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Language Learning & Acquisition- Understanding learning strategies

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LANGUAGE EXPOSURE AND LEARNING

Language exposure

Exposure refers to the contact that the learner has with the language that they are trying to learn, either generally or with specific language points. Referring to the language in general, it often refers to contact outside the classroom (Bacus, R. C., & Alda, R. C. (2023).

Exposure is an essential component of learning a foreign language, and learners who are more frequently exposed to the language are more likely to achieve higher levels of proficiency than those who are not.

Example
A learner studying in a country where English is spoken as a first language has a lot of exposure and so more opportunities to learn.

In the classroom
One of the most important tasks of the teacher is to give learners enough exposure to examples of language in different contexts, and from different speakers. As a competent speaker of the language, the teacher can provide useful examples of language, and can also use natural input from Internet recourse, TV, video, web sites, magazines, and books.

The difference between language exposure and learning

- The research reviews the difference between language exposure and learning. Learning a native language is completely different from learning a foreign language. The first one develops naturally without making any effort or studying any grammar rules. Babies are constantly exposed to their mother tongue by their parents or other relatives, with no pressure to produce the language immediately and correctly.
- They just repeat what they hear around them. Whereas the foreign language is not taught in a similar way and happens later than L1. Learning a foreign language is mainly based on structures and rules, and in most cases, the class environment is the only source of language input and output.

The Importance of the Learning Environment

- According to a well-known study of second language exposure, the quality of the language environment that the student is surrounded by is crucial to success in learning a new language.
- Exposure to the new language should not be the only focus when learning that language, or they risk failing to know the correct usage of language or when to use it. It turns out that some linguistic (stylistic, pragmatic, cognitive) aspects of language are not taken into granted.
- The data collected from the class observations, learners' test results, and interviews show that **the more teachers expose their learners to the foreign language, the more learners see the authentic language in context and learn it as their native language.** In that way, learners have more chances to make associations between the language and its use.

How do I feel about English?

We'd like you to talk about how you feel about English.

- How do you feel when you speak English?
- How about when you write in English?
- Does English *feel* different from speaking your mother tongue?

Share your thoughts with other learners

We asked students who've learnt English how they feel about speaking English

-"I see myself as a stronger and more confident man. I think of myself as an older person when I speak English".

-"Speaking English helps me to understand British culture and at the same time gives me a better understanding of my own culture from other people's perspective".

- "Speaking English makes me feel I'm the person I was always meant to be".

We've heard some interesting ideas and opinions there. Speaking English can make people feel like a 'different, older person' or, 'Speaking English makes me feel like the person I was meant to be' – those are quite strong feelings.

But how about you? Did you agree with any of our learners? Or perhaps you completely disagreed.

Encouraging the use of English

“You are proficient in a language to the extent that you possess it, make it your own, bend it to your will, assert yourself through it rather than simply submit to the dictates of its form ... Real proficiency is when you are able to take possession of the language, turn it to your advantage, and make it real for you. This is what mastery means” (Widdowson, 1994: 384).

People learn English for different reasons and knowledge of the language is often important in fields like medicine, business and computing.

English is becoming more and more important in order to communicate in the international world. English opens doors to employment, education and mobility. And it helps teachers and learners engage across the globe.

Learning a language is a complex process and because of this there is not just one way to teach English correctly. Lexical approach focuses on teaching real language and moves away from artificial language found in textbooks.

The Impact of *Genuine Language Exposure*

- Grammar and vocabulary are without a doubt an essential part of speaking and writing in any language however it wasn't until students start to get exposure from the outside world and comprehend the news and other TV shows by means of what they start to get a grasp of language **which is could be called genuine exposure.** Take into consideration diverse students' interests and expectations.

- **Don't Be Afraid to Make Mistakes**

It is also important for the student to understand that making a mistake on pronunciation or structure is part of the learning process and **those very mistakes are what essentially will make them stronger at mastering a new language.**

Using authentic materials

- Using authentic materials is important to generate students' imagination and motivation in all levels of language courses.

- It is suggested that these materials should be appropriate to their level, interest and needs, so that they don't feel a kind of fear or panic when faced with language that is largely unfamiliar. Using authentic materials can be rewarding and stimulating for both teacher and students.

Develop coherent and natural language through communicative tasks

In order to effectively utilize this technique, it is essential to understand what makes a communicative task a success. A communicative task is a fluency-based activity that results in heightened competency and communication skills in the students (Richards, J. C., 2005).

information gap, the role-play, *unscripted conversations*, and games like *'Find Someone Who'*

Ideally, some activities should be nearly spontaneous. All of these activities can be modified, applied and used by tutor depending on students' current level, context and what teacher expects the learners to gain from these exercises.

Students should use their English language resources effectively and creatively. (Abbasi, A. M., Mangrio, R. A., Channa, M. A., & Hanif, U. (2020).

Both communicative tasks and language exposure are important for language learners as they help to develop effective communication skills and improve language proficiency.

The use of literary texts

Bring into class enthusiasm and variety to increase language exposure

The study of literature can facilitate the development of language, aware to the learners about the cultural, promote the students' critical thinking, and their motivation in a foreign language classroom. There is a growing body of books, chapters, and articles about the value of literature in foreign language teaching programs (*Tehan, Yuksel & Inan; 2015, p. 2*).

- The use of literary texts in language classroom will be useful, because these texts show how language works in contexts. They show how language should be used. For many students literature can provide a key to motivating them to read in target language. It is increasingly evident that the course books and curriculum should be utilized, updated with emphasis on perceptual training of **reading** literature considering socio-cultural context of education and multicultural environment.

Literature should be useful in the language classroom because of the following reasons:

- It is very motivating/ It is a stimulus for language acquisition.
- It is authentic material.
- It has general educational value.
- It helps students to understand another culture.
- It develops students' interpretative abilities.
- Students enjoy it and it is fun.
- It expands students' language awareness.
- It encourages students to talk about their opinions and feelings

Times change, but to think cogently and express yourself well will always be the abilities the world needs

Data Collection:

I am going to share some experience and ideas beyond the learning ‘foreign language’ focus on English language acquisition in the context of AUL Journalism program (pre – intermediate), which immensely requires them to be independent learners, critical thinkers and problem solvers.

The participants of this study are the first year students of English at AUL. However, we should not forget that in the case of Azerbaijani universities, making significant modifications within the "standardized" curriculum (Study Program) is extremely difficult.

To tailor it according to intended implementations was our prior task. Thus, particular in Journalism program English course with projected 360 hours were split to 4 semesters (with 90 hours each 4 terms), so that it resulted with the so-called “intensive” language teaching.

Maximizing the use of English

Below are some tips for how to maximize English speaking time in your classes:

- Language exposure can come in the form of multimedia, articles, opinion pieces, and news stories. To improve students' writing skills (at pre intermediate level) it is recommended to start with *opinion paragraph* which can lead learners to broaden their perspective on their language acquisition process
- the integration of language exposure with journalistic education can lead to more skilled journalists, who can effectively communicate and report on diverse complex issues to a global audience. (Zeynalova, S.S., & Allahverdiyeva, A.M. (2017) ch.10)
- Praise learners' use of English, and highlight examples of good language use
- Deal with errors sensitively so that learners are not afraid to speak
- Help learners to speak in English by noticing where they have 'gaps' and provide language to fill these gaps (e.g. a learner uses a word in L1 in the middle of a sentence in English because they don't know the word in English)
- Make sure learners have the language they need to do the speaking activities you ask them to do
- Give clear instructions for speaking activities (and all activities!) so that learners know what to do

The importance of oral presentations

The benefits of using oral presentations in the language classroom

Presentations have also been shown to improve students' abilities in ways that can be beneficial for their future employment (Živković, 2014).

This is especially true in the EAP or ESP context, where there is a much higher chance that students will be asked to use English to present in their future jobs (Bruce, 2011).

Presentations also provide a more authentic way of practicing English than simple speaking drills.

For most language teachers the five major benefits to using oral presentations in the classroom are:

- They are student-centered.
- They require the use of all four language skills.
- They provide students with realistic language tasks.
- They have value outside the language classroom.
- They improve students' motivation.

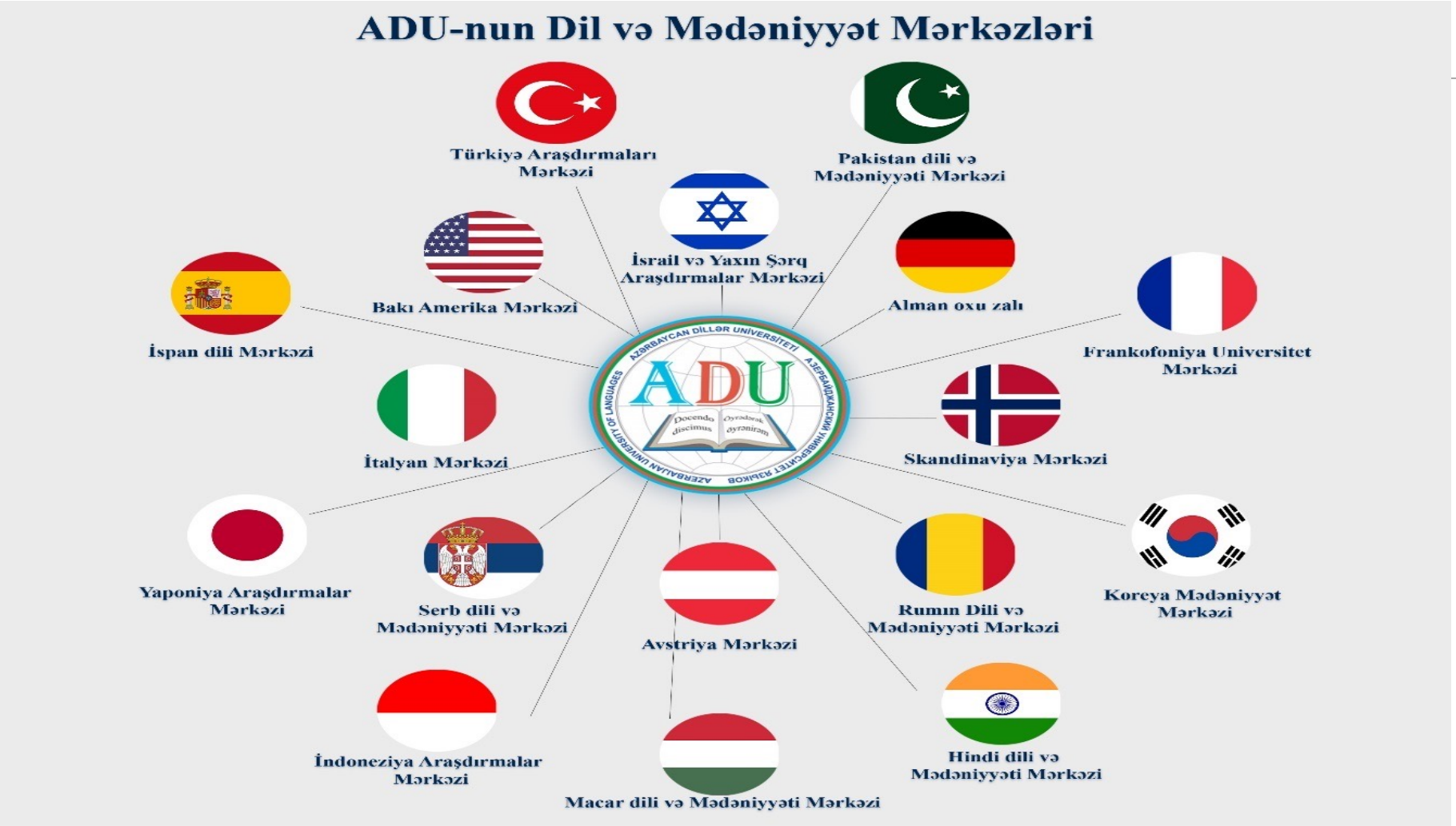
L2 exposure can happen not only during the lesson but also within the school/university

Another important finding is that L2 exposure can happen not only during the lesson but also within the school/university and outside the school/university. Today, engaging online language learning is crucial due to availability of both internet resources and online tools, which are the best assist to expose the language in an authentic environment.

The activities/strategies suggested in this study help to introduce learners to the incidental language and maximize how they learn. In this research, we also share the experiences of different language teachers and our personal ones on how to implement different activities in order to increase learner exposure to English.

AUL Language and Culture centers

https://adu.edu.az/az/adu-haqqinda/DEPARTMENTS/6.html



Conferences/ Webinars/Workshops

Conclusion

Language acquisition techniques and strategies can be highly beneficial in the language classroom and can give learners confidence “to pick up” the language instead of focusing on grammar rules or structures.

Research provides that in case of Journalism program learners there is an association between speaking English and using media platforms as dependent variables in improving media literacy. The more exposure we have to a language, the more comfortable we become with it, and the easier it becomes to recall words and phrases. Additionally, exposure can provide context for language learning, which can help improve comprehension and retention.

Over to you

- How do you think the educational system you are familiar with should be changed to meet the challenges of the future?
- What skills do you think that teachers and learners need to be part of 21st century society?

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