



Investigating Exposure to Linguistic Input in Learning English in an EFL Context

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Abstract

In today's world, English plays an essential role in education, technology, business, travel, and communication. It is spoken in different countries for different purposes and used as L1, L2, and a foreign language. In Afghanistan, it is used as a foreign language, and it is available only in English classes. The primary focus of this research is to investigate exposure to English as a foreign language (EFL) input in Afghanistan. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in this study, and a questionnaire was the data collection tool. The findings of this research indicate that the more performers are exposed to linguistic input, the better they learn English. For example, the performers who read newspapers and watched videos on social media like Facebook, Instagram, and X performed better than other students. Finally, this paper found that advanced learners performed better than other levels because they were extensively exposed to more linguistic input in real-life situations.

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1. Introduction

In today's globalised world, students across many countries are increasingly interested in learning English for a variety of purposes, including education, technology, business, and international communication. English has become the dominant medium through which people connect and exchange knowledge across borders. In Afghanistan, however, English is taught and learned primarily as a foreign language and is generally limited to formal classroom settings. Outside these classes, students have very few opportunities to use or hear English in real-life contexts. This limited exposure creates a learning environment in which students rely heavily on teachers' instructional input rather than on natural or authentic language use. Consequently, understanding how linguistic input contributes to language acquisition is a crucial area of study for improving the quality and effectiveness of English. The primary objective of this research is to examine how systematic exposure to linguistic input affects the performance of EFL learners in Afghanistan at different proficiency levels. In most EFL contexts across the country, learners are not regularly exposed to English-language input, as the dominant means of communication is the national languages, such as Dari and Pashto. Therefore, English exists mainly as a classroom subject rather than a living language used in daily interaction. This situation limits learners' opportunities to naturally internalise the language through listening, reading, and conversation. Investigating the effectiveness of linguistic input in such a constrained environment can provide

valuable insights into how English instruction can be enhanced. It also helps identify strategies that can increase exposure to meaningful input and improve overall language proficiency among Afghan EFL learners.

Being systematically exposed to linguistic input has proven to be highly beneficial for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). When students are consistently engaged with various forms of linguistic input—such as listening to conversations, watching English movies, reading authentic texts, and interacting with other speakers—their overall language performance significantly improves. The study reveals that learners who receive more exposure to linguistic input tend to perform better in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Continuous exposure allows them to internalise grammatical structures and vocabulary more effectively, enhancing both fluency and comprehension. Therefore, systematic and meaningful exposure to linguistic input plays a crucial role in fostering the success of English language learning within an EFL context.

The extraordinary effectiveness of linguistic input can be explained through linguistic acquisition theories such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Long's Interaction Hypothesis, which emphasise the importance of comprehensible input and meaningful interaction between learners and speakers. When learners receive sufficient input and opportunities to interact, their cognitive processes work naturally to comprehend and produce language. However, linguistic input alone is not enough for complete language mastery. The study suggests that other complementary strategies, such as active speaking practice, extensive reading, exposure to authentic media, and real-life communication, are also essential for effective learning. By combining systematic exposure to linguistic input with these supportive strategies, EFL learners can develop their English proficiency more efficiently and achieve long-term improvement in their language competence.

2. Literature Review

Chomsky stated that children are born with an innate capacity and that their minds are programmed with the structure of language (Chomsky, 1986). Universal Grammar (UG), which he proposed, focuses on the innate properties of language. Acquiring an L1 doesn't need systematic instruction, and parents don't teach their children any rules of grammar (MacNeilage, 1966). According to Bohannon and Stanowicz, the children acquire their L1 based on positive evidence. If the parents want to correct them, the children will produce what they think is correct (Bohannon & Stanowicz, 1988). Negative evidence doesn't rely on reasonable information, and it is insufficient to acquire an L1 (Brown & Hanlon, 1970). Children learn a language by imitating what their parents say. They try to repeat what others say. Imitation can increase learning opportunities (Williamson & Markman, 2006). Imitation doesn't mean that children learn only from other actions; it also helps them infer and reproduce goals (Meltzoff & Williamson, 2013). According to Souders, applying positive reinforcement enables teachers to develop learners' talents, interests, and personality traits (Souders, 2019). Teaching is about getting learners involved in discovering knowledge in the classroom (Christensen, 1991).

As Maag stated, Positive reinforcement is a fundamental universal principle regardless of a child's age, gender, and culture (Maag, 2001). Li argued that the reward will develop and motivate the learners' behaviour in teaching classes (Li, 2022). Long argued that modification interaction will be meaningful if the non-native speakers participate in conversation with the native speaker (M. H. Long, 1980). He also explained that input is the form used, whereas interaction is the function of the form.

Ellis stated that there are two essential roles in interaction (Ellis, 1991). 1. Comprehensible input is necessary for second language acquisition. 2. Modifications to the interactional structure of conversations. In addition, Long stated that negotiation for meaning, especially when it triggers interactional adjustment by native speakers or more competent interlocutors, facilitates acquisition by connecting input (M. Long, 1996). Comprehensible input is the most fundamental method for acquiring language (Krashen, 1989). He also indicated that there are stages for acquiring a language. Current competence is *i*, whereas *+1* is the next level. The focus of this hypothesis is on the meaning, not on the form. According to Jill G. & Peter A., we first acquire the structure and then practice using it in communication (De Villiers & De Villiers, 1978). The input hypothesis says the opposite in acquiring

a language. Chomsky proposed the black box problem (Chomsky, 1976). Something goes into the black box, and something comes out. Children hear many sentences from their parents and adults around; they process these within the black box. As Cook and Newson (2014) cited, Chomsky's Universal Grammar model is illustrated in the figure (Chomsky, 1976).

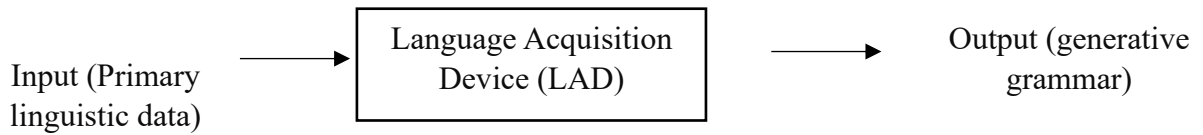


Figure 1. LAD Procedure

A language acquisition device (LAD) is a procedure that operates on experience acquired in an ideal community (Chomsky, 2006). According to McCawley, the language acquisition device is actual of language acquisition (McCawley, 1993). The effectiveness of linguistic input in learning English as a foreign language is a new subject. Current research investigates exposure to linguistic input and its effectiveness among EFL Learners in Afghanistan.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

In this study, quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied at the School of Professional and Continuing Education, where English is taught at different levels in Badakhshan Province. Exploring the effectiveness of linguistic input was the priority of this study, which was not addressed in other research conducted in Afghanistan.

3.2. Participants

In this study, 60 participants from the School of Professional and Continuing Education were included. They were chosen from intermediate, upper intermediate, and advanced classes. They also had different ages and different backgrounds.

3.3. Research Tool

The questionnaire was the tool for collecting the data, and it had four sections. 1. The first section was personal information. 2. There were four questions about Exposure to linguistic input. 3. There were eight statements about the effectiveness of linguistic input. 4. There were four open-ended questions.

3.4. Procedure

After coordinating with the School of Professional and Continuing Education, the questionnaire was distributed to intermediate, upper intermediate, and advanced classes at different times. Subjects were randomly selected, and the questionnaire was read to the participants. They had 30 minutes to answer the questions.

3.5. Validity and reliability

To ensure internal validity of this study, the questionnaire was reviewed by experienced researchers who have published many scientific articles in international journals. In the results, the findings were discussed by different researchers at Badakhshan University to remove any political biases in this study. The data were reliable, as the findings accurately represented the facts and realities of this research.

3.6. Results

This study was done at the School of Professional and Continuing Education in Badakhshan Province, where the learners used English as a foreign language. The primary focus of this research was to investigate the effectiveness of linguistic input in EFL Classes. This research suggests that the more

performers are exposed to linguistic input, the better they can use English. Chomsky proposed that the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) is essential for acquiring any language. When the learners are exposed to input, their minds will process and produce it. The results of this research also showed that, regardless of the importance of linguistic input, the learners have to practice more exercises and tasks in their teaching classes. In addition, they recommended strategies such as watching American Movies, reading different texts, and communicating with people who speak English as L1 and L2.

4. Data Analysis

Figure 2 illustrates the frequency of learners' exposure to linguistic input across four key language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The data clearly indicate that listening is the most frequently practised skill, with the majority of learners engaging in listening activities daily. This suggests that auditory input, such as listening to conversations, audio materials, or English media, plays a dominant role in the learners' language exposure. Speaking also shows a relatively high daily engagement rate, indicating that learners often practice oral communication, perhaps through classroom interactions or peer discussions. Reading and writing, however, are less frequent, with many students engaging in these activities weekly rather than daily. Only a small proportion of learners reported occasional or no exposure at all in any of the four skills. Overall, the figure demonstrates that listening and speaking are the primary modes of linguistic input for EFL learners, reflecting a communicative approach to language practice, while reading and writing appear to receive comparatively less consistent attention in their learning routines.

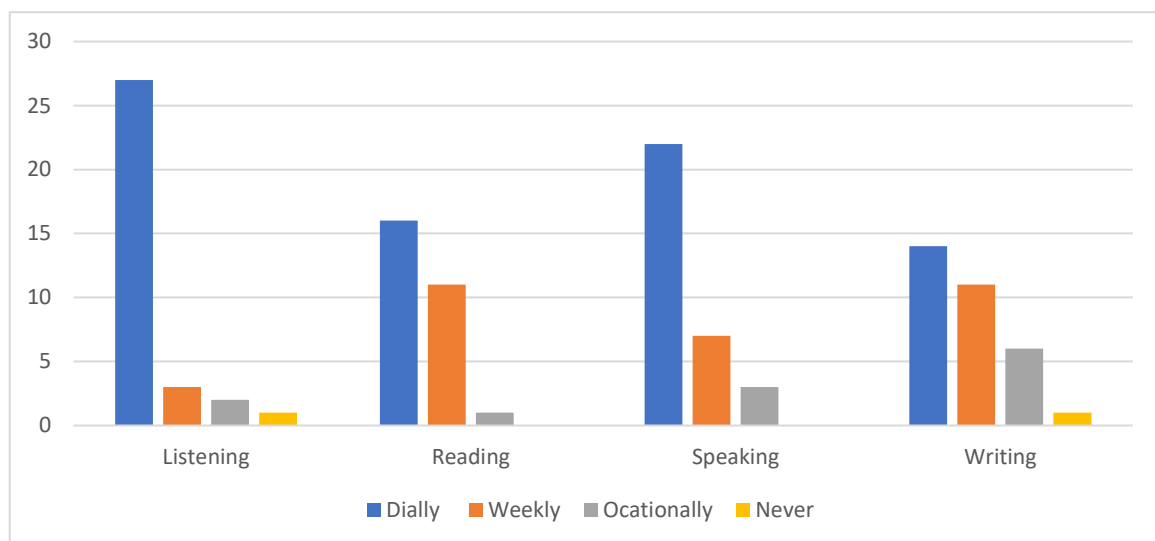


Figure 2. Exposure to Linguistic Input

The chart (**Figure 2**) shows that exposure to linguistic input will develop the learner's linguistic competence, as learners are exposed to listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills every day in the EFL Context.

Figure 3 presents learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of various types of linguistic input in improving their English proficiency. The data reveal that watching English movies received the highest level of agreement, with most participants strongly agreeing that this activity greatly enhances their language learning. This suggests that audiovisual materials provide meaningful and engaging exposure to authentic language use. Reading English articles and texts also elicited strong positive responses, indicating a significant contribution to vocabulary expansion and comprehension skills. Additionally,

conversations with teachers and interactions with other students were considered valuable, underscoring the importance of communication and social engagement in the learning process. Different forms of input, such as multimedia, repeated English input, and input from authentic sources, were also perceived as effective by many learners, though to a slightly lesser degree. In contrast, very few participants expressed disagreement, implying that most learners recognise the overall importance of diverse input sources. In summary, the figure demonstrates that learners attribute high effectiveness to dynamic and interactive forms of input—particularly movies and communication—suggesting that authentic, engaging, and varied exposure plays a vital role in successful English language acquisition.

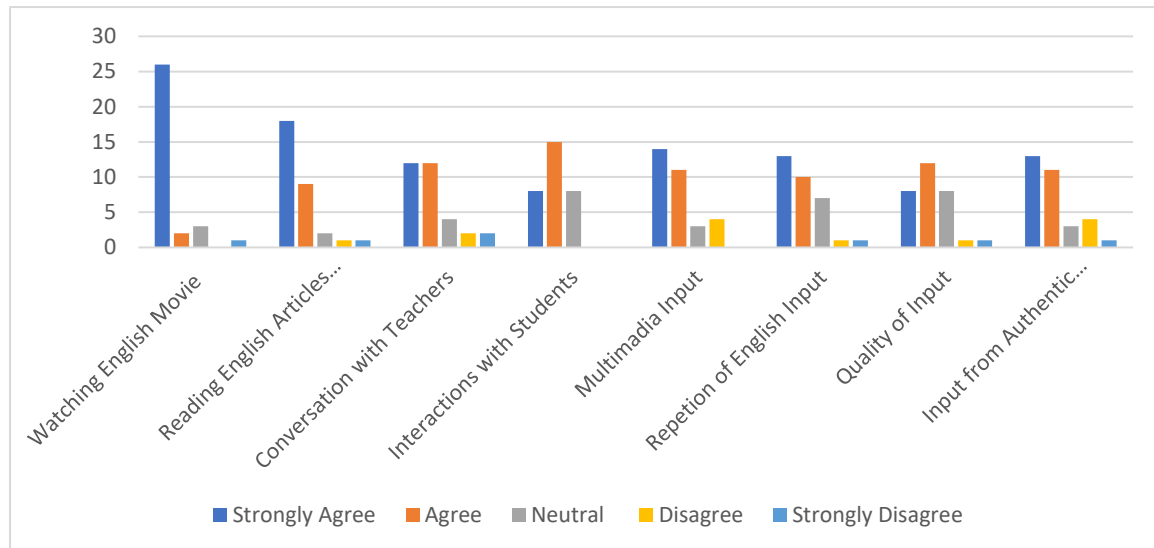


Figure 3. Received Effectiveness Input

The chart shows that learners watched movies in English more than any other option. In addition, they were exposed to reading, engaged in conversation, interacted with others, engaged with multimedia, received high-quality linguistic input, and used feedback from authentic sources to learn English.

4.1. Open-Ended Questions

In This Study, there were four open-ended questions, such as: 1. In your opinion, which type of English input has been most helpful for your learning? Most of the subjects said that speaking and listening, as well as watching American movies, would help them learn English 2. Do you believe input itself is enough to learn English, or should it be combined with other methods? Regarding this question, most learners believed that input alone is not enough to learn English; it should be combined with other methods and techniques in teaching classes. For Example, the teacher in class should not only pay attention to linguistic input but also focus on their cognitive system. In addition, communication and keeping practices were other options to learn English in the EFL Context. 3. What challenges do you face when using English input (e.g., understanding accent, vocabulary, speed)? Some technical terms, watching native-speaker movies, and speed and accent were the most challenging for learners in the EFL Context. 4. What strategies would you recommend to improve the effectiveness of English input in the classroom or self-study? Being exposed to linguistic input will be the strategy to develop their linguistic competence. Moreover, they recommended that watching different movies, listening to different audios, and reading various texts will be the strategies to improve the effectiveness of linguistic input.

4.2. Discussion

Based on the findings, some key points need to be discussed. First, exposure to linguistic input will help learners perform better than other students. For example, if the teacher assigns more texts, tasks, and homework, learners will perform better. In the teaching class, if there is a text, the learners will start reading and reviewing it. They will face the words that they have never heard or read before. Therefore,

the performers try to understand the meaning of words in different texts. In addition, watching English Movies, especially American Movies, regularly will enhance their linguistic competence. Communication was another area they focused on. Learners, particularly at an advanced level, regardless of their teaching class, have to have casual conversations with their friends. This casual conversation will help them memorise more vocabulary and enhance their speaking skill.

Reading different texts was another main point. By reading texts, the learners will notice that they don't know some new terms. They will start searching their meanings, and this process will lead them to learn more in English. They also recommend watching different movies in English, listening to L1 Audio, and doing practice tasks in English during the teaching classes.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion of the findings, this research concludes that exposure to English in EFL Classes is efficient and valuable for performers. For example, the more learners engage in different class activities, the better they understand the lessons. One advantage of exposure to linguistic input is the systematic development of the four skills. However, learning English in EFL Classes, especially in Afghanistan, is possible through a conscious way and explicit teaching. The learners must be in the class and listen to the teacher's instructions. Regardless of exposure to linguistic input, watching different videos in L1 and L2, listening to various audio in L1 and L2, and reading different texts are recommended strategies for EFL Learners.

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