

Students' English Learning Exposure: Preferable Type and Geographical Location

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Abstract

Indonesia has a vast region with thousands of islands within it. Distributing equal learning exposure to English foreign language learning across the region is an inevitable issue. Several studies have been conducted either in the area of learning exposure or descriptive inferential on the effect of geography on education. However, rarely any study traces causal relation between English exposure which is affected by students' geographical area. Many aspects influence exposure, yet the location is not mentioned. Therefore, it is an important issue to be discussed, especially for distance learning institutions since it has difficulties controlling students' learning environment. By observing this case, Universitas Terbuka which employs open and distance learning can formulate a better learning approach. Using data that is extracted from 76 participants from 28 regional offices located all over Indonesia, the researcher expected to see whether there was any meaningful relationship between the exposure and the geographical location where the students live. By using a nested sampling design, the researcher administered a questionnaire followed by in-depth interviews with selected participants. A mixed method with quantitative and qualitative analysis is applied in this study. The first finding from the questionnaire showed a similar result that English exposure either in the form of watching a movie, practicing English with a friend, or listening to music is preferred over learning English in school despite the various geographical background of participants. Second, the geographical location where the students live shapes their preference for certain types of exposure.

Keywords: English Learning, Exposure, Geographical Location

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Introduction

Education as an instrumental element of human life needs to be embraced by each individual. Ideally, in each state, every person needs to have equal access to education and learning exposure. It is crucial to consider this since it will increase students' achievement and robust national development. According to Sahek (2019), school facilities in urban areas need to be similarly available to those in rural areas for all students to enjoy the facilities fit for a developed country. Sahek also added that to cultivate children's self-potential through school education, the education system must consider their developmental needs. However, it is not an easy task since the development in each area is not always equal. A state with a vast geographical area tends to deal with inequality issues. Urban and suburban achievement gaps have received a lot of attention in research on the geographic variation in educational outcomes, and these studies typically find that these achievement gaps are larger in cities or metropolitan areas with higher levels of racial-ethnic and socioeconomic inequality and segregation. (Owens 2018; Owens and Candipan 2019; Reardon, Kalogrides, and Shores 2019).

In addition, the literature on neighborhood effects on educational outcomes in densely populated areas is robust (Chetty, Hendren, and Katz 2016). Although they do not include rural areas, these analyses offer crucial insights into how educational opportunity is distributed across the biggest urban areas of the country as well as racial-ethnic and socioeconomic differences in opportunity. Moreover, the 2019 covid catastrophe put all countries on a real challenge to reach their citizen and to make sure each of the students within the nation can access available learning exposure.

Learning exposure is crucial, especially for speaking skills. The specific linguistics environment affects the second language user's proficiency towards the target language in terms of the extent of exposure. However, providing good exposure, particularly in speaking competence is not a trivial matter. It remains challenging even in a state where English is a second language like the Philippines, as it is stated by Candilas (2016) that the competencies in learning to speak the language remained a challenge at all school levels in the Philippines. We can imagine how difficult for a country like Indonesia where English is a foreign language to be able to have sufficient speaking exposure. Students need to get exposed significantly to the English language not only inside but also outside the classroom. Following Al-Zoubi (2018), it is believed that learning the English language needs to be encouraged and developed in the classroom and outside the classroom through appropriate techniques. It means we need to make sure we have given our students both exposures but before that, we need to know to what extent the exposure we have given to them. By knowing it we can fix and plan better exposure for students.

On the other side, due to the geographical issue and the pandemic, gaining good exposure is difficult. Students who live far away from the big city, where technology and access to sufficient English exposure are located, tend to experience a lack of exposure. The pandemic, on the other side, worsens the situation. Based on Global Education Monitoring Report (2021), the outbreak of COVID-19 has given an effect on the educational systems. More than 1,5 billion children around the world are affected by school closures which represent 90 percent of total enrolled students in 194 countries. Governments are challenged by the reality to have the ability to accommodate students in various kind regions or geographical backgrounds either rural or urban areas. However, a finding from Global Education Monitoring Report confirms that decisions regarding remote learning solutions were affected

by a country's income, especially when it came to "differences in adoption of online learning platforms," which highlights that "low- and middle-income countries are at a far more disadvantaged starting point for an effective transition to online learning platforms.

Speaking as one of the English skills relies on native English exposure since it is the best way to learn a foreign language as accurately as possible. To do so, teachers or language instructors often count on the internet or technology. The problem is not all students have that privilege due to economic disadvantage and that is not a good condition. The evidence shows that the disparities observed in access to the internet and information communication technologies (ICTs) at home due to the differences in socio-economic standing could widen already severe learning inequities. (Hereward et al., 2020; Dreesen et al., 2020). Although normatively, equality for learning exposure is a must, empirical finding shows otherwise. Students from rural and underdeveloped economic backgrounds experience a lack of exposure. The argument is supported by the Global Education Monitoring Report (2020) that highlights around 30 percent of students in the world cannot continue learning through remote channels, and almost three out of four in this disadvantaged population are living in rural areas and/or belong to the poorest community in their countries. Due to the social phenomena, research is interested in establishing a study on learning exposure and its relationship with the geographical background. By dividing Indonesia's area based on three time zones, the researcher wants to see how different geographical locations can have a relation or affect learning exposure particularly English speaking.

Indonesia as an archipelago nation consisting of over 17,000 islands puts the nation as a state that has a vast region that encompasses from Aceh to Papua Island. The geographical proportion of Indonesia which stretch from 1,904,569 km² (nationsonline.org) generates a problem for the stakeholder to provide accessibility of good learning exposure. Even though the state is rich in terms of natural resources, it faces difficulty to cover equal learning rights. Based on Fadhil, et.al (2020), due to their poverty or the poor educational infrastructure in the areas of Indonesia where they live, many Indonesians are unable to advance their knowledge and abilities. Additionally, he asserts that there are not many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Indonesia's less developed regions.

With the spirit of making higher education open to all (www.ut.ac.id), Universitas Terbuka (UT) Indonesia tries to reach all locations by providing 39 regional offices or UPBJJ (Unit Program Belajar Jarak Jauh). Referring to the condition, it is interesting to explore how far UT can provide learning exposure at least in a small scope such as an English class. In conducting the research, the researcher takes UT students as the sample and focuses on speaking class students. Several considerations are taken into account. First, UT students are spread from Aceh to Papua and abroad. It means that taking the sample from UT can be a representative sampling to see whether geographical location affects students' preference for a certain type of exposure compared to others. Second, long before the pandemic, UT students dealt with distance learning, something that they were familiar with. Third, speaking can be considered a lesson that demands good exposure. Pollard (2008) states that speaking is one of the most difficult aspects for students to master due to several reasons, where one of them being the demand for enough exposure to English. Therefore, selecting a speaking class can lead to the objective of this research, which is to find to what extent earning exposure, in this case, English can affect learners.

There is much research that has been conducted on the area of exposure (Domingo, 2020; Liberman, 2016). Domingo showed that 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. Liberman (2016) suggested that early exposure to multiple languages can enhance children's communication skills, even when children are effectively monolingual. On the other side, the geographical issue has been a concern in educational research such as a study from Raychaudhuri, et al (2010) that confirmed the geographical location of school result in several problems including poor attendance, resulting low achievement, increases in dropout rate and amplifies a host of social problems. Another research on geography and education can also be seen in Walter (1998). He contends that one of the factors which influence academic performance is the school location/site of the school. Most developed countries realized this, and the environment makes sure their schools are situated in the best location to minimize failure. Bradley et al. (2008) review geography and socioeconomic status, which are two major factors affecting the educational outcomes of young people. However, there is rarely research that combines learning exposure and geographical location. To conduct the research, I develop two research questions to answer. First is to what extent English exposure affects their English ability. Second, does the geographical location of the learner affect their preference toward exposure?

Research Method

In conducting this research, the researcher used a mixed method with an exploratory design. In a research study, the mixed method involves mixing or integrating data from qualitative and quantitative sources. In the mixed method, qualitative data typically has open-ended questions without predefined answers, whereas quantitative data typically has close-ended questions, such as those on surveys or psychological tests (Creswell, 2014). In the quantitative approach, we measure a quantitative range of learning exposure students gained as well as answering the first research question. We use Landell (1997) as the indicator to decide the range of questionnaire results. He divided the range of mean scores into low (1 - 2.33), moderate (2.34 - 3.67), and high (3.68-5). Meanwhile, the researcher explores qualitative data on the students' perspective on the geographical location where they live and how it affects their preference for certain types of exposure. The data is simultaneously used to answer the second research question. The research examined 76 participants from 28 regional offices across Indonesia. We divided 28 offices into 3 areas based on the division of time zone in Indonesia where the offices are located. The difference in the time zones themselves is generated based on the geographical position of the area within the Indonesia zone. The division can be seen below:

Figure 1. Indonesia time zone division

Indonesia		
Western Indonesian Time (WIB)	Central Indonesian Time (WIT)	Eastern Indonesian Time (WIT)
+7:00 UTC	+8:00 UTC	+9:00 UTC

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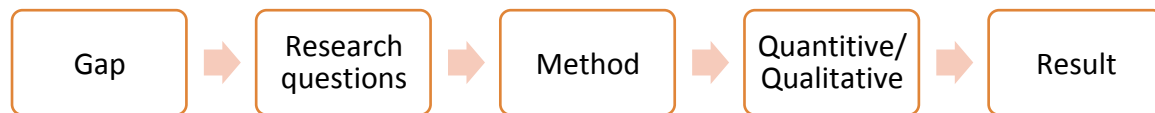


Source: <https://whichtimezone.com/asia/indonesia/>

In collecting the data, the researcher chose nonprobability with purposive technique as the sampling method. The participant accepted a questionnaire with a Likert scale which is

adapted from Al-Zoubi (2018). The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions that will measure the extent of speaking exposure students usually get. The result of it is measured and presented in the form of quantitative data. After that, the researcher chooses 6 participants that represent each of the time zones in Indonesia and interviewed them. A semi-structured interview is developed to fulfill the needs of this research. The result of the interview method is used to answer the second research question on whether does geographical region where students live affects their preference toward certain exposure.

Figure 2. Research Process



Result

Before presenting the result, we confirm that the results of this study are used to answer two research questions. The first question is to what extent the exposure affects students speaking skills and the second is whether the geographical location of the students affects their exposure preference. After analyzing the research, we found two findings.

The first finding shows that English exposure indeed affects students speaking from 3,889. If we refer to Landell (1997) on the Likert scale of measurement, those scores can be categorized as high. It means that students' level of satisfactory perception toward the learning exposure they have experienced is high. By meaning, it confirms the fact that the exposure affects their speaking skill to the extent of around 3,889. The table of questionnaire results can be seen below:

Table 1. Mean and Deviation Standard

<i>Number of Regional Offices (UPBJJ)</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Deviation Standard</i>
<i>All (28 UPBJJ)</i>	3,889	1,364
<i>WIB</i>	3,833	1,396
<i>WITA</i>	4,109	1,191
<i>WIT</i>	4,875	0,083

The second finding, we found after analyzing interview results. The result shows that geographical location matters concerning their exposure preference. At the beginning, of this study we limit to types of exposure based on four types of learning exposure (Magno, et al. (2009) where he claims there 4 types of learning exposure such as home (bilingualism), dormitory (friends), school (formal and informal), and all forms of media, both aural and printed. Thus, we found that students from more developed places or tourist spots prefer to have a friend as their learning exposure. Meanwhile, a student from an underdeveloped for instance Sorong in Papua Island prefers to have exposure to media. It happens to the ability of media such as the Internet to break geographic and economic constraints.

In addition, we also found that all interviewees are considered satisfied with the geographical location where they live. It is found that if the students are given the option to move, based on the questionnaire, none of them are satisfied and want to remain in their hometown. All of them prefer to move to other developed places like Bali or Jakarta. It means geographical

location is highly likely important in their learning or in terms of acquiring better exposure to support their learning process.

Discussion

1. Quantitative Data Analysis

The researcher conducted quantitative data analysis to answer the first research question on to what extent English exposure affects English speaking skills. To answer it, the first researcher develops a questionnaire and address it to 76 students in 28 regional offices around Indonesia. All the participants are selected using purposive sampling and all of them are the students of the speaking class. It is found that from 16 questions in the questionnaire, all of them are indisputably show English exposure does affect students speaking skills with around 3,889 which is considered high if we refer to the Landell indicator on the Likert scale interpretation.

If we break the 28 regional offices into three divisions based on the time zone, we can find that the perception of the impact of English exposure on the speaking skill of the students is also high with 3,889, 4,109, and 4,875 for students in the regional western, central, and eastern office with a standard deviation that is not significantly different. It means average students are choosing or responding to almost, if not, similar answers to the questionnaire. Although the students are not in the same geographical region. The geographical division can be seen in the tables below:

Table 2. Indonesian Time Division

No.	Regional Offices (UPBJJ)	Western Indonesian Time	Central Indonesian Time	Eastern Indonesian Time
1	Bandar Lampung	V		
2	Bandung	V		
3	Batam	V		
4	Bengkulu	V		
5	Bogor	V		
6	Jakarta	V		
7	Jayapura			V
8	Jember	V		
9	Kendari		V	
10	Kupang		V	
11	Majene		V	
12	Makassar		V	
13	Malang	V		
14	Medan	V		
15	Padang	V		
16	Palangkaraya	V		
17	Palembang	V		
18	Pekanbaru	V		
19	Pontianak	V		
20	Purwokerto	V		
21	Samarinda		V	
22	Semarang	V		
23	Serang	V		

24	Sorong			V
25	Surabaya	V		
26	Surakarta	V		
27	Yogyakarta	V		
28	Malaysia		V	

Another finding in this study is the fact that school or institution is not the most favorite and effective means of exposure for the student. In contrast, practicing outside the classroom is students' second favorite after listening to English programs and listening to music. Despite it is still categorized as a highly impactful exposure for English speaking skills, it is not the highest based on the questionnaire result. We can see from Table 3 below that the highest score is exposure that comes from "listening to English programs and songs". This finding partially rejects Domingo's (2020) claims in his study that students who expose inside the classroom perform better compared to the ones who expose at home or communicating with a friend. It means their exposure to formal English learning in the classroom is better than exposure to informal or practicing English language outside the classroom in many contexts. We can see the table of student's preferences for exposure below:

Table 3. Questionnaire on Students' Perception

No.	Statement	N	Mean	SD	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Practicing English outside the classroom improves my speaking skill.	78	4	1,329	52.6%	19.2%	10.3%	9%	9%
2.	Getting more exposure to English develops my proficiency in speaking.	78	3,987	1,334	53.8%	15.4%	15.4%	6.4%	9%
3.	Doing English homework assignments and project work expands my speaking skill.	78	3,885	1,319	46.2%	21.8%	15.4%	7.7%	9%
4.	Encouraging myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	78	3,910	1,301	44.9%	26.9%	11.5%	7.7%	9%
5.	Having exposure in English helps me to get good marks in exams and a good job.	78	3,885	1,348	46.2%	24.4%	11.5%	7.7%	10.3%

6.	Watching English TV programmes, videos, or movies facilitates speaking skill acquisition.	78	3,962	1,427	55.1%	16.7%	10.3%	5.1%	12.8%
7.	Using social media (Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Instagram ...) helps me improving my speaking ability	78	3,795	1,380	43.6%	23.1%	14.1%	7.7%	11.5%
8.	Communicating in English outside the classroom makes speaking English easy.	78	3,910	1,369	48.7%	23.1%	9%	9%	10.3%
9.	Using English in real life situations increases my fluency.	78	3,974	1,386	55.1%	15.4%	11.5%	7.7%	10.3%
10.	Travelling to English speaking countries develops speaking skill.	78	3,936	1,380	52.6%	16.7%	12.8%	7.7%	10.3%
11.	Applying variety of techniques in the classroom by the teacher increases speaking skill.	78	3,910	1,341	47.4%	23.1%	12.8%	6.4%	10.3%
12.	Listening to English programmes and songs helps me to speak English language better.	78	4,026	1,358	57.7%	12.8%	12.8%	7.7%	9%
13.	Listening to English programmes and songs improves my English pronunciation.	78	3,897	1,373	48.7%	21.8%	10.3%	9%	10.3%

14.	Talking face to face with English native speakers is beneficial and enjoyable.	78	3,833	1,427	47.4%	21.8%	10.3%	7.7%	12.8%
15.	Talking on the phone with English native speakers increases my English proficiency.	78	3,744	1,343	38.5%	28.2%	12.8%	10.3%	10.3%
16.	Talking with English native speakers helps me to overcome my grammatical errors.	78	3,654	1,317	34.6%	25.6%	20.5%	9%	10.3%

Description:

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

**Adapted from Zoubi (2018)*

2. Qualitative Data Analysis

The second research question is "Does the geographical location of the learner affect their preference toward exposure. To answer the question, we develop an interview protocol and address it to some selected participants who represent each division of the time zone. As it is previously mentioned in this study, we purposively choose 76 participants from 28 regional offices to make it easier in categorizing. We divided the 28 regional offices into 3 big areas based on their division of Indonesia time zone. The time zones are divided due to geographical location. By referring to that concept we can locate students' positions and assess their perception. The prior assumption is that the geographical location where they are located can have a meaningful relation to their perception of learning exposure.

Based on the analysis of the interview data, we found 3 findings. The first is all participants in the interview session confirm that they agree that exposure is important. The importance of learning exposure confirms the high perception score on the questionnaire in all three regions: western, central, and eastern time zone. Another finding is despite the positive response on the importance of exposure, not all students are satisfied with the amount of exposure they get. The interviewee from Samarinda argues in the interview session:

interviewer: Do you think that English exposure to improve your Speaking skill which you have received so far is enough? Why?

interviewee: Not enough. Because I never speak in English in my community. And all this time, I learn through websites or social media. I also set the language of my handphone in English.

The interview result shows an unsatisfactory response regarding the amount of exposure she has received due to a lack of ability to have active practice or the real opportunity to use her speaking skill in a real context. As we know, speaking is a skill that demands high exposure because the speaker needs to have the ability to use it in a real context. The fact that her region cannot provide it confirms the assumption of the geographic location where students live is affected by their exposure preference. As we can see that she only has access to social media or websites without having any opportunity to try her English with people around her place. Of course, this is a different matter if she lives near a tourist spot or a developed place like Bali or Jakarta where access to foreigners is not an issue.

In line with the discussion above, it reveals that of 4 interviewees only 1 interviewee prefers school as a place to get good exposure. The rest prefer the media and/or friends. This confirms the questionnaire where a school is not something that becomes the most favorite choice to gain exposure and the geographical location where students live can lead their choice toward a certain time of exposure preference. The students from more developed places or tourist spots prefer to have friends as their learning exposure. Meanwhile, a student from an underdeveloped, for instance Sorong in Papua Island prefers to have exposure to media since it is easier to be found in their location. The last finding confirms all interviewees agree that their place is not the best place to gain exposure. They see other places which are economically more developed like Jakarta or tourist spots like Bali as the best place which once again confirms the importance of the geographical matter in shaping their perspective toward exposure.

Conclusion

Exposure is one of the important factors that need to be considered in teaching speaking. The amount of exposure is crucial to know to make us aware of how far we provide it to our students as the more exposure given the better possible improvement students possibility will get during their learning process. In this study, we try to find the relationship between exposure and the geographical location where students live. Collecting data from UT students in 28 regional offices around Indonesia, based on the questionnaire, we reveal that the extent of exposure UT students have are high and learning outside the classroom and from media is the most preferable form of exposure students enjoy most. Another finding is the fact that the geographical location where students live does matter in directing the types of exposure they chose.

On the contrary, even though this study reveals some new perspectives on exposure and geographic issues, further research is needed since there is the possibility to explore and can add more comprehensive information regarding a similar study. Furthermore, bigger aggregate data and statistical inference research design can show the area that this study has not yet revealed.

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