



## Frequency of Target Language Use by Learners in a Foreign Language Education Context

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### Abstract:

Target language use (TLU) has traditionally been analyzed as an independent variable impacting language proficiency. However, there is a significant research gap regarding the pre-existing contextual factors that determine TLU frequency as a dependent variable. This descriptive study examines the extent of TLU and its underlying drivers among students and faculty members at a State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Utilizing a mixed-method approach—comprising questionnaires, interviews, and observations—the research categorizes TLU into pedagogical (self-motivated study) and authentic (communicative) purposes. The study reveals that the learners' target language use is for pedagogic (self-motivated study) and authentic (communicative) purposes. Students tended to use the target language pedagogically more than authentically. The contextual variables comprise students' internal and external factors, including affective aspects, in-and-out-class activities, and social and situational language environments. The classroom teaching-learning strategies conducted by the lecturers mostly facilitated the pedagogical use. Since the success of foreign language learning is determined, among others, by the frequency of target language use, its influential factors need to be managed well so that the target language use is promoted and maximized.

**Keywords:** frequency of language use; language environment; target language use; teaching and learning strategy

### Abstrak:

Penggunaan bahasa sasaran (TLU) sudah sejak lama dianalisis sebagai variabel independen yang memengaruhi kemahiran berbahasa. Namun, terdapat kesenjangan signifikan mengenai faktor kontekstual yang menentukan frekuensi penggunaan bahasa sasaran sebagai variabel dependen. Studi deskriptif ini meneliti sejauh mana penggunaan bahasa sasaran dan faktor pendorongnya yang terjadi di kalangan mahasiswa dan anggota fakultas di Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran—yang terdiri dari kuesioner, wawancara, dan observasi—penelitian ini mengategorikan TLU ke dalam dua tujuan berbeda, yaitu pedagogis (belajar mandiri) dan autentik (komunikatif). Studi ini mengungkapkan bahwa penggunaan bahasa sasaran oleh para pembelajar bertujuan untuk keperluan pedagogis (belajar mandiri) dan autentik (komunikatif). Penggunaan bahasa sasaran secara pedagogis lebih banyak atau lebih sering digunakan oleh mahasiswa daripada yang secara autentik. Variabel kontekstual meliputi faktor internal



dan eksternal siswa, termasuk aspek afektif, aktivitas di dalam dan di luar kelas, serta lingkungan bahasa sosial dan situasional. Strategi pembelajaran di kelas yang dilakukan oleh para dosen sebagian besar memfasilitasi penggunaan bahasa sasaran secara pedagogis. Karena keberhasilan pembelajaran bahasa asing ditentukan, antara lain, oleh frekuensi penggunaan bahasa sasaran, faktor-faktor yang memengaruhinya perlu dikelola dengan baik agar penggunaan bahasa sasaran dapat dipromosikan dan dimaksimalkan.

**Kata kunci:** frekuensi penggunaan bahasa; lingkungan bahasa; penggunaan bahasa sasaran; strategi belajar dan mengajar

## INTRODUCTION

One of the determinant factors to promote the success of teaching and learning foreign languages is the intensity of target language use (TLU) (Diessel, 2007; Gass & Mackey, 2002b, 2002a; Tang, 2002; Tarone, 2002). The problem might arise when the learning of the foreign languages happens in a multilingual educational setting where the community uses their native languages more essentially as an integrative tool, while the foreign languages are just instrumental.

The studies on TLU so far mostly addressed the consequence of language use, such as its effect on language acquisition or ability, and hardly did they deal with the pre-existing factors that affect language use. As language competence is influenced by the frequency of language use, it is important to trace back the factors that underlie the use of the target language so that language education designers and practitioners can consider creating a condition where TLU could be promoted and maximized. Believing that the frequency of using the target languages is effective in improving the language skills, to gain more empirical details in this context, this study focused on describing the frequency of the TLU and exploring its influential contextual factors, such as the learners' affective aspects, extra-curricular activities, classroom teaching-learning strategy (TLS), and the social and situational target language environments.

Studies about target language use have been conducted so far focusing more on its position as an independent variable that influences learners' language ability. Gas & Mackey (2002) discuss the role and importance of frequency on language acquisition. Diessel (2007) claims that frequency of use is a determinant of the development of language competence. Tarone (2002), furthermore, asserts that besides noticing and creativity, frequency is effective in improving language ability. Carli et al. (2014) explicitly state that learners' practice of language use is a major



factor influencing their proficiency. In sum, those studies focused on what happens after the target language is used, e.g., that it promotes the acquisition of language. Rarely have the researchers been oriented towards the factors that underlie (i.e., exist before) the language use. This is the niche that this study tried to address.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researches have been conducted on the influential factors on language ability. Jin, Bot, and Keijer (2015) examined the relationship between anxiety factors with English and Japanese language proficiency for students at universities in China. Pfenninger & Singleton (2016) studied the age factor associated with learning in the classroom. Grymska (2016) researched the aspect of language talent, especially the memory associated with the learning process. He stated that memory determines the mastery of vocabulary and grammar. Wiertelak (2016) unfolded the dynamics of willingness to communicate in fluctuating classes during the teaching and learning process. Al-Hoorie (2017) examined the relationship between attitude, motivation, and language skills. Sehic (2017) revealed the relationship between creative thinking skills reflected in completing a college course and linguistic competence. Jaśkow (2015) saw the interconnectedness of family attitudes (especially parents) with learners' language skills.

The use of the target language (TL) is driven by affective factors, such as the motivation and attitudes towards the language (Allen, Gardner, & Lambert, 1974; Brown, 1987; Dörnyei, 2003). Strong motivation and a positive attitude, promotable through the teaching-learning process and practical activities, stimulate learners to be more intensive in using TL, which improves language skills. Using the TL encompassing listening, speaking, reading, writing (Sadiku, 2015; Hinkel, 2006), and translating, which may happen in and/or outside of the classrooms, in a foreign language educational setting, is determined by the teacher's strategy. This can be taken as predictive of the level of language acquisition (Firth & Wagner, 2007; Gass & Mackey, 2002; Gilmore, 2007; Milton, 2008; Tarone, 2002; Clément et al., 1994).

Language acquisition, like the mastery of knowledge and skills, as stated by Piaget (1976) and Vygotsky & Cole (1978), takes place through the process of fulfilling the gap between existing competence and target competence. Learners need to be assisted in developing their knowledge and skills through scaffolding. It is done by allowing learners to get real experience in everyday



life. In the view of interactionism (Ellis, 1986), acquisition of language occurs when there is an interaction between human internal capacity, also so-called Language Acquisition Device (LAD) (Chomsky, 1966), and input from the external environment. The interaction manifests in the form of comprehensibility. This means that language acquisition will occur if learners are exposed to input that is understandable. Krashen explicitly calls it "sufficient quantity of comprehensible input" (Krashen, 2013).

Kress (2010), with the theory of multimodality, states that learning processes for mastery of knowledge or skills will become increasingly effective if done in a variety of ways involving various senses. It implies that learning by listening, reading, viewing pictures, listening to music, playing, and practicing will be more effective than learning in just one way, such as listening to a lecture. The pedagogical implication is that teachers should use a variety of strategies, media, and materials to stimulate and activate all the sensical perceptions of learners so that the learning process can occur effectively.

On the other hand, the output hypothesis (Sun, 2020; Birkner, 2016) states that language acquisition will be effective if learners not only accept input but also produce output as the manifestation of the acquisition process. In producing the output, learners undergo trial-and-error and hypothesis testing processes. Learners think loudly by making an analogy to their knowledge of the language rules. Then, they try to test the truth of the analogy by producing output, hoping to gain feedback from the surrounding interlocutors. With that process, there will be an increase or improvement in linguistic competence.

Frequency has also been a contributing factor to language acquisition (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982; Gass & Mackey, 2002; Tarone, 2002). The grammatical pattern that is often used by the teacher is mastered better. It is also supported by the fact that the more often a learner practices the target language, the better the pronunciation will be.

The teaching of foreign languages (Arabic & English) includes a range of interacting components: teachers, learners, teaching materials, instructional strategies, and the evaluation of learning outcomes (Merrill, 2001; Chaudron, 1988). The human resource component of teachers and learners interacts with each other's characteristics, motivations, objectives, interests, talents, experiences, and abilities (Harmer, 2007). Those factors affect the intensity of TLU, hence increasing the effectiveness of teaching, learning, and language acquisition.



This study was to reveal the learners' use of target languages, Arabic and English, in foreign language educational institutions, the Arabic Department (AD) and the English Department (ED), Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, Surabaya, Indonesia. This was taken as the research site because it represents a typical state-managed foreign language formal educational institution in Indonesia, where both foreign languages are taught.

As the learning takes place in a context where Arabic and English are foreign languages, the main purpose is instrumental, for academic, professional, and/or personal purposes. Arabic ability is used to pass examinations and to continue the study in Arabic-speaking countries, as indicated by some of its graduates studying in Egypt and Sudan. Some of them use it to read religious books as they become religious preachers and scholars. Many of them become teachers of Arabic. English is also instrumental, such as to continue the study, to get jobs as journalists, reporters, teachers of English, and for personal enjoyment.

This study focused on the frequency of learners' TLU in such an educational context for both self-motivated study and communicative purposes, excluding drills or doing exercises to practice language rules, and the existing contextual factors.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Method*

This study used a descriptive method (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 2010; Creswell, 2014), first, by quantifying the numeric data as the results of questionnaires filled by the samples to unfold the extent of TLU, and secondly, by describing the verbal data as the results of open-ended items questionnaires, interviews, and observation to reveal the prevailing contexts. This study used a descriptive method because it merely described a condition as it was, without giving interventional treatment to bring up the data.

### *Data Sources*

In this study, the data sources were of two types: the subjects and the site. The subjects were students, lecturers, and faculty members, and the site was the faculty's physical environment. Sixty students, consisting of thirty students from AD and thirty students from ED, were taken as the respondents to the questionnaires. They were taken randomly from students of semesters two, four, and six (as the study was conducted in the even semester) to represent all students of the



departments. The lecturers were the source of the data about classroom teaching and learning strategy (TLS), and the faculty members about the faculty's educational policy. The research site was the faculty's physical environment from which the data were taken about the physical, social, situational factors, and language environmental conditions.

### *Data Collection*

The data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and observation. The students were given questionnaires consisting of closed and open items. The close items were to gain quantitative data on the frequency of TLU covering the areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating. Translating was included because it integrates reading and writing. Each item has four options: always, often, seldom, and never. The respondents were required to self-assess or make a self-reflection about the frequency of their use of the target language by choosing one of the options. The adverbs of frequency were defined based on hours per day. **Always** was defined as using the target language more than eight hours a day, **often** means using it between three to eight hours, **seldom** refers to using it between one to three hours, and **never** is less than one hour such as using it only occasionally. The questionnaire also contained close items to uncover learners' motivation, attitude, and needs as the underlying internal factors of the TLU. The open items were to get the descriptive data complementary to the close items.

Interviews were done with the lecturers and the faculty members to get the data about the teaching-learning strategy and faculty's educational policy. Observation field notes were made to record the data about the physical, social, situational, and linguistic environmental conditions.

### *Data Analysis*

Having been collected, the data were analyzed according to their purposes. First, the close items in the questionnaires, which captured the data of the frequency of TLU, were tallied and converted into a percentage to unfold the frequency levels of TLU: always, often, seldom, or never. From this step, we knew how many respondents chose always, often, seldom, or never in using the target languages. In other words, it answered the first research question about the frequency level of the TLU either for self-motivated study or communicative purposes. The TLU for self-motivated study refers to the use of language for academic or learning purposes, which normally but not always happens in the classroom. The TLU for communicative purposes is the use of the target language in real-life, daily communication, not intended for, although may affect pedagogical purposes,



such as watching TV, reading newspapers, making telephone calls, texting WhatsApp, listening to songs, etc.

Second, the open items responses, interview results, and observation field notes were analyzed qualitatively following Miles, Huberman, Saldana (2020), i.e. reduced (by selecting the relevant information), displayed (by managing, classifying, and finding relationships), and concluded to uncover the contextual factors potentially contributing to the TLU.

## RESULTS

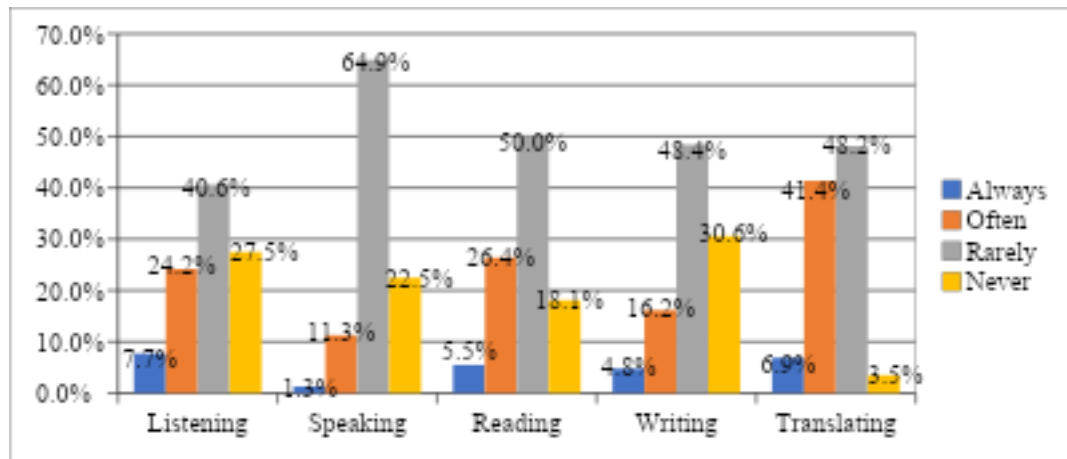
The results are about the frequency of using Arabic by Arabic Department (AD) students, English by English Department (ED) students, and the contextual factors affecting the TLU.

### *Frequency of Using Arabic by Arabic Department (AD) Students*

The finding of the frequency of using Arabic by AD students shows that the largest percentage was "rare" which is 53.5% and the second was "never" which is 22.9%. Respondents who chose "often" are 19.3% and the lowest percentage is those choosing "always" only 4.3%. When the numbers are aggregated between the rarely and the never (both showing low intensity), the percentage is 76.4% and those who always and often used Arabic (both implying high intensity) is 23.6%. Probed further by seeing the questionnaire items, it turned out that such rarity represented the authentic communicative use rather than TLU for self-motivated study.

Such a general finding is presented in more details, i.e. the TLU in the modes of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating in this figure.

**Figure 1. Frequency of using Arabic in five modes**



To compare the rarity levels of TLU in those five modes, the level of “rarely” speaking Arabic was the highest percentage, i.e. 64.9%. It implied the general tendency that most respondents rarely spoke Arabic. Regarding the listening activity, when the questions were whether students listened to Arabic news broadcast on radio/television, watched Arabic-language films without seeing the subtitles, the results showed the highest percentage was rarely (40.6%). It implies that listening was rarely done in real-life contexts, such as listening to television, radio broadcasts, and gadgets. Listening to Arabic was done only in an academic context when listening to lectures in the classroom.

Concerning speaking Arabic, when asked whether the students communicated in daily life with friends, families, and/or foreign tourists, the results showed 64.9% rarely as the highest percentage. Some of them only sometimes conversed in Arabic with friends and lecturers when they held class discussions and presentations. About reading activity, when asked whether students read magazines, newspapers, brochures, announcements, advertisements, and access information on the internet, the results showed 50% rare as the highest. They said they mainly read textbooks. Reading references, and journals only when they got assignments from the lecturers.

In writing, whether students wrote emails, short messages (SMS), WhatsApp (WA) texts, statuses on Facebook, and Instagrams in Arabic, the data also showed 48.4% rarely as the highest. Sometimes, they wrote a summary of book chapters, essays as a part of a coursework or class assignment. About translation, assuming that translating requires reading or understanding the source language and writing or speaking the target language, whether students translated to or

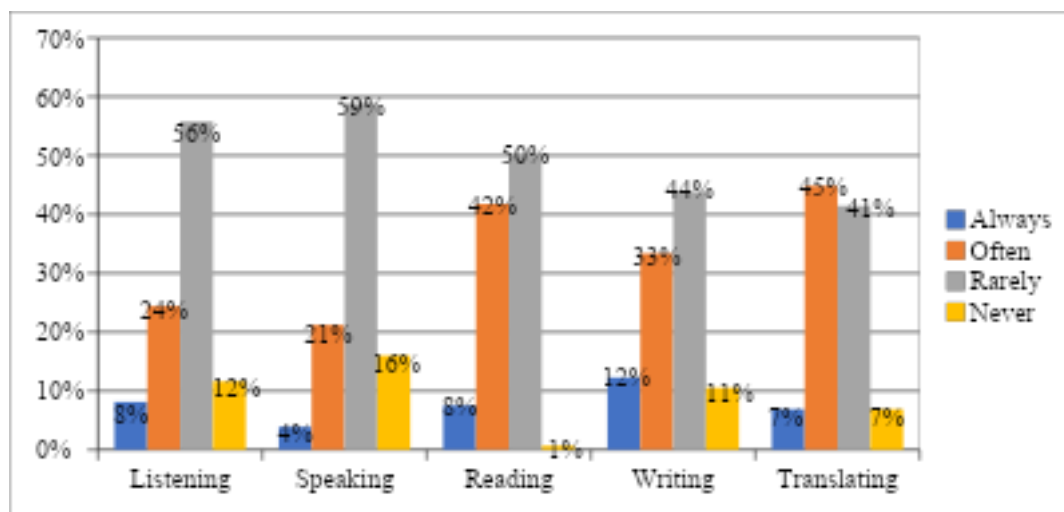
from Arabic, the data showed 48.2% rarely. They did it only when they got the translation tasks.

In sum, students seemed to use Arabic mainly for their study (self-motivated study) purposes and hardly for real-life (authentic communicative) use.

### *Frequency of Using English by English Department (ED) Students*

The data showing the frequency of using English by students of the ED were that the highest option was "rarely" which is 52.8%. If the option of "rarely" is combined with "never" (both indicating low frequency), the percentage would be 63%. That means the ED students' use of English tends to be infrequent. The use of English across all five modes: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating is presented in the following figure.

**Figure 1. Frequency of using Arabic in five modes**



First, the intensity of listening, speaking, reading, writing in English, all showed that the highest percentage was "rarely". Only translating got the highest percentage "often." Compared among those five modes, the rarity of speaking had the highest percentage (59%). In listening activity, whether students listened to English broadcasts on radio or television, watched English films without reading the subtitle, the data showed that rarely (56%) was the highest. However, whether the lectures were given in English, most of the subjects responded "often". It implies that students listened to English in the classrooms (pedagogical) more than that in the natural (authentic) contexts, such as to television, laptop, or gadgets.

On speaking, whether the students communicated with families, foreign tourists, and friends outside of the class, the highest percentage was also rarely (59%). Some students conversed using



English with friends and lecturers in the class during discussions and presentations. In reading, whether students read English magazines, newspapers, booklets, announcements, advertisements, and access information on the internet, rare (50%) was also the highest. They said they read reference books and journals especially when they had assignments.

In writing, whether students wrote emails, short messages (SMS), WhatsApp (WA) texts, statuses on Facebook and Instagrams, the data showed rarely (44%) was the highest. They said they only sometimes wrote papers, reviews, and assignments. Translation is an integrated skill because it requires reading or understanding the source language and writing or speaking the target language. Whether students translated to or from English, the data showed 45% often. They mostly did it when they had translation as a classroom task.

Comparing the results, we can see there is almost the same tendency between the students of the Arabic Department (AD) and English Department (ED) with regards to listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating in that the frequency of authentic use of the target language was low.

### *Contextual Factors Affecting the TLU*

The frequency of TLU is constrained by internal and external factors. The internal factors like attitude, motivation, and personal objectives determine whether or not a student uses the target language. The external factors such as extra-curricular activities, teaching-learning process, and social and/or situational environments also constrain students' TLU. This part presents those influential variables in both AD and ED contexts.

Regarding the internal factors, most respondents from each of the two departments said they liked the languages and wanted to acquire them. They would feel ashamed or sorry if they did not master them. Those responses implied that the respondents had strong wants (an internal drive to master the languages). They also claimed that they needed them to support their study and their career. Concerning the future ideals that most of them wanted to be lecturers, authors, and tour guides are consistent with their wants.

However, when probed further to recheck if their wants were in line with their needs, the findings showed that their needs were not as pressing as they wanted. Although they said that the skill they wanted was speaking, in practice they barely needed it because their community did not use it. So, there was a gap between their wants and needs. They said they wanted it, but actually, they did



not need it. Wants are internal forces, whereas needs are from external factors.

Another internal variable that might affect language learning is the students' previous educational backgrounds. About 75% of students of AD were graduates of Islamic Senior High School (*Madrasah Aliyah*) and Islamic Boarding Schools (*Pondok Pesantren*). Most ED students were from Senior High Schools and Vocational Schools. Such differing backgrounds affected students' language attitude, behavior, and competence which then constrain their TLU.

The external factors affecting the TLU were out-of-class extracurricular activities, classroom teaching-learning process, and social and situational environments. Students' associations of both departments conducted weekly study clubs participated mostly by the freshmen where students could practice using the TL. They also held annual language festivals comprising competitions using the TL, such as speech, debate, essay writing competitions of which participants were Senior High School students. Only some of the AD and ED students were involved in the committee. So, the benefit of the competitions to increase students' (the research subjects) TLU was not quite significant.

About the classroom TLS, there were some similarities and differences between the AD and ED. Among the similarities were that students wanted to have the classroom activities in which they were actively practicing the TL such as having group discussions, presentations, and debates. The lecturers have mostly been using the TL as a medium of instruction. Among the differences were that regarding the teaching materials, in the Arabic Departments, though aiming to improve language skills, the materials for Reading subject, for example, were taken not only from Arabic literary texts but also from Islamic sources. So, it was integrating Islamic values in the learning of a language. That was barely done in the English Department.

Another difference concerning listening subject, in AD the materials were pedagogical and authentic (Tomlinson, 2012). An example of Arabic pedagogical listening materials was *Al Arabiyyah baina Yadaika* (Arabic at Your Hands), the authentic ones were taken from Arabic films, *Al Qishshoh lil Athfal* (Stories for Children), and Youtube videos. In ED, there were more pedagogical and fewer authentic materials. This was possibly because abundant pedagogical materials for Listening are available more in English than in Arabic. It was also caused by teachers' preference in material selection.

Another external factor is the social and situational environments around the campus where the



departments are located. Viewing the social environment, it was observed that the atmosphere was not quite supportive to promote Arabic and English acquisition. Students, lecturers, and administration staff were rarely heard speaking using the TL. Although a signage ENGLISH SPEAKING ZONE was put in some places, during the observation, the researcher did not hear students obey the rule. This was consistent with the previous finding that the surrounding community did not use the TL.

During the observation, the researcher found an English wall magazine but not an Arabic one. In Arabic, one banner was found regulating dressing ethics, and one sticker encouraging the use of the TL. In short, the social and situational contexts seemed to be in need of being made more conducive to promote the TLU.

## DISCUSSION

This part aims to give meaning to the findings by discussing the relevance, significance, and implications in the perspective of foreign language instruction. Especially for the teachers of foreign languages in foreign language contexts, this could be a useful insight in promoting the effectiveness of their teaching and gaining success in their professional duties. A previous study claimed the connection between teachers' professional success and their positive views towards research (Derakhshan, Coombe, Zhaleh, Tabatabaeian, 2020).

The assumption underlying this study is that the high intensity of TLU promoting the effectiveness of language learning and acquisition results in students' adequate language competence (Dulay et al., 1982; Krashen, 1985; Brown, 1987; Krashen, 2013). Based on the data already presented, the finding is that the intensity of TLU needs to be raised. Most of the subjects tended not to use the target language in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating as frequently as expected. This is understandable because the context is almost similar to the Arabic learning setting in Singapore (Yassin, 2020) where target language interaction outside of the classroom is meager. This is a constraint in language acquisition because acquisition requires high-frequency practice (Dulay et al., 1982; Krashen, 1985; Ambridge et al., 2015; Crossley et al., 2019).

The low intensity of TLU is predicted to have an impact on low language acquisition. To compensate for this, the classroom instruction could have been improved by conditioning the students to not only experience the explicit, formal learning but also the implicit, natural acquisition (DeKeyser, 2008) consistent with Krashen's distinguishing learning from acquisition



(1981). The pedagogical implication in the classroom is that teachers need to use a comprehensive strategy where learners not only understand the rules of the language and train them adequately (for learning purposes) but also have to be exposed and have the opportunity to do natural communication using the target language (for acquisition). This goes in line with the previous finding about strategy instruction that took place naturally in an adult EFL classroom (Kaldonek-Crnjaković, 2020). Dulay et al. (1982) claim it as a formal and natural language environment.

The formal environment is a situation when the target language is used to discuss the rules of language such as when the teacher explains the grammatical and morphological systems, like what happens in the Grammar Translation Method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The natural linguistic environment is an atmosphere when the language is used to communicate naturally not focusing on the rules of the language, which normally takes place in Communicative Language Teaching (Richards, 2006). The teacher's speech in such an informal environment can contribute effectively to promoting the acquisition process because the teacher and learners share native language backgrounds and cultural experiences as cultural familiarity increases learners' interest and engagement (Sheridan, Tanaka, Hogg, 2019).

What is striking was a contradiction between facts and expectations in the data. On the one hand, the fact showed that the frequency of TLU tended to be low, but their responses indicated their high needs. The hypothetical explanation is that when filling up the questionnaire, there was an inaccurate respondents' perception of the word "needs." Respondents might have thought that needs are the same as wants although they are principally different. Needs imply external necessity while wants internal desire. Needs arise due to the drive of external environmental factors that lead to satisfy the needs. This agrees with Muslim et al.'s study of senior high school students who had integrative and instrumental motivation on English learning but "low investment" (Muslim et al., 2020).

Associated with the motivational theory of language learning, the need is inherent in integrative motivation and instrumental motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The want is underlain by self-development motivation. Integrative motivation is driven by the need to integrate and socialize with the target language community. Instrumental motivation is the motivation that arises because of the need for language as a tool to perform tasks, such as to get the job, or to improve their grades (Nadarajan, 2019). Developmental motivation is had by someone who wants to learn a language merely to develop her/himself.



As need is more compelling than wants, language teachers as designers, planners, implementers, and evaluators of the language teaching and learning process (Harmer, 2007), desirably create an environment or implement strategies in such a way that learners have needs for language skills. Hence, learners will strive harder, be more enthusiastic and vigorous in learning and language practice to increase their competence to fulfill their needs.

The learners' TLU in the classroom was meager as for listening to the lecturer's explanation during the lesson or in discussion. Interacting with friends in the classrooms during the breaks or after the class, the students quite hardly used the TL. They preferred using their native language (NL), mostly vernaculars (Javanese or Madurese), and sometimes Indonesian to using the TL (Arabic or English). This might be one of the constraints of a foreign language learning in a multilingual context. Using NL makes them feel closer or more intimate, easier, and communication becomes more effective (Sperber et al., 2010; Fan et al., 2015). To overcome such a problem, faculty policy in passing rules and regulations concerning target language use throughout the campus needs to be reinforced involving student organization and lecturers.

As stated in the findings, students used the TL only to write a lesson or a paper, and not to write short text messages, WA texts, e-mails, Facebook, or other social media, nor to write stories, articles, or poetry for wall magazines. In reading activities, students rarely read newspapers, magazines, journals, novels, poems, emails, texts on the internet in the TL. For that, lecturers play a very strategic role because as the designer of language learning (Kuure et al., 2016) they could give the tasks of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating. Students' works would later be assessed as portfolios to be taken into consideration in their evaluation system.

Language is a skill course whose main goal is the development of linguistic ability and not merely knowledge of the system of language. Therefore, one of the teaching strategies is to increase the number of learners' exercises and practice using the target language. The teaching strategies need to be learner-centered or student-active (Spratt, Pulverness, Williams, 2005), one of its indicators is the maximum student-talking time or the minimum teacher-talking time (CELTT, 2007).

In this context, it must be clearly distinguished between ability and knowledge. Someone who knows the rules of a language is not necessarily able to use it properly when communicating using the language. If the goal is language ability, learners must frequently practice using it. Because the purpose of language learning is the ability to use it functionally to communicate, or to obtain



communicative competence (Savignon, 1997), then its learning strategy should be through the learners' participation in communicative practices (Nguyen, 2012).

To serve that purpose, language teachers are required to have professional competence (Blašková et al., 2014; Kunter et al., 2013; Lauermann & König, 2016; Puspitasari et al., 2016) referring not only to the mastery of the target language but also to the ability to be the source of effective input and good models for the students. During the teaching and learning process in the classroom, lecturers are required to always use the target language either in explaining the materials or in discussing and interacting with their students. Their speech must meet the criteria of effective input, which is abundant and comprehensible; hence, promoting learners' language acquisition (Krashen, 2013). Teachers should also create a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable atmosphere so that learners are in a condition of low affective filter; thus, increasing intake reception (Krashen, 1985).

Relevant to the unexpected findings, the learner factor needs to be taken into consideration. They make harder efforts for the improvement of language skills by using the TL authentically, such as doing a lot of practices listening to oral texts on various media: radio, television, android, cassette, CD, and computer sets, speaking with lecturers or among fellow students, participating in discussions, seminars, conferences, trainings, study clubs, or doing drama rehearsals, reading poetry, and singing, intensively reading texts from a variety of sources, such as newspapers, magazines, android, emails, and other social media, and writing various texts, such as SMS, WA texts, Facebook, Twitter, emails, articles, and poems.

Policymakers also play an important role in creating a conducive environment, for example by making regulations for language use discipline and providing supporting facilities and infrastructures, such as laboratories, reading room, library, discussion venue, art stage, and holding various festivals, competitions, and activities where students frequently practice using the target language. The physical environments inside and outside the classrooms can also be created to contribute to the improvement of the students' language competence, such as by publishing wall magazines, banners, stickers, and delivering oral and/or written announcements.

Lecturers can also contribute to increasing the intensity of students' TLU in several ways. First, their instructional strategies should implement a student-active learning approach, conducting a variety of TLU activities, and carrying out a series of interaction patterns of classical work, individual work, pair-work, groupwork, or mingling activities (Harmer, 2007). The teaching-



learning techniques could be conducted in an interactive, communicative, effective, and enjoyable atmosphere. The media are made so varied that they can stimulate all learners' various characteristics, viz. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, social, or individual (Spratt, et al., 2005). Thus, the learning process becomes effective for all. The teaching materials are also mixed between pedagogical and authentic materials (Tomlinson, 2012), with a diversity of topics relevant, interesting, and useful for learners. Activities are contextual so that learners feel the class is a part of their life.

When all that happens in the classrooms being a part of students' real-life is done using the target language, sub-conscious learning will take place. This is consistent with the principle of the constructivist theory which claims that knowledge and ability develop during the process of learners' social and cognitive life (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978; Piaget, 1976). The more learners can be exposed to linguistic input, the better it is to improve their language ability. In the context of educational institutions, such a linguistic environment can be created by displaying a lot of wall newspapers, wall magazines, announcements, banners, and stickers that can be accessed by learners.

To raise the learners' authentic use of the TL, a linguistic environment is important for some reasons. Being in a target language environment, learners get ample opportunity to always use and train the language they are learning, whether to listen, talk, read, or write. In such an environment, learners are stimulated or even obliged to adapt themselves to the existing condition, and emerge in themselves the need to use the target language; hence, motivated to make hard efforts to be always using it. That complies with the principle that language learning is the process of habit formation (Brown, 1987).

As a part of the language supporting environment, displays of target language newspapers in strategic places and regularly replacing them with the latest editions will benefit learners not only because they will get up-to-date news and information, but they can also get exposed to authentic linguistic input to enrich their knowledge of vocabulary, to improve reading comprehension ability, to find new expressions, to reinforce knowledge of grammar, and to find idiomatic expressions. Wall magazines created by learners are also good to support the establishment of a linguistic environment, as well as a means of stimulating learners to write, learning to express thoughts and feelings, practicing the drafting of informative or argumentative texts, while other learners can also make them materials of reading and gaining richer linguistic input.



Announcements can be a crucial part of a linguistic environment. When written in the target language, learners will strive hard to understand them because announcements are always related to the learners' needs. If they do not read nor understand the announcement, they may be lost. An oral announcement through the sound system available in the campus environment can also be delivered in Arabic and English so that learners are imposed on listening to a natural speech in the target language.

## CONCLUSION

As one of the determinant factors inducing the success of language teaching and learning, learners' use of the target languages should be intently encouraged in foreign language educational settings. Target language use can be of two types: for self-motivated study purposes and for communicative authentic use (primarily for daily-life communicative purposes). Both should be continuously practiced by the learners to maximize the achievement of the language educational objective, i.e. adequate proficiency of the target languages. This study revealed that the pedagogical use of the target languages by learners had been facilitated, but the authentic use still needed to be raised and intensified. Such a condition may be addressed to some responsible internal and external factors.

Students' internal drive to learn foreign languages is favorable, evidenced by their wants to acquire the ability to speak the target language, which indicates their positive attitude towards the target language. Unfortunately, their wants are not in line with their needs, which implies that the external motivating factors are not supportive. Therefore, what should be done is to establish conducive social and situational environments in which learners can use the target language more frequently and incessantly. This responsibility may be taken by all stakeholders, i.e. students, lecturers, education-supporting staff, and faculty members.

Students' awareness of the importance of target language ability and motivation to learn it should be raised by establishing a language environment that stimulates their needs. Their eagerness to learn foreign languages should be fulfilled by conducting extracurricular activities more frequently in which as many students as possible are involved, and have the opportunity to practice using the target languages. Lecturers design and conduct the language teaching and learning process that engages the students and activates their participation in using the target



language not only pedagogically, but also authentically. The education-supporting staff with whom students often consult to cope with administrative matters can be involved to create a social environment to harness students' authentic use of the target language. The faculty management as the policymakers are decisive in passing the regulations of target language use, provide facilities, and take measures to create physical, social, and situational environments that are conducive for foreign language learning.

As the frequency of target language use is facilitated by the learning environment and likely to influence language acquisition, it is recommended that all educational-relevant factors, such as students' motivation, teachers' competence, managements' commitment, and environmental conditions are managed and prepared well so that instructional goals are maximally achieved.

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