



The Impact of Exposure to English Language on Language Acquisition

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of exposure to English language on language acquisition. The participants of this study were 42 EFL students chosen randomly from the Department of English Language and Literature at Ajloun National University, Jordan. The students were given five sets of Likert scale type of questionnaire as the instrument of this study that consisted of 22 items. The results yielded the following results: Firstly, there was a strong impact of exposure to English language on language acquisition as the overall means was high reached (3.72). Secondly, there is a statistically significant correlation between exposure to language and developing the four language skills since the p value is (0.228), which is greater than the significant level ($p > 0.05$). Finally, the researcher recommended that students should be continually exposed to the English language through watching English movies and program, surfing the internet, listening to radio, reading English books ,magazines ,newspapers, and practicing English language with native speakers on a daily basis to encourage them overcoming their weaknesses and improving their fluency as well as proficiency in acquiring English language. Moreover, teachers and parents should raise learners' awareness towards the importance of learning English language through exposure to the language daily using different techniques that can enhance second language acquisition.

Keywords: language acquisition, language exposure, language skills

INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communication that is used to transfer ideas, information, and feelings from one person to another. However, it has been estimated that half of the world's population is multilingual (Grosjean & Miller, 1994), and the acquisition of more than one language has been connected with cognitive benefits throughout the lifespan (Bialystok, Craik & Ryan, 2006). Nowadays, English language is considered as an essential that is attended and used all over the world as a means of communication. A good command of English is the stepping stone to better educational, and job opportunities, and higher social status (Charise, 2007). With the intention of equipping the younger generation with the English communication skills required for higher education and career opportunities, public and private schools in the Arab World introduced ESL/ EFL in their educational systems .Language learning may be difficult and exciting task,

particularly for those who learn a language as their second or foreign language. Considering the importance of English language, the Ministry of Education in Jordan has outlined English as a foreign language that should be acquired by the students. It has received more attentiveness in Jordan especially in the educational field. Generally, basic education at the elementary level in Jordan consists of a series of ten years of continuous teaching. Secondary education comes after this ten-year period for two years. Although secondary education, which typically starts at age 16, is not compulsory, it includes a two-year track of sequential study in which students can join either academic or vocational programs. When this two-year educational program ends, students can take a general secondary certificate examination, also known as the Tawjihi, according to their track of specialty. The students who complete the test with a passing score are granted a special certificate. As soon as students complete this full educational system, they are qualified to obtain admission to universities. (English General Guides and curricula for Secondary Stage, MOE, 1993)

However, exposure to language can be defined as the contact that the learners have with the target language that they are attempting to learn. 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, and from different speakers. As a qualified speaker of the language, the teachers can give practical examples of language, moreover they can apply natural input from television, cassettes, video, web sites, books, and magazines. Mainly, language exposure in general, refers to contact outside the classroom. Benson (2001) defined outside-of-class language exposure term as, "*any kind of learning that takes place outside the classroom and involves self-instruction, naturalistic learning or self-directed naturalistic learning.*" The forms of outside classroom language exposure can include: listening to English programme on the radio, watching English programme and movies on the television, traveling to English speaking countries, talking face to face with English native speakers (L2 interaction), using English language in real life situations, surfing the internet using English language as well as, reading English books, magazines, and newspapers.

It is believed that learning English language needs to be encouraged and developed in the classroom and out the classroom through appropriate techniques. Such techniques help students become better able to improve their English language and to express themselves in the target language. Nevertheless, in teaching English language to learners, the researcher is not talking about writing stories or plays, which require creative gifts and powers of imagination, to judge that the learners are really weak in English language. Educators simply look forward to enabling their students to express themselves in simple correct and acceptable level of English through exposure to English language.

In fact, there is a general consensus among researchers in language acquisition that exposure to language plays an essential role in language acquisition, where learners are liable to learn languages easily, and more successfully. Basically, exposure to a language is considered successful when the learner can produce the language since learning can take place anywhere and in any time. If learners only focus on classroom activities, they will not acquire the second or foreign language probably. Many learners learn English

inside the classroom but if they do not get the chance to practice it outside the classroom they will not learn it appropriately. It should be emphasized that exposure can directly improve a target language so that language proficiency may be a result of social interaction with speakers of the target language. (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Nevertheless, an insufficient exposure to the target language can be influenced by the learner's anxiety and self-efficacy, mainly in speaking and writing. For instance, a learner studying in a country where English is spoken as a first language has a lot of exposure consequently, more chances to acquire the language. As an experienced speaker of the language, the teacher can supply learners with practical models of language, and can also use natural input from CDs, television, video, web sites, magazines, and books.

Exposure to English language is something learners run into in their everyday life. Interest and motivation are essential factors when it comes to language learning, but one should distinguish between reward and work when bringing different types of media in the classroom. Learners recognize when they are being taught when they are at school, and they may concentrate on what the teacher is presenting. But when they sit on their computers at home, watching a film or playing a game, they might learn words and phrases and use them in real life situations. This is called incidental learning (d'Ydewalle, G., & De Bruycker, W., 2007). Thus, formal classroom learning is one way to perform and learn a new language skills, although multitudes of opportunities for learning a new language can be presented outside of the classroom. Multimedia (Internet, social media, television, radio, Video games), group work and projects may assist learners to develop the target language appropriately.

Generally speaking, students' weakness in learning English language has its roots in the method of teaching, lack of motivation, the teacher, practice and interest and in the curriculum design. Though, in spite of Jordan's high profile global image and continual appearance in national and international contexts, little research has been conducted or published on exposure to English language and language acquisition.

For most Jordanian students who do not get enough exposure to authentic English speaking environment or chances to interact using English, they could only learn to improve in classes through intensive training. Many learners have studied English at schools but they did not use it outside the classroom. They have many problems in learning English language because they do not have the courage to speak in English confidently.

THIS STUDY

The present study is significant because it aims to provide evidence on the positive relationship between exposure to English language and language acquisition and its relationship to language skills. Moreover, it intends to concentrate on other studies where outside classroom activities are assessed with reference to their possible relationship with in-class performance. Additionally, it provides information for further research on exposure to English language and language acquisition.

This study tries to answer the following questions:

- To what extent does exposure to English language affect language acquisition?
- What is the relationship between exposure to English language and developing the four language skills?

LITERATURE REVIEW

To assess the relationship between exposure to English language and language acquisition, the current review begins with examining the studies focused on exposure to English language and language acquisition. Thus, exposure to L1 plays a major role in second or foreign language (L2) learning. Politzer (1965) revealed that all immigrants arriving the United States learn to speak English language since they continue exposing themselves to English language environment. If learners are exposed to the L2 in the same way as they are exposed to the L1, better accomplishment will be attained. This happens due to the natural L2 learning situation, the difficulty is to acquire the IL to manage the environment is certainly remarkable.

It should be realized that exposure to the second or foreign language (L2) is crucial in improving the first language acquisition. Kennedy (1973) explained that a learner who start on acquiring L1 is generally exposed to an affluent linguistic environment, comprises of a variety of complicated lexical and grammatical items, many of them are beyond the learner understanding. Moreover, Kennedy clarified that the amount of exposure to the L2 learner attains in class is less than the amount the learner obtains in acquiring the L1. Therefore, L2 learner is naturally a part-time learner. Despite the insufficient time learner is exposed to the L2, how the time is spent is also significant. As an alternative of having a affluent linguistic environment, the L2 learner is regularly exposed to selected lexical, phonological, syntactical, and thematic items. However, it is the teacher who determines the order of the presentation of these items to the learner.

Rajagopal (1976), observed that students who were weak in English were those handicapped by their environment. They got less encouragement to practice speaking English at home. Even their contacts outside the home did not give them with situations in which they could practice speaking the language. His findings supported the hypothesis that Malay-medium learners of ESL are unsatisfactorily exposed to English. Consequently, this is the main reason for their poor performance in the language as well as the lack of exposure to the target language is due to the fact that English is not the medium of instruction to any further extent but it is merely a subject taught in schools.

The early studies in second language exposure generally examined the "Age of Arrival" (AOA) that can be defined as the age when a person starts to live in the second language environment (Asher & Garcia, 1969; Flege et al., 1999). However, the expression "Age of Learning" (AOL) was used to stand for AOA. On the whole, AOL could be confusing as learners may start to learn second language before the arrival in the second language environment. Krashen et al. (1979) suggested that AOA is more significant, mainly when there was no exposure to that second language before the arrival. Moreover, Krashen et al. (1979) anticipated that, due to literature review of, there are three generalizations regarding the impacts of age on the speed and final success in second language acquisition: Firstly, adults progressed during early stages of morphological and syntactic

development more rapidly than children. Secondly, older children acquire second language quicker than younger children. Thirdly, learners who start natural exposure to second language throughout their childhood normally accomplish higher second language proficiency than those who beginning as adults.

Briere (1978) carried out a study among Native Mexican children learning Spanish as second language. It was concluded that the children who got the highest marks on the test of Spanish were those whose community was the contiguous to a Spanish-speaking community. Apparently, this study showed that boys who usually spent most of the time with their parents are likely to be more fluent in speaking Spanish. Therefore, the finding shows that the function of language contact in determining the success of second language learning. Basically, second language learners learning the target language in the target language community are at the benefits of being significantly exposed to the language while a large number of second language learners learning the target language outside the target language community are not.

Chandrasegaran (1979), conducted a study among Malay learners who learn English as second language. She found a strong relationship between the extent of exposure to English and proficiency in acquiring English language. The assumption was that urban learners, by living in an environment where the chance for practicing English was more available, experienced wider contact with English accordingly became more proficient in the target language. Moreover, she concluded that urban learners were better at English than rural learners. She eliminated the factor of quality of teaching in rural schools as being lower because government schools followed the same curriculum and the teachers have similar qualifications. As well as, urban learners were more motivated towards learning English language than rural learners. In conclusion, the principal hypothesis here is that learners' relative proficiency in their two languages is in some sense a function of the amount of language to which they are exposed in those languages. Moreover, the acquisition of the first language occurs in the long period of cognitive and physical development and of socialization.

The language is acquired in the context of the community of the speakers. In highlighting the significance of exposure in the first language acquisition, Steinberg (1982) claimed that learners who are exposed to language generally through overhearing adults, watching television or by conversation do not attain enough language knowledge due to the nature of the environment and speech input which learners receive to assist target language learning. However, additional exposure to the language, particularly at levels in which the speech has to be mainly modified to the learners' level of understanding, will essentially lead to more regular usages of definite words and language structure.

Ellis (2002) proposed that the more regularly the structure has been used, the more willingly the learner will be familiar with or produce the language. He assumed that learners might not be counting words as they speak or listen; nevertheless when learners process one there is a decline in processing time that indicates this increase, accordingly the perceptual and motor systems adjusted by the experience of a particular language. He emphasized that the learners can acquire the language by repeated exposure to the TL. Throughout this exposure, the learner normally uses the linguistic features of which the

language is composed. Considerably, he does not argue that L2 learners should learn TL by hearing the language only. Nevertheless, the two methods should be united, as pedagogical rules were appropriately successful when applied in process with a number of helpful exemplars of their application.

In her article, Lambine's (2008) entitled with "English just isn't a foreign language anymore", she clarified that the more exposure to the language the children can get outside the school the more they learn the target language. Generally, learners in their last three years in school (at ages 16-19) were asked to respond to the statement "*I consider English to be more like my second mother tongue than my first foreign language*". The learners generally agreed to this, distinguishing it from other foreign languages they had begun to learn afterward stage.

To find out learner's exposure to low frequency words through watching movies, Webb (2010) investigated the scripts of 143 movies. The results showed that there is not adequate exposure to make certain learning unless learners keep a normal habit of watching movies for a long time. In the course of long exposure to movies, it is probable for learners to acquire the low frequency words under the condition that they recognize the most frequent 3,000 word families.

Simultaneously, Ghaderpanahi 's (2012) study regarding using films alone as a form of language exposure to facilitate English language learning. He considered that the impact of movie watching couldn't be more effective than communicative activities, which involves more learner participation and interaction.

To sum up, the previous studies have provided evidence on how exposure to English language has positive effects on language acquisition. However, language acquisition is crucial to fluency in a second / foreign language acquisition that can be useful and helpful learning environment through exposure to target language. These studies have confirmed that a variety of forms of media can be constructive for the ESL/EFL students' language development. Many researchers have discovered how media may work as a tool for second language acquisition learning. However, the results of many studies showed that language acquisition could be speeded by explicit teaching such as that typically practiced in school. Therefore, chatting with native speakers, watching English programs, listening to English programmes and songs, practicing English through using social media and surfing information on the internet can all contribute to expose learners to English language because a massive amount is communicated in English.

METHOD

Participants

The participants of this study were 42 EFL students (among these 42 students, 15 are males and 27 are females.) chosen randomly from the Department of English Language and Literature at Ajloun National University.

Instrument

To investigate the impact of exposure to English language on language acquisition at Ajloun National University, a questionnaire was developed. To validate the questionnaire, a jury of specialists in EFL, applied linguistics, from the Department of English Language and Literature at Ajloun National University were asked to examine it, and provided their comments and suggestions. All their suggestions were taken into consideration when producing the final form of the questionnaire. The students were given five sets of Likert scale type of questionnaire. These included 'Strongly Agree', 'agree', 'I don't know', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'. This questionnaire was divided into two parts: The first part concerned with the impact of exposure to English language on language acquisition included 13 items. While the second part focused on the impact of exposure to English language on developing the four language skills contained 9 items. The questionnaires were distributed to the students in class. The researcher stayed in the classroom, while the subjects respond to the questionnaires, to answer to any questions that the students may have regarding the questionnaire. After the students had completed the questionnaires, the researcher collected all answered questionnaires to be analyzed.

RESULTS

For data analysis of the questionnaire, the researcher used the following scale: The item with the means of between (1 - 2.33) is rated Low. The item with the means of between (2.34 - 3.67) is rated Moderate. The item with the means of between (3.68-5) is rated High.

Results Related to the First Question

To what extent does exposure to English language affect language acquisition?

Table 1. Means, standard deviation, agreement degree and rank of exposure to English language and language acquisition

| No. | Statement | No. | Mean | SD | Agreement Degree | Rank |
|-----|---|-----|------|-------|------------------|------|
| 1 | Practicing English language outside the classroom in many contexts improves my English language level. | 42 | 3.64 | 1.009 | Moderate | 9 |
| 2 | Having more exposure to English language develops my proficiency in English language. | 42 | 3.98 | .966 | High | 5 |
| 3 | Doing English homework assignments and project work expands my English language. | 42 | 2.39 | 1.433 | Moderate | 13 |
| 4 | Encouraging myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake. | 42 | 3.93 | 1.006 | High | 6 |
| 5 | Exposing to English language helps me to get good marks in exams and a good job. | 42 | 3.79 | 1.175 | High | 8 |
| 6 | Watching English TV programmes, videos, or movies facilitates English language acquisition. | 42 | 3.91 | .892 | High | 7 |
| 7 | Watching a lot of English TV programmes, videos, or movies without subtitles in my own language helps me to understand English language better. | 42 | 4.04 | .930 | High | 3 |
| 8 | Using social media (Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Instagram ...) facilitates English language acquisition. | 42 | 4.06 | 1.084 | High | 2 |
| 9 | Surfing the internet helps me in learning English language. | 42 | 4.01 | .896 | High | 4 |

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|-------|--|----|------|-------|----------|----|
| 10 | Communicating in English outside the classroom makes English language acquisition easy. | 42 | 3.38 | 1.121 | Moderate | 12 |
| 11 | Using English in real life situations increases my English fluency. | 42 | 3.59 | 1.220 | Moderate | 10 |
| 12 | Travelling to English speaking countries develops English language acquisition. | 42 | 4.11 | .942 | High | 1 |
| 13 | Applying variety of techniques in the classroom by the teacher increases language acquisition. | 42 | 3.58 | .984 | Moderate | 11 |
| Total | | 42 | 3.72 | .278 | High | |

Table (1) showed the results of the effect of exposure to English language on language acquisition .It illustrated that item no. 12 "Traveling to English speaking countries develops English language acquisition" reached the highest means (4.11) by standard deviation (.942) and classified in the first rank. In the second rank was item no. (8) "Using social media (Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Instagram ...) facilitates English language acquisition." The means reached (4.04) by standard deviation (1.084). Items (2,4,5,6,7 ,8 ,9 and 12) means were high .The rest of the items means were moderate. Finally, the overall means was high reached (3.72). Thus, the results presented a strong effect of exposure to English language and language acquisition.

Results Related to the Second Question

What is the relationship between exposure to English language and developing the four language skills?

Table 2. Means, Standard of Deviation, Agreement Degree and Rank of Exposure to English Language and Developing the Four Language Skills

| No. | Statement | No. | Mean | SD | Agreement Degree | Rank |
|-------|--|-----|------|------|------------------|------|
| 1 | Listening to English programmes and songs helps me to understand English language better. | 42 | 4.30 | .915 | High | 2 |
| 2 | Listening to English programmes and songs improves my English pronunciation. | 42 | 3.91 | .819 | High | 5 |
| 3 | Talking face to face with English native speakers is beneficial and enjoyable. | 42 | 4.43 | .668 | High | 1 |
| 4 | Talking on the phone with English native speakers increases my English proficiency. | 42 | 3.47 | .774 | Moderate | 7 |
| 5 | Talking with English native speakers helps me to overcome my grammatical errors. | 42 | 3.24 | .872 | Moderate | 6 |
| 6 | Reading English books, magazines and newspapers increases my reading speed. | 42 | 4.13 | .605 | High | 3 |
| 7 | Reading English books, magazines and newspapers improves my vocabulary and spelling. | 42 | 3.12 | .974 | Moderate | 8 |
| 8 | Writing emails and research in English assists me to write in an organized way and neat handwriting. | 42 | 3.98 | .680 | High | 4 |
| 9 | Writing down the new words I pick up when watching TV or using the Internet, helps me to speak English fluently. | 42 | 2.99 | .701 | Moderate | 9 |
| Total | | 42 | 3.73 | .282 | High | |

Table (2) presented the results of the relationship between exposure to English language and developing the four language skills (listening, speaking ,reading and writing) .It demonstrated that item no. 3 " Talking face to face with English native speakers is beneficial and enjoyable." got the highest means (4.43) by standard deviation (.668) and

classified in the first rank (speaking skill). In the second rank was item no. (1) " Listening to English programmes and songs helps me to understand English language better." Means reached (4.30) by standard deviation (.915) (Listening skill). In the third rank is item no. (6) " Reading English books, magazines and newspapers increases my reading speed." Means was (4.13) by standard deviation (.605) (Reading skill). In the fourth rank item no.(8) " Writing down the new words I pick up when watching TV or using the Internet, helps me to speak English fluently." Means was (3.98) by standard deviation (.915) (writing skill). Items (2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 12) were high .The rest of the items were moderate. Finally, the overall means was high (3.73).

Table 3. Correlation between Language Exposure and Developing the Four Language Skills

| | | Exposure | Language Skills |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Exposure | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .228* |
| | Sig. (1-tailed) | | .037 |
| | N | 62 | 62 |
| Language Skills | Pearson Correlation | .228* | 1 |
| | Sig. (1-tailed) | .037 | |
| | N | 42 | 42 |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table (3) examined the relationship between language exposure and developing the four language skills. As can be seen in table (3), the coefficient correlation between language exposure and the four language skills was (.228), and the significance level (.37). Therefore, there is a statistically significant at the level of significance ($P < 0.05$) between the two variables. This indicates a statistically significant correlation between exposure to language and developing the four language skills since the p value is (.228), which is greater than the significant level ($p > 0.05$) which signifies a strong significant relationship between language exposure and developing the four language skills. Therefore, the results related to the second question proved a positive relationship between language exposure and developing the four language skills.

DISCUSSION

Exposure to the English language is something learners run into in their everyday life. This approve the advantage of learning English language in the authentic language environment when they sit on their computers at home, watching a film or playing a game, they might pick up words and phrases and use them in the future. However, language exposure plays a major role in the learner's language production. It should be realized that exposure to the TL can directly develop a that language comprehension that can lead to social interaction with speakers of the target language .Thus, a reasonable amount of exposure can be affected by one's self-efficacy and apprehension of the TL. With reference to the first question of this study, the results showed that language exposure plays an essential role in the language acquisition since the overall means was high reached (3.72). Thus, the results presented a strong effect of exposure to English language and language acquisition. Politzer (1965), also addressed the same view, when he stated that immigrants arriving to the United States ultimately learn to speak English as they were continuing to expose themselves to the target language environment.

Accordingly, thorough exposure to the TL, the learner can improve the second / foreign language acquisition. Same result was garnered by Ellis (2002) stressing that learners may apprehend the target language by regular exposure to it. Throughout this exposure, the learner normally come across the linguistic features that composed language. He emphasized the results of several studies showed that language acquisition can be speeded by explicit instruction, such as that normally used by teachers in schools. Lambine's (2008) explained that the increased exposure the children get outside the school environment, it can change the way they think about the language.

Regarding to the second question of this study, the results related to the relationship between exposure to English language and developing the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) proved a positive relationship. Language learners acquire skills and knowledge by using the language, by writing and speaking, and by listening and reading. It confirmed that item no. 3 " Talking face to face with English native speakers is beneficial and enjoyable." got the highest means (4.43) by standard deviation (.668) and classified in the first (speaking skill). In the second rank was item no. (1) " Listening to English programmes and songs helps me to understand English language better." Means reached (4.30) by standard deviation (.915) (Listening skill). Drew & Sørheim (2009) amongst others argue that by listening to a CD or an audio books, the pronunciation of the learners will improve, and their vocabulary will increase. Students may even acquire native-like accents by listening to previously recorded material.

In conclusion, the results showed a significant impact of exposure to English language on language acquisition and learners who are exposed to the English language at numerous levels are more open when it comes to language learning as well as there is a strong relationship between exposure to English language and developing the four language skills.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and analysis of this study, the statistical analysis approved that there are some positive relationships between exposure to English language and language acquisition as well as in developing the four language skills.

However ,there is a strong relationship between exposure to English language and English language acquisition that can take different forms such as: listening to English programme and songs on the radio, watching English programme and movies on the television, traveling to English speaking countries, talking face to face with English native speakers (L2 interaction), using English language in real life situations, surfing the internet using English language, using social media in English language as well as, reading English books, magazines, and newspapers .Thus, studies cited in this study indicated that the significance of exposure in language learning that means the more the learner exposed to English language, the more he reads and speaks in the language - i.e. - the higher the exposure, the better the learner performs in the target language. Actually, exposure to English language improves language learning as exposure refers to the total contacts with a target language that a learner receives, both in verbal and in written forms.

The researcher recommended that students should be continually exposed to the English language through many types of media, such as movies, songs and the internet on a daily basis to help them get rid of their points of weakness and improve their fluency as well as proficiency in English. Moreover, provide quality English exposure through a variety of pleasurable and developmentally appropriate language activities /materials related to their everyday life. Besides, teachers and parents should raise learners' awareness towards the importance of learning English language through exposure to the language daily using different techniques that can enhance second language acquisition. Finally, the present study is only a small step towards doing justice to this topic. This study may help future researchers investigate this issue with a larger group in more depth and with more connection to exposure to English language and language acquisition.

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