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Outdoor Learning for Cadets of Maritime Higher Education Institute: The Students' Perspective

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Abstract

This paper aims to describe how motivation, attitude, input, and exposure affect learners anxiety in students uptake in acquiring English. The participants of this study are adult learners who have learned English averagely for more than ten years. Studies on SLA have illustrated that learners' anxiety could hinder them from acquiring a second or a foreign language. As an effort to reduce the tension and anxiety, a set of out-of-classroom learning activities was conducted. It was then observed how the students gradually loosened their anxiety and gained more confidence in expressing themselves in English throughout the activities.

Keywords: second language learning, anxiety, attitude, outdoor learning

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of the global society has triggered human resources in maritime fields to fulfil the higher demands as well as to keep up with the global growth and technology advancement. Graduates from maritime school and institutes are required to have higher qualification, especially in terms of speaking English and studies about their speaking skills have been conducted (Trisanti & Puspitasari, 2018). Furthermore, cadets who are still studying have to be able to understand and speak English as most of their study materials

(i.g. regulation, parts of the ship, SMCP) is in the form of English.

There are still many cadets are still not familiar with English, and it has not yet been used for effective daily communication both inside and outside the classroom. Most of the students are found anxious or even avoid people who speak English.

Thus, different programs have been implemented in order to improve their confidence and English communication skills. One of the programs was called English Camp, where the cadets were exposed to English through a medium of different outdoor activities, including games. This program exposed them to

speak in English through outdoor activities which were designed by considering external and internal factors influencing L2 and foreign language learning and acquisition.

Acquiring or learning English can be different for each individual. Some internal factors such as age, personality, experience, attitude and motivation significantly influence someone in the process of his or her second language acquisition (Ellis, 2015; Khasinah, 2014; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Likewise, external factors such as input and exposure have a significant effect on the learners. Flege's (1995, 2018) studies claimed that inputs even played a more important role than age in foreign or second language learning. Flege, Yeni-Komshian, & Liu, (1999) found that two groups of Italian adults having AOAs of 6 years were foreign-accented, and their strength of FA depended on the frequency of Italian use. These studies confirmed that exposure to a second language and the more the learners are conditioned to use it will have a positive impact on the acquisition.

Based on the explanation above, this paper is purposed to analyze questionnaire containing cadets perception of the program in which it could be used to see factors influencing SLA that appear and how the factors influence the learner in acquiring or learning English.

METHOD

This research adopts descriptive and qualitative research. It is a common type of research in education, especially to analyze teaching and learning activities. As L2 teaching and learning are complex

matters, this type of research allows researchers to not only examine how learning takes place or factors affect it, but also provide a more in-depth examination and understanding of learners behaviours and experiences (Nassaji, 2015). Different from experimental research which involves variables to be controlled and examined, naturalistic data characterize descriptive and qualitative research. Nassaji (2015) explained that they attempt to study language learning in their naturally occurring settings without any intervention or manipulation of variables. Descriptive research focuses on describing a phenomenon and its characteristics.

Meanwhile, qualitative research is purposed to see a phenomenon in holistics to gain a deeper understanding of participants, including their opinion, perspective and attitudes. The focus of this research itself is to describe an outdoor English learning program which involves different English learning activities and games as well as to highlight its characteristics. Moreover, it examines the participants, including their opinion and attitudes towards the program.

The instrument used in the study is the 5-point scale questionnaire which was given to 280 participants of the final-year cadets. The data of this research involves; (1) questionnaire form which has been filled by final semester cadets who followed the program, and (2) supporting documents, such as rundown and rules of the program. Next, the questionnaire will be examined to see the participants' perception of learning English through outdoor activities. The documents were

analyzed to give a detailed description of the program, including its characteristics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Second language (L2) acquisition defines how people learn a language other than their mother tongue, either inside or outside the classroom. In general, internal and external factors or condition plays an important role and somehow are interconnected.

External Factors

External factors are those that are coming from the surroundings of the learners or individuals. They are curriculum, instruction, culture and status, and access to native speakers (Ellis, 1997; Flege, 2018). The general claim from studies on inputs and exposures in second language acquisition is that exposure matters to bilingual language acquisition, especially exposure to the minority language. Researchers have linked amounts of exposure to language dominance to a preference in the child to use one language instead of the other (Carroll, 2015). In this case, the program was designed accordingly to support learners to speak only English during the program. In the document, it is found that all written instructions, including rules and regulation, written instruction, and games' instruction, are all in English.

Moreover, all instructors and assistants were using English during the program. The purpose of the situated circumstance is to give the learners exposure to English all the time. Another reason is because students' perception on their teachers' competence has found to have significant impact on their achievement (Lestari et al., 2018; Puspitasari et al., 2020). Rampton (2013) came up with a similar notion as the old predictabilities dissolve in contemporary globalized super-diversity. It also becomes more difficult to find the co-occurrences of

people, acts, and signs that we once anticipated, empirical analyses tuned to the total linguistic fact will become increasingly important. The globalizing world will provoke the societies into learning and acquiring second or any foreign language to become bilinguals or multilingual. In the same alignment, language attitudes will also be affected. There will be an encouragement for the majority of languages. Learners will have more exposure to the majority language that provides more stimulation to learn and acquire.

2. Apakah konten permainan yang disajikan sesuai dengan kebutuhan berbicara bahasa inggris peserta ?
280 tanggapan

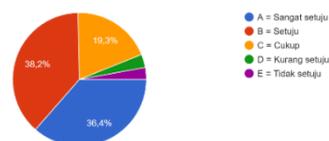


Figure 1. Games help improve participants' speaking ability

3. Apakah konten permainan yang disajikan lebih efektif dalam melatih kemampuan berbicara bahasa inggris dibandingkan dengan pembelajaran "speaking skills" dikelas ?
279 tanggapan

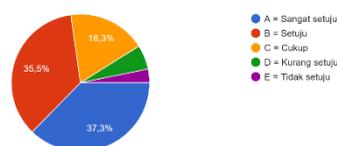


Figure 2. Games are more effective to improve speaking skills than classroom learning

Next, the input is also essential. Through the graph, it could be seen that 38,2% and 36,4% of participants have a positive perception of the content in which it reflects the input of English materials of the program. Besides, the graph shows that the majority of the participants agree that input on English outdoor activity is more effective for learning and for practising their speaking skills compared with classroom activity.

5. Bagaimana konten yang disajikan menambah kosakata bahasa inggris peserta ?
278 tanggapan

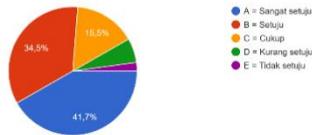


Figure 3. Contents of the games enrich participants' vocabularies

6. Bagaimana konten yang disajikan meningkatkan kelancaran berbicara bahasa inggris peserta ?
277 tanggapan

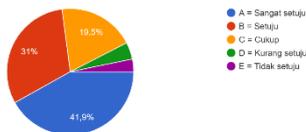


Figure 4. Contents improve fluency

Input that was given during the program results on enriching vocabulary and improving fluency. In other words, the majority of the participants have positive perceptions towards input which was used during the program.

Internal Factors

Learners' characteristics have a significant role in second language acquisition. Brown (2007) mentioned the characteristics, such as age, background knowledge, experiences, personality influence learners' successes in acquiring a foreign language and teachers' capacities to enable learners to achieve that acquisition. From the questionnaire result, it is shown that motivation and attitude appeared as factors that lower their affective filter in improving their English throughout the program.

4. Apakah konten kegiatan yang disajikan memotivasi peserta untuk ingin belajar berbicara bahasa inggris lebih lanjut ?
280 tanggapan

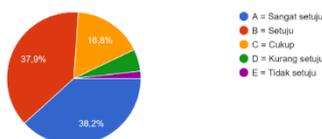


Figure 5. Contents motivate participants to learn more

1. Bagaimana pembelajaran berbicara bahasa inggris melalui aktifitas permainan ?
279 tanggapan

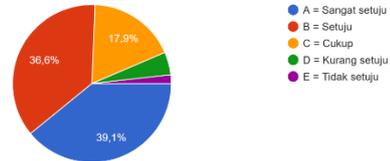


Figure 6. Games make learning English better

The graphs above show that the majority of the participants has positive perceptions towards the program as they agreed the program was carried out in the form of games. It motivates them to learn more speaking in the future. The graphs could also reflect a positive attitude and motivation as it shows a positive perception from the group.

The affective filter hypothesis refers to how effective factors could support or hinder them from acquiring a foreign language. Attitude towards the target language is viewed as a critical affective variable, in addition to motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety state. Learners with high filters (i.e., with low levels of self-confidence and motivation but high levels of anxiety) are considered to receive little linguistic input and receive less. In contrast, learners with low filters (i.e., with high levels of self-confidence and motivation but low levels of anxiety) are believed to obtain and allow in a great deal of linguistic input (McKenzie, 2010). In this case, the graphs above show that the general participants experience low affective filter as they enjoy learning speaking English in the form of games and try only speaking the language during the program.

Lastly, motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, clearly has a role in second language acquisition. Intrinsic motivation

correlates strongly with educational achievement. Learners who enjoy language learning and take pride in their progress will do better than those who do not. However, in terms of extrinsic, learners' motivation is not static but dynamic, continuously responsive to the learning conditions (Ellis, 2015).



Figure 7.



Figure 8.

The graphs above exposed the majority of participants have a positive attitude towards instructors' assistance and the method used to improve their speaking ability. Furthermore, both the program and instructors' assistance are seen as factors that contribute to the participants' positive motivation.

In conclusion, external factors could influence learners' characteristics in order to support them acquiring a foreign language. Based on the analysis above, factors influencing second language learning in the study are input, exposure, attitude, and motivation. Provision of supporting environment should emphasize on types of input and exposure, which could lower learners' affective filter in acquiring language. The result of the

questionnaire shows that a fun outdoor learning program could result in learners positive perceptions towards acquiring and learning English.

CONCLUSION

Acquiring and learning a foreign language is a complex process. It is generally influenced by internal and external factors which are interconnected. The research shows that providing a supporting environment wherein English is used all the time by learners could influence them to have a positive attitude and motivation in acquiring or learning English. Also, it is found that supporting environment which provides input and exposure in the form of fun-outdoor activities influence learners to have a positive perception towards the program. Hence, it is safe to claim that provision of external factors which are input and exposure contribute to reduce learners' anxiety and help them to acquire and to learn a foreign language through enjoyable activities successfully.

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