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USING EFFECTIVE EXPOSURE TIME (EET) AS A MEASUREMENT OF EFL STUDENTS' LEARNING

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Abstract

Globalization promotes huge amount of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Effective and efficient measurements of English literacy become more and more necessary. Traditional assessments are usually carried out in the form of formal assessments which are prolonged, cost inefficient and unnecessary for most of the learners. It is important to identify an efficient and effective measurement of English literacy for EFL learners who do not live in an English environment and/or whose second language is not English. In this paper, through literature review and analysis on the existing learning assessment on EFL, 'Effective Exposure Time' (EET) is proposed as a measurement of EFL students' learning from the social learning aspect. The EET is defined under the social learning theory as the exposure time in the formal and informal learning environments on learning comprehension (reading and listening) and production (writing and speaking) of EFL from the more knowledgeable others (teachers and non-teachers) in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). By using the EET, EFL learning can be assessed efficiently and effectively.

Keywords

EFL, Social Learning Theories, EET, Learning Assessment

1. Measurement of EFL

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the learning of English by non-native English speakers. The skills of EFL are reading, writing, listening and speaking. Reading and listening are comprehension skills and writing and speaking are production skills (Bilash, 2009). In EFL, English literacy is usually measured by formal assessments. Some popular proficiency tests for assessing EFL are International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOFEL) and Trinity College London's English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL).

Although there are many different kinds of formal assessments, they are mainly for assessments with purposes like further studies and immigration. The students are required to pay and to go through assessments in the official examination centers. However, it would be time-consuming and cost inefficiently for general public to know their English literacy. With the high importance and huge amount of learners of EFL, it is important to identify an effective measurement of English literacy in EFL. This paper aims at proposing an effective measurement for EFL students' learning from the social learning aspect.

2. Literature Review: Social Learning in EFL

2.1 Knowledge Construction in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

EFL is commonly associated in the socioculture theory (Behroozizad et al., 2014) which was initiated from the theory of Vygotsky (1978) that learning is a result of social interaction. Social learning theory emphasizes on the construction of knowledge from social interaction (Vygotsky, 1962). An important concept of social interaction of Vygotsky is the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD). Vygotsky defines ZPD as the 'distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more knowledgeable others' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86) and the learner would progress via scaffolding that occurs during interacting with the knowledgeable others.

Social learning can be applied to EFL. In a study on ZPD, scaffolding and basic speech development in EFL, Khaliliaqdam (2014) proved the importance of scaffolding via communication activities in EFL. In the study, the EFL learners learnt in the ZPD. Though social interaction, learners receive and then modify the knowledge (Jarvis, 1987). In the social learning environment, the EFL learners have to be connected to others. The effectiveness learning of EFL

is affected by different factors, for instance, attitudes, motivation and anxiety (Hashwani, 2008; Shahrzad & Kris, 2016). It implies that the learning of EFL can be improved in a preferred environment of the learners. While formal learning environment may sometimes have negative impact to the learners, for example, increasing anxiety, some EFL learners can learn more effectively in the informal learning environment. Figure 1 illustrates the learning process of an EFL learner in the ZPD.

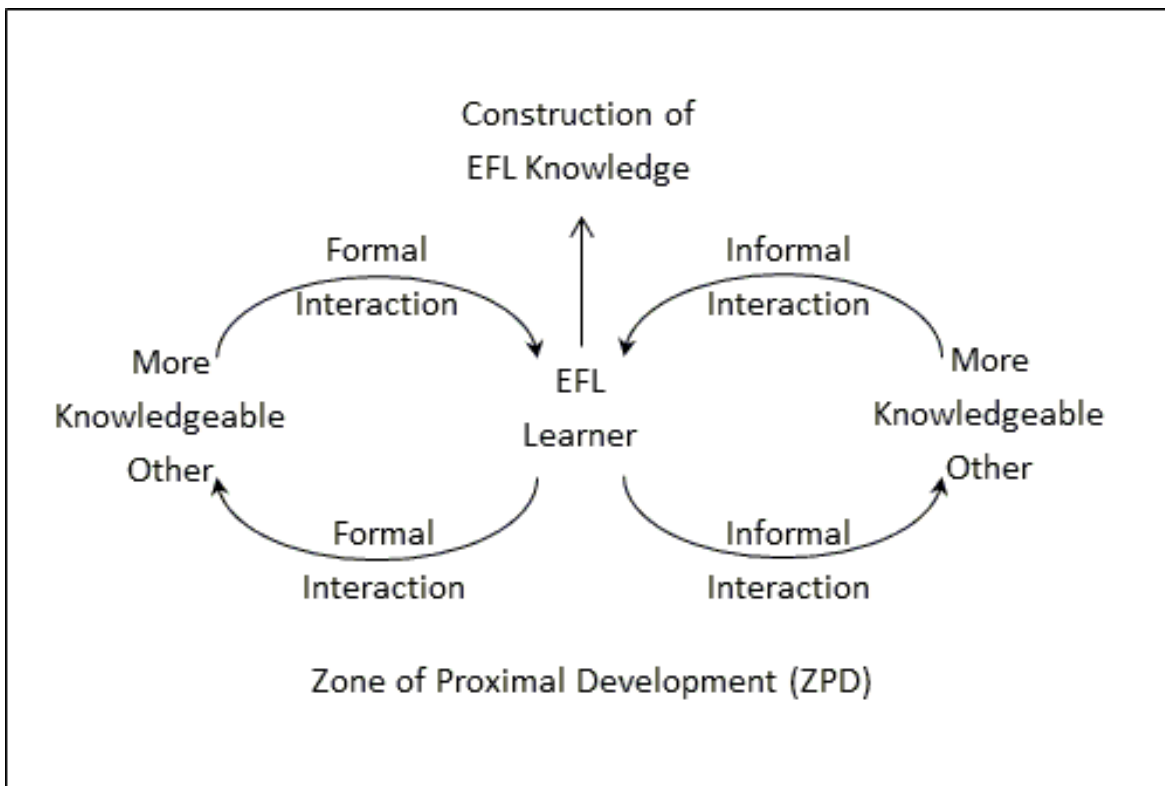


Figure 1: Knowledge Construction of EFL in Social Learning

In the social learning environment, the EFL learner interacts with the more knowledgeable others via formal interaction and informal interaction. For the formal interaction, the learning contents are predesigned, for example, for learning in the School. For the informal interaction, learning occurs in the environment where the EFL learner learns from the more knowledgeable others, for example, dining in restaurants with native English waiters. Through the social interaction in these ZPD, the knowledge of the EFL learner is constructed.

2.2 Social Learning of EFL in China

Among the countries in the world, China is the one with the most EFL learners. In China, with the introduction of open-door policy, the communication need between East and West has been increased rapidly and it led the teaching needs of EFL (Wang, 1986). The importance of EFL in China is more prominent in the recent globalized environment. Driven by globalization, English course is no longer for learning basic knowledge in English but for broadens students' horizons and learns about different cultures in the world (Zuo, 2008).

Social learning can be applied in EFL in China. In Chinese society, the teachers encourage social learning and learn by rote. For example, teachers always ask students with good results to teach the others (Zhang, 2008) and therefore the students with poor results can learn from the 'more knowledgeable others'. Students can learn EFL through informal learning environment which is unorganized and unintended. Informal learning via social learning was encouraged since the ancient time. Master Menzi encourage people 'keep learning as long as one lives' through learning from others and from personal experiences.

In the recent decade, the researchers in China have been actively conduct studies on EFL in the aspects on reading, writing, listening and speaking (Wong, 2009; Liu, 2010; Zhao, 2012). With the increasing popularity of EFL, the measurement of English literacy has become an important issue in China.

3. Effective Exposure Time (EET)

3.1 Theoretical Framework of EET

The 'Effective Exposure Time' (EET) is defined under the social learning theory as the exposure time in the formal and informal learning environments on learning comprehension and production of English as a Foreign Language from the more knowledgeable others. Figure 2 illustrates the theoretical framework of the EET from the base layers of social learning, Zone of Proximal Development, more knowledgeable others, formal and informal learning, to the top layer of EFL learning of comprehension and production.

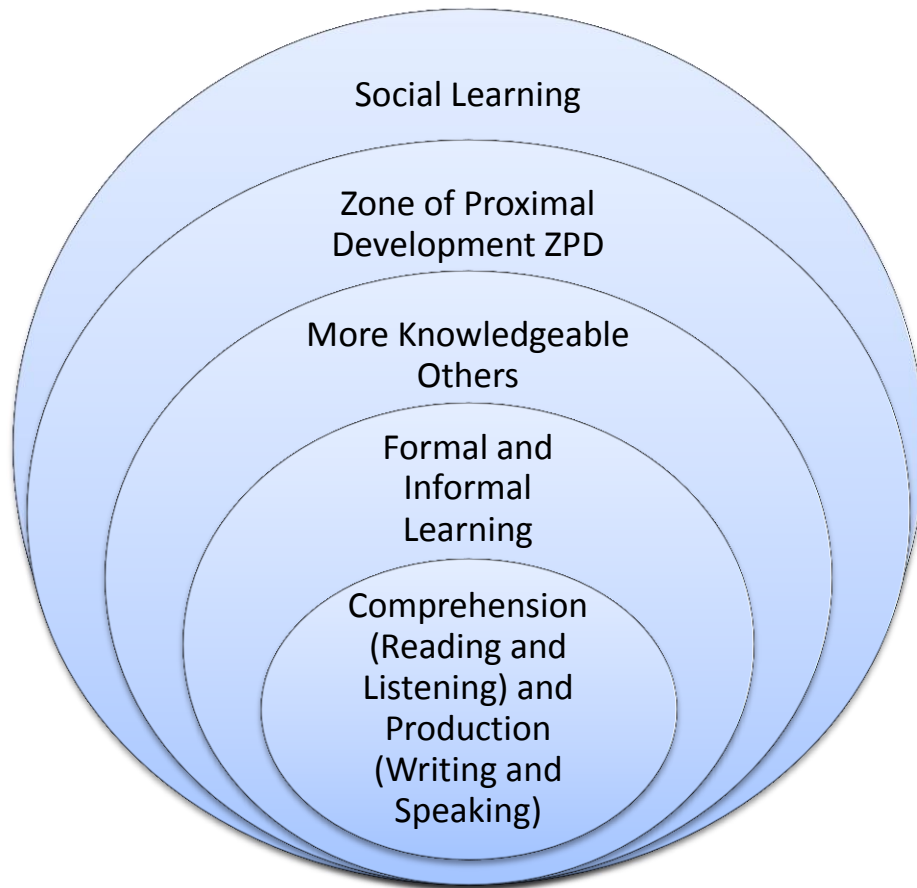


Figure 2: *Effective Exposure Time (EET) Theoretical Framework*

The theoretical foundation of the EET framework is the social learning theory and Vygotsky's ZPD. On top of them is the learning from the more knowledgeable others through social interaction. In formal learning, the more knowledgeable others are the teachers while in informal learning, everyone with better English literacy than the learner would be the more knowledgeable others. The learners learn the comprehension (reading and listening) skills and production (writing and speaking) skills from both the formal and informal learning environment from the more knowledgeable others.

3.2 Using Learning Time as Measurement

As discussed above, both formal and informal learning should be considered for measurement of English literacy in EET. The time spent of these formal and informal activities in EFL learning should be included. It has the same belief as Kozhevnikova (2014) who considers the amount of time students are exposed to the target language and culture is a factor that determines successful in language teaching and learning. She defines exposure as 'the



amount of time a person has contact with language in verbal or written form, formal or informal ways of communication, in which he or she can have either an active or passive role' (Kozhevnikova, 2014, p.4462).

For the EFL, one type of measurement of English literacy is from the exposure time in the English environment. Formal exposure time include the learning time in attending the formal classes, participating in the learning activities, having online learning and doing assignment. Informal exposure time is the informal learning outside the prescribed formal learning design. It includes learning English via talking to the native English speakers, dining in the English speaking restaurants, watching the English movies and TV programmes, listening to the English songs and visiting to the English speaking cities. The EFL students can learn English through social interaction in these environments.

Exposure Time (ET) is the time of exposing in the English environment. However, learning in these environments may not always be effective. For example, if a learner speaks English in a restaurant with a non-native English waiter with poor English, the exposure time should not be included in the EET as learning is ineffective. To learn English effectively, the key factor is to learn from 'more knowledge others'. As a result, we should consider including this factor for including the element of effectiveness in measuring English learning by exposure time. The measurement of EET, therefore, is proposed to be the exposure time in both the formal learning and informal learning English environment with a more knowledgeable other which could result effectiveness in English learning.

4. Conclusion

In order to find an efficient and effective measurement for EFL students' learning, Effective Exposure Time (EET) which developed from social learning theory as the theoretical foundation is proposed. It measures the learning in the formal and informal learning environments on learning comprehension and production of EFL, which the learning occurs in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through social interaction with more knowledgeable others.

Although the proposed EET is a sound measurement for EFL from the theoretical aspect, further studies are required to assess its effectiveness. A new proposed measurement is expected to undergo years of studies and analysis with adequate data and deep studies to prove. It is

planned to conduct several quantitative and qualitative researches, to compare the effectiveness of using EET and other assessment methods in measuring the learning of EFL.

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