

# The Correlation Between Learning Motivation, Vocabulary Mastery and Listening Comprehension

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**Abstract:** This article is aimed at discussing and reporting the result of a study about correlation between learning motivation, vocabulary mastery and listening comprehension. The correlation was proven by the result of the study which was carried out at a senior high school in Surakarta. The sample of the study were 30 students of XI MIA 2 taken by cluster random sampling. A questionnaire was used to collect learning motivation data and objective tests were used to collect vocabulary mastery data and listening comprehension data. Single correlation and multiple linear regression were used to analyze the data. The result of the analysis shows that there is a positive correlation between (1) learning motivation and listening comprehension; (2) vocabulary mastery and listening comprehension; (3) learning motivation, vocabulary mastery simultaneously, and listening comprehension. Thus, it cannot be neglected that learning motivation and vocabulary mastery give contribution toward listening comprehension.

**Keywords:** *learning motivation, vocabulary mastery, listening comprehension*

## INTRODUCTION

Listening is the most avoided language skill in English language learning. However, listening could be the most important skill which ideally comes before the other three skills. It is because before learners are introduced with the written form of a word, teachers should introduce to them the oral form of the word to avoid mispronunciation. Some aspects may influence listening comprehension such as learning motivation and vocabulary mastery, whereas both of them facilitate a good listening comprehension. Achieving good listening comprehension needs high learning motivation and mastery of vocabulary. Therefore, learning motivation and vocabulary mastery affect each other to listening comprehension.

Listening comprehension is a bit difficult for language learners including

Indonesian students. By this situation, students' participation in listening comprehension class can be one of the ways to indicate their motivation in learning, whether or not they are still interested in class activities. According to Richards and Schmidt, motivation is generally considered to be one of the primary causes of success and failure in second language learning (2002: 344). In addition, Buck (2001: 3) states that listening comprehension is the result of an interaction between a number of information sources, which include acoustic input, different types of linguistic knowledge, details of the context, and general word knowledge, and so forth. Thus, success of listening comprehension is influenced by learning motivation and some other aspects including word knowledge or vocabulary.

Further, some experts such as Helgesen and Brown (2006); Nunan (1998); Brown (1990) and also Richards and Schmidt (2002) mention three processes in listening; top-down process, bottom-up process and interactive process. Top-down process is process of making sense of what the listener heard by focusing on the schema, or background knowledge and context. Bottom-up, in the other hand is focusing on the phonological code, such as sound, vocabulary, grammar, phrases, et cetera. While interactive process is the combination of both top-down and bottom-up processes.

Listening comprehension in this study means an active process of constructing number of information sources by applying background knowledge and general world knowledge to interpret spoken text.

However, the success of listening comprehension also depends on the motive of the students in learning. Learning is seen as a set of internal processes associated with practice or experience leading to relatively permanent changes in the capability of skill (Schmitt, 1997: 375). Whereas motivation, as is being underlined by Elliot is seen as an internal state that arouses us to action, pushes us in particular directions, and keeps us engaged in certain activities (2000: 332). Motivation that is related to learning is stated simply by Jones et.al., in O'Malley and Chamot (1996: 160): "Motivation, or the will to learn, can be considered as a component of metacognition insofar as it plays a self regulatory role in learning". It is closely related to the students' learning strategies. As we know that every student needs different learning strategy to comprehend a new information especially information which is in form of spoken text.

According to Brophy, students' motivation is rooted in students' subjective

experiences, especially those connected to their willingness to engage in lessons and learning activities and their reasons for doing so (2004: 4). It means that the reason of the students in attending class activities, especially listening class activities is one of the forms of their motivation in learning. So, the students' motivation can be seen from their behavior in attending classes. A good behavior is closely related to the high motivation and vice versa.

Thus, learning motivation in this study is defined as the process of advances in capability of skill that plays as self-regulatory which keep an individual engaged in certain learning activities.

Another thing that affects listening comprehension is word knowledge or vocabulary. Some experts have different opinion in defining vocabulary according to their point of view. Jackson explains that vocabulary is the stock of words in a language, or that is known or used by an individual, or that is associated with a particular activity (2002: 202). Vocabulary, when it is classified based on form, it not only consist of a single word but it can also be in form of compound word such as: secondhand, daughter-in-law, post office, et cetera and idioms such as call in, call on, carry out, come in et cetera. As it is being stated by Richards and Schmidt in *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* that vocabulary is a set of lexemes, including single words, compound words and idioms (2002: 580). In the other hand, word knowledge is not only about word form but also about word meaning. As it is assumed by Read that vocabulary knowledge involves knowing the meaning of words (2000: 16). Ur points out vocabulary from the other point of view, that is teaching and learning point of view. It is stated that vocabulary can be defined,

roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language (Ur, 1996: 60).

Therefore, vocabulary mastery in this research can be defined as understanding meaning of a set of lexemes of English that is used by an individual and is taught as foreign language.

From those theories above, the writer underlines that learning motivation and vocabulary mastery became crucial elements in listening comprehension. Therefore, this research is aimed to find out whether there is a correlation of the two variables, learning motivation and vocabulary mastery through listening comprehension and how strong is the correlation according to correlation coefficient.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology that was used by the writer was correlational method. According to Singh, correlation is one of the most widely used measures of association between two or more variables. In its simplest form it signifies the relationship between two variables, that is, whether an increase of one variable results in the increase of the other variable (2007: 146). The variables involved in the research are learning motivation and vocabulary mastery as independent variables and listening comprehension as dependent variable.

As the population, the researcher took all the eleventh grade students of science class of at a senior high school in Surakarta which consist of three classes with a total 73 students. The sample of the research is 30 students of XI MIA 2 taken by cluster random sampling. The research was conducted in October to November 2014.

The data were collected by giving questionnaire and tests to the sample class. A questionnaire which consist of 41 items in Indonesian language with four optional

answers was used to collect the data of learning motivation. Meanwhile, objective tests were used to collect the data of vocabulary mastery and listening comprehension. There were 50 items of vocabulary mastery test and 40 items of reading comprehension with multiple choice questions. But, especially for testing students' mastery of spelling the researcher used written test and for testing students' mastery of pronunciation the researcher used spoken test and it has been recorded. Those three instruments have previously been tried out for checking the validity and reliability of the items.

Pearson Product Moment Formula and Multiple Linear Regression were used to analyze the data of this research. Pearson Product Moment is used to test the first hypothesis (there is a positive correlation between learning motivation and listening comprehension) and the second hypothesis (there is a positive correlation between vocabulary mastery and listening comprehension). Meanwhile, Multiple Linear Regression test is used to test the third hypothesis (there is a positive correlation between learning motivation and vocabulary mastery simultaneously and listening comprehension).

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the computation of the first hypothesis, it is found out that correlation coefficient ( $r_{x_1y}$ ) between learning motivation ( $X_1$ ) and listening comprehension ( $Y$ ) is 0.43. Then, it is being calculated to the t-value, the value of  $t_o$  ( $t_{obtained}$ ) is 2.5. The value of  $t_t$  ( $t_{table}$ ) at the level of significance  $\alpha=0.05$  for  $N=30$  is 1.7. Because  $t_o$  (2.5) is higher than  $t_t$  (1.7) or  $t_o > t_t$ , it can be concluded that the coefficient correlation ( $r$ ) is significant. It means that the first hypothesis that there is a positive

correlation between learning motivation and listening comprehension is accepted. Then, it shows that the increase of learning motivation will be followed by the increase of students' listening comprehension. The coefficient of determination between  $X_1$  and  $Y$  is  $(0.43)^2 \times 100\%$ . It means that 18.1% variation of listening comprehension ( $Y$ ) is determined by learning motivation ( $X_1$ ).

From the computation of the second hypothesis, it is found that the correlation coefficient ( $r_{x_2y}$ ) between vocabulary mastery ( $X_2$ ) and listening comprehension ( $Y$ ) is 0.37. Then, it is being calculated to the t-value, the value of  $t_o$  ( $t_{obtained}$ ) is 2.14. The value of  $t_t$  ( $t_{table}$ ) at the level of significance  $\alpha=0.05$  for  $N=30$  is 1.7. Because  $t_o$  (2.14) is higher than  $t_t$  (1.7) or  $t_o > t_t$ , it can be concluded that the coefficient correlation is significant. It means that the second hypothesis, that there is a positive correlation between vocabulary mastery and listening comprehension, is accepted. Then it shows that the increase of vocabulary mastery will be followed by the increase of students' listening comprehension. The coefficient of determination between  $X_2$  and  $Y$   $(0.37)^2 \times 100\%$ . It means that 14.025% variation of listening comprehension ( $Y$ ) is determined by vocabulary mastery ( $X_2$ ).

The computation of multiple regression in the third hypothesis testing,

shows that the coefficient of  $a_0 = -5.422$ ,  $a_1 = 0.204$  and  $a_2 = 0.107$ , so the multiple regression equation of  $Y$  on  $X_1$  and  $X_2$  becomes  $\hat{Y} = -5.422 + 0.204X_1 + 0.1077X_2$ . The testing of the significance regression for  $F_o$  is 3.54. After the value of  $F_o$  is compared to F-table ( $F_t$ ) at the level of significance  $\alpha=0.05$ , it shows that the value of  $F_o$  (3.54) is higher than  $F_t$  (3.35);  $F_o$  (3.54)  $>$   $F_t$  (3.35). It means that the third hypothesis saying that there is a positive correlation between learning motivation and vocabulary mastery simultaneously and listening comprehension is accepted. The coefficient of determination ( $R_{y12}^2$ ) is 0.208. It means that 20.8% variation of listening comprehension ( $Y$ ) is determined by learning motivation ( $X_1$ ) and vocabulary mastery ( $X_2$ ) and 79.2% the rest is determined by other factors. Therefore, the theories which state that there is a positive correlation between learning motivation and vocabulary mastery simultaneously and listening comprehension are proved.

The contribution analysis of independent variables; students' learning motivation and students' vocabulary mastery toward the dependent variable, students' listening comprehension can be seen in the table 1.

*Table 1. The contribution analysis of independent variables toward the dependent variable*

<b>Variants</b>	<b>Relative Contribution</b>	<b>Effective Contribution</b>
Learning Motivation toward Listening Comprehension	64.63%	13.41%
Vocabulary Mastery toward Listening Comprehension	35.37%	7.34%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>20.75%</b>

The result of hypotheses testing shows that the coefficient of correlation of learning motivation, vocabulary mastery, and listening comprehension is significant and all of the hypotheses indicate positive correlation. In addition, the contribution

analysis shows that each independent variable has its contribution in the success of dependent variable. The correlation between learning motivation, vocabulary mastery and listening comprehension can be illustrated as follows.

Listening comprehension is one of the keys in language learning. By comprehending what we listen to, we will clearly understand the information which is transferred orally. Lado in Buck (2001: 62) underlines that listening comprehension is a process of recognising the sounds of language. Further, in the book entitled *Assessing Listening* by Buck, he defines listening comprehension as an active process of constructing meaning, and that this is done by applying knowledge to the incoming sound (2001: 31). Knowledge here means general world knowledge and the listeners' background knowledge that can be used by the listeners to construct meaning based on context.

Mathewson (in Flowerdew and Miller), points out that there are four affective factors that may lead to a decision to read/listen: attitude, motivation, affect, and physical feelings (2005: 91). Ideally, students who have high motivation will lead themselves to attend every class, including listening comprehension class. They tend to look for the appropriate learning strategies for themselves because basically motivation is related to behavior and learning strategies. Flowerdew and Miller state that the more learners want to succeed in learning a language, the greater their range of strategies (2005: 69). It is noted that without motivation students are not interested in finding appropriate listening strategies and then they will find it difficult for themselves in doing listening comprehension section. In the other hand, if the students have high motivation, it will lead them to get wide range of listening strategies which will guide them to good listening comprehension outcomes such as being able to find main idea, specific information, the word meaning and so on.

Listening comprehension is complex, and sometimes boring, especially for

listening to the long text with uncommon vocabularies. The other obstacles were mentioned by Gazzaniga, Ivry, and Mangunin in Imai (2005). They stated that the listener is confronted with enormous variability in input: the rate of speech, the dialect of the speaker, and the sex of the speaker. Those obstacles cause anxiety to the students in attending listening section. Then, they are not able to focus on the listening material during the section. Jafari (2010) argued that without having an interest in and a motivation for learning, students get bored with taking part in listening classes. Subsequently, this feeling leads them to acquire passive attitude toward this skill and causes them to make less progress in listening comprehension.

Simultaneously, another aspect that influences listening comprehension is vocabulary mastery. As it is stated by Goh (in Jafari 2010), it has been identified some factors that affect learners' listening comprehension. The five most important factors were vocabulary, prior knowledge, speech rate, type of input, and speaker's accent. One who has less vocabulary will get more difficulties in comprehending utterances. As stated by Krashen, while knowledge of vocabulary may not be sufficient for understanding all messages, there is little doubt that an increased vocabulary helps the acquirer understand more of what is heard or read (1982: 80).

In line with the previous experts, Richards and Schmidt (2002:313) state that the study of listening comprehension processes in second language learning focuses on the role of individual linguistic units (e.g. PHONEMES, WORDS, grammatical structures) as well as the role of the listener's expectations, the situation and context, background knowledge and the topic. In a bottom-up process, we understand something by building up from the most

concrete units of the input (Rost, 1994:4). In this process, it is needed to get the meaning from almost all of the single words to decode the information. Bottom up processing cannot maximally be applied without the sufficient lexical knowledge. Thus, to be a good listener, it is important to master vocabularies. The increased vocabulary will facilitate listener or reader in understanding what is being listened or read. It is because understanding lexical knowledge or vocabulary will help the listeners catch the words' meaning, words' intonation and words' grammar to be understood clearly when listening.

Related to listening comprehension, it can be pointed out that there are two aspects affecting on listening comprehension namely: learning motivation and vocabulary mastery. Listening which is known as the most difficult skill to comprehend is impossibly conquered for them who have low motivation and less vocabulary knowledge. In Listening comprehension class, students who have low motivation tend to feel inferior when facing listening comprehension obstacle because they have no listening strategies. But those who have high motivation will have themselves enthusiastic even though they find difficulties. Those who have less vocabulary knowledge will get difficulty in understanding any items related to words meaning, words form, and words grammar. In the other hand, students having more knowledge of vocabulary find themselves easy in comprehending any spoken text related to their understanding.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the result of the research, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis says that there is a positive correlation between learning motivation and listening comprehension is accepted. The

computation presents that the correlation coefficient ( $r_{x_1y}$ ) is 0.43 and the value of t-obtained (2.5) is higher than the value of t-table (1.7);  $t_o (2.5) > t_t (1.7)$ . The coefficient of determination ( $r_{x_1y}^2$ ) between learning motivation ( $X_1$ ) toward listening comprehension (Y) is 0.181. It means that 18.1% variation of listening comprehension (Y) is determined by learning motivation ( $X_1$ ) and the rest 81.9% is determined by other factors.

The second hypothesis says that there is a positive correlation between vocabulary mastery and listening comprehension is accepted. The computation presents that the correlation coefficient ( $r_{x_2y}$ ) is 0.37 and the value of t-obtained (2.14) is higher than the value of t-table (1.7);  $t_o (2.14) > t_t (1.7)$ . The coefficient of determination ( $r_{x_2y}^2$ ) between vocabulary mastery ( $X_2$ ) toward listening comprehension (Y) is 0.14025. It means that 14.025% variation of listening comprehension (Y) is determined by vocabulary mastery ( $X_2$ ) and 85.9% the rest is determined by other factors.

The third hypothesis says that there is a positive correlation between learning motivation, vocabulary mastery simultaneously and listening comprehension is accepted. The computation presents that coefficient correlation ( $r_{y12}$ ) is 0.46 and the value of  $F_o$  (3.54) is higher than the value of F-table (3.33);  $F_o (3.54) > F_t (3.33)$ . The coefficient of determination ( $R_{y12}^2$ ) is 0.208. It means that 20.8% variation of listening comprehension (Y) is determined by learning motivation ( $X_1$ ) and vocabulary mastery ( $X_2$ ) and 79.2% the rest is determined by other factors.

Therefore, as the implication of this research, it can be said that learning motivation and vocabulary mastery are included as the aspects which contribute to the success of listening comprehension.

Learning motivation is related to the initiation phase of learning that will be reflected to the following phase such as the way students learn, students' enthusiasm in achieving targets, the way students overcome their learning problems, and even what students do in giving reward for their own achievements. One of teacher's ways to motivate students' learning is using interesting topic in listening comprehension activity. By using interesting topic the students will enjoy listening every passage because it contains familiar vocabulary and is suitable for their interest. The enjoyment in listening comprehension may be seen as the indicator of high motivation. It is necessary to lower students' anxiety before and during listening comprehension test. One of the solutions for improving vocabulary mastery is by giving more time to focus on vocabulary buildings. It can be in form of games which may increase students' motivation or by using drilling to introduce new vocabulary which the correct pronunciation is needed to be heard before the writing does. The suitable text is needed to be paid attention to. The text which contains too many new vocabularies may decrease students' curiosity to guess the appropriate meaning. So, to build students' vocabulary, the text should be interesting and does not contain too much new vocabulary. It is important to gain students' motivation in listening also.

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