The Correlation between Internal & External Factors that Influence Elementary School Students in Learning English Vocabulary and Their Grade in Vocabulary Test: A Study on the Third Graders of Marsudirini 77 Elementary School Salatiga

Sesilia Rani Setyo Sari, M. Hum, Satya Wacana Christian University, Indonesia

Abstract
Communication is very important in this globalization era. To communicate well, proper diction in uttering language expressions is very demanded. In this case, we cannot get rid of the language because it is inseparable part and the most dominant factor in communication besides gestures, facial expressions, etc. In this globalization era, we need English as a medium to have a conversation with people around the world. Unfortunately, many people especially those at the young age still find difficulties in learning English vocabulary. This research pays a particular attention to the Third Grade of Marsudirini 77 Elementary School Salatiga to see their difficulties in learning English Vocabulary and their relation to their grade in vocabulary test. The questionnaire were distributed to students to be fulfilled and the result was correlated to the students’ grade in vocabulary test. As a matter of fact, the internal and external factors included in the questionnaire positively correlate to the students’ grade. The more difficulties they find, the lower grade they will get. On the contrary, the less difficulties they find, the highest grade they will get. That is why, similar study needs to be conducted to know all the difficulties that can hinder students in learning English vocabulary.

Key words: factor, difficulty, student, learning English Vocabulary, Vocabulary Grade.

There are four basic skills need to be learned in learning English, speaking, reading, listening, and writing. All of those skills involve vocabulary. When speaking to others, we need to choose proper diction to convey messages. When reading a passage, we need to know the vocabularies to get the main idea of it. When listening to somebody talking, we need to administer the vocabularies to understand and avoid misunderstanding. Finally, when writing a composition, we need to know the exact term of words used in the work of writing.

“Learning of a language is an emotional experience, and the feelings that the learning process evokes will have a crucial bearing on the success or failure of the learning (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987 : 47)”. From this statement, it is clear that emotional factor is important for the learners to determine their success or failure in learning a language. To gain this emotional factor, students should be encouraged to learn a language, in this case, English, to achieve success instead of failure. This emotional factor is one of the internal factors that influence difficulties in learning English Vocabulary. Tschirner (2004) also proclaims that learning English for 8 years or more do not necessarily enable students to meet vocabulary threshold.
for academic purposes. The conclusion that could be withdrawn from this statement is that emotional experience might not be incorporated in the students’ learning so that vocabulary learning cannot be done effectively.

To master the language well, students cannot avoid learning the vocabulary of that particular language. Unfortunately, we see that students in Indonesia find difficulties in learning English, especially the vocabulary. Some say that it is difficult to memorize certain words; others say that the teachers cannot translate the proper interpretation of the words (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 50). These phenomena show that external factors also give big influence related to difficulties in learning English Vocabulary. Bae Son (2001) provides another way to teach vocabulary by involving CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). CALL could also be used as an effective way in teaching vocabulary for the sake of implicit and explicit learning of vocabulary and comprehension.

As we can see that learning English is crucial for the sake of getting information and socializing to others, especially foreigners. That is why, administering English vocabulary is demanded. The emotional feelings of the students should be noted since it will determine the success or failure of the learning itself. In fact, many students still find it difficult to learn vocabulary. This is the reason why the writer is interested in analyzing further about the factors that influence difficulties faced by Elementary Students in learning English Vocabulary. The factors that influence difficulties involve both, the internal factors and the external ones.

1. Vocabulary Learning

In the 1950s, many people began to notice that vocabulary learning is not a simple matter. It is not simply a matter of learning that a certain word in one language means the same as a word in another language. Much more needs to be learned, and there were so many materials that cannot be covered in the classroom (Allen, 1983: 2). According to Allen (1983: 7) “There are some words that are familiar to people, young people especially, that are being learned without any teaching, explanation, or even drill from the teacher.” The example of the words are ‘cowboy’ and ‘rockstar’ since children often see the movie on the television. In this way, it can make it easier for them to memorize. On the other hand, there are words that have been explained, taught by teachers but students still cannot comprehend them like comprehending the words ‘cowboy’ and ‘rockstar’. The question will be how can we make vocabularies seem familiar to children as they are familiar to the words ‘cowboy’ and ‘rockstar’? (Allen, 1983: 8). Chung (2003) also proposes an idea that we should be knowledgeable in helping learners to notice and learn technical vocabularies.

One way to do so is by presenting vocabulary lesson in a textbook; for example, explaining persons and things in the classroom. For instance, boy, girl, book, pencil, window, and door. It is so important for the first stage learners to know this basic vocabulary since the meanings
can easily be made clear. Windows, walls, desks, and doors are the things that students can see and touch. It is essential as a research study, conducted by some of the vocabulary experts, proclaimed that involving senses in learning process will be successful (Allen, 1983 : 9). From this statement, a question will arise, that is “how can we create the same atmosphere when it happens to teach vocabulary outside the classroom”. Vocabulary lesson for the first stage or beginner uses three ways to show the meaning of words:

1. pictures
2. explanation in the students’ own language
3. definition in simple English, using vocabulary that the students already know

The real object is important but if it cannot be acquired, the Audio Visual Aids of pictures, explanation in the students own language, and the defined simple English will have fulfilled the needs of children in learning vocabulary for the first stage.

2. Factors that Influence Difficulties in Vocabulary Learning

Internal Factor
Internal factor here means that the factor inside the students themselves play an important role in learning an English vocabulary. That is why, there is only one factor included here, the pupils. According to Felix (1977) as cited in Leontiev & James (1981 : 133), “Students are the most important factor in learning an English vocabulary”. There are some characteristics of students, such as age, motivation, behaviour, etc. Talking about age, the way of learning of teenage students will be different from adults, so the teachers must be aware of this difference. Young children tend to have limited attention span whereas the adults tend to pay attention longer to the lesson. The next is about the students’ motivation. Strongly motivated students will likely achieve better grade than non-motivated students. It is the job of the teachers to give stimulus so that the non-motivated students will have a spirit to learn. Considering the students’ behaviour, teachers must also know whether the students are diligent enough or not in reviewing the material, since memorizing vocabulary is essential for them to develop their ability in mastering English.

External Factor
External factors are the factors outside the students that influence them in learning English vocabulary. The external factors are:

a. Time
Felix (1977) as cited in Leontiev & James (1981 : 150) stated that, “Time is the key word in determining what level students can achieve.” How many hours in a day and what proper material to be learned, can determine the measurement of the students’ progress. If there is limited time, it is the job of the teachers to make a summary and teach the students the most important material within the time allocated. It might happen that
regarding the examination, teachers only give exercises, which is actually beyond the material being prepared. Because of “mark-oriented”, students will be lacking of theoretical material. In this condition, teachers only focus on achievement and neglect the process of language learning.

b. Frequency of the Learners’ Contact with the Language

A more significant factor beside time, according to Felix (1977) as cited in Leontiev & James (1981 : 175), is the frequency of the learners’ contact with the language. It means that regardless the time available, the teaching and learning process will be effective or not. If it is a short period of time, but with the right objectives, the result will be likely better than learning in a long period of time with the wrong one to be set.

c. The Number of Students in the Classroom

Felix (1977) as cited in Leontiev & James (1981 : 190) also added that, “The number of students in the classroom will play a significant role.” Research has proven that a class with limited number of students is better than the class with a large number of students. The teachers can recognize the students easily and the material will likely be inserted into all the students’ mind effectively, in a small number of students in class.

This study is going to find the kinds of internal and external factors that influence difficulties in learning English vocabulary and their significance toward the students’ English Vocabulary Learning. This study focuses on factors influencing difficulties faced by the third graders of Elementary Students of Marsudirini 77 Salatiga in learning English Vocabulary. The factors are divided into two, the external factors and the internal ones. The external factors are related to the things outside the students’ ability, like the educational environment. Whereas the internal factors include the students’ motivation in learning English Vocabulary, or in other words, related to any kinds of factors inside the students. Students still find it difficult in learning it because of the big influence of these two kinds of factors. Chujo (2005) emphsizes how vocabulary size, text lengths, and sample size affect the stability of text coverage and define relevant parameters. In this case, a teacher should not pay a particular attention to the internal and external factors only but also the forms and face validity of the vocabulary lesson itself.

Children are taught English Vocabulary at school. Unfortunately, they still find it hard to learn. There are so many factors that influence these difficulties that need to be analyzed deeper. The causes of the difficulties can be from the students themsleves or from the outer factors, such as the teacher or the educational environment. This study is going to find out the difficult factors that hinder the Elementary students in learning English Vocabulary. Children, especially Elementary Students, need to be introduced to basic vocabulary with the right guidance from educators. It is so important since vocabulary is a vital part to communicate well in English. By knowing the different factors that hamper the Elementary Students in learning English Vocabulary, it is expected that the educators can get rid of the difficult factors and help students more in dealing with the difficulties in English Vocabulary Learning.
3. Methods

In this study, the subjects are the third grade of Elementary School students of Marsudirini 77 Salatiga, who are still learning English vocabulary in the basic level. In fulfilling the need of finding difficulties faced by Elementary school students in learning English vocabulary, the writer used the following instrument:

1. Questionnaire
   The questionnaire is aimed to get the detailed information about each student in facing their difficulties in learning English vocabulary.

2. Interviews
   It is meant to seek for information in difficulties of teaching English vocabulary from the teachers’ perspectives.

3. Observation
   The writer is eager to observe the teaching and learning process to identify and analyze the atmosphere of teaching and learning process.

For the first time, the writer did an observation for a while only to find out how students learn English, especially the vocabulary. The way the teacher teaches was also observed since this is one of the influential factors related to difficulty faced by students in learning English vocabulary. This short observation is aimed at seeing what kind of English vocabulary they find it hard to learn. Furthermore, after distributing the questionnaires, the writer analyzed what difficulties are faced by Elementary school students in learning English vocabulary in the basic level and their correlation toward the students’ grade using Pearson correlation. Furthermore, interviewing the teacher to know other difficulties faced by their students is also highly demanded. This is because the teachers’ awareness could help the teaching and learning process run smoothly. Finally, students’ grade on vocabulary was being analyzed to see whether their grades are satisfactory or not.
4. Finding and Discussion

The Correlation of the Internal and External Factors, and also both toward the students' grade.

Correlations
The Internal factor toward its grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Factor</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Vocabulary Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Factor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.388*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.388*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlations
The difficult vocabulary toward the students' grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficult Vocabulary</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Vocabulary Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.352*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.352*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Correlations
The concrete/abstract vocabulary toward the students’ grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concrete/Abstract vocabulary</th>
<th>Concrete/Abstract vocabulary</th>
<th>Vocabulary Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete/Abstract vocabulary</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Grade</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.391*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlations
The number of students in the classroom with the students’ grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The students amount</th>
<th>The students amount</th>
<th>Vocabulary Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The students amount</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Grade</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
After being calculated, the writer copied them in SPSS program and processed it with Pearson Correlation with the following results:

1. Item A is for the internal factors that influence the difficulties in vocabulary learning. It is positively correlated to the students’ vocabulary grade and the result is really significant. The significance level is p<0.05, and the correlation shows that p=0.028 (0.028<0.05). In short, the more students have problems in the internal factors, the more they have problems in their vocabulary test.

2. The second item that is B, consists of external factors (vocabulary difficulties), which is positively correlated to the students’ grade. The result is still significant, p=0.048.
In this case, we can conclude that the less difficulty students face, the better grade they will get.

3. Item C is the second external factor, that is the concrete and abstract vocabularies. It is also correlated to the students’ grade and the result is positively significant. P=0,027 (0,027<0,05). If the students learn concrete vocabularies, they will get better mark in vocabulary test whereas if they learn abstract ones, students will get lower mark.

4. The next item is the third external factor, that is the number of students in the classroom. It is exactly the same with the standard of p (probability), that is 0,05 (0,05=0,05), but it is still considered significant. To sum up, the less number of students in the classroom, the better grade they will get. On the contrary, the bigger number of students in the classroom, the lower grade they will get.

5. The last external factor is the Educational Environment. It is also positively correlated to students’ grade and the p=0,048. It is still considered significant since 0,048<0,050. If the educational environment, like the teacher, is supportive enough, the better grade students will get.

6. The writer also correlates both the external and the internal factors to students’ grade. As a result, the writer combines both of the factors and get the result of p=0,00. This is positively significant indeed because both of the factors really influence the difficulties of vocabulary learning of the third grade of Marsudirini 77 Elementary School. The conclusion is that the less students find difficulties in term of external and internal factors, the better grade they will get.

The conclusion from all of these is that there are internal and external factors that influence difficulties in vocabulary learning, and both have correlation to the students’ grade. If their difficulties in learning English are not significant, automatically their grade will be high. On the other hand, if students find difficulties more often, their grade will be lower. The internal factor itself is the motivation from the students; whereas, the external ones are the educational environment, like teachers, the number of students in the classroom, the level of vocabulary, and the length of students’ learning in the classroom. Both have positive correlation with the students’ grade on English vocabulary testing.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

Learning English vocabulary is not that easy because there are many factors that can hinder the teaching and learning process. These difficulties are worth noting since children at a young age need encouragement in learning a language, which is not their mother tongue. These difficulties consist of internal and external ones. The internal factor is the intrinsic motivation of the students, which consist of:
Students’ desire to learn English
Students’ limited attention span/concentration
Students’ willingness to get a good grade

These internal factors are positively correlated to the students’ grade, that is the more motivation they have, the better grade they will get. Whereas the external factors consist of:

- Difficult vocabularies
- Concrete/abstract vocabulary
- The number of students in the classroom
- Educational environment, like the duration of the lesson and the use of dictionary.

After being correlated to the Pearson Correlation, all of these items positively correlate to the students’ grade in vocabulary test. If they find less difficulty in these items, their grade will be higher. The writer also analyzed to combine both of the factors correlate to the students’ grade with Pearson Correlation to see their relation. The result shows that both factors correlate positively to the students’ grade on vocabulary. As an additional information, the writer also discussed the difficulties faced by the teacher in facing the students in learning English vocabulary. The teacher admitted that they way the students behave play a significant role since they are always noisy and difficult to handle.

Getting involved in education is very demanding. Every person needs education and educators need to provide proper guidance in the teaching and learning process. Education world needs teachers who are aware of the difficulties faced by their students in learning something, in this case, English vocabulary. We need to know what factors hamper the students in learning English vocabulary and hope that the teachers could get rid of those difficulties. That is why, paying attention to the students’ difficulties in learning English vocabulary will be worth doing. A similar study needs to be conducted to know other factors besides motivation and educational environment, whether the students’ behaviour, the parents’ support, etc, could influence vocabulary learning. Similar study is also needed to know all factors that influence difficulties in learning English vocabulary and their influence on the students’ grade of Vocabulary English testing for the sake of knowledge contributions in Applied Linguistics.

References


