



ENGLISH LANGUAGE EXPOSURE OF STUDENTS IN VISAYAS STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the level of language exposure in the learning of the English language of the students at the Visayas State University. A learners' exposure to the target language does have an impact on language learning. Adapting a language exposure questionnaire, the researcher identified the activities that exposed students to the target language. With a scoring guideline, the researcher revealed the level of students' exposure to the English language. The results of the study showed that more than half of the respondents have a moderate level of language exposure. Students were exposed most to the English language when they are at school or with the use of different media compared to when they are at home or communicating with friends. Teachers and students can utilize this result in engaging in appropriate activities both inside and outside the classroom that can help increase the learning of the English language.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a critical tool in communication. It cannot be denied that a good speaker of a language can communicate ideas to others. Native speakers of a language may find it at ease when using their native language in oral or written communication. However, problems usually emerge when people need to communicate using the language which is not native to them. Learning a language is defined as the developing communicative ability in the second or foreign language. It is considered an advantage for speakers if they know a language other than their native language, and in the present time, learning to use English in communication benefits an individual.

The need for mastery in English is becoming more significant in the 21st century (Lee, 2011). More than 600 million people worldwide use English as an international language. The English language becomes an agent of communication worldwide, which makes it a prerequisite for an individual to be a part of the international business and society. English becomes the lingua franca of the world. In the world of today, where competition is very high, being proficient in the English language provides an edge to an individual.

In the Philippines, school children begin learning English as a second language at an early age (Ellorimo, 2014). Even before enrolling in formal education, children are already exposed to the English language in different ways. When a child starts schooling, his or her exposure to the English language becomes more frequent, significantly as he or she advances to an upper level. However, even after years of learning English, several students have difficulties in using it in oral and written communication. In the recent study conducted by PISA in 2018, the Philippines rank lowest in reading, mathematics, and science. The result was alarming, especially in the education sector. In a survey conducted by Social Weather Station in March 2009 about Filipinos' self-assessed proficiency in English, it showed a decline compared to a survey conducted in December 1993 and September 2000. The decline is manifested in all aspects of English proficiency from the ability to speak, write, and to think in English (SWS, 2012). In the same survey conducted in 2008, Filipinos' self-assessed proficiency in English language results shows recovery after a decline over the previous twelve years (Salazar, 2008). The recovery is most notable on the ability to speak English compared to the results conducted in the last survey. Though personal usage of English slightly went up, these "improvements" still "fall short" of meeting international standards.

Many factors influence learning English as a second language like age, personality, motivation, anxiety to mention. Several studies have been made on the impact of language exposure to the learning of the target language, and results agree that quality exposure to the

target language improves language learning (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). This study, however, aims to describe the levels of the language exposure of the students to the target language, in this case, is English. Considering the generation-millennials and generation z that they belong and the advancement of technology, it is hypothetically apparent that they are highly exposed to the English language in daily activities.

In various educational institutions where instructional activities are always directed to the needs of the intended learners, research-based data on the language exposure of the students is wanting, such data will provide the teachers with implications for teaching English courses. Students' awareness of activities that would benefit them would be an advantage. Thus, this study aims to answer two main objectives: to identify the level of English language exposure of the students of Visayas State University and determine the activities that frequently exposed them to the language.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several factors could affect the language proficiency of a student (Phon, 2017), and one of these factors is the exposure to the target language. Researches on language learning highlighted the presence of exposure to the target language might impact language learning. In a study conducted by Magno (2009) about assessing the level of English language exposure, results show that exposure to the target language affects the learners. In his study, exposure refers to the total amount of time in which an individual has contact with a language, may it be in verbal or written form, formal or informal ways of communication, and in which an individual may have either an active or passive role. Modern technological advancement allows students to be exposed to the English language in different ways.

Exposure to a second language happens mostly at school and with the use of technology or when learners read books and other reading materials written in the second language or by listening to music. Even by an active user of the language, learners are still exposed to English. Zoubi (2018) cited the study of Politzer about the impact of language exposure on the immigrants who arrived in the United States. They were able to peak the English language due to continuous exposure to the English language environment. Further, he also cited that students who lacked exposure to the target language are weak in it. In a study conducted to examine the possible positive effects of English exposure to media, it found that exposure to English material in the media benefits the second or foreign language learner, specifically in the proficiency of English usage and the speed of the acquisition (Molnar, 2013). In the article

“English just isn't a foreign language anymore,” Lambine (2008) elucidated that the more exposure to the language the children can get, the more they learn the target language.

Exposure to language can take place in various contexts. Formal and informal learning of a language engages learners in the target language. For distinction, formal learning is arranged by teachers and explains the learning content systematically. Informal learning, on the other hand, takes place in daily activities (Malcolm, Hodkinson, & Colley, 2003).

In a study conducted by Gamez (2015), she described the activities that engaged the students in language learning, which include listening to English music daily, watching English television with subtitles in the home language, gaming in English, and the use of social media in English. Activities that were less appealing to the respondents include watching English spoken television without subtitles and watching English spoken television with English subtitles, reading English books, comics, or magazines for more than 30 minutes. Overall, the study shows that children were exposed to English each day through different types of media. Myer-Scotton (2006) described that second language learning is more prevalent in social groups.

To sum up, the previous research cited provided evidence of the effect of language exposure to language learning. The present study, however, aims to identify the level of the English language exposure and determine the different activities that positively expose the students to the English language.

METHOD

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Further, only descriptive statistics were used to describe the common activities that expose students to the target language. The respondents for the research are students of Visayas State University. Using random sampling, 203 students were selected. Utilizing an English language exposure questionnaire adapted from Magno, Bunagan, and Regodon (2009), the researcher determined the frequency of time in which an individual has contact with a second language. The researcher also pinpointed the activities that engaged the students in the use of the target language. The instrument was developed for students who use English as a second language.

The survey questionnaire was answered during the respondents' vacant time. The procedure of answering was clearly explained to the students, and it was mentioned that there was no right or wrong answer, and that truthful answers were necessary for the accuracy of the result.

The items for the English exposure questionnaire present the situations where English is spoken at home, with friends, at school, and on media. There is a total of 23 items that portray situations where an individual comes in contact with the English language. The questionnaire was used in a previous study conducted by Magno et.al.

The questionnaire used a Likert-type scale where students selected among always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. Score in each item ranges from 5- always, 4- often, 3-sometimes, 2-rarely, 1-never. The higher the students' score, the more exposed they were to the target language. The lower the score would mean, the lesser the student's exposure to the English language.

Students' scores on the English language exposure were categorized on the following level: high for scores between 85 to 115, moderate for scores between 54 to 84, and low for scores between 23 to 53. The lowest possible score is 23, and the highest possible score is 115. The researcher calculated the range of scores by subtracting the lowest score from the highest score. Table 1 presents the distribution of scores based on language exposure levels.

Table 1. Distribution of Scores Based on Language Exposure Level

English exposure score	Language exposure level
85-115	high
54-84	moderate
23-53	low

The items on the English language exposure survey are grouped into four: home, friends, school, media, each with a detailed description of activities. Table 2 shows the arrangement of each item number.

Table 2. Arrangement of Items

Category	Total items	Item arrangement
Home	4	1,2,3,4
Friends	3	5,6,7
School	5	8,9,10,11,12
Media	10	13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Students differ on the degree they are exposed to or in contact with the English language. Items 1 to 4 were situations where English was used at home. Seventy-two students said that sometimes their parents talked in English. Seventy-five students said that English was rarely used at home. Seventy-eight students said that they sometimes used English in conversing with family members. One hundred thirty students said that they sometimes engaged in activities at home where English was used.

Items 5-7 were situations that show students' exposure to the English language when they communicated with their friends. Ninety-six students said that their friends used English to communicate. Sixty-nine students said that they sometimes attend social gatherings where English was spoken, and eighty-five students said that sometimes they used English to communicate.

Items 8-12 are situations where students were engaged or in contact with the English language at school. Ninety-two students said that their teachers often spoke English. Eighty-three students said that activities in school were often conducted in English. One hundred two students said that their classmates sometimes spoke English. Seventy-eight students said that the school always encouraged students to speak English. Seventy-nine students said that English was often used as the medium of instruction in the classroom.

Items 13-23 are situations where students are exposed to the English language through the different forms of media. One hundred one students said that they sometimes used English when they chatted online. Ninety-five students said that they used English when they sent text messages. Eighty-nine students said that they sometimes received English text messages. Ninety-four students said that they always browsed web pages that were written in English. Eighty-eight students said that they always listened to English songs. Sixty-nine students said that they always watched movies in English. Sixty-five students said that sometimes they watched TV shows in English. Sixty-five students said that they always read magazines written in English. Sixty-seven students said that they always read the newspaper written in English. Seventy-two students said that they always read books written in English. Seventy-two students said that they often read English information around.

The level of exposure to the English language under different circumstances varies, as shown in table 3. For the situations at home and with friends, the students have a moderate level of exposure to the English language. In contrast, they have high exposure to the English language at the situations at school and on media. Students were exposed to the English language when they were at school, with a mean score of 3.77, as shown in Table 3. The exposure to the English language through media follows with a mean score of 3.34. Meanwhile, the exposure to the English language with friends comes with a mean score of 2.96 and at home with a mean score of 2.72. Students are highly exposed to the English language, especially at school, mostly because English is used as a medium of instruction, and students are required to use English in conversation. In a study conducted by Dixon (2015), he found that combined English exposure at home and in the classroom improved children's English vocabulary skills. The result in their study showed that the learners' exposure to English at home allowed students

to learn and express new English words, while exposure to English in school allows learners to practice using the new words.

Table 3. Summary of the Distribution of Students' Response in Each Item

	Mean	SD	Interpretation
School	3.77	0.41	High
Media	3.34	0.40	High
Friends	2.96	0.16	Moderate
Home	2.72	0.29	Moderate

The items in the category “school” provide students high exposure to the English language. Activities include when teachers and other students speak in English, activities in school are conducted in English, the medium of instruction used in the classroom is English, and when a school encourages students to speak in English. Using different media also exposed students to the English language. Activities included are chatting online in English, sending and receiving text messages in English, browsing webpages that are written in English, listening to songs in English, watching movies and TV shows in English, reading magazines, books, and newspapers in English, and reading any information around written in English. Communicating with friends using the English language is another chance for students to use the English language. Other activities include when friends speak in the English language, attending social gatherings where English is spoken, and talking with friends in English. Results indicated that the activities that engage the students in using the English language at home are when parents speak in English language, converse with family members using the English language, and engage in activities at home where English is used.

Table 4. Activities that Exposed Students to the English Language

Item number	Mean	Interpretation
8 My teachers speak in English.	4.06	High
11 My school encourages students to speak in English.	3.94	High
12 The medium of instruction used in the classroom is English.	3.93	High
9 The activities in my school are conducted in English.	3.89	High
10 My classmates speak in English	3.05	Moderate
17 I listen to songs in English	4.11	High
16 I browse webpages that are written in English.	4.08	High
18 I watch movies in English.	4.06	High
22 I read books written in English.	3.90	High
20 I read magazines written in English.	3.73	High
19 I watch TV shows in English.	3.65	Moderate
21 I read newspapers written in English.	3.29	Moderate
15 I received text messages in English.	3.22	Moderate
13 I chat online in English	3.14	Moderate
14 I send text messages in English	3.04	Moderate

5	My friends speak in English	3.13	Moderate
6	I attend social gatherings where English is spoken	2.92	Moderate
7	I talk with my friends in English	2.83	Moderate
4	I engage in activities where English is used.	3.16	Moderate
3	I converse in English among my family.	2.61	Moderate
2	English is spoken at home.	2.57	Moderate
1	My parents talk in English.	2.55	Moderate

Two students got the highest score, which is 99. This score shows that the English language is most of the time used in language situations they are involved in. Thirty-three students got the lowest score, which is 32. This score implies that the use of the English language is minimal in various language situations. The mean score for the high exposure level is 92, the mean score for a moderate level is 73, and for low exposure, the level is 41. There is a massive difference in the mean score between the high exposure level and the low exposure level. Table 5 shows a summary of the students' level of language exposure. Forty-seven students or 23.15% from the total population of 203 have a high level of exposure to the English language, 121 students, or 59.61% from the total population, have moderate exposure to the English language, and 35 students or 17.24% from the total population have low exposure to the English language.

Table 5. Summary of Students' Level of Language Exposure

Score	Number of students	Percentage	Mean score	Level
85-115	47	23.15%	92	high
54-84	121	59.61%	73	moderate
23-53	35	17.24%	41	low

Exposure to language is vital for second language learning and proficiency. High exposure to the language gives greater chances for the learners to speak and be proficient in the target language. According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982), the language environment includes everything the language learner hears and sees in the target language. It may include a wide variety of situations- exchanges in restaurants and stores, conversation with friends, watching television, reading street signs and newspapers, as well as classroom activities.

The quality of the language environment is of paramount importance to success in learning a new language (Ismail, 2013). If students are exposed to a list of words and their translation, together with a few simple readings in the new language, they will perhaps be able to reach a degree of reading skill in the language. However, listening and speaking skills will remain unused. If one is exposed only to classroom drills and dialogues, one may acquire substantial mastery of classroom communication skills but still remain at a loss in other areas of social discourse. Without exposure, no learning can take place.

CONCLUSION

The present study reveals that the opportunities that engage learners in the English language vary. More than half of the total population of the respondents are moderately exposed to the English language. Moreover, students are exposed most to the English language when they are at school or with the use of different media compared to when they are at home or communicating with friends. Schools do promote the use of the English language since the medium of instruction is English, and teachers do encourage students to speak English. With the use of different media, activities such as chatting online, browsing the internet, watching the television, listening to music in English, reading magazines and books, and sending or receiving text messages in English provide students more time to be in contact with the English language. Students who have a low level of exposure to the English language uses it minimally in different situations. In contrast, students who have a high level of exposure to the English language uses it more frequently in various situations.

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