

INTENSIVE EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A REQUISITE FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION A PROPOSAL TO FACILITATE SWIFT LEARNING IN ESL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

The key purpose of this research is to insist on the necessity of intensive exposure to English language especially in ESL classrooms to facilitate swift language acquisition. This proposal is based on an experiment conducted with 40 Engineering students randomly chosen from the department of Computer Science and Engineering at Aalim Muhammed Salegh College of Engineering, Chennai, India, in 2019. The students were exposed to intense language learning environment to see if the language learning takes place swiftly as expected in a particular period of time. The outcome of this experiment was: Firstly, intensive exposure to English language had a great impact on students in acquiring the basics of the language in comparison to the previous batch students, who, though greatly interested, still could not make it due to the lack of intense exposure. Secondly, there is a significant association between intensive exposure to language and developing the four basic language skills, i.e., Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing which in turn results in swift acquisition. Lastly, it is recommended that students should continually be exposed to the English language even outside the ESL classroom through home assignments like watching English movies, listening to radio, reading English books, newspapers, magazines, and practicing English language with native speakers on a daily basis using mobile applications to encourage and improve the fluency as well as proficiency in acquiring English language. It is also recommended that teachers and parents should raise learners' awareness towards the importance of learning English language through exposure to the language on daily basis using different techniques that can augment second language acquisition.

Keywords: Acquisition, Language acquisition, Second language acquisition, Intensive, Exposure, Proficiency

1. Introduction

The term Language acquisition is always related to the mother tongue acquisition of a child. Second language acquisition is learning a second language after a first language is already established. Many times this happens when a child who speaks a language other than English goes to school for the first time. Children have an easier time learning a second language, but anyone can learn a new language at any age. Since English has evolved as a lingua franca, learning English language has become indispensable, especially in the third world countries like India. In such context, learners of English as a Second language encounter many barriers in acquiring the language due the lack of adequate exposure to English language. Intensive exposure to English language to such learners prove language acquisition easier and faster.

2. Exposure To English Language

Exposure to language can be defined as the contact that the learners have with the target language that they are attempting to learn(BBC, 2017). For example, a learner studying in a country where English is spoken as a first language has a lot of exposure and obviously has more opportunities to learn. Whereas, in countries like India or China, where the mother tongue is used widely for internal

communication, there is less exposure to the target language, thus making second language acquisition a complex process. Thus, inside the classroom, one of the most central roles of the teacher is to provide learners with sufficient exposure to practice the target language in a variety of contexts. As a qualified speaker of the language, the teachers can give practical examples of language, in addition to applying technological input from television, cassettes, video, web sites, books, and magazines in and outside the classroom for intense exposure to the language

3. Intensive Exposure leads to higher Proficiency

In a study conducted by Matusevych, et.al. (2017) on the impact of first and second language exposure on learning second language constructions, results show that higher cumulative amount of target language exposure leads to higher proficiency. Lili and Yanlong (2005) assess, for example, that news style on newspapers, television, magazines and radios are good writing models for it encompasses narration, exposition and argumentation. They also attest that media in the form of news presentation and gathering observe the standard rules in English grammar. Therefore, exposure to these medium allows students to get inputs on good writing techniques. Also they add that constant reading of newspapers and magazines expands learners' vocabulary. However, Harper and de Jong (2004) argue that language exposure is not enough to attain language competency. They cite that older students require a good grasp of abstract ideas and complex lexical structures that maybe best learned thru textbooks and traditional classroom discussions. Magno, et. al. (2009) study on the level of English language exposure of Taiwanese students, suggest that the more exposure to English enables them to facilitate the language better. This was concluded after the findings showed that Taiwanese student participants in the Philippines have higher level of English exposure than the Taiwanese respondents in Taiwan. These samples were administered with a checklist for English language exposure to measure the frequency of the samples contact with the targeted language.

4. Methodology

This study was conducted at Aalim Muhammed Salegh College of Engineering where English language is used as the medium of instruction for the Engineering students enrolled in the academic year 2020-2021, by conducting a specific course called Soft Skills Training Programme(SSTP) that includes IELTS training.

4.1. Questionnaire

Firstly, a questionnaire was tailored to determine the regularity of time in which individual has contact with the second language. The tool was developed for the Engineering students of Semester I and II, especially of those students whose second language is English. The items for the English exposure questionnaire reflect different situations where English is spoken at home (e.g., speaking and conversing in English at home), with friends (e.g., conversing in English language with friends), at school (e.g., teachers and classmates speaking in English, activities in school conducted in English), and media (e.g., watching English television shows, listening to English music, reading English books). Through the survey it is estimated that there is a total of atleast 20 unidimensional items that illustrate situations where an individual comes in contact with the English language.

4.2. Proficiency Tests

To assess the language proficiency of the students, IELTS testing module was used to test the student's level of reading, writing, speaking and listening, after providing them with an intensive exposure of the language for over a period of three months. The tests were administered to the students on a date set by the researcher. The resource instruments used in assessing skills were adopted from International English Language Testing System (IELTS, 2019). Scores were interpreted based on the bands adopted from IELTS.

5. Results

5.1. Listening proficiency and the exposure level

Table 1 presents the mean scores of the students' listening proficiency in relation to the level of exposure to English language. For high level exposure, the mean score is 22.50, for moderate level the mean score is 26.60 and for low level is 22.12. The highest mean score of listening proficiency is in moderate level. Using Pearson correlation, the scores of the listening tests were correlated with the scores of language exposure tests to determine its correlation.

Table 1. Listening proficiency mean scores in relation to level of language exposure

Level of exposure	No. of students	Mean score
high	11	22.50
moderate	23	26.60
low	6	22.12

5.2. Reading proficiency and the exposure level

Table 2 presents the mean scores of the reading proficiency in relation to the level of exposure to English language. For high level exposure, the mean score is 28.55, for moderate level the mean score is 27.72 and for low level is 25.10. The mean score of reading proficiency in high exposure level is higher than the mean score of reading proficiency in low exposure level which means that high exposure to English language level would result to high reading proficiency.

Table 2. Reading proficiency mean scores in relation to level of language exposure

Level of exposure	No. of students	Mean score
high	11	28.55
moderate	23	27.72
low	6	25.10

5.3. Speaking proficiency in relation to the exposure level

Table 3 presents the means scores of the respondents' speaking proficiency in relation to the level of exposure to English language. For high level exposure, the mean score is 26.06, for moderate level, the mean score is 23.63 and for low level is 12.65. The mean score of speaking proficiency in high exposure level is higher than the mean score of speaking proficiency in low exposure level which means that high exposure to English language level would result to high speaking proficiency.

Table 3. Speaking proficiency mean scores in relation to level of language exposure

Level of exposure	No. of students	Mean score
high	11	26.06
moderate	23	23.63
low	6	12.65

5.4. Writing proficiency in relation to the exposure level

Table 4 presents the mean scores of the speaking proficiency in relation to the level of exposure to English language. For high level exposure, the mean score is 26.83, for moderate level, the mean score is 23.58 and for low level is 12.29. The mean score of writing proficiency in high exposure level is higher than the mean score of writing proficiency in low exposure level which means that high exposure to English language level would result to high speaking proficiency.

Table 4. Writing proficiency mean scores in relation to level of language exposure

Level of exposure	No. of students	Mean score
high	11	26.83
moderate	23	23.58
low	6	12.29

5.5. Association of language exposure and language proficiency

Language exposure has a affirmative connection to language proficiency in the four areas. Positive correlation means the two variables move in tandem. When one increases, the other also increases where in this case a high language exposure also mean high language proficiency. Moreover, for the test of significance, reading, speaking, and writing are significantly correlated to language exposure since the p value is less than 0.05. The values are $p > 0.035263$, $p > 00001$, $p > 00001$ respectively. However, for listening, the p value is greater than .05 Hence the correlation is not significant. Since language exposure has a significant relation to reading, speaking and writing, and students are more exposed to English at College, it is recommended that teachers would maximize opportunities to expose students to English through reading, speaking, and writing activities.

Table 5. Correlation of Intensive exposure and language proficiency

Proficiency	Pearson Correlation		
	R	P - Value	Correlation
Listening	0.0716	0.136510	Positive
Speaking	0.7327	0.00001	Positive
Reading	0.1358	0.035263	Positive
Writing	0.7935	0.00001	Positive

6. Conclusion

Based on the results, it was attested that language proficiency was affected by Intensive language exposure. This variable has influence to listening, reading, speaking and writing. The longer periods of exposure to greater quantities of input may lead to a more successful language acquisition. It is a great challenge to both teachers and students to identify and use all possible activities that expose oneself to the English language.

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