

LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ENGLISH EXPOSURE OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITAS PALANGKA RAYA

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Abstract

This study discusses the learning experiences and level of exposure to English among English Education students at the University of Palangka Raya. This issue is important because English proficiency in Indonesia is still relatively low according to the EF EPI 2023 report, making an understanding of students' learning experiences and exposure relevant to improving the quality of learning. Previous studies have mostly focused on learning strategies, while the aspects of students' real experiences and their level of exposure have rarely been studied, especially in the local context. This study aims to describe the learning experiences and English exposure of students. The research design uses a mixed method involving 42 students as participants. Data were collected through closed questionnaires (Likert scale) and open-ended questions, then analyzed descriptively, quantitatively, and qualitatively. The results show that most students have fairly positive learning experiences, especially in terms of motivation and engagement in learning. However, active use of English is still inconsistent. Informal exposure through digital media, especially entertainment content, is more dominant than educational content. Meanwhile, formal exposure in the classroom and exposure through the social environment is still limited. These findings emphasize the importance of learning strategies that are able to integrate formal and informal exposure and independent learning in a balanced manner in order to support students' English language proficiency more optimally.

Keywords: *Education, English Exposure, Learning experience.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is an important tool used by people to communicate and interact with one another. In this era of rapid globalization, especially in the world of education, the use of foreign languages has become increasingly crucial, particularly English, which has become the primary language of communication in the exchange of knowledge, technology, and global culture. (Gallowa & Numajiri, 2020) state that globalization has strengthened the position of English as a lingua franca in various forms of international communication. This is reinforced by (Rose & Galloway, 2019) who emphasize the importance of the Global English's approach in teaching, given that English has now become a basic cross-cultural and functional skill.

English language learning in Indonesia has started since the colonial era, which in the current era has become a compulsory subject at various levels of formal education. This is certainly an opportunity for students in Indonesia to learn more about English and implement it into their daily lives, but it is also a challenge during the learning process. Based on data released by (EF EPI, 2023), Indonesia is ranked 80th out of 112 countries regarding English proficiency. This condition is the impetus for the need for in-depth

research on the learning experience of students in Indonesia, especially English education students.

The learning process and experience play an important role in improving students' mastery and skills, because meaningful learning occurs when students are actively involved. (Kolb & Kolb, 2018) emphasize that meaningful learning experiences are formed through a cycle of concrete experiences, reflection, concepts, and active experimentation. Unfortunately, implementing this approach in Indonesia poses its own challenges. Positive perceptions and active student participation are also crucial in shaping meaningful learning experiences. (Hidayat & Fauzan, 2021) highlight that supportive academic environments directly strengthen students' motivation and participation in EFL classrooms. These challenges include the varying quality of educators and their teaching methods, as well as the lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure. Educators in Indonesia, particularly those teaching English, must create an effective learning system that does not rely solely on lecture-based methods but is balanced with hands-on student practice. Various efforts can be employed by educators during the learning process, including leveraging advancing technology and adapting teaching methods that encourage students to engage directly.

Active learning at school must be accompanied by personalized learning. Personal learning experiences also affect the stimulation of individual development in achieving satisfactory learning outcomes. At this stage students will be challenged to take an active role as autonomous, who are able to manage time, choose material that suits their needs and maintain consistency of interest (Pahlevi, 2021). (Benson & Huang, 2020) states that students who consume English learning independently (movies, podcasts, articles, etc.), will show 25% faster development than ordinary students. In other words, learning experiences outside the classroom certainly make a significant contribution and benefit.

Based on the previous explanation, students must form a learning strategy that produces of course. As the saying goes that a building that stands firmly starts from a strong foundation, language learning also requires a strong foundation. (Richards, 2015) asserts that mastery of the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing is the key to success in language. To achieve the four basics of language, of course, supportive learning resources are needed, one of which is the utilization of digital media. The utilization of digital media, such as online learning platforms and technology-based applications, provides opportunities for students to practice the four skills flexibly and independently. Various interactive features offered by digital media allow students to access a variety of authentic materials, do repetitive exercises according to individual needs, and get instant feedback.

In addition, technology also facilitates direct interaction through social media, online forums, or virtual collaboration, making the language skills acquired more relevant and practical. As stated by (Godwin-Jones, 2018), the utilization of mobile and digital technologies in language learning significantly expands learning opportunities outside the formal classroom, as well as supporting the development of learning autonomy and increasing student motivation in mastering English. In addition, several studies emphasize the role of digital and entertainment-based media in supporting language learning. (Hanafiah, 2019) found that the use of films can increase students' speaking participation, while (Syahira et al., 2024) revealed that entertainment-based digital media has a strong appeal for learners, although it tends to encourage the use of English more in informal contexts than in formal academic settings.

Apart from the challenges described earlier, the most dominating is the absence of dedication to the introduction of foreign languages from an early age, which then has an

impact on students' unpreparedness in developing optimal English language competence. The introduction of an object or subject early on, will help the child's progress to understand and master it, which of course must be balanced with systematic support through communicative and student-centered teaching strategies, so that early exposure to language does not only become a discourse, but is truly embedded in the learning process. Another factor that contributes to this challenge is that the development of English language learning in Indonesia is hampered by limited digital infrastructure and suboptimal adaptation of learning media and curriculum load (Yulianti & Arifin, 2022).

Although both in-school and personal learning experiences play an important role, they are still not fully able to fulfil students' learning needs in developing English as a whole. One aspect that is often overlooked, especially in education, is the level of students' exposure to English in their daily lives. Students' exposure to English plays a crucial role in shaping students' linguistic character and confidence in communication. The more often students are exposed to the use of English in real contexts, whether through digital media, social environments, or the consumption of authentic content, the greater their chances of realizing the language naturally. (Liu, 2022) also notes that many EFL contexts, including in Asia, are characterized as “input-rich but output-poor,” meaning learners receive sufficient exposure but often lack opportunities to produce the target language. This condition can hinder the development of speaking and writing skills if not addressed properly.

But unfortunately, in Indonesia the realization of the use of English in everyday life, still cannot be said to be achieved because the exposure that takes place is still minimal and less authentic. This is what causes many students to think that English both at school and in everyday life is only a formality of the world of education (Meisana et al., 2020). This statement can be proven by the results of research conducted by (Astuti, 2017) in several high schools in Yogyakarta, which shows that most students feel less confident speaking English, due to the lack of direct practice opportunities in the surrounding environment. It can be concluded that the absence of a practical environment that supports authentic language causes students to only master theoretical aspects, not real communicative skills.

Given these challenges, it is important to understand that each student has a unique learning experience, which greatly influences how they receive and develop English language skills. In addition to classroom learning experiences, exposure to English through digital, environmental and independent activities also plays an important role in shaping students' language proficiency. However, to date there is little research that specifically explores how learning experiences and exposure levels affect their English learning process, especially in a local context such as Indonesia. Many previous studies have focused more on developing learning models or strategies (Alfiah, 2020; Hapsari, 2019), without considering in depth the individual conditions of students, variations in learning experiences, and their level of exposure to English. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap and is expected to answer the question “what are the learning experiences of English education students at the University of Palangka Raya? and how do English education students at the universitas of Palangka Raya experience English in their academic and social contexts?” by exploring in depth the learning experiences and levels of exposure to English experienced by English education students in Palangka Raya.

Without this research, understanding of the factors that influence students' learning experiences and exposure to English in the local Indonesian context will remain limited, making it difficult to develop appropriate learning strategies. The main purpose of this study is to describe and analyse the extent of learning experience and the level of exposure

to English among English education students. This research carries the title "Learning Experience and Exposure of English Education Students." This title reflects an attempt to answer the challenges of English language learning in Indonesia through a more contextualized approach and based on students' real experiences. The results of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically in the development of language learning literature, as well as practically in the formulation of learning strategies that are more contextual and relevant in the educational environment.

METHOD

This study uses a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain more in-depth and holistic results. According to (Creswell, 2018), mixed methods allow researchers to combine numerical and descriptive data in a single study, resulting in richer and more comprehensive findings. The quantitative approach was used to collect data through closed-ended questionnaires, while the qualitative approach was obtained through analysis of open-ended questions in the questionnaire. This combined approach aligns with the views of (Fraenkel et al., 2019), who state that in research on second language learning, the simultaneous use of quantitative and qualitative methods is crucial to capture aspects of the learning experience that cannot be fully represented by statistical data alone.

The data obtained were analysed using two techniques, in accordance with the principles of mixed methods. Quantitative data, consisting of 29 closed-ended statements, were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distribution, percentage, and mean value. The use of descriptive statistics is in accordance with the recommendation of (Fraenkel et al., 2019), which states that descriptive statistics are effective for summarizing data in survey-based educational research. Meanwhile, Qualitative were analysed using a descriptive thematic content analysis technique, with the aim of identifying key patterns in students' responses regarding the use of digital media as a means of learning English. This technique allows the researcher to organize the open-ended responses into meaningful themes, and support them with direct quotes from the respondents, in order to make the understanding of the phenomenon under study richer and more contextual (Vais Moradi et al., 2019).

This study was conducted in the English education study program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, with 42 English education students from the 2022 cohort participating. The selection of location and participants was done purposively, with a diverse background of students, enabling the researcher to obtain varied data. The participants in this study were English education students from the 2022 cohort, with a total of 42 participants. The selection of participants in this study was conducted using purposive sampling, with criteria including having actively participated in English language courses for at least five semesters and being willing to serve as respondents in this study. The use of purposive sampling aligns with the views of (Fraenkel et al., 2019), who state that purposive sampling is a technique for determining samples based on specific considerations to ensure that the data obtained is more robust.

Data collection on this questionnaire was carried out using a questionnaire containing 30 statement items, which have been compiled based on theories related to learning experience and language exposure, and have been adapted to the context of students' daily lives. According to (Fraenkel et al., 2019) the use of contextualized

questionnaires is very important in language research, so that the data obtained truly reflects the real experiences of participants. All questionnaires were distributed online via google form, to provide easy access for students. This online distribution is in line with recent research trends which show that the use of online questionnaires can increase efficiency and flexibility in data collection (Evans & Mathur, 2018). By combining these two techniques, it is hoped that the research can provide a comprehensive picture of the learning experience and exposure to English of English Language Education students at Palangka Raya University, as well as answer the research objectives that have been set.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussion of the study, organized according to the research questions. The first part discusses students' learning experiences (RQ1), followed by their English exposure across academic, digital, and social contexts (RQ2).

Research Question 1: What are the learning experiences of English Education students at the University of Palangka Raya?

Learning experiences and exposure to English have a role in shaping students' English language skills. Broadly speaking, this study aims to describe how English education students at Palangka Raya University build learning experiences and the level of English exposure they experience.

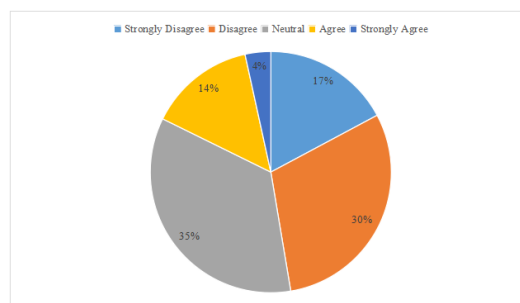


Figure 1: Students Learning Experience

The diagram above illustrates 9 statements regarding students' learning experience in the English language learning process. 35% of students chose the neutral category for their learning experience. This shows that most students still assess their learning experience at a moderate level, not fully positive or negative.

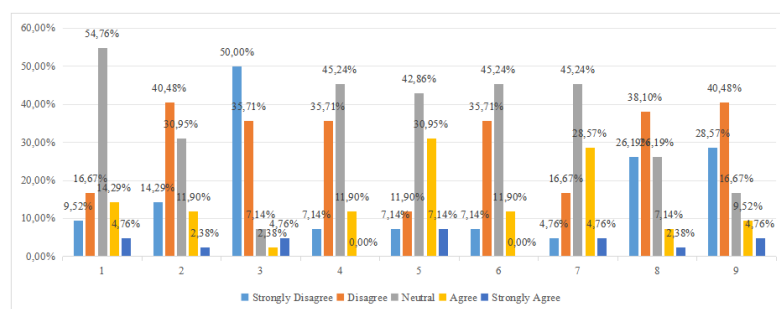


Figure 1: Students Learning Experience

Based on the bar graph of "learning experience" which illustrates the responses to nine statements in the form of a Likert scale (sts-ss), it can be seen that most students tend to be in the category of *agree* (s) and *neutral* (n) in answering statements related to their

experience during English learning. In the first statement, the majority of students 54.76% gave a "neutral" answer which indicated an attitude that was not clearly leaning, meanwhile, 16.67% chose to *agree*, and only 9.52% *strongly agreed*. This shows that there is still a distance between the expectations and reality felt by students in the learning process.

In contrast to the results of the initial statement, the second and third statements showed a positive response. there were 40.48% and 50.00% of respondents who chose to agree with the two statements. Based on the existing results, it can be said that students feel more motivated and benefit from the learning process they are undergoing, although they still do not have a very strong level of confidence in the quality of the learning experience as seen from the graph. the average strongly agree is below 15%. in line with the findings of (Hidayat&Fauzan, 2021), which states that positive perceptions of the learning experience are closely related to active participation and reinforcing support from the academic environment.

For example, in the fourth and sixth statements, 45.24% of respondents chose *neutral*, which indicated their uncertainty about the effectiveness of the teaching materials and methods used. Only 10-15% of respondents chose to agree. This finding identifies that language barriers are still a significant challenge for some students who tend to be passive-minded regarding English. Statement nine shows quite interesting results. The data shows 40.48% of respondents disagree (ts) while only 4.76% strongly agree (ss) on this statement. This result quantitatively shows that there is still resistance or doubt from most students towards the effectiveness of digital media in learning English. At first glance, this data seems to contradict the general assumption that the digital generation is very close to technology.

However, the results of the above statements contradict the qualitatively analysed open-ended answers, where more complex and rich narratives were found. In fact, some students actually mention YouTube, Tik-Tok, Spotify, Duolingo, Quizzes and other applications such as cake and character ai as media that they actively use to learn English. one of the participants 7 and 8 wrote interconnected answers: *"I am more interested in learning English through digital media such as YouTube and quizzes application. digital media provides many options for students to learn in the way they like to learn."* participant 24 also mentioned *"I agree because digital media such as you tube, Tik-Tok, and Instagram reels help me learn English in a fun and easy to understand way."*

From these responses, it can be seen that although some students explicitly disagree with the 9th statement on the Likert scale, in practice they still use and rely on digital media as a means of learning. this indicates a mismatch between explicit perceptions (attitudes towards digital media as the main approach) and actual behaviour (frequency of using digital media for learning).Further explained, the various reasons put forward by students reflect that digital media provide flexibility, interactivity, and accessibility that are difficult to match by conventional learning. students mentioned that media such as you tube provide a variety of educational and entertainment content in English that is fun, including podcasts, ted talks, songs, movies, to autocorrect features in applications such as character ai.

This finding is in line with the research of (syahira et al., 2024) which concluded that digital media has a significant role in improving English speaking skills, because students can learn according to their learning styles, whether visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic. (Hanafiah's study, 2019) confirms that the use of media such as movies can increase students' interest and active involvement in the language learning process.In addition, the flexibility of time and place, as well as the ability to learn independently and

access content at any time are the main reasons for choosing digital media. one student wrote: *"I prefer to learn using digital media because I can adjust the flexibility of time and place. I can also monitor my own progress."* However, not all students expressed the same preference. Some respondents actually stated that they did not like digital media because they considered it not in-depth enough, or because they preferred a direct learning approach with the lecturer. as stated by one respondent: *"no, I prefer to learn English directly and tangibly so that it is easy to capture and understand the material."*

This statement confirms that preference for digital media is relative and influenced by learning style, independent ability, and previous learning experience. Therefore, an effective learning approach must accommodate blended learning between face-to-face and digital media support. as stated by one student: *"in my opinion, the approach should be balanced. On campus, we get direct guidance from lecturers, while digital media can be a useful complement to practice independently outside of class."* As such, this section reinforces the importance of learning strategies that not only focus on formal approaches, but also facilitate the pedagogical and purposeful use of digital media, in order to maximize the potential of technology as an authentic, flexible, and enjoyable source of English exposure and practice.

In general, based on the results of quantitative and qualitative data, this data shows that the majority of students have a fairly positive learning experience during the English learning process, especially in the aspects of motivation and engagement. it's just that it is still necessary to pay attention to effective learning strategies, which not only focus on formal approaches but also facilitate the use of digital media in a pedagogical and directed manner, in order to maximize the potential of technology as an authentic, flexible, and enjoyable source of exposure to English. This is in line with Gardner's (1985) opinion that good attitudes and learning experiences can strengthen motivation and student engagement in second language learning. This is in line with Gardner's (1985) opinion that good attitudes and learning experiences can strengthen students' motivation and engagement in second language learning. The dominance of the "agree" category can be an indicator that the teaching methods used are quite effective and accepted by students, although the high "neutral" category also signals that there is still room for improvement in terms of more individualized and contextualized learning approaches or support. This analysis will be the basis for assessing the relationship between learning experiences and motivation in English language acquisition.

Research Question 2: How do English Education students experience English exposure in their academic, digital, and social environments?

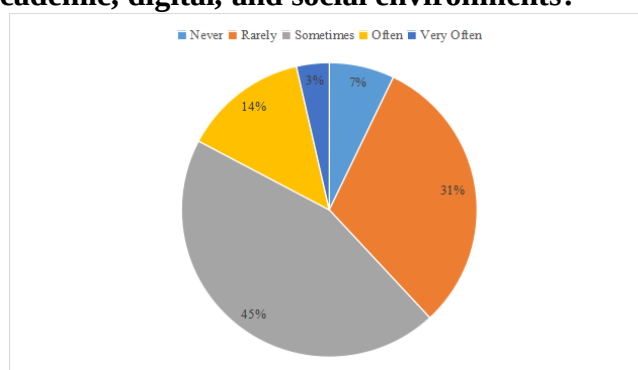


Figure 2: Formal English Exposure

The second diagram illustrates 5 statements on the level of exposure of students to the use of English in formal contexts. From the diagram above, it is known that 45% of

students chose the category Sometimes in terms of formal exposure to English. This means that the use of English in the classroom has occurred, but it has not taken place regularly and consistently.

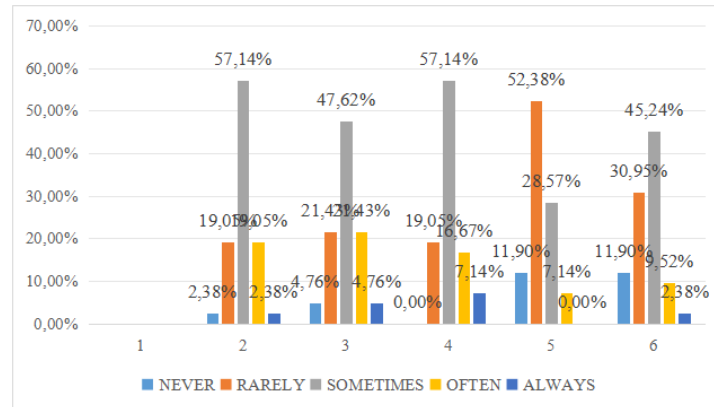


Figure 2: Formal English Exposure

Based on the results of data processing from the second bar chart, the results show that the categories sometimes and rarely are the two dominant categories that appear in almost all questionnaire statements. This shows that although the use of English in learning activities takes place, the intensity is still not high or uneven. Meanwhile, the fourth statement ("*I use English to complete school assignments*") shows 52.38% of students chose *rarely*, which means, there is still minimal application. This may be related to the point of view of students who are more comfortable completing assignments in Indonesian or the factor of habitual use of the language used daily. Similarly, statements 2 and 5 also show a tendency to dominate the category *sometimes*. This means that the use of English is still not done consistently. This contradicts the statement conveyed by (Gokcan&CobanogluAktan, 2019), "the consistency of formal exposure to the target language in an academic context greatly affects the development of students' language skills." Thus, it can be concluded that exposure to English in formal contexts in this population is classified as low intensity. The sometimes category that dominates the most reflects the potential for ongoing exposure, but not yet stable or consistent.

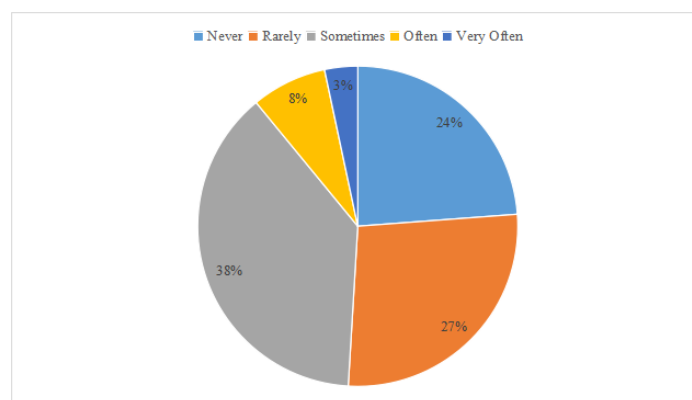


Figure 3: Informal exposure through media

In the third pie chart, the results of a statement related to exposure to English students through various digital media are shown. 38% of students chose the category

sometimes in utilizing digital media as a means of exposure to English. These results indicate that students are quite often exposed to English through the media, although there are still opportunities to get the intensity of its use.

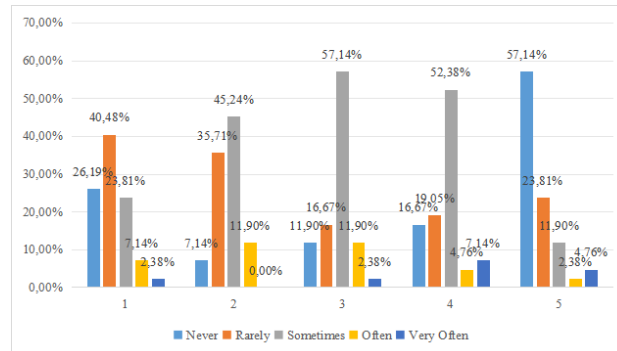


Figure 3: Informal exposure through media

Based on the results of data processing from the third bar chart, it is found that the sometimes and often categories are the two most dominant categories in almost all questionnaire statements. This shows that students are quite active in utilizing digital media as a source of exposure to English, although not yet fully consistent. In the fifth statement *"I listen to songs in English"* became the highest indicator, with 42.86% of respondents choosing the category very often. Meanwhile, in the first statement (*"I watch movies or TV series in English"*), there is a dominance of the categories often (38.10%) and sometimes (33.33%), which shows that the consumption of visual content is also quite high among students. However, in the third statement *"I read online articles or news in English"* and the fourth *"I watch news, podcasts, and other platforms in English"*, there are results in the sometimes category where 57.14% in item 3 and 52.38% in item 4 dominate, while the often category is still relatively low. This shows that students are more likely to access entertainment content than informative or academic content.

The results found above are in line with research conducted by (Syahira et al., 2024) which states that "entertainment-based digital media has a higher appeal than media that are formal educational in nature." However, this statement contradicts the findings of (Rakhman et al., 2021), which states that "online consumption of academic content can enrich students' critical reading skills", so the current condition shows a gap that needs to be improved. Thus, it can be concluded that English education students at Palangka Raya University focus more on entertainment content. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage students to utilize digital media in a more balanced manner between entertainment and educational content, to strengthen their overall mastery of English.

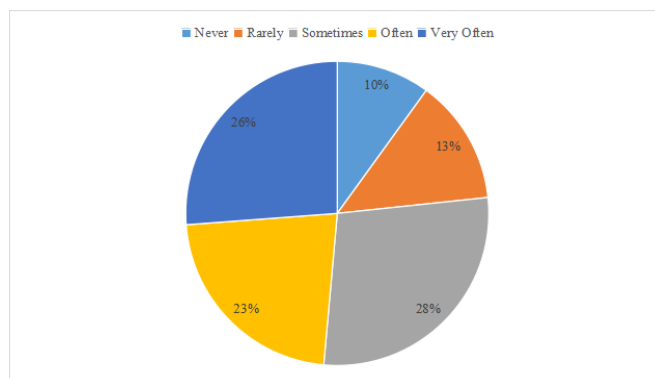


Figure 4: Informal Exposure through Environment

The fourth pie chart explains the results of the average extent to which students get exposure to English through their social environment. from the diagram above, it can be seen that 28% of students chose the category sometimes in interaction. This shows that interaction using English in the student's social environment has occurred but not optimally.

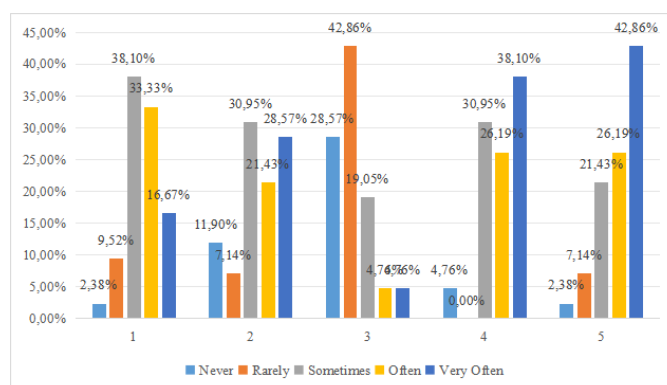


Figure 4: Informal Exposure through Environment

Based on the results of data processing from the fourth bar chart, it is found that the sometimes and often categories are the most dominant categories in most of the questionnaire statements. This shows that students' interaction with English through the social environment is already running, although not yet fully optimized. The fifth statement "I often attend activities or events (communities/clubs) that use English" occupies the highest position, with 42.86% of respondents choosing the category very often. In addition, in the first statement "I speak English with family, close people, and friends outside of class", with the category sometimes as much as 33.33% and the category often as much as 16.67% quite dominant.

On the other hand, the second and third statements show that exposure through digital environments such as social media is quite high. while direct interactions such as making friends with strangers or taking online courses are still relatively low, with a dominance in the sometimes and rarely categories. This low exposure, can be a concern for the party This finding is in line with the opinion of (Zainuddin et al., 2021), which states that "exposure through the digital environment is now one of the most accessible forms of exposure for students." However, this also needs to be balanced with an increase in direct interpersonal interactions, because as (Tan & Tan, 2021) stated, "the most effective language learning experiences still occur through direct communication in real social situations."

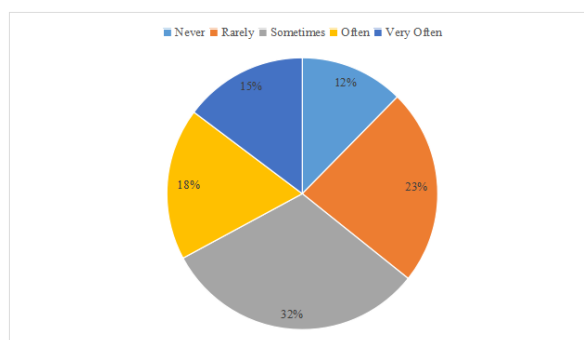


Figure 5:Active Use of English

On pie chart 5, regarding the aspect of active use of English by students in various productive activities such as writing and speaking. A total of 32% of students chose the category sometimes in terms of active use of English. This shows that most students begin to use English actively related to productive activities, although the consistency and intensity of its use still need to be improved.

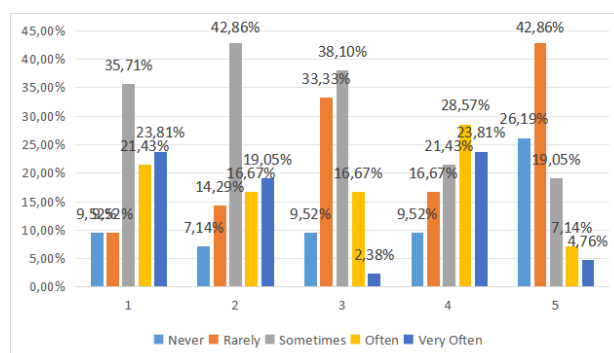


Figure 5:Active Use of English

Based on the results of data processing from the fifth bar chart, it was found that the categories sometimes and often became the most dominant categories appearing in almost all questionnaire statements. This shows that students are starting to have an awareness of using English actively, but not yet fully consistent. In the fifth bar chart with the statement "I try to translate text or sentences into English", being the highest indicator, with a total percentage of 42.86 respondents choosing the category very often, this shows that many students take advantage of translation activities as a way to practice their understanding and use of English. While in the third bar chart with the statement "I read articles or books in English independently", with a frequent category as many as 33.33% of respondents, and a category sometimes as many as 38.10%, which means it reflects the interest of students in improving their reading skills, or in other words reading has become part of the learning habits of some English language education students at Palangka Raya university.

However, in the first and second statements, which relate to writing personal journals or actively writing on social media, the sometimes and rarely categories are still dominant. This shows that productive activities based on personal expression in English are still not fully formed as a habit. (Liu, 2022) states that "the main challenge for EFL learners is the input-rich but output-poor environment, so speaking and writing skills develop more slowly." Therefore, although students have shown enthusiasm in reading and translation activities, there needs to be a stronger push to encourage them to actively

reproduce in English, either through reflective writing activities or project-based assignments. Thus, although the development of active use of English is already underway, efforts to improve the balance between receptive skills and productive skills need to be continued so that students' mastery of English becomes more optimal.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that learning experiences and exposure to English, both formally and informally, play a major role in shaping students' language skills. Although most students demonstrate positive motivation and engagement, the use of English remains largely passive and uneven, particularly in formal contexts and productive activities such as writing or speaking. Exposure to digital media is the most widely utilized source, but it is more dominated by entertainment content than educational content, resulting in suboptimal learning outcomes. From this, it is important for educational institutions to develop more balanced learning strategies—combining classroom approaches, technology use, and encouraging English-language social interaction. Moving forward, further research is recommended to explore the long-term impact of such strategies and examine how learning experiences and language exposure evolve in a broader and more diverse campus environment.

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