, has recently been broadly defined as *any kind of learning that takes place outside the classroom and involves self-instruction, naturalistic learning or self-directed naturalistic learning* (Benson 2001: 62). However, a narrower definition based on what is learnt about the target language (product) and how it is learned (process) was suggested for the VUW study.

Previous research

Benson (2001: 62) has recognised the dearth of research on out-of-class language learning (OCLL), *and its importance to the theory and practice of autonomy*. The framework for research concerning OCLL is rather broad and at times somewhat vague. There are a number of research areas that have been investigated in the past but they were mainly concerned with learning inside the classroom. Examples of these are such things as learner concentration span and learning styles. There are a range of research areas that have immediate relevance to OCLL that are not yet completely understood and explained. Researchers working in different spheres of study (eg: psychology and education) have overlapping concerns and interests. These include cognitive and affective factors that influence educational outcomes such as learner beliefs, perceptions and expectations, learner identity, learning styles, motivation and learning strategies.

An early theme of research pertinent to OCLL has concerned the value of *functional practice* (Bialystok 1981) or exposure to the target language in communicative situations. In her research of the

factors and processes that contributed to language proficiency, Bialystok (1981) concluded that out-of-class exposure to the target language in communicative situations helped the learners complete language tasks they met subsequently, and that such functional practice was critical to the development of all language skills. Other research has recognised that the target language community offers learners information about L2 registers that aid the development of proficiency (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992: 183). Further research has recognised the value of functional practice. Target language discourse outside the classroom has been found to inform learners about the appropriate use of language and the nature of conversation (Rubin and Thompson 1994: 22). Ellis (1994) concluded that learners get the most benefit from formal language instruction when it is coupled with opportunities for natural exposure to the language.

The context in which OCLL occurs has been a recurring theme in much research. Freed (1995) sought to assess the value of study abroad for language development and concluded that the gains which learners experience are not uniform across learners. It has been shown that OCLL can occur in different contexts ranging from organised self-access-centres (SACs) and libraries to where the learner resides. Learner use of SACs in specific contexts has been investigated more than once, with results and conclusions often generalized within the broad perspective of learner autonomy. Detaramani and Chan (1999), Tsang (1999) and Lai and Hamp-Lyons (2001), for example, have all conducted research concerning student use of various SACs in Hong Kong. It has been argued that *different contexts providing opportunities for language learning, like different contexts of language use, are not discrete* (Breen 2001: 176). Thus the language proficiency gains learners make outside the classroom may be linked to classroom learning and vice versa.

Much research has focused attention on the role of the language learner. Case studies researched by Victori and Lockhart (1995) specifically concerned learners' individualised study programs. Their findings highlighted the interaction of metacognition, learner autonomy and language learning and supported the importance of learner training. Cotterall (1999) sought to identify the beliefs of English language students regarding variables that influence language learning and she found that students rated practice and opportunities to use the target language ahead of the teacher in terms of their importance for successful language learning.

Studies have also shown that motivation and metacognition influence out-of-class learner behaviour (Pickard 1995, Victori and Lockhart 1995, Ushioda 2001, Yorozu 2001, Wenden 2001, Lamb 2002). Both factors have been identified as important aspects of learner autonomy which affect the type of activities learners choose to complete and why, as well as what they learn from them. Research has also indicated that a number of mediating factors such as the social context, gender and ethnicity of learners may reduce, or enhance, the range of language learning opportunities which learners encounter (Polanyi 1995, Tanaka 1997, Liu 2002).

The range of published research findings informed the design of the VUW study in a number of ways. They suggested a range of issues and themes pertinent to OCLL that could be explored via research, including language learning inside and outside SACs, the ability of learners to reflect on and monitor their own learning, individual differences in motivation and OCLL behaviour in different contexts and at different times. There were areas which the review of literature suggested would be difficult, if not impossible, to research in a conclusive manner, such as the exact contribution of OCLL to overall language gains. The review of research literature also suggested the types of qualitative and quantitative data that might enable further discussion. These included details of both positive and negative factors which influence OCLL, data concerning the types of materials and learning activities learners are engaged with out of class and what they contribute to gains in proficiency. The literature review informed the research focus and methodology employed in the VUW study, the types of questions that were asked and how the data obtained was interpreted.

Research methodology

The study combined a longitudinal study conducted during a twelve-week English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course (ELIN 932) at VUW with a survey of 106 students (female n=59, 55.7% male n=47, 44.3%) carried out at the end of that course. Just over half of the survey respondents (50.9%) were aged 21 years or younger. The majority (70%) were studying at VUW for the first time and a third (33%) indicated they had three or more years of tertiary education in mainland China prior to commencing study in ELIN 932.

The eight students who participated in the longitudinal study kept written records and evaluations of their self-access centre (SAC) and library study that were discussed during each fortnightly interview. Students were selected for the study from a group of volunteers to create a representative mix of new and returning students resident in different types of accommodation and of different gender and language proficiencies. It was possible to classify all research participants as high, middle or low proficiency on the basis of initial class placement tests conducted at the start of the EAP course. Interviews that lasted an hour were conducted individually, and comprised a mix of predetermined and spontaneous questions, that either sought new data or responded to previous interview data. Written notes were made during the interviews and they were also recorded so they could be reviewed as necessary.

Questions in the end of course survey (see Appendix 1) were developed through small pilot studies and consultation with teaching staff at VUW. Contact with subjects in the longitudinal study was a further influence on the items finally included in the survey. The questions sought to find out about the range of materials the learners used outside of class, when and where they used English and the learning activities they were involved in. Additional questions asked respondents about the reasons for their choice of learning materials and activities and things that made it difficult to interact with native speakers.

For consistency and ease of delivery, the end of course survey was administered to all students enrolled in the VUW intensive language course ELIN 932 when they were assembled in a large lecture theatre for their weekly test. All the students were given identical end-of-course survey forms to complete. The survey asked them about their OCLL and this meant that the Chinese students completed the survey without feeling they were being singled out for special attention. The students enrolled comprised at least ten nationalities and, since most of them were at intermediate level or above, it was considered appropriate to present the survey in English. The purpose of the survey was outlined to students beforehand and the way to answer the questions was also modelled for them before they wrote their own responses. The data gathered was coded and collated using the SPSS computer program, facilitating the limited statistical analysis that was carried out to complete the description of OCLL. No other specific sampling procedures were employed in this research.

The study relied in part on self-report, which has been criticised for its lack of reliability. Triangulated methods of data collection, however, involving both qualitative and quantitative data from more than one source addressed this limitation and added strength to the research findings.

A further potential weakness regarding the reliability of self-report was that the interviews of subjects in the longitudinal study, and the final survey of this study, were all conducted in English. Conducting interviews in English meant that the researcher could be more directly involved in the interviews without the need for translation. For the learners involved in the interviews, participation in the research provided a motivating opportunity to practise their developing language skills. The length of the interviews meant subjects could talk at length, and some gave highly reflective and thoughtful responses to the questions they were asked.

Research questions and results

Staff at VUW gave the impression that there was wide variation in the way students enrolled in English Language Institute courses (such as ELIN 932) interpreted and executed their responsibilities as language learners. The aim of the study, therefore, was to verify and document what learners did outside of class. The study was intended to be descriptive rather than experimental by nature, so measures of statistical significance were deemed inappropriate. The percentages reported here need to be considered in relation to the size of the whole research cohort (n=106), or the subsets of that group. Some analyses refer to a proportion of a particular group, representing a cluster of a specific reported behaviour or survey response. Three research questions gave focus to the study and analysis of results.

Question 1: *How do learners use the opportunities that exist outside the classroom for developing their language proficiency?*

Both the longitudinal research and the end-of-course survey data confirmed that there is considerable variation amongst learners in the way they use their OCLL opportunities and the extent to which they do so. In the end-of-course survey students indicated the type of accommodation they lived in during the course and the main language they spoke at home.

Over half of the respondents (55.7%, n=59) indicated that they used mainly Chinese in the place where they lived during the course. Nearly 40 percent (39.6%, n=42) indicated that they used mainly English. A further 4.7% (n=5) indicated that they used equal proportions of English and Chinese.

The top five out-of-class language activities that survey respondents indicated they participated in involved receptive rather than productive language use. As Table 1 indicates, less popular activities required productive use of English and social interaction.

Data from the longitudinal study showed that the language development of many of the subjects received a considerable boost from their OCLL. Several subjects commented that they were able to focus more sharply on their personal language needs outside of class. Sometimes the OCLL was rated more highly for both enjoyment and learning than their formal classroom-based learning.

ACTIVITIES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
Listening / watching news on radio or television	92 (87%)
Independent study in a library	77 (73%)
Reading books, magazines or newspapers	77 (73%)
Watching television programs, videos, or movies	76 (72%)
Listening to music or radio	68 (64%)
Talking with other students	61 (58%)
Internet research / Email / Chat	59 (56%)
Talking with native speakers off-campus	52 (49%)
Personal writing	48 (45%)
Having a friend who is a native speaker of English	45 (43%)
Using English at home	42 (40%)
Other activities	2 (2%)

Table 1: Respondent out-of-class language learning activities

Most subjects gave evidence that indicated they were able to exercise learner autonomy to some extent. There were exceptions, however, and these are a concern. One subject in the longitudinal study had rich exposure to local language via his membership of a music club, experience on a farm-stay and through attending church weekly. While he flatted with local native speaking students, another subject in the longitudinal study had no native speaking contacts beyond her former home-stay mother, and was flatted with other Chinese students. She seldom used the SAC at VUW, but when she did, she completed her homework there rather than made use of its language resources. The OCLL behaviour of these two students may represent two extremes of a continuum.

The longitudinal data and the end-of-course survey indicated that student accommodation could have a corollary effect on their opportunities for functional practice and social integration. Amongst the end-of-course survey respondents who used mainly Chinese where they lived, 59% reported using the SAC at VUW outside of class time more than three times per week. In contrast, only 48% of respondents who used mainly English where they lived used the SAC that often. Data from the interviews revealed that some subjects were not able to readily deal with authentic input. Some used the SAC to compensate for the language exposure they missed outside of class.

One of the first impressions gained from interviewing subjects for this study was that they lacked confidence and were unsure about their OCLL. It could be a mistake to assume that learners themselves know best how to take charge of their own learning. Many subjects appeared to labour under the misconception that there is a right and a wrong way to learn English. In the interviews and written

evaluations, their self-assessments of SAC study frequently failed to distinguish between evaluations of the learning methods, or of learning outcomes, or their match to their language needs.

Some of the factors that influence the way in which learners use facilities such as SACs remain unclear. However, based on the questions the subjects asked the researcher, there is a need to give very clear and unambiguous direction to learners who are not used to setting directions for themselves or who lack the knowledge and experience required to do so.

Less frequent use of the SAC by students who were less proficient was noted in this study, and there is a concern that this could impact on their language development. It is unfortunate that student lack of proficiency, or their personal and affective needs sometimes weakened their ability to make sound decisions about ways of contributing actively to language growth. It is a further concern that some students appeared to spend energy on activities and tasks such as multiple-choice reading comprehension exercises or dictations in such a manner that did not substantially contribute to either language uptake or the development of new skills. It seems likely that the variations in OCLL noted amongst the students would contribute in the longer-term to differences in language gain amongst them.

Question 2: What reasons do learners give for their choice of language materials and activities?

The motivation which most of the subjects in the longitudinal study had to learn English stemmed from their desire to enter university, and this influenced their choice of language materials and activities, what they chose to learn out of class and why. Those students with a broader view of their language development and with more intrinsic motivation seemed more enthusiastic about their learning and were more involved in actively using the language.

Subjects in the longitudinal study also reported that their teachers spent a portion of classroom time advising and directing what they ought to do in their own time after class. The end-of-course survey results showed that for 76% of students the advice of their teacher influenced the choice of language learning materials. Similarly, the decisions of 68% of survey respondents were influenced by the need to prepare for tests. What the learners did to achieve fluency in English, however, was influenced by their individual language needs, the opportunities that they had to practise using English and their ability to plan and execute an effective learning strategy.

Although the number of students in the study was relatively small, some of the results were disconcerting. It was of concern to the researcher that while half of the high proficiency learners in the end-of-course survey indicated that they chose materials that helped them work on their weaknesses (50%, n=28), less than a quarter of the low proficiency learners did so (22%, n=41). Figures for students rated as middle proficiency were more encouraging (44%, n=36). In contrast to the high proficiency learners, the low proficiency learners also more frequently employed materials they had used before, and that were easily available to them. When SAC materials were unavailable during peak use times, some students reported opting out rather than changing their study plans or learning strategy.

The longitudinal data additionally revealed that intervening variables such as learner choice of accommodation, their social and affective needs and preferred learning style could influence the choice of language learning materials and activities. Table 2 indicates the proportion of respondents living in each accommodation type who completed particular activities. It is interesting to note not only the activities that were popular with respondents who lived in particular types of accommodation, but those that were not.

Respondents who lived in university hostels, for example, were less inclined towards spending time on personal writing and less likely to have native speakers as friends. This fits with anecdotal evidence the researcher obtained about the tendency of hostel residents to find and mix with people of their own culture. Respondents who lived in home-stays, on the other hand, were more likely to use English at home naturally and less inclined to spend time talking or working with other students learning English.

ACTIVITIES	FLATS/HOUSES (n=61)	HOMESTAY (n=17)	UNIVERSITY HOSTEL (n=12)
Independent study in a library	77.05%	52.94%	66.67%
Personal writing	47.54%	47.06%	33.33%
Using English at home	32.79%	76.47%	41.67%
Listening to music or radio	57.37%	70.58%	66.67%
Having a friend who is a native speaker	44.26%	47.06%	33.33%
Working and talking with other students learning English	55.73%	47.06%	75.00%
Talking with native speakers off-campus	44.26%	64.71%	66.67%

Table 2: Types of accommodation

Students who lived in flats or houses were less likely to use English at home, or to talk with native speakers off-campus, suggesting that the opportunities they exploit for functional practice were much diminished. It is possible that for some students, speaking Chinese at home provided welcome relief after a day of intensive English language study.

The high use of library facilities for independent study by students who lived in flats or houses may be because their living arrangements were not entirely conducive to independent study. For two students in the longitudinal study the close proximity of public libraries to their accommodation made them a viable study space. Accommodation in home-stays and university hostels can offer privacy, it may be quieter than flats and it usually includes suitable workspace and furniture. It must be pointed out that in addition to the library facilities on campus, students at VUW have access to a large well-resourced public library in the city centre, and a range of suburban libraries. It is possible that students who lived in flats or houses had a greater sense of independence and did not feel the need to study close to where they lived. Clearly it is important for teachers acting as language advisors to find out about student living arrangements and the opportunities they might afford for functional language practice.

The final question in the end-of-course survey asked students to indicate any factors they felt made it difficult for them to use English out of class. The results shown in Table 3 are somewhat indicative of variables which impact on the amount and kinds of functional practice students can benefit from. Learning a new language in an immersion situation involves a period of adjustment. Students arriving in New Zealand need time to attune their ear to native English and to settle into their new learning environment. One subject in the longitudinal study commented that life in New Zealand had changed his personality. He indicated that he found talk was necessary to be understood, and that he felt he was becoming more like a New Zealander. For other students, affective factors such as language anxiety may not be easily overcome.

FACTOR	FREQUENCY (% OF RESPONDENTS, N=108)	% OF FACTORS (N=315)
I mix mostly with people from my own country	61 (57.5%)	19.4%
It's not easy to start a conversation with a New Zealander	50 (47.2%)	15.9%
My feelings eg: feeling nervous, unconfident or anxious	49 (46.2%)	15.6%
I haven't made any English-speaking friends yet	42 (39.6%)	13.3%
I have no one to speak to	35 (33.0%)	11.1%
I don't like making mistakes	30 (28.3%)	9.5%
I don't have enough time	20 (18.9%)	6.3%
It's too difficult to communicate in English	14 (13.2%)	4.4%
I'm only interested in academic English	6 (5.7%)	1.9%

Other reasons	8 (7.5%)	2.5%
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Table 3 Factors making it difficult for respondents to use English out of class

The option about starting conversations with New Zealanders was deliberately ambiguous since some learners find that native speakers are not always communicative, and others find their language skills are deficient. It is important to realise that students can experience several of these difficulties at one time, and this may have the effect of limiting what OCLL occurs through functional practice.

Given the wide range of materials and learning opportunities available to students in the VUW EAP courses, the combined effect of individual learner characteristics and intervening variables make the choice of out-of-class language learning materials and activities largely idiosyncratic.

Question 3: *What changes occurred in the way respondents used out-of-class language learning opportunities during their course?*

The frequency, range and complexity with which learners used their OCLL opportunities changed during the twelve-week course. The depth and quality of data collected, however, was limited by the reflection and self-report of the eight subjects in the longitudinal study. None of the questions in the end-of-course survey related to changes in out-of-class language learning behaviour as there was no way to verify the reliability of student responses. Therefore the interviews and other data gathered in the longitudinal study were the focus of consideration and analysis for the third research question.

The study was able to identify some easily observed changes, especially in the frequency and range of learning opportunities exploited. Some of these changes were a result of increased language proficiency, some were the result of shifts in learning strategies or goals and others were a response to changes in other variables. For example, the choice of learning materials and use of the SAC were to some extent influenced by ELIN 932 assessments. While some subjects used a wider range of materials as the course progressed, others with a different learning focus used fewer. Analysis therefore suggests that changes in an individual's use of OCLL opportunities are complex and the changes that occur may be related to learner attitudes and ability.

Discussion

The results of this research serve to remind us that language learning is idiosyncratic. The time and effort expended by learners on target language study and practice out of class will always vary. Although some OCLL opportunities may be exploited by learners, others are not. In addition, some learners have the capacity to increase the number and range of opportunities they use, or to create new ones to suit themselves. While learners may exhibit different learning styles, and learn at different speeds, it also takes time to develop sophistication in learning to learn. There is a need for teachers and researchers to develop a more analytical approach to the types of knowledge learners gain out of class, and a more detailed understanding of what contributes to learning to learn. In this regard, this study has highlighted some important aspects of OCLL: learner motivation, learner awareness, learner training, and learner monitoring or self-evaluation.

A range of complex and related factors influenced student OCLL behaviour in this study. The data indicated that factors influencing learners' idiosyncratic choices and decisions in turn affected the way the learners used their OCLL opportunities. A student's language proficiency, the student's accommodation and the language spoken where the student stays during the course have been identified as factors that influenced the types of OCLL engaged in. The combined research data highlighted the contrast between those students who made the most of OCLL opportunities and those who did not. It may be possible to do more to increase the range of language practice opportunities students have access to. However it must also be recognised that some differences between learners may not easily be overcome.

Some learners need to be made aware of the potential pitfalls of focusing on a narrow range of academic language skills. If students can be encouraged to reflect on their learning, to consider how language proficiency develops and to review and analyse their motivation, it is possible that they may become better learners. A course goal of learner autonomy or independence should therefore remain part of the focus of student attention, so that they each obtain the maximum benefit from their OCLL opportunities.

The research did not attempt to identify or quantify the language gains that stemmed specifically from OCLL. Neither did it attempt to statistically assess the interdependence of complex variables that influence OCLL. This study has, however, underlined the strong contribution that OCLL makes to the development of language proficiency amongst Chinese students enrolled in English language courses at VUW. All evidence suggests that OCLL in other contexts would also contribute to gains in proficiency. In particular this study has shown the potential value of self-access language learning for less proficient learners and those who lack opportunities for functional practice. It has also shown that interactions between the way in which learners perceive, use and value their opportunities for OCLL have a continuing and dynamic impact on proficiency gains.

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APPENDIX 1 End-of-course survey completed by consenting students

The out-of-class language learning survey

ELIN 932 Victoria University of Wellington 2002

INSTRUCTIONS

There are no right or wrong answers for these questions.

Write answers based on your own experience.

Where it says *Other* you may write a different answer.

1. Please write your class number here: _____
2. Please tick whether you are male or female: _____ Male _____ Female
3. How old are you? _____ (Years)
4. What country/s have you attended secondary school in? _____
5. How many years of university/polytechnic education did you complete before joining the EPP? _____
6. How many years have you worked in full-time employment? _____
7. Where have you stayed during this course? (You may tick more than one)
 _____ University hostel _____ Home-stay
 _____ Flat or house _____ Other: _____
8. Which language do you use MOST where you now stay? : _____
9. How many EPP courses have you taken ? (Tick one)
 _____ This is my first EPP course _____ This is my second EPP course
 _____ This is my third EPP course _____ I have done more than three EPP courses
10. During this EPP course how often did you usually use language learning materials from the LLC? (Tick one)
 _____ 5 times a week _____ Usually 3 or 4 times a week
 _____ Usually once or twice a week _____ Less than once a week
 _____ Never
11. What **MATERIALS** have you used for learning English out-of-class in the LLC and other places? TICK all the learning materials you used for your out-of-class language study. CIRCLE the material you used MOST.
 _____ Audio tapes / cassette tapes (Listening) _____ Pronunciation books/tapes
 _____ Dictation exercises _____ CD Roms
 _____ Music _____ Videotapes/DVDs
 _____ Television news _____ Radio NZ News
 _____ Television programs _____ Newspapers
 _____ Computer programs _____ Reading books
 _____ Internet _____ Magazines
 _____ Vocabulary exercises _____ Grammar books
 _____ Dictionaries _____ Punctuation exercises
 _____ Other: _____
12. Why did you use those learning materials for your language study? TICK whatever helped you decide which materials to choose. CIRCLE your main reason for choosing materials.
 _____ Advice from your class teacher _____ Suggestions from friends
 _____ Preparing for tests _____ Advice from LLC or library staff

- Personal or course goals
- They were easily available
- Other: _____
- To work on areas of weakness
- I've done/used them before

13. For this question, mark one box (1-5) in each row.
 How useful were the materials you used out of class (in the LLC and other places) for developing these skills?

	Not useful				Very useful
Speaking skills?	1	2	3	4	5
Writing skills?	1	2	3	4	5
Listening skills?	1	2	3	4	5
Reading skills?	1	2	3	4	5
English vocabulary?	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar knowledge?	1	2	3	4	5

14. How useful were the materials you used out-of-class for developing your overall English?
 (Mark one box)

Not useful				Very useful
1	2	3	4	5

15. Apart from study in the LLC and completing work set by your teacher, what other **ACTIVITIES** have you done out-of-class to improve your English?
 TICK all the out-of-class **ACTIVITIES** that you believe have helped improve your English.
 CIRCLE the activity that you believe has helped improve your English the MOST.

- independent study in a library
- using the internet for research, email or chat
- personal writing
- working and talking with other students who are also learning English
- using English in the place where I stay
- listening/watching news on the radio/television
- watching television programmes, video, or movies
- listening to music or radio
- talking with native speakers off-campus
- having a friend who is a native speaker
- reading books, magazines or newspapers
- Other: _____

16. What has made it difficult for you to use English out of class during this course?
 TICK whatever applies to you.

- CIRCLE the most important reason.
- My feelings e.g. feeling nervous/unconfident/anxious
 - I have no one to speak to
 - I don't have enough time
 - It's too difficult to communicate in English
 - I'm only interested in academic English
 - I don't like making mistakes
 - I mix mostly with people from my own country
 - It's not easy to start a conversation with a New Zealander
 - I haven't made any English-speaking friends yet
 - Other: _____

If you have any comments to make about this survey, write them here.

About the author

Nigel Pearson recently completed an MA in Applied Linguistics at Victoria University of Wellington. He has taught English language at various levels and in various roles in New Zealand, Brunei and Thailand. In addition to learner autonomy he has interests in CALL and SAC, and now works in an Auckland language school which is part of the Wollongong University College network.

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