

# **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN TEFL CLASSES: A SELF-CENTERED APPROACH**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the attitudes of Moroccan teachers (N=14) and students (N=97) towards the use of extracurricular activities in TEFL classes. A review of the literature showed a strong relationship between the use of extracurricular activities and students' learning of English. The present study, therefore, aimed to explore the importance of these activities in improving English learning in Moroccan universities. Based on a quantitative and qualitative method, it examined the role of extracurricular activities in developing students' self-learning of English. The results of this study revealed that teachers rarely used extracurricular activities to motivate students to learn. They also demonstrated that students shared positive attitudes towards extracurricular activities as an effective tool to learn English and improve their academic skills. In short, the pedagogical implications of these findings are that extracurricular activities facilitate teaching English, motivate students to learn and make them more sociable and ready for long-life learning.

## **KEY WORDS**

extracurricular activities; TEFL; motivation; self-centered learning; communication.



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**ATIVIDADES EXTRACURRICULARES NAS AULAS DE ENSINO DA LÍNGUA  
INGLESA COMO LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA:  
UMA ABORDAGEM CENTRADA NO INDIVÍDUO**

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**RESUMO**

Este estudo procurou investigar as atitudes de professores de Marrocos (N=14) e alunos (N=97) relativamente à utilização de atividades extracurriculares nas aulas de Ensino de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira. Uma análise da literatura mostrou uma forte relação entre o recurso a atividades extracurriculares e a aprendizagem de Inglês por parte dos alunos. Portanto, este estudo teve como objetivo explorar a importância destas atividades na melhoria da aprendizagem de Inglês nas Universidades de Marrocos. Baseado num método quantitativo e qualitativo, examinou o papel das atividades extracurriculares no desenvolvimento da autoaprendizagem de Inglês por parte dos alunos. Os resultados deste estudo mostraram que os professores raramente recorriam a atividades extracurriculares para motivarem os alunos para a aprendizagem. Também demonstraram que os alunos tinham atitudes positivas perante as atividades extracurriculares e viam-nas como uma ferramenta efetiva para aprenderem Inglês e melhorar as suas competências académicas. Em suma, as implicações pedagógicas destes resultados indicam que as atividades extracurriculares facilitam o Ensino de Inglês, motivam os alunos para a aprendizagem e tornam-nos mais sociáveis e aptos para uma aprendizagem ao longo da vida.

**PALAVRAS - CHAVE**

atividades extracurriculares; ensino da língua inglesa como língua estrangeira; motivação; aprendizagem aut centrada; comunicação.



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# Extracurricular Activities in TEFL Classes: a Self-Centered Approach

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## INTRODUCTION

Teaching English in Moroccan universities has become a real challenge for teachers due to the increase in number of students enrolling each year, the lack of materials to ease instruction and time constraints. These obstacles, together with the low standards of students in foreign languages, led teachers to use extracurricular activities to vary their sources of instruction. Yet, it is assumed that the use of extracurricular activities in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) is still limited and inadequate, for teachers resort to them only occasionally to vary their teaching techniques and engage their students in building their self-learning. This, of course, affects students' motivation to learn English and improve their academic and social skills.

The present research is an attempt to investigate the use of extracurricular activities in Moroccan universities by English teachers to see to what extent they are effective in motivating students to learn. It studies teachers' and students' attitudes towards these activities using questionnaires and interviews. The aim is to examine the use of extracurricular activities in teaching English as a foreign language and to discuss their importance in Moroccan education system, in general.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The present empirical study is conducted within the framework of the interactionist theory of language acquisition (Dolati, 2012). This theory considers communication interaction as an essential tool to language development. According to Lariviere (2016), "English language learners need more than just academic exposure to language for acquisition to occur." They need a suitable environment to develop their "interpersonal language through social contexts" (Lariviere, 2016). Extracurricular activities offer students this opportunity to improve their skills in English by acting and interacting in different didactic situations which mimic their social contexts.

The study is also grounded in the 'natural approach' which enables students to acquire language in a natural way by immersing them in real-life learning activities such as interviews, video-conferences and speech contests (Normah, 2017). The natural approach learning is different from the ordinary curricular-based learning which students daily get in classroom. It is rather about activities which offer students a natural environment for communication.

## DEFINITIONS OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Extracurricular or extra academic activities refer to those activities which took place outside the realm of the normal curriculum of education. The term appeared in the 19th century in European and North American schools and universities though some examples of extracurricular activities such as competitions and drama dated back to ancient Athens and Sparta (Macarova & Reva, 2017, p. 45). Extracurricular activities are used today to improve students' communicative, social and artistic skills. They are usually conducted under supervision of educators to guide students towards a particular behavior or a skill (Simoncini & Caltabiano, 2012). Researchers (Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, & Ball, 2012; Leung, 2003; Reeves, 2008) argued that extracurricular activities are necessary for the appropriate growth of students and for the improvement of their self-confidence, intelligence and personality.

The main examples of extracurricular activities which have received interest from researchers are: academic, athletic, community service clubs, performance organizations, cheerleading clubs, social fraternity, sorority and volunteering (Hunt, 2005; Lariviere, 2016; Peguero, 2011). Yet, it should be noted that the bulk of literature defining the term extracurricular activities makes it difficult to determine what exactly constitutes an extracurricular activity (Bartkus, Nemelka, Nemelka, & Gardner, 2012). There is no clear-cut or generally-accepted definition of the term extracurricular activities, and whenever researchers attempt to define it, they describe it in the form of examples of activities (Nelson, Vandrzyk, Quirin, & Allen, 2002, p. 695). Some researchers (Nelson et al., 2002, p. 278) even use synonyms such as 'out-of-class experiences' to describe extracurricular activities (see Bartkus, Nemelka, Nemelka, & Gardner, 2012).

For the purpose of this study, the author limits extracurricular activities to language-related tasks such as artistic, mental and physical activities that are organized by teachers outside the regular classroom curriculum, but closely associated with students' learning of English.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies of extra-curricular activities focused mainly on the benefits of their use in schools and universities, and how they affect students' personal, academic and social well-being.

Daley and Leahy (2003) found in their study of 126 children who participated in physical extracurricular activities that there was a positive association between involvement in some forms of physical activity and students' positive self-perception. Similarly, Eccles (2003) argued that participation in voluntary school activities has a positive effect on students' development of sense of togetherness and responsibility. He added that students' who engage in these activities are more attached to school and achieve good education results (cited in Wilson, 2009).

McGee, Williams, Howden-Chapman, Martin and Kawachi (2006) conducted a study on the importance of extracurricular activities and revealed that students who participate in sports show higher level of attachment towards their mates, teachers and parents. Their work in teams help them to build a sense of togetherness and to reduce their social anxiety.



This idea is also shared by Penner and Wallin (2012) who argued that through music, for instance, students of English have more chances to communicate with their teachers and classmates in a creative way, using a language that goes beyond verbal skills.

Gibbons (2006), in his empirical study on the link between extracurricular activities and academic achievement for youth, found that students who were involved in club and sport activities in and outside of school achieved higher results than their classmates who did not participate. Gibbons' study also revealed that a moderate participation of students in these activities is more effective than over or less involvement in them.

Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie and Gonyea (2008) examined students' involvement in educationally purposeful activities and the impact on their academic performance and retention during the freshman year. He studied eighteen four-year degree-granting colleges with various ethnic institutions: White Institutions, Black College Institutions and Hispanic Serving Institutions. He discovered a positive association between students' participation in extracurricular activities, academic achievement and remaining in school for all races and genders.

Some researchers (Allar, 2008; Gilman, 2004; Smith, 2008) investigated the negative impact of some extracurricular activities on students, such as alcoholism, frustration and injuries. These researchers recommended a moderate and supervised use of extracurricular activities.

Yildiz (2015) examined the role of extracurricular activities in the success of students' learning of English. He studied the case of 15 students from a preparatory school in Iraq by means of questionnaires and quizzes. He found that there are many advantages of extracurricular activities on students' self-confidence, motivation and learning of English.

Makarova and Reva (2017) conducted a comparative study of the impact of extracurricular activities on foreign language learning in Canadian and Russian contexts. Based on questionnaires, the authors surveyed 119 university students from both countries. The results of this study revealed that students view language-related extracurricular activities in universities as a motivating tool to learn language and practise it. Students from both countries reported a positive impact of extracurricular activities on building their self-esteem and developing their communication skills. They also revealed that these activities helped them overcome shyness and nervousness.

Normah (2017) investigated teachers' attitudes towards the use of extracurricular activities in enhancing students' speaking skills in Saudi Arabia. He relied on questionnaires addressed to 40 high school teachers and interviews with three teachers. He found that teachers share positive attitudes towards extracurricular activities in English classes, but the way they use them is not appropriate.

In brief, this review of the literature shows that there is a shortage of studies which have dealt with the importance of language-related extracurricular activities at university. Very little information is available about the attitudes of students and teachers towards the role of extracurricular activities in learning English, particularly in Morocco. The present study, therefore, is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature by examining the effectiveness of extracurricular activities in Moroccan universities and how they impact students' acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research examined teachers' and students' utilization of extracurricular activities and the effects on students' learning of EFL. It relied on semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to collect the data from a selected number of teachers and students. The techniques of the interviews and questionnaires have been routinely used by researchers in sociolinguistic and education studies and yielded outstanding results (Creswell, 2002; Normah, 2017; Zakhir & O'Brien, 2016). The use of these two instruments offered a mixed quantitative and qualitative analysis of the collected data. The following section gives an overview of the research methodology.

## PARTICIPANTS

This empirical research studies the case of (n=14) teachers and (n=97) students who were randomly chosen from two Economic universities in Morocco. Teachers belonged to the English department but they all taught English for Specific Purposes (ESP). There were three female teachers and eleven males. The age of five teachers ranged between 31-40, three between 41-50, and six between 51-62. They have different teaching experience. Eight have taught English for about 13 years while the remaining teachers exceeded 20 years of experience.

Students were selected from three classes of Economics. They belonged to different economic options. There were 35 female students and 62 males. The age of 78 ranged between 20 and 23 while 19 were between 24 and 26. They belonged to different regions of Morocco. 31 were Amazigh while 66 were Arabs. They were all enrolled in the first year of their Master degree. The choice of this education level was purposeful because students have just one semester of English courses and teachers have to use all their resources to refresh their students' minds with English basics and sharpen their skills to prepare them for their Doctoral studies where English is dearly needed. It should be noted here that Moroccan science students undergo three years of interruption in their English studies in this new LMD system. This complicates the tasks for teachers who find themselves forced to remind students with high school courses and at the same time introduce them to more challenging courses of ESP.

## INSTRUMENTS

### *Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to examine teachers' use of extracurricular activities, their attitudes towards them and their perception of students' reactions to these activities. They were conducted during the first second semester between 23<sup>rd</sup> February and 7<sup>th</sup> April. Interviews with the teachers took place in the lounge and in classrooms. They required about 15 minutes for each teacher. They included close and open-ended questions. A tape-recorder was used to collect the data of the interviews and transcribe them. The interviews used in this study followed the guidelines of Normah (2017) and Nghia (2017).

### *Questionnaires*

The questionnaires addressed to students aimed to investigate their views on the utility of extracurricular activities and their effects on their learning of English. They consisted of three main parts. The first part examines students' attitudes towards their use of extracurricular activities; the second component studies their reactions to these activities; the third explores their views on the effects of these activities on their achievements. Questionnaires consisted of open-ended and close questions and Likert scale test. They required 20 minutes for accomplishment. They were addressed to students during ordinary sessions, with the help of their teachers. The quantitative data collected with the questionnaires were then analysed and discussed. The results were given with percentages and discussion of the respondents' answers. The technique of the questionnaires followed the models of (Macarova & Reva, 2017; Zakhir & O' Brien, 2016) in their studies of attitudes towards languages and education.

## THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

### TEACHERS' RESPONSES: DISCUSSIONS

The following section provides the results of the interviews with fourteen teachers of English selected from two Economic sciences faculties. The results are classified into three headings: the use of extracurricular activities, teachers' views on their effectiveness in teaching and their opinions on their students' perception of these activities.



The findings of the interviews reveal that teachers rely on extracurricular activities as a crucial pedagogical tool in their instruction of English. Eleven teachers claimed that they sometimes use extracurricular activities to diversify their teaching techniques and create a healthy environment for learning English. The interviewee 6, for instance, argued, "I sometimes use extracurricular activities to create an anxiety-free atmosphere of learning, to motivate students to work harder and avoid disruptive behavior in class." Other teachers justify their use of extracurricular activities by the need to look for more attractive tools to grasp the interest of students to learn and to change the rigid standard curricula which students find exhausting. Such attitudes echo Wilson's (2009, 2) view on extracurricular activities as an alternative for teachers to cope with students' high levels of alienation and boredom, underachievement and school disengagement.

It seems also that the interviewees are positive towards the use of extracurricular activities to give their students a chance to discover their competencies and improve them. Interviewees (2 and 11) argued that time constraints make their teaching of EFL more complicated, particularly that students have a limited number of hours to learn (30 hours). Extracurricular activities for them offer more opportunities to work on both receptive and productive skills in an effective way. "My students play an important role in their own learning of EFL through the different didactic situations I create for them via extracurricular activities," said interviewee 2. On the contrary, two interviewees (5 and 8) stated that they rarely, if not never, rely on extracurricular activities in their TEFL classes due to their students' indifference.

The interviewees showed different attitudes when asked about the category of extracurricular activities they favour more in teaching EFL. Five teachers gave priority to mental activities which help to hone students' communicative and cognitive skills in English. "Mental activities target learners' intellectual and cognitive skills. They help develop students' critical thinking, autonomy, problem solving and decision making, deemed necessary in today's life, especially for youth," commented interviewee 11. Four chose physical activities while the remaining teachers opted for 'both' physical and artistic activities. The latter choices were justified by teachers by their stimulating nature for students. "Artistic and physical activities introduce a real change in learning context and break the routine; students like to move, act and react," pointed out interviewee 1. Another teacher (Interviewee 5) argued "Artistic extracurricular activities help students to be confident and open to their society. They also increase positive, interpersonal relationship that strengthens their youth development."

To know about the types of extracurricular activities used by teachers in their instruction of EFL, they were asked to name the ones they rely on in the classroom. Here, the interviewees gave plenty of activities such as debates, monologues, public speaking, poems, telling stories, tour guides, talk shows, games, jokes, etc. Teachers believed that these activities target students' receptive and productive skills. "To work on monologues, I give my students time to search for discourses of famous playwrights, or just write their own works, work in groups to exchange ideas and, then, deliver their monologues in classroom. By the end, students receive questions and feedback, and this is how they improve their language skills," reported interviewee 3. "These activities offer us a chance to deal with shy students and work on skills that need much time in ordinary lessons," added interviewee 14.

The frequent use of these extracurricular activities seems to be impeded by the shortage of materials in universities. Nearly all the interviewees (13) expressed their



regret for the absence of real projects by the Ministry of Higher Education to integrate extracurricular activities in universities and to supply them with sufficient materials to diversify their ways of teaching EFL. The interviewee 1 pointed out, “we need stadiums, theatres and media rooms to improve our ways of using extracurricular activities in university. Universities in the US, Europe and Asia make of extracurricular activities a basic requirement to improve their students’ education.” It is indeed disappointing that only some private Moroccan universities like Alakhawayns, Universiapolis and Mundiapolis which have a suited infrastructure for the use of extracurricular activities in time when Western universities use also out-of-school activities to improve their students’ formal and informal education. Wilson (2009, 7) stated “in the US, over half of the students’ time is spent learning involved in some sort of extracurricular activities.” Western students have access to pro-social activities such as performing arts, dances, team sports and volunteering clubs. The scores they get in these activities are added to their academic grades and determine their access to selective universities such as Harvard, Stanford and Oxford.

The interviewees regretted the fact that the dearth of materials confines the use of extracurricular activities to classrooms in a traditional way. They all confirmed that they rarely use extracurricular activities at the university level as in Europe or the US. Except for some contests such as the greatest debaters, public speaking and contrasting monologues which are not frequently used at all universities due to financial reasons, students have no chance to express themselves and vary their sources of learning English.

The absence of the needed materials, unfortunately, impacts teachers’ use of extracurricular activities which reduces their students’ interest in participation. “My students love all what is new; they like to participate in debates, talks and writing contests, but they need something challenging such as theatre, singing and, why not, dancing. Such activities influence their personalities and academic achievements,” claimed the interviewee 2.

Another teacher (Interviewee 5) pointed out that the age factor impacts students’ benefit from extracurricular activities. He argued, “I am afraid my students may go indifferent to extracurricular activities because they expect a traditional mode of instruction such as lectures. The use of these activities can be more appreciated by high school students.” What is noteworthy here is that neither high school students nor their university mates benefit from these activities in the right way. Teachers are still using their activities in an old-fashioned way, which does not motivate their students to participate.

The interviewees also stated that mental and artistic activities are more favoured by their students. “Students like activities where they act and communicate with each other. Groups’ competitions such as games, debates and cooperative writings stimulate students to participate and share their knowledge,” said the interviewee 2. “Students feel more active when they play the role of leaders or mediators in groups. They like activities where they play a role in their learning, relieve the stress of daily routines and be creative,” claimed the interviewee 3. This view echoes Daley and Leahy (2003) who argue that participation in extracurricular activities “may influence the mental well-being of young people by reducing stress.” In a similar vein, Harmer (2003) pointed out that role-plays activities are effective in teaching English. They may stimulate students in a funny way, help them express themselves freely, develop their self-reliance and use their language as much as possible.



Teachers were also given the question: “Do you notice any effects of extracurricular activities on your students’ behavior?” Here, they all offered a positive answer. They stated that these activities teach students how to be attentive and patient. “Students become attentive and motivated to study,” reported the interviewee 7. Another interviewee argued that extracurricular activities encourage his students to work alone and sharpen their own competencies in English. “Due to extracurricular activities, my students are creative and have a good self-confidence,” pointed out interviewee 9. Teachers also confirmed that their use of group-works and activities such as two-minutes-talk and monologues create a sense of leaderships in their students, make them collaborative and more attached to university. Park (2015, p. 14), in this regard, claimed, “Involvement in extracurricular activities results in an increased sense of belonging to the school community.” He added that students through extracurricular activities “are guided towards appropriate behaviors and activities while being challenged to help develop competencies and confidence” (p. 18). Indeed, this positive effect of extracurricular activities on students’ behaviors concerns also their communication skills in English. The interviewee 10 claimed, “Team-work based extracurricular activities let students build a sense of togetherness which helps them express themselves freely and without complications.” Similarly, the interviewee 14 argued that his supervision of extracurricular activities makes him able to deal with the negative psychological behaviors of his students and to provide them with necessary advice, support and assistance to overcome their problems. “Some of my students were stern, shy and disconnected from class. Now that they are engaged in some extracurricular activities, they become able to participate in class and give their opinions,” stated interviewee 1.

Unexpectedly, one of the teachers (interviewee 9) mentioned that the overuse of extracurricular activities sometimes has a negative effect on students’ learning: “Sometimes, I feel that my students get addicted to extracurricular activities and give less interest to other courses such as writing and listening.” Eccles, Barber, Stone and Hunt (2003) stated that there are negative consequences of some types of extracurricular activities such as over-involvement and exclusion. However, this problem was relegated by the other interviewees, as they all claimed that teachers should diversify their sources of teaching using extracurricular activities to avoid such problems.

In a like manner, the interviewees argued that there is a positive effect of extracurricular activities on students’ achievements in English. The interviewee 11 stated, “It is difficult to measure that but I can say that hardworking students always develop a penchant for them because they increase their level of motivation and, hence, they are conducive to good results and performance.” Teachers also believed that participants in extracurricular activities learn more vocabulary, citizenship values, arts, and demonstrate high levels of communication skills. This confirms the findings of many researchers who worked on the effects of extracurricular activities on students’ achievements. Reeves (2018) argues that students who are engaged in extracurricular activities have better grades than their classmates who didn’t participate (see Wilson 2009, p. 14). Similarly, Morrisey (2005) noticed an established link between the participation in extracurricular activities and students’ education attainments.

In brief, the interviews with English teachers reveal that extracurricular activities have a positive effect on students’ self-learning of EFL. They also show that students are positive towards extracurricular-activities-based courses and are more motivated in using them than ordinary ones. However, teachers seem dissatisfied with the shortage

of materials to extend to use of extracurricular activities in their daily instruction process. They all believe that their current use of extracurricular activities is not enough to create a suited positive learning atmosphere for students.

## STUDENTS' RESPONSES: DISCUSSIONS

This section provides the results of the questionnaires addressed to (97) students. It aims to discuss the attitudes of students towards the use of extracurricular activities, the effects of these activities on their learning of EFL and the types of extracurricular activities they like more in and outside of classrooms.

Students were first asked how many years they have learned English, and they provided different responses. Those who received their high school education in public schools (N=64; 65.97%) indicated that they studied English for 5 years while others who were graduated from private schools (N=33; 34.02%) had more than 10 years of English. Concerning students' mastery of English, (N=59; 60.82%) stated that they are 'good' while (N=38; 39.17%) opted for the 'medium' level. It should be noted that the majority of students who claimed a good mastery of English studied in private schools where they had more modules of English than their mates who followed their studies in public schools.

They were also asked if their current teachers of English use extracurricular activities, and the majority (N=71; 73.19%) gave positive answers. They stated that their teachers 'sometimes' resort to these activities to motivate them to learn and change the routine of ordinary English courses. "Sometimes, our teacher brings us videos to follow and discuss on particular issues like politics, sports, cinema, etc. It really encourages us to discuss and express ourselves in English," argued respondent (13).

To know more about students' views on their teachers' use of extracurricular activities, they were given the question: 'what sort of extracurricular activities does your teacher use in classroom?' Seventy five (77.31%) students chose 'artistic activities,' thirteen (13.40%) chose 'mental activities' and nine (9.27%) opted for physical ones. Moreover, all students believed that the activities used by their teachers are relevant for improving their language skills and communicative competencies. "Artistic activities are good for us. They ease the learning process and help us overcome our problems of communication," said respondent 79. "We learn a lot from extracurricular activities. It is a good experience for us to express ourselves in a funny way and exchange information in English," added respondent 93.

Similarly, when asked which type of activities they prefer more in classroom, (N=83; 85.56%) students chose artistic ones. Respondent (93) justified his choice of artistic activities by the fact that students learn more when they are free to express themselves on issues which concern them. "I was shy, and I couldn't even reach the white board; but with the help of teachers and the artistic activities they organize, I am now able to participate, give my opinion and speak fluent English." It is noteworthy here that all students think that extracurricular activities give them an opportunity to build their own competencies in English. The preparations and rehearsal they do before participating in artistic activities offer them a good chance to improve their English. One of the



respondents (55) claimed, "Before we participate in monologues or debates, we do a hard work to choose a convincing topic and, then, prepare it for presentation. This, of course, allows us to practice all language skills in an autonomous way." Students also argue that in artistic activities, they practice language more because they work in teams and learn from each other.

Similar to teachers, students seem dissatisfied with the shortage of materials to frequently practice extracurricular activities in their faculties. "We need data shows, cameras, computers, sports equipment and a theatre to improve our use of extracurricular activities. Learning English needs sophisticated materials," pointed out respondent (7). Another student argued, "We can't connect with students from other cities or countries to practice online debates, contests and conferences due to the lack of computers and Internet." Indeed, the shortage of sufficient materials to implement extracurricular activities limits students' learning of English to traditional courses and routines which decrease their motivation to attend classes. Reeves (2008) argues that students who participated in some sort of extracurricular activities are more likely to remain in school and attend classes than those who did not. This is due to the rich environment which extracurricular activities offer for students to exploit their abilities and skills.

Students also pointed out that extracurricular contests should be organized at the university level to encourage them to participate. They argued that teachers rarely organize university contests such as public speaking and the greatest debaters. Respondent 75 stated, "Our teachers should create clubs and more activities where we can practice arts and compete with students from other universities in English." Students also claimed that practicing extracurricular activities will help them spend the maximum of time at university, which will be beneficial for them to acquire more academic skills and improve their English, as well. "Practicing some sort of extracurricular activities prevents students from wasting their time doing trivial things and offer them more space to practice English," stated respondent 11. Similarly, Brown argues that students who practice some sort of extracurricular activities are less likely to misbehave and do bad things (see Wilson 2009, p. 12). They rather acquire linguistic and social skills which help them in their future.

When asked about the importance of contests in extracurricular activities in their learning of English, (N=92; 94.84%) students provide positive answers. They pointed out that they acquire more vocabulary, communicative skills and improve their self-esteem and self-reliance. "Participating in contests makes you know about your weaknesses, practice language in real contexts and improve your confidence," argued respondent 3. Similarly, respondent 11 mentioned that "such competitions make students feel more autonomous and able to rely on their own skills." It is clear from these responses that students are willing to participate in extracurricular contests to improve their English and social skills, despite the shortage of materials at universities. Students also blame their teachers' indifference to the importance of extracurricular activities for their learning and achievements. "We are fed up with the ordinary classes we get every day in English. We need more challenging activities as in European and American universities. Lectures and teacher's centered activities are just routines which lessen students' motivation to study English," said respondent 85.

In short, students' responses to the questionnaires reveal that the current use of extracurricular activities in English classes is not sufficient. They criticize the lack of



materials and their teachers' indifference to the use of extracurricular contests at the university and national levels. Students' responses also show that they prefer extracurricular activities more than ordinary classes where teachers dominate discourse. They believe that structured extracurricular activities are necessary for their learning of EFL, building their own personalities, shaping their strategies of learning and increasing their motivation and self-confidence.

## IMPLICATIONS

The reader of this study may infer from both teachers' and students' views that there is a great demand for extracurricular activities in Moroccan universities to enhance students' learning of EFL. They all agree that such activities are beneficial for the improvement of education standards, in general, and EFL, in particular. They also defend their use in all education levels as part of the curriculum to motivate students to learn English effectively, to help them participate in their learning process and to increase their integration in university. Extracurricular activities, therefore, should be adopted in all classes to maximize the benefit of students and offer them a chance to hone their learning skills. This, of course, requires gathering the efforts of all education actors. Teachers should be encouraged to plan language-based extracurricular activities as a fundamental tool in TEFL. They have also to be cautious in selecting the required activities to create a positive environment for their students to sharpen their language skills and explore their competencies. Eccles (2003) argued that the type of extracurricular activities and level of participation may influence student's development.

Teachers may receive trainings from experts on ways to integrate extracurricular activities in their classes. This will help them solve problems of time constraints and overloaded work. Wilson (2009) pointed out that without training, teachers cannot understand students' needs and cause them to quit their activities or experience negative feelings towards them. Teachers should also learn how to diversify their extracurricular activities by mixing physical, mental and artistic activities. They should be creative in using these activities and at the same time avoid burdening their students with arduous activities that may affect their learning of the subject.

Language extracurricular activities should not be limited to classrooms. They should also be organized at the university level to target the maximum number of students and to spread the culture of competitiveness among them. Teachers should encourage students to create clubs, competitions, conferences and artistic activities to improve their creativity, academic and social skills.

The current activities of public speaking, the greatest debaters and contrasting monologues organized at the national level are still humble and sporadic. They should rather be generalized to involve all universities and students, regardless of their majors. The study revealed that students are motivated to participate in such extracurricular contests. Teachers, therefore, should work as mentors to guide their students to the right sort of activities and encourage them to participate in competitions.

Universities must, in turn, devote budgets for the sake of integrating extracurricular activities as part of the curriculum and help teachers to innovate in their implementation



in English classes. Western universities devote significant budgets for such activities and provide teachers with a suited infrastructure and all the necessary materials to promote their use in and out of classrooms (Reeves, 2008). They even appoint mentors whose role is to help adapt extracurricular activities to students' education needs. They also make relationships with actors outside of universities to integrate their students in pro-social activities and offer them rich opportunities to shape their social and personal skills. Moroccan universities can do the same by encouraging their teachers to look for partnerships with the outside world to maximize the benefit of their students. They can, for instance, compensate for the dearth of materials by holding relationships with American centers, British centers and public theatres and so on. Research (Eccles, 2003; Gardner, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Morrissey, 2005) has shown that such outside-extracurricular activities have a strong influence on students' education career in the future and make them open to society.

It is indeed time to start thinking of the importance of extracurricular activities in TEFL classes, in particular, and in education, in general. All university actors should work together to look for sufficient ways of integrating these activities in their curricula. This will not only help teachers of EFL save time and efforts, but also increase students' commitment to education and improve their self-reliance, as well.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This research paper has tried to examine the importance of extracurricular activities in TEFL classes, in particular, and in university education, in general, through the study of teachers' and students' attitudes. Though the results provide a clear insight into the perception of teachers and students to the importance of these activities in and outside of EFL classrooms, they still need to be improved by an observation study to see how students' react to their use in real contexts. This will also help us know about the ways teachers of EFL integrate extracurricular activities in their courses and measure their effectiveness in motivating students to learn. Furthermore, the study of extracurricular activities in TEFL classes can also be elaborated by the evaluation of students' achievements. Researchers may compare the achievements of students who participate in some sort of extracurricular activities with those of students who do not to study the influence of these activities on education standards.

Last but not least, the use of extracurricular activities can also be improved by studies on their influence on students' motivation to learn and build up their own skills. Researchers should explore the link between structured activities and students' enthusiasm to remain at university and learn. That is, how some sorts of extracurricular activities increase students' commitment to university life and help sharpen their linguistic, social and professional skills.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear from the results of this study that EFL teachers and students share positive attitudes towards extracurricular activities as an effective pedagogical tool to enrich the teaching-learning process. Teachers believe that these activities help them manage time to target all students and motivate them to learn English. Similarly, students prefer extracurricular activities to break the routine of lectures and ordinary courses, and to be autonomous in learning language and social skills. They also confirm the positive effects of extracurricular activities on their achievements and personalities. However, students and teachers alike express many reservations about the shortage of materials to ease the use of extracurricular activities both in classrooms and at the university level. They think that the lack of materials force them to use these activities in a traditional way, which does not effectively help all students improve their English.

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APPENDICES

This questionnaire aims to fulfill an academic research on the role of extracurricular activities in teaching EFL

Please try to answer the given questions

1. Age.....
2. Sex.....
3. Level.....
4. Origin: Amazigh Arab
5. How long have you been studying English?  
.....
6. Rate your level in English.  
Bad Medium Good very good
7. Does your English teacher use extracurricular activities?  
Yes No
8. How often?  
Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very often
9. Do you like extracurricular activities?  
Yes No
10. Yes, why? .....
11. What sort of extracurricular activities does your teacher often use in classroom?  
Physical Mental Artistic
12. Do you find these activities relevant to your learning?  
Yes No
13. What sort of activities do you prefer?  
Physical Mental Artistic
14. Justify your answer  
.....
15. Are there all the necessary materials to practice extracurricular activities?  
Yes No
16. If no, what is needed?  
.....
17. Are there contests of extracurricular activities organized by teachers in your university?  
Yes No
18. If yes, name some of them.  
.....
19. Do these contests have any effect on your personality and learning of English?  
Yes No
20. If yes, what is this effect?  
.....  
.....



This questionnaire aims to fulfill an academic research on the role of extracurricular activities in teaching EFL

Please try to answer the given questions

1. Sex:.....
2. Age:.....
3. Teaching experience:.....
4. Do you use extracurricular activities (ECA) in teaching English?  
Yes No
5. If yes, how often and why?  
.....
6. Name the types of ECA you rely on a lot.  
.....
7. Determine the category of ECA you favor more.  
Physical Mental Artistic
8. Justify your answer.....
9. Are there sufficient materials for the use of ECA?  
Yes No
10. Do you organize ECA at university level?  
Yes No
11. If yes, Name some examples.....
12. How do your students react to the use of ECA?  
Positively Negatively Indifference
13. Can you justify.....
14. Which category do they favor more?  
.....
15. In your point of view, why?  
.....
16. Do you notice any effects of ECA on your students' behavior?  
Yes No
17. If yes, specify.....
18. Do you notice any effect of ECA on students' achievements?  
Yes No
19. If yes, what is it.....  
.....

