

# Extramural English and

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## EXTRAMURAL ENGLISH AND ADULT EFL LEARNERS' PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

by

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### Abstract:

This study examines the duration of adult EFL learners' EE activities related to their PA. Further, it examines the correlation between the learners' duration in spoken and written EE and their PA. For this purpose, 32 Indonesian learners participated in the study. After analyzing the questionnaires and the phonological awareness test using the non-parametric (Spearman) correlation, the overall result showed a strong positive correlation between the amount of time the adult EFL learners spend for EE and their PA ( $r=.818$ ). The specific results also showed strong positive correlations between spoken and written EE and their PA ( $r=.758$  and  $r=.726$ ). The extramural English activities they mainly engage in deal with technology. The implication of the present research deals with managing learners' EE activities that are assumed to significantly contribute to their language learning, not only the PA but also other language skills. Thus, the findings call for future research examining the effect of extramural English on phonological awareness and other possible English components or skills.

**Keywords:** Extramural English, Adult EFL learners, Phonological Awareness

### Abstrak:

Studi ini meneliti durasi aktivitas EE pelajar EFL dewasa yang terkait dengan PA mereka. Lebih lanjut, ini juga secara khusus meneliti korelasi antara durasi yang dihabiskan peserta didik dalam EE lisan dan tulisan dan PA mereka. Untuk tujuan ini, 32 pelajar Indonesia berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Setelah menganalisis kuesioner dan tes kesadaran fonologis menggunakan korelasi non-parametrik (Spearman), hasil keseluruhan menunjukkan korelasi positif yang kuat antara jumlah waktu yang dihabiskan pelajar EFL dewasa untuk EE dan PA mereka ( $r = 0,818$ ). Hasil spesifik juga menunjukkan korelasi positif yang kuat antara EE lisan dan EE tertulis dan PA mereka ( $r = 0,758$  dan  $r = 0,726$ ). Kegiatan bahasa Inggris di luar sekolah yang terutama mereka lakukan berurusan dengan teknologi. Implikasi dari penelitian ini berkaitan dengan mengelola kegiatan EE peserta didik yang diasumsikan memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan terhadap pembelajaran bahasa mereka tidak hanya PA tetapi juga keterampilan bahasa lainnya. Dengan demikian, temuan ini menyerukan penelitian di masa

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*Sa'adah et al(2023)*

*depan yang meneliti efek bahasa Inggris di luar sekolah pada kesadaran fonologis dan komponen atau keterampilan bahasa Inggris lainnya yang mungkin.*

**Kata kunci:** Bahasa Inggris Ekstramural, pelajar EFL dewasa, Kesadaran Fonologis

## INTRODUCTION

There is a shift in how learners learn English after the pandemic as they adapt to the new situation. Online learning, which usually limits the activities between teachers and their learners, allows them to find outside-school activities. Their experience, since they must adapt during a pandemic, may force them to do other activities. As they have to stay at home, they may do some Extramural English (EE) activities such as reading short stories, magazines, news, or novels longer than before. They may also surf the Internet, interact through social media, watch movies, videos, and TV, and listen to radio or songs more often while staying at home. With the spread of technology and its increased suitability for second language (L2) learning, EFL learners increasingly engage in digital communication through English outside of the classroom (Lee & Lu, 2021; Reinders & Benson, 2017).

Sundqvist (2009) introduced EE as "English outside the walls," which refers to the English learners who encounter or participate outside the classroom walls (Sundqvist et al., 2009). Some studies have found evidence of the effectiveness of EE language learning, such as reading books, surfing the Internet, reading magazines, watching films or videos in English, playing digital games, listening to audio, having technology-enhanced socialization, having face-to-face socialization, and writing compositions (Zhang et al., 2021; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). These activities are critical in this context because they have a positive relationship with learners' oral proficiency and vocabulary (De Wilde et al., 2020; Puimège & Peters, 2019; Frances et al., 2017; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Olsson, 2012; Lefever, 2010; Sundqvist et al., 2009; Storch & Hill, 2008), writing abilities (De Wilde et al., 2020), translation skills, and help overcome language difficulties, understanding, and learning from English lectures (Hellekjær, 2010). This finding supports Gee's (2008) argument that the entertainment and pleasure learners experience while playing games provide a good foundation for learning. Besides, Avello et al. (2019) suggest that learners will develop a global mindset due to their exposure to EE, which includes reading books and watching English-language films.

*Sa'adah et al(2023)*

Sundqvist et al. (2009) offer a broader range of EE activities than the definition of activities included in the home learning environment (HLE). Watching films, TV series, music videos, video blogs (vlogs), listening to music, reading blogs, books, magazines, newspapers, surfing English websites on the Internet, following people, news, organizations, and so on, on Twitter or Instagram (or some other online community), reading/writing/speaking/listening/interacting in real life or online, and playing video/digital games are examples of typical extramural activities. Given these various activities, the possibilities for EE appear limitless for those with Internet access. Opportunities are more limited for those who do not have access to the Internet, but they are still available. Sundqvist et al. (2009) add that EE includes input, output, and interaction in English, which are necessary for second language (L2) learning. There is less of it, but it is still there.

Aside from Sundqvist's definition, EE has other established terms that are closely related. Benson & Reinders (2011) defines Out-of-Class Learning as "activities that have no direct relationship to schooling in which learners engage in the use of language for their own interest or pleasure." Laufer & Hulstijn (2001) refer to this as Incidental Language Learning. Referring to similar activities, Laufer & Hulstijn (2001) define Incidental Language Learning as the acquisition of a language with no intention of learning it. Language learning can also occur while the learners are learning other things. Learners, for example, learn new English vocabulary while listening to an English song or watching an English movie.

Several studies have shown that EE has a significant influence on English proficiency. Sundqvist et al. (2009) conducted the first study introducing EE. The study discovered a link between Swedish teenagers' time spent on English-mediated activities outside of school and their English oral proficiency and vocabulary. In a study focusing on digital games as EE L2 learning in terms of vocabulary, Sylvén & Sundqvist (2012) discovered positive correlations between playing digital games and L2 proficiency. Learners spend more time on L2 contribution and scaffolded interaction when they use online games in L2 learning. Furthermore, the impact of games on L2 English proficiency depends on the frequency with which the game is played and the type of game played, as it is considered a typical activity among teenagers. Besides, some other studies have proved that EE through entertaining media such as listening to songs, surfing the Internet, and using social media showed a positive correlation with learners' oral proficiency and vocabulary (De Wilde et al., 2020; Puimège & Peters, 2019; Frances et al., 2017; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Olsson, 2012; Lefever, 2010;

*Sa'adah et al(2023)*

Sundqvist et al., 2009; Storch & Hill, 2008) writing abilities (De Wilde et al., 2020), translation skills (Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999), and help overcome language difficulties, understanding, and learning from English lectures (Hellekjær, 2010).

Regarding watching movies as an EE learning activity, some studies have revealed the benefit of watching TV shows and films on language acquisition. Other research indicates that films or television shows with discipline-specific content provide more opportunities for learners to acquire specific vocabulary (Csomay & Petrović, 2012; Peters & Webb, 2018). For example, TV shows or films set in a hospital or a court will allow learners to acquire vocabulary used in medical or legal contexts. Olsson (2012) discovered that reading, writing, and watching TV or film were English extramural activities important for increasing vocabulary size and writing skills.

EE activities may be done through an interaction between learners (De Wilde et al., 2020; Lefever, 2010; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012). It was proved that the interaction contributes positively to the learners' performance (Palermo & Mikulski, 2014). While studying at home, interaction is limited through social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and others. In an Extramural digital setting, such as social media, virtual communities, and digital games, the ideal second language self significantly predicts second language willingness to communicate (Lee & Lu, 2021).

Sylvén & Sundqvist's (2012) study also revealed gender differences in vocabulary, with boys outperforming girls and the frequency and types of digital games played. Huang (2016) studied upper-secondary learners' EE and attitudes toward learning English from EE activities and in-class settings. The findings show that learners are frequently exposed to EE. The findings also indicate that learners are generally pleased with how they acquire and learn English. Litzler and Bakieva (2017) also investigate whether learners spend more time outside of the classroom practicing their language skills or working on vocabulary and grammar exercises and the activities they engage in to improve their language skills.

EE activities similar to HLE for children are potential factors that predict phonological awareness development. Phonological awareness (PA) is the ability to understand the structure of a word in the spoken language rather than its meaning. It denotes a person's sensitivity to the sound structure of spoken language (Anthony & Francis, 2005). According to Konza (2011), PA is the ability to focus on speech sounds. The emphasis is on its

*Sa'adah et al(2023)*

intonation or rhythm; certain words rhyme, and the individual sounds. Other researchers define PA as a combination of phonetic and phonemic awareness (Hismanoglu, 2012), in which phonetic awareness refers to a learner's ability to identify English consonants and vowels. Phonemic awareness refers to a learner's ability to blend phonemes into syllables and syllables into words, add, delete, substitute, or rearrange phonemes or groups of phonemes within a word or phrase (Hismanoglu, 2012; Venkatagiri & Levis, 2007).

Some have investigated PA as one of the most reliable predictors and associates of children's early reading ability (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Plaza & Cohen, 2007; Swanson et al., 2011; Solari & Gerber, 2008). Other findings show that PA is essential for learners from various first language backgrounds, including Spanish (Khalaf et al., 2019), Korean (Kim et al., 2007), Indonesian (Winskel & Widjaja, 2007), Arabic (Haddad & Geva, 2008), Chinese (Yeung & Chan, 2013), and Japanese (Yoshikawa & Yamashita, 2014).

According to the findings of Giambo and McKinney (2004), changes in PA variables are significant predictors of changes in oral English proficiency. Some studies involving adult EFL learners show a robust positive correlation between PA and speaking comprehensibility and accuracy (Souza, 2015; Venkatagiri & Levis, 2007), which is consistent with the findings of Giambo & McKinney (2004). It means that the more sensitive one is to L2 phonology, the more native-like one's pronunciation is. The findings suggest that PA may play a role in EFL speakers' comprehensibility, particularly when pronouncing a foreign language.

Aside from Souza (2015) and Venkatagiri & Levis (2007), some other studies on the importance of PA in adults were also conducted. Hismanoglu (2012) conducted a study to determine prospective EFL teachers' levels of PA, emphasizing the importance of PA in teaching English as a foreign language. Another study by Brennan and Booth (2015) emphasizes the importance of PA and PA instruction for adults. Brennan & Booth (2015) propose that when adults are learning to read a second orthography, one of the considerations should be how initial instruction directs attention to PA ability.

Senechal & LeFevre (2002) proposed a model that depicted the relationships between HLE (shared reading, book exposure, and parent teaching about reading and writing) and child outcomes in language, PA, emergent literacy (e.g., print concepts, letter knowledge), and reading. According to their findings, language and literacy skills mediate environmental effects, reading, and PA. Cooper et al. (2002) reported similar findings, indicating that general

*Sa'adah et al(2023)*

oral language may contribute to the development of early reading by significantly influencing the development of PA. However, several studies have recently been conducted to examine for otentexaminctors of PA development. HLE is one of the factors that have been researched and examined (Schmitt et al., 2011; Torppa et al., 2007; Levy et al., 2006; Burgess et al., 2002; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Frijters et al., 2000).

Highlighting the dominant role of parents in HLE of children, which no longer exists in the adult learning environment, this study is going to broaden the definition of HLE by including EE, that is, the English that learners come in contact with or are involved in outside the walls of the classroom (Sundqvist, 2009). Considering those aspects, this study proposes EE as a new variable to replace HLE. Based on the review of previous studies examined (De Wilde et al., 2020; Lefever, 2010; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Frances et al., 2017; Olsson, 2012; Puimège & Peters, 2019; Storch & Hill, 2008; Sundqvist et al., 2009; Schmitt et al., 2011; Torppa et al., 2007; Levy et al., 2006; Burgess et al., 2002; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Frijters et al., 2000), this study is going to investigate whether EE activities have any correlation with adult EFL learners' PA.

As one of the continuous variables involved in this research, EE's measurement is focused on measuring the amount of time adult EFL learners spend having contact with English outside the classroom (EE), both at school/college and in their leisure time. Further, the measurement also explores the kinds of extramural activity the learners do, whether spoken EE (SEE) or written EE (WEE). Therefore, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. RQ1: Is there any correlation between EE and adult learners' PA?
2. RQ2: Is there any correlation between SEE and PA for adult learners?
3. RQ3: Is there any correlation between WEE and PA for adult learners?

## METHOD

### *Design*

In general, this study intended to examine the contributions of EE to the development of PA in adult learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). This study involved two continuous variables, namely EE and PA. In other words, the study aimed to explicate the

*Sa'adah et al(2023)*

development of adult EFL learners' PA about their EE. Concerning the objectives, the study employed a correlational design. Latief (2012) states that correlational research designs measure the relationship between two or more continuous variables. The correlational design allows for predicting scores and explaining the relationship among variables (Creswell, 2012). It means that if the variables correlate, the results of these correlations can be used to predict the level of one variable from another (Latief, 2012). The correlational design also provides information about the strength of relationships among variables.

***Participant***

This study's participants were 32 adult EFL learners in second-year tertiary education in the English department. Those participants were chosen with the view that in second language acquisition (SLA), awareness is required at the early stages of L2 learning. Furthermore, given the researcher's ease of access to the research subjects, this study included English department learners enrolled in the third semester. The selection of the research subjects, who were second-year learners, was based on the assumption that learners in their first year of college may still have a diverse background of English knowledge, particularly in the variables under investigation. They have not received additional English instruction, which may affect physical or mental changes that affect performance, a process known as maturation (Gay et al., 2012). These varieties and situations were expected to give a comprehensive picture of learners' PA and the factors contributing to its development.

***Instrument***

Two instruments were utilized to collect the data: a PA test and an EE questionnaire. This study's PA test was designed for adult learners whose first language is not English. The test aimed to assess learners' PA skills at phoneme and onset-rime awareness. The exam consisted of forty items divided into eight sections. It was adapted from Starting Points: Supporting the Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008) and created in response to the test blueprint created for this current study. The phoneme awareness level PA skill test included phoneme manipulation, which covered six skills: skill in isolating phonemes, identifying phonemes, categorizing phonemes, blending phonemes, segmenting phonemes, and deleting phonemes. At the onset-rime level, the ability to identify unrhymed words and change the onset of words was tested.



*Sa'adah et al(2023)*

Two types of validity determined the PA test validity: construct validity and content validity. Two experts were involved in the construct validation process to ensure that the instruments' purposes corresponded to the tasks that needed to be completed (Latief, 2012). A tryout was held for thirty English learners. The tryout ensured that the learners understood the instructions and items. During the administration process of the tryout, it was observed that the learners could understand the instructions and test items.

Furthermore, the learners' work in the tryout was graded to determine the need for validity and reliability analysis. The validity analysis was done by calculating the coefficient of correlation between test scores and criterion, called the validity coefficient (Ary et al., 2010). The calculation results showed that the correlation coefficient of forty test items was all greater than the correlation of the coefficient table ( $N=30$ ,  $df=28$ ,  $r$  table= .361), and the sig. (2-tailed) values were less than the alpha value of .05. These indicate that the forty items of the PA test were valid.

Following the validity analysis, the reliability analysis was carried out. Coefficient alpha, or Cronbach alpha, was used to conduct the analysis (Ary et al., 2010). The test analysis showed the Cronbach alpha value was .947 ( $N=40$ ). The value was very close to 1, indicating very high reliability. Based on the validity and reliability analysis findings, the PA test was ready for data collection.

Using the Likert scale, the questionnaire for EE adapted from Sundqvist et al. (2009) consisted of 15 items; eight items figured out the learners' Written EE activities, while seven others figured out the learners' Spoken EE. The close-ended questionnaire presents the answer, so the respondent only needs to choose one of the available options. The options showed the amount of the learners' EE activities and how long they usually spend their time doing EE activities in a week. "Never" if they never do it at all, "rarely" if they do their EE activities less than 3 hours per week, "sometimes" if they do their EE activities around 3 – 5 hours per week, "often" if they do their EE activities around 6 – 10 hours per week, and "very often" if they do their EE activities more than 10 hours per week.

***Data collecting technique***

Data collection in this study was divided into two stages due to the use of two types of instruments: a PA test and a questionnaire for EE. The first stage of data collection, using a questionnaire for EE, focused on gathering information about how much time learners spend

outside the classroom interacting with English (Extramural English). Thus, the questionnaire included 15 questions to determine how much time the students devote to extramural English activities. The second stage focused on gathering information about students' PA through a PA test.

#### **Data analysis technique**

The quantitative data of students' EE (Extramural English). and PA were analyzed using inferential statistical analysis, especially correlational analysis. The correlation test involved two steps; the first step was the fulfillment test of assumptions (normality and linearity) required for running a correlation analysis, and the second step was the hypothesis testing. The results of normality and linearity tests showed that the PA data were not regular or linear. For these reasons, the second step deals with the hypotheses testing using the non-parametric Spearman correlation to investigate the correlation level and direction between EE and adult EFL learners' PA. The data analysis in this study was conducted with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics 23 for Windows.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Correlation between EE and adult learners' PA**

Following the assumption tests, a correlation test was used to determine the relationship between the amount of time spent by the learners to do EE, (Extramural English). both SEE and WEE, and adult EFL learners' PA. The overall EE and adult EFL learners' PA revealed  $p$  value of .000 less than the  $\alpha$  value of .05, which indicates a significant relationship between learners' EE and PA (see Table 3). The correlation value showed a strong correlation between the two variables ( $r = +.818$ ,  $N = 32$ ).

*Table 1. EE and adult learners PA correlations*

		EE	PA
Spearman's rho	EE	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
		N	32
	PA	Correlation Coefficient	.818**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	32

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation between SEE and PA for adult learners**

A correlation test was also used to determine the relation between the time the learners spent doing SEE and adult EFL learners' PA. The SEE and adult EFL learner's PA results revealed a value of .000 less than 05, indicating a significant relationship between learners' SEE and PA (see Table 3). The correlation coefficient revealed a strong positive correlation between the variables ( $r = +.758$ ,  $N = 32$ ).

**Table 2. SEE and adult learners PA Correlations**

			PA	SEE
Spearman's rho	PA	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.758**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	32	32
	SEE	Correlation Coefficient	.758**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	32	32

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation between WEE and PA for adult learners**

A correlation test was also used to determine the relationship between the number of time learners spent doing WEE and adult EFL learners' PA. The result for WEE and adult EFL learners' PA revealed  $\rho$  value of .000 less than the  $\alpha$  value of .05, indicating a significant relationship between learners' WEE and PA (see Table 3). The correlation value showed a positive, strong correlation between the two variables ( $r = +.726$ ,  $N = 32$ ).

**Table 3. WEE and adult EFL PA Correlations**

			PA	WEE
Spearman's rho	PA	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.726**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	32	32
	WEE	Correlation Coefficient	.726**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	32	32

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

All tables show that there are various differences in all tested variables. It means that the findings imply theoretical and practical consequences.

### **Discussion**

This study aims to investigate the relationship between EE and adult EFL learners' PA. Although EE activities done by adult EFL learners are not the same as children having their HLE, it was proved that exposure to English during learners' activities has a positive correlation to their PA. The results corroborate the hypothesis, in line with Schmitt et al. (2011), Torppa et al. (2007), Levy et al. (2006), Burgess et al. (2002), Senechal & LeFevre (2002), Frijters et al. (2000) who highlight the significant relations between the amount of time EFL learners spend to do EE activities and their PA. Similar results revealed that SEE and WEE activities strongly correlate positively with adult EFL learners' PA. This is essential for EFL learners to get more exposure to English outside the classroom for better PA achievement.

The result of the current study supported some other studies which proved that EE through entertaining media such as listening to songs, surfing the Internet, and using social media showed a positive correlation with learners' oral proficiency and vocabulary (De Wilde et al., 2020; Lefever, 2010; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Frances et al., 2017; Olsson, 2012; Puimège & Peters, 2019; Storch & Hill, 2008; Sundqvist et al., 2009). The amount of time adult EFL learners spend on EE activities strongly correlates with their PA achievement. The more they spend their time on EE activities, the better PA they have and the better oral proficiency they achieve.

Related to the implications, lecturers, in general, should encourage their students to use EE because of the importance of PA, which has a strong positive correlation with speaking comprehensibility and accuracy (Souza, 2015; Venkatagiri & Levis, 2007), which is consistent with the findings of (Giambo & McKinney, 2004). The more sensitive to second-language phonology, the more native-like one's pronunciation is. The findings suggest that PA, particularly when pronouncing a foreign language, may influence EFL speakers' comprehensibility.

The questionnaire result showed that the learners spent more time dealing with technologies in EE activities. Both SEE and WEE activities are dominated by digital EE, such as reading status on social media, surfing the Internet, listening to songs, and watching YouTube videos. In line with these findings, Lee & Lu (2021) and Reinders & Benson (2017)

proved that EFL learners increasingly engage in digital communication through English outside the classroom. Regarding these results, the lecturer should consider using technology for intra-curricular and extra-curricular EE activities.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

### *Conclusion*

The study's result proved a robust positive correlation between the amount of time the adult EFL learners' EE activities and their PA ability. The more time students spend on EE, the better their PA is. It indicates that the EE activities contribute to developing students' PA. Further, specific findings also revealed strong positive relations between students' SEE WEE and PA. Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that educators make better, more deliberate use of the positive correlation of EE exposure to adult EFL learners' PA. The majority of their extramural English activities involve technology. They could bring EE activities into the classroom, for example, by starting the English lesson with attractive social media posts in English, analyzing and interpreting the lyrics of the learners' favorite songs, inviting learners to post their English writing or short videos on social media such as Instagram or Youtube, watching short movies together, and other activities.

### *Limitation*

Nevertheless, this study has limitations and directions for future research. The first is that the participant samples are limited and do not vary (from one college), representing the country's entire population. We might have gotten different results if the study sample had been more diverse. Future research should recruit students from various schools and regions to improve the generalizability of the findings. Second, this research design is a correlation in which the result may predict the connection between SEE and adult EFL learners' PA and WEE and adult EFL learners' PA. It is suggested that future research conduct further studies to investigate the connection between EE and PA and the effect of EE on PA or other language aspects and skills.

### *Implication*

Regarding the significant contribution of EE activities to adult EFL learners' PA, managing learners' EE activities will significantly contribute to their language learning.

*Sa'adah et al(2023)*

Further, the spoken and written EE activities will contribute not only to their PA development but also to other language skills.

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PAGE 8

PAGE 9

PAGE 10

PAGE 11

PAGE 12

PAGE 13

PAGE 14

PAGE 15

PAGE 16

PAGE 17