

## Evaluating Implicit and Explicit Exposure to ESL and Their Influence on Motivation

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Received 07/12/2021	<b>Abstract</b>
Received in revised form 27/02/2022	Extensive SLA research has led to a myriad of teaching and learning methods. Implicit and explicit English language exposures constitute important components utilized in English language education. In Malaysia, the English language status had been downgraded for a period of time after the pre-independence era resulting in reduced English language exposure in classrooms. This has contributed in producing decreased English language fluency among graduates and it has raised the question as to which of the two language exposure modes best motivates language learning. Accordingly, the present study investigated whether doing receptive and productive language activities implicitly or explicitly correlates with motivation (low to high) among Malaysian higher education students. 445 from 460 undergraduate respondents from different public and private higher education institutions were selected following data cleaning. The initial analysis for descriptive data using the SPSS was followed by the structural model analysis using the PLS-SEM. The results show that explicit ESL exposure increased motivation to learn English. Implicit exposure, by contrast, did not directly increase motivation
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to learn English. Future research should examine how implicit (vs. explicit) language exposure influences different elements of language learning (e.g., syntax, semantics) to further verify the significance of present study's measurement items.

## Introduction

The role and status of the English language has changed over time in different global regions. Various educational reforms have been observed in many parts of the world in order to prepare students for the future in a globalized world (Rashid et al., 2017). Major reforms have taken place in regions where English is not the first language. For example, educational reform has occurred to varying degree in countries such as those in Africa (Coyne, 2015), Korea (Moodie & Nam, 2016), Japan (Butler, 2015), and Malaysia (Selvaraj, 2010) over the last 12 years. In these regions, the English language has become increasingly prominent (Rashid et al., 2017). In Asian regions, Spolsky and Moon (2014) have described the recent rapid proliferation of English language education as phenomenal. Indeed, Asian English users now constitute the highest number of English users in the world. In Malaysia, English continues to expand as it is increasingly used in both formal and informal settings on a daily basis.

Just like any other formerly colonized country, the colonizer has left its language imprint on the locals. Nevertheless, the role and status of English in Malaysia has gone through several phases. The first phase began during the colonial era in Tanah Melayu (former name of Malaysia) when English was used as the formal language of administration. The second phase began when Malaysia gained its independence and the new government chose to establish Bahasa Melayu (Malay language) as the official language. This was done in order to promote unity among people with various cultural backgrounds such as Malay, Indians, Chinese, Kadazan, Iban, and Bidayuh. At this point, the English language had been downgraded to merely a subject taught in school. Even higher education institutions (especially the public institutions) were required to use Bahasa Melayu as the medium of communication. The third phase began when the government aimed to make Malaysia an education hub (see Education Act, 1996). This ambition restored the role

of English as the medium of instruction in higher education institutions. This decision was made in order to attract international students to study in Malaysia.

The re-introduction of English as the instruction medium in Malaysian public universities commenced in 2005, but only in Mathematics, Science, and Technology courses (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004). The status of English in Malaysian education, especially in higher education institutions, has continued to be a topic of interest for researchers, particularly in the context of English language proficiency among Malaysian students and graduates. The history of the English language in Malaysia has not only featured the status changes of English over time, it has highlighted the types of English language exposure that has resulted from said changes both inside and outside the classroom. In the first phase, the students were exposed to native English teachers, and these students acquired the language via daily communication. Additionally, English exposure also came from the workplace where English was the primary medium of communication. Today, the amount of English exposure in school is limited to a few hours a week, with little to no encouragement to apply the language outside of the classroom setting. To be sure, the transition of English status over time has ultimately reduced the amount of English input Malaysians receive in current day Malaysia. One of the concerns resulting from this situation is reduced language ability among Malaysian graduates (Darmi & Albion, 2012). Higher education students are expected to have a sufficient level of English proficiency so they can focus on developing language fluency whether in communication, presentation, negotiation, letter or document writing after they graduate.

With respect to the low English proficiency among Malaysian graduates, researchers have recognized that low motivation is a factors affecting the university students' learning (Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020). Some researchers refer to motivation as the combination of effort and desire to achieve a language learning objective attending with a good attitude toward language learning (Achmad & Yusuf, 2016; Ulfa & Bania, 2019). Rubrecht and Ishikawa (2012) refer to it as the degree to which a person is willing to work due to the urge to do so, and the enjoyment they experience in the process.

There are various factors that affect students' motivation to learn the English language. Previous studies have discussed the different types

of motivations among ESL learners (i.e., intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) and the factors that affect motivation, such as the feeling of competence when one is able to master a language (intrinsic motivation) or the desire to learn English to procure a better job (extrinsic motivation) (Puay, 2020). Other researchers such as Rahman et al. (2017), discovered additional factors like a teacher's influence, personal attitude, and/or parental influence. Studies focusing on the impact of language inputs (whether implicit or explicit) on learners' motivation have been hitherto limited. Therefore, student learning preferences should be well understood as they may have a significant impact on language learning motivation. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to determine i) what the preferred types of exposure to ESL (between implicit and explicit exposure) among the Malaysian higher education students are?; ii) How different types of ESL exposure impacts learners' motivation?

### **Literature Review**

Krashen's SLA theory has proposed that understandable language input and low anxiety are important factors for language acquisition (Li, 2009). According to this theory, language learners learn a second language via acquisition and learning (Li, 2009; Rebuschat, 2015). Language acquisition refers to the situation where learners subconsciously absorb the target language by way of exposure and then use it without having had communication practice. It involves merely exposing the students to the target language in order for them to acquire the structure (Shaul, 2014). Language learning, by contrast, refers to conscious and deliberate language training with feedback. It involves teaching about the target language via the intentional practice of its use, pronunciation and structure. Many researchers find that Krashen's argument that language acquisition is more important than language learning debatable. SLA researchers have also shown a considerable interest in the topic of implicit and explicit learning as discussed by previous researchers like Andringa and Rebuschat (2015), and Leow (2019). Based on Krashen's SLA theory, language acquisition is primarily an incidental process that results in implicit linguistic knowledge. Krashen has described language learning as an intentional process that results in conscious, metalinguistic knowledge. Krashen has also argued that speech comprehension and production are also the result of the acquired

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(incidental/implicit) knowledge, while learnt (intentional/explicit) knowledge is used to monitor utterances for mistakes. Although Krashen claims that there is no interface between implicit and explicit knowledge, both types of ESL exposure have unique influences on the language learning process and performance.

Al Zoubi (2018) defined language exposure as the contact that learners have with the target language. The English teacher plays a role in providing learners with sufficient exposure and opportunity to practice the language in various contexts. Researchers believe that learning English should be encouraged both inside and outside of the classroom with the appropriate techniques. The general consensus among researchers is that ESL exposure plays an essential role in language acquisition and that it encourages students to learn the language easily and more successfully (Al Zoubi, 2018). There are two types of language exposures discussed by previous researchers; namely, incidental and intentional exposure. These aforementioned exposures are also called implicit and explicit learning. While some researchers (Krashen, 2000; Truscott, 1996) are critical of the role of explicit language learning in L2, others such as N. Ellis (2002) and R. Ellis (2002) believe that it has a facilitating role. The earlier group of researchers has agreed that the emphasis should center on target language exposure via social interaction with native speakers as this can directly improve language proficiency (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005).

D'Ydewalle and De Bruycker (2007) added that learners could also learn words and phrases while sitting on their computers at home while playing a game. These are examples of the implicit or incidental learning of language that commonly takes place outside the classroom. Incidental learning also involves the memory encoding of a word or expression without the intention to commit the knowledge to memory (Hulstijn, 2013). Explicit exposure to the target language, by contrast, typically takes place in a formal classroom setting, where learners deliberately arrive and are fully conscious of the language lesson at hand and the fact that they are being taught (Al Zoubi, 2018) with the intention of committing the elements to memory; this is intentional learning. Researchers are committed to discovering effective ways to learn and develop ESL skills among non-native learners.

It is important to note the key characteristics defining implicit and explicit knowledge proposed by R. Ellis (2005) which are; awareness,

accessibility, and self-report. According to this researcher, implicit learners are able to access and use language through automatic processing yet they are unable to verbalise their learning. R. Ellis's (2005) key characteristics for distinguishing implicit from explicit knowledge, is that implicit exposure involves learners' experiences of the target language that happen inadvertently through other activities performed in the language. In the context of ESL teaching and learning, however, modules have focused on language proficiency instead of language fluency. While someone can be incredibly proficient, he or she may not necessarily be fluent. The term 'fluency' refers to the overall proficiency of the target language observed when individuals are able to speak and understand the language smoothly and effortlessly without excessive interruption (De Jong et al., 2015). Proficiency, on the other hand, refers to individuals who have knowledge pertaining to the language such as sentence structures and grammar and are able to form a sentence without an emphasis on language accuracy. Different types of implicit and explicit exposure are required for higher education ESL learners due to the years they have spent learning English language syntax and forming sentences in the language.

## Research Methodology

Based on the calculation of the estimated sampling size using Cohen's (1988) statistical power analysis and Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size, it was indicated that the sampling size can range from a minimum of 206 for performing multiple regression analysis to a maximum of 384. Although Cohen's (1988) statistical power analysis have been mostly chosen as the guideline for estimating the desired sample size (Chua, 2006), but this study had chosen to accept Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) recommendation for the maximum of 384 respondents given that the target population is nearly 1000000. Therefore, choosing the recommended sample size by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) would be more meaningful and acceptable while the actual population was that large. In addition, the researcher had adequate resources and sufficient time to achieve the recommended sample size, and 460 responses were acquired through the dissemination of Google form through identified English lecturers from public and private higher education institutions in different states all over Malaysia.

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The probability sampling techniques through the stratified random sampling has been selected to gain the data required as the results would represent the target population while also providing the bias control.

Items for exposure to ESL were extracted from a study on the impact of exposure to English Language on SLA by Al Zoubi (2018). The questionnaire in his study was divided into two parts; the first concerned with the impact of exposure on SLA, and the latter focused on the impact of the exposure to English language on developing the four language skills. The impacts of exposure on SLA demonstrate learners' exposure to the target language and how the exposure influence their SLA. In his study, the researcher found a strong effect of exposure to English language on language acquisition among 42 EFL randomly chosen students from a university in Jordan. Different types of exposure were ranked according to the mean by standard deviation. This study adopted the items in both sections of Al Zoubi's (2018) which were distinguished into two observed variables to measure a latent variable, exposure to ESL. The two observed variables were named as implicit exposure to ESL and explicit exposure to ESL.

There is an overlap between implicit and explicit exposure to ESL where implicit language learning involves skills and knowledge acquisition without conscious awareness, while explicit learning involves the learner's conscious and deliberate attempt to master some material or knowledge. The items in the first part of Al Zoubi's (2018) questionnaire relate to the impact of exposure to ESL on SLA which focus on the implicit exposure and incidental learning. On the contrary, the second part of the questionnaire includes items measuring the impact of the different types of exposure to ESL on specific language skills. Therefore, in this study, the earlier set of items in the researcher's study denoted the implicit exposure and the latter explicit exposure to ESL. In addition, instead of five-points as adopted in Al Zoubi's, the respondents are given seven sets of Likert scale type of questionnaire in this present study. Respondents were required to choose between (1) strongly disagree, and (7) strongly agree. Finally, following the items on implicit and explicit exposure to ESL, the questionnaire in this present study included a section for items studying the learners' motivation in ESL learning. Further explanations on the items are placed in the following sub-sections.

Additionally, a pilot study was conducted with 50 respondents among the diploma students from two higher education institutions in

Malaysia. The pilot test helped to ensure the completion of the questionnaire and to test the workability of both instrument (Kumar, 2011). Besides that, despite being extracted from validated instruments used in the previous studies by Al Zoubi (2018) and Pintrich et al. (1992; 1993), a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out to evaluate whether the measures of the construct were consistent with the researcher's understanding of the construct. This test was also carried out to further validate the instrument by testing for the respondent's comprehension of each item as the questionnaire was prepared in bilingual.

### **Items Measuring Implicit and Explicit Exposure**

The differences between items measuring implicit and explicit exposure adopted from Al Zoubi's (2018) study are shown in Table 1. These items include common activities of students in higher education. An explanation for each section was given to the respondents prior to their responses. They were informed that the items measuring implicit exposure refers to the activities outside the classroom without any learning intention, whereas the items measuring explicit exposure were the activities they do both inside and outside the classroom where the activities in implicit exposure are incidental with less emphasis on improving specific language skill. For example, IE1 refers to the practice of English language outside the classroom in general. On the other hand, the items measuring explicit exposure focus on intentional activities, such as listening to English programs and songs to improve the understanding of English language (ILP1), and to improve English pronunciation (ILP2). These items are also different from IE5 where the activity of watching English TV programs without L1 subtitles is an example of regular activity performed without specific intention for English language learning.

**Table 1***Comparison between Items Measuring Implicit and Explicit Exposure*

<b>Implicit Exposure</b>		<b>Explicit Exposure</b>	
IE1	Using English language outside the classroom in many contexts improves my English language level.	ILP1	Listening to English programmes and songs helps me to understand English language better.
IE2	Using English in real life situations increases my English fluency.	ILP2	Listening to English programmes and songs improves my English pronunciation.
IE3	Doing homework, assignments, and project work expands my knowledge in English language.	ILP3	Talking face to face with English native speakers is enjoyable and beneficial for my speaking skills.
IE4	Exposure to English encourages myself to speak the language even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	ILP4	Listening to a speech by English native speakers increases my English proficiency.
IE5	Watching English TV programmes, videos, or movies facilitates English language acquisition.	ILP5	Talking with English native speakers helps me reduce my grammatical errors.
IE6	Using social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram ...) facilitates English language acquisition.	ILP6	Reading English books, magazines and newspapers increases my reading speed.
IE7	Surfing the internet helps me in learning English language.	ILP7	Reading English books, magazines and newspapers improves my vocabulary and spelling.
IE8	Communicating in English outside the classroom makes English language acquisition easier.	ILP8	Writing emails and research in English assists me to write in an organized way.

Contrastingly, listening with the intention ‘to understand’ and being able to see talking to the native as ‘beneficial and enjoyable’ (see ILP1 and ILP3) indicate the learners’ motive to learn the language. So, it is about the individual’s intention and the items are structured in such a way to suggest that these (the song or speaking to a native speaker) are vehicles for learning. In addition, it’s typical that when a Malaysian ESL student listens to an English song, it’s about the song and not about lyrical comprehension. That amounts to echolalia. In other words, they

can sing the lyrics without understanding their meaning. Similarly, when a person is watching an English movie, they refer to the subtitles to help them understand the story. Webb (2010) found that even if the learners keep a normal habit of watching movies for a long time, they can only acquire the most frequent 3000 word families. However, if there are communicative activities involved, then the watching activity is turned from incidental into intentional because learners are more involved in communicative activities (Ghaderpanahi, 2012). So, incidental listening and speaking do not always result in comprehension. In other words, the subtext of the two items mentioned, namely, "...helps me to understand the English language better..." in ILP1 and "...is enjoyable and beneficial for my speaking skills..." in ILP3 suggest an underlying intentionality (i.e., deliberate language learning). If so, it would qualify as explicit learning.

In short, while implicit exposure can be somewhat beneficial, explicit learning is necessary to support language skills. Therefore, to evaluate the impact of intentional language learning activities on language ability, the items measuring explicit exposure are more specific whereby each activity (i.e., listening, reading, talking, and writing) is directed for certain learning purposes. ILP3, for instance, refers to the activity of talking to native speakers for the benefits and enjoyment in learning English language, while ILP5 focuses on the purpose of reducing grammatical errors. Reading activity in ILP6 and ILP7 are aimed at increasing reading speed and improving vocabulary and spelling skills, while writing emails and research in English (ILP8) is aimed at improving the ability to write in an organized way.

### Items Measuring Learner's Motivation

Items from the Motivation Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) established by Pintrich et al. (1991; 1993) were adapted to measure the learners' motivation in ESL learning. There are 14 expectancy components in the MSLQ including items developed to assess Control of Learning Beliefs (CLB). CLB refers to the students' belief in their efforts to learn will amount to a positive outcome. 10 items, as shown in Table 2, were chosen to be included in the present study that fit the purpose of the study. Some minor modifications to the original statements were made to assess the influence of exposure to ESL on

motivation. The source where these items were established was using 7-point Likert scale.

## Table 2

### *Items Measuring Learners' Motivation in ESL Learning*

Implicit Exposure	
Mot3	With extensive exposure to English language, I'm confident I can understand the basic concepts taught in this class.
Mot5	With extensive exposure to English language, I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course.
Mot6	With extensive exposure to English language, I expect to do well in this class.
Mot8	With extensive exposure to English language, I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in this class.
Mot9	I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses.
Mot10	It is important for me to learn the course material in this class.
Mot11	I am very interested in the content area of this course.
Mot12	I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.
Mot13	I like the subject matter of this course.
Mot14	Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important.

## Data Analysis

The data collected in this study was first analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Window version 25 (SPSS 25). Data were entered in SPSS, run for calculation, and prepared for further analysis. Once these steps were completed, the research commenced on running several types of pre-determined analyses including internal consistency, descriptive analyses, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). These tests are necessary to provide information that defines a set of factors in a situation, established the goodness of measures, as well as to achieve research objectives by answering the research questions and verifying the hypotheses model of the study.

The results on factor loadings showed a clean distribution of items into two separate components of implicit and explicit exposure with the values ranging between .623 and .814. In establishing the conceptual

connections among the items measuring exposure to ESL, the principal component analysis through varimax rotation normalization was employed by using KMO. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy value in this analysis was .948 proving that the items were interrelated. Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant with p-value less than .001. The results also indicated that the anti-image correlation matrix was significant with values greater than .5, and thus the factor analysis undertaken was appropriate. In addition, the eigenvalue of 9.582 and accounted for 63.88% of the variance in the data.

### Analysis on Implicit Exposure to ESL

Implicit exposure to ESL as used in the current theories of SLA and cognitive science in general refers to unconscious learning of facts. This type of learning is sometimes said to take place incidentally (Hulstijn, 2013) as rendered in the items developed and tested by Al Zoubi (2018) in his study on the impacts of exposure on SLA. It can be assumed that different activities represented by different items in this section indicates implicit exposure to ESL carried out incidentally at a non-specific timing. The mean score of each item measuring implicit exposure is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Analysis Results for Implicit Exposure to ESL*

Code	Mean	STD	Min.	Max.
IE1	5.99	1.088	2	7
IE2	6.16	.954	3	7
IE3	5.87	1.124	2	7
IE4	5.89	1.065	2	7
IE5	6.26	.988	2	7
IE6	6.08	1.017	2	7
IE7	5.95	1.082	2	7
IE8	6.00	1.064	2	7

Based on Table 3, it can be suggested that most of the responses lean towards the sixth point in the scale, being 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree. The highest mean scored by IE5 but recorded low

variation among the respondents ( $M=6.26$ ;  $STD=.988$ ). The statement reveals that watching a lot of English TV programs, videos, and movies without subtitles in the first language facilitate the target language comprehension. In contrast, IE3 records the lowest mean ( $M=5.87$ ;  $STD=1.124$ ) but still very close to 6. It shows that doing English assignments and projects is the least preferred exposure to help expand knowledge in English language. By sequence, IE8, IE6, and IE2 are among the highly scored items with mean values between 6.00 and 6.16 and standard deviations between 1.064 and .954. Nevertheless, IE7 and IE1 recorded mean values below but close to 6.00 (5.95 and 5.99 respectively) and  $STD$  values 1.082 and 1.088 indicating high variations.

### Analysis of Explicit Exposure to ESL

Other than implicit exposure, learners are also exposed to explicit exposure to ESL. In this study, the explicit exposure is intentional learning, which, as discussed in the literature review, refers to the input obtained with awareness or the intention of developing knowledge and skills. An explicit exposure, or intentional learning can be obtained inside and outside a classroom, whether using the productive or receptive skills, providing that learners are aware of the process. Table 4 indicates the various activities of explicit exposure to ESL and the ranking based on the responses given by the respondents.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Analysis Results for Explicit Exposure to ESL*

Code	Mean	STD	Min.	Max.
ILP1	6.16	1.003	2	7
ILP2	6.12	1.046	3	7
ILP3	5.70	1.200	2	7
ILP4	5.72	1.099	2	7
ILP5	5.56	1.184	1	7
ILP6	5.84	1.118	2	7
ILP7	5.90	1.095	2	7
ILP8	5.61	1.183	1	7

Table 4 shows that the lowest mean is 5.56 for ILP5, which indicates that talking with English native speakers to increase proficiency as the least preferred explicit learning method, followed by ILP8 ( $M=5.61$ ) which involves writing emails and research in English to learn an organized writing. Consistently, other than ILP5, ILP3 and ILP4 recorded rather low mean values of 5.70 and 5.72 respectively, as they both involved talking and listening to English native speakers to gain benefits and improve proficiency level. In contrast, it is also safe to assume that listening to English programs and songs to help improve English comprehension is the most preferred exposure with  $M=6.16$  and  $STD=1.003$  indicating high distribution among the respondents. ILP2 ( $M=6.12$ ) is the second highest mean showing that listening to English programs and songs also help improve learners' pronunciation. On the other hand, reading English materials to enhance vocabulary, improve spelling, and reading speed signified by ILP7 and ILP6 recorded mean values of 5.90 and 5.84 respectively. The table also indicates that all standard deviation values are above 1 suggesting high distribution of responses among the respondents.

### Impact of Implicit and Explicit Exposure to ESL on Motivation

Following the analysis of data in SPSS 25, an advanced statistical analysis was run using the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 3.0 to establish measurements and structural models. Measurement model is significant to confirm constructs reliability and validity of the current study, while structural model is applied to produce bivariate correlation analysis and simultaneous regression analyses in order to establish correlations, as well as the relationship effects among constructs under investigation. In this study, the researcher attempted to examine the impact of the different types of exposure on motivation through relationships, and thus, PLS-SEM was deemed as an appropriate tool for this purpose.

The results depicted in Table 5 show that the measures used to represent each construct were accurate based on, firstly, the minimum loading of 0.707 while the highest was 0.882. Three measures with loadings below 0.7 were deleted involving ILP1 (0.682), ILP2 (0.683), and MEM4 (0.696). Secondly, the internal consistency of constructs were proven to be very good as all the variables involved in this have achieved

the threshold criterion of 0.7. Thirdly, in terms of the constructs reliability, Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs were above 0.708 and the composite reliability were below 0.95. In addition, with the AVE values of all the variables were between 0.546 and 0.683, all constructs were found to have achieved construct reliability. In addition, the latent variables involved in this study were having factor loadings, composite reliability, AVEs, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability values above their recommended levels. Figure 5.1 shows the factor loadings and path coefficients that have been obtained from Consistent PLS-Algorithm.

**Table 5**

*Assessment of AVE, CR, Cronbach's Alpha, and rho\_A*

	Items / Measures	Factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha (>0.708)	rho_A (ρA)	Composite Reliability (0.7-0.9)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE>0.5)
Implicit exposure	IE1	0.806	0.928	0.93	0.929	0.62
	IE2	0.856				
	IE3	0.761				
	IE4	0.777				
	IE5	0.745				
	IE7	0.819				
	IE8	0.814				
Explicit Exposure	ILP3	0.742	0.915	0.917	0.915	0.546
	ILP4	0.779				
	ILP5	0.707				
	ILP6	0.785				
	ILP7	0.844				
	ILP8	0.743				
Motivation	MOT3	0.890	0.963	0.963	0.963	0.683
	MOT6	0.843				
	MOT8	0.830				
	MOT9	0.837				
	MOT10	0.786				
	MOT11	0.848				
	MOT12	0.860				
	MOT13	0.843				
	MOT14	0.795				

The second objective addressed in this study is the effects of the different types of exposure to ESL on motivation. The analysis on the effects of exposure to ESL on motivation was able to identify which of the independent variables is more influential. Table 6 displays the second research objective (RO2) which was supported by RQ2, and it was answered through two hypotheses.

### Table 6

#### *Relationship between Exposure to ESL (IE and EE) and Cognitive Learning Dimensions*

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RO2:	To investigate the effects of implicit and explicit exposure to ESL on the learner's motivation.	
H1	There is significant relationship between IE and MOT.	Supported
H2	There is significant relationship between EE and MOT.	Supported

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Based on Table 6, the first hypothesis is pertaining to the relationship between implicit exposure and motivation (H1) followed by explicit exposure and motivation (H2). The analysis on H1 found positive path coefficient ( $B=0.297$ ;  $t\text{-value}=4.015$ ;  $p\text{-value}<.001$ ) and thus accepting H1. The results for H2 are also showing positive correlation between explicit exposure and motivation, but with higher values ( $B=0.608$ ;  $t\text{-value}=8.594$ ;  $p\text{-value}<.001$ ). The path coefficient values and the t-values of the implicit and explicit exposure indicated that there are direct influences from both types of exposure to ESL on motivation, and the difference in the values suggested that explicit exposure to ESL is the preferred type of exposure among Malaysian higher education students. It is supposed that because motivation involves the desire to accomplish an aim, a learner is more aware of the input they receive in order to gain knowledge of the exposure. Motivation provides the motives for people's actions and needs, and therefore without awareness it would be impossible to do decision making on appropriate strategies in learning (Naeeini et al., 2018).

## Discussion

The overall results reveal that Malaysian ESL learners prefer explicit exposure over implicit exposure. In the questionnaire adopted from Al Zoubi (2018), the items measuring explicit exposure cover four language skills; namely, listening and reading skills (receptive activities), and writing and speaking skills (productive activities). The survey results show that the respondents perceive that receptive (vs. productive) language activities work best for language learning. The most preferred receptive language activity involves listening to English TV programs and songs for improving English language comprehension and pronunciation. The second most preferred receptive language activity involves reading English materials (e.g., books and magazines) to improve vocabulary, spelling skills, and reading speed. The least preferred receptive language activity involves listening to native speakers speak face-to-face. Notably, the least preferred receptive activity does not align with Lightbown and Spada's (2006) recommendation for ESL students to communicate and interact with native speakers. These researchers emphasize the importance of social interaction with native English speakers for language learning. Similarly, Peregoy and Boyle (2005) also recommend that second language learners socially interact and communicate with native speakers to enhance language learning. However, Zulkurnain and Kaur's (2014) results may shed light on ESL learners' low enthusiasm for interacting with native English speakers. Initially, ESL students face considerable language production (e.g., speaking) challenges. Among other things, students' may have limited vocabulary and a lack of target language knowledge. Moreover, speaking requires that the speaker thinks promptly and responds instantaneously without hesitation (Kashinathan & Abdul Aziz, 2021). Additionally, language production activities such as writing are a complex activity that requires thinking and a certain level of linguistics knowledge (Erkan & Saban, 2011).

The study also reveals that explicit ESL exposure increases the motivation to learn English in that the strength of t-value 8.594 from explicit exposure is significantly greater than 4.015 from implicit exposure. This finding contradicts earlier researchers' beliefs, about explicit language learning in L2 such as Krashen (2000), Truscott (1996). According to them, the learners' implicit exposure to social interaction has a direct positive impact on language proficiency.

In reference to the descriptive analysis of explicit exposure and motivation, item ILP1 (*listening to English programs and songs help me to understand English language better*) obtained the highest mean (6.16) and corresponded to item Mot14 (*understanding the subject matter of this course is very important*), which recorded the highest mean (6.09) among other items measuring motivation. This finding shows that the respondents are aware of the significance of understanding the language as part of the learning process. This indicates awareness among the respondents on the importance of understanding the language. This supports the discovery that explicit exposure has more influence on motivation relative to implicit exposure.

### Conclusion

The choice of using Al Zoubi's items, which was developed for studying the impact of exposure on SLA and the influence of exposure on the development of the four language skills, was made due to the relevance of the items for measuring implicit and explicit exposure to ESL. The exposures related to SLA are incidental, while the exposures related to the development of language skills are intentional. The study by Al Zoubi (2018) diverges from previous studies in that their analyses focused on the measurement in terms of the implicit and explicit knowledge of a second language. While researchers like Williams (2005) and Godfroid (2016) were interested in determining the extent to which learners are capable of implicit learning, R. Ellis and Roever (2018) were interested in assessing whether the knowledge acquired from the learning is implicit or explicit. In spite of this, the scope of the present study only focuses on the kinds of exposure experienced by the learners. Granting that, the results reveal that ESL learners among Malaysian higher education students prefer explicit (vs. implicit) exposure to ESL than implicit exposure. Furthermore, the impact of each type of exposure on motivation also supports the respondents' preference.

However, English language lecturers must acknowledge that students at the tertiary level of education should not only be focusing on learning language syntax. This is because the ESL learning at this level must focus on language fluency whether in communication, presentation, negotiation, or letter/document writing after they graduate. The survey results show that the respondents perceive that

they learn more from receptive activities such as listening to English TV programmes and songs to improve English comprehension and pronunciation. Respondents perceive that the second most beneficial receptive language activity involves reading English materials such as books and magazines to improve vocabulary, spelling skills, and to increase reading speed. However, this study has some limitations due in part to limited time and resources. The survey focused on the collection of quantitative data. In order to provide greater detail, future studies are encouraged to add qualitative data by using open-ended survey questions or interviews.

Additionally, future researchers should apply use the items to examine the influence of different types of exposure on other language learning factors such as self-efficacy, as well as the preference between implicit and explicit exposure between different genders, age groups, and other social backgrounds. Results from future studies on different elements will further verify the significance of Al Zoubi's items to examine the impact of exposure on SLA and language skills development, and expand them to investigate the effects of implicit and explicit ESL exposure on language learning and performance.

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### About the Author

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