THE ROLE OF INTERNAL FACTORS OF EFL LEARNERS AT MARGINAL SCHOOLS

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Abstract: The expected result of teaching and learning certain language is influenced by many factors. They commonly come from internal and external sides of the EFL learners. There are many internal as well as external factors affected to the English learning. Out of many internal factors possessed by the EFL learners, this paper tries to examine five of them: (1) age, (2) gender, (3) motivation, (4) intelligence, and (5) personality. Those are assumed to have significant effect on the success of learning English as a foreign language. The paper focusses on the lower secondary schools particularly at marginal schools. In this type of schools, English is generally assumed as the low-proficiency subject among the others. Considering the different students’ characteristics from urban schools, it is predicted that the outcomes of learning English in the schools will be different as well. It is revealed from the result of National Exam which qualitatively lower than urban schools’ achievement (Wahyono, et al: 2015). By recognizing the factors, it is expected to place the paper as the basic consideration in deciding the effective strategies in teaching English especially in this kind of marginal schools.

Keywords: Internal factors, EFL learners, marginal schools, lower secondary level

Introduction

The succeed in learning a language achieved by all language learners does not always depend on the same condition. Every language learner who learns a language in the same class, the same time, the same situation, using the same books, using the same media, or taught by the same teacher will probably produce the different outcomes. Besides the facility availability such as learning in a comfortable classroom, or taught by the professional and experienced teacher which given to the learners, there are surprisingly many factors influence their succeed in learning a language. One of them are factors existed inside the learners, both the efforted factors, like motivation, self-esteem, risk-taking, interest,
anxiety, self-confidence; and also the effortless factors, such as intelligent, age, gender, personality and so forth.

Moreover, the different location of schools or language institutions will predictedly produce the different language learning outcomes. The characteristic of learners from urban schools are different from those who learn the language in marginal schools. The outcomes from marginal schools generally are still low. Those may be caused by the lack of professional teachers, insufficient books and media, lack of information access, or the low background knowledge of the learners, and so on.

This article tries to elaborate some influencing internal factors which will predictedly influence the foreign language acquisition. They are age, gender, motivation, intelligent and personality of the learners.

**Marginal Schools in Indonesia**

Marginal schools in Indonesia are included to the schools which located in the border areas of a country, province, regency or even sub-regency and far from the downtown (Kusuma: 2012). Most of people may consider them as the under-qualified schools since those kind of schools typically has the lower outcomes, lack of current educational informations, lack of books, media or other subject materials, lack of teachers, even lack of school fund. It also can be said that the marginal schools are commonly chosen after the students are not accepted in urban qualified schools enrollment. Moreover, some students are from low income family who cannot enroll to the more qualified schools which are far from their house so that they have to live separated from their family and need extra-fund for the living cost. Althought, some students of marginal school are from high-income family whose parents do not want to sent their children to continue the study in urban schools. Most of them are worried about the uncontrolled urban social intercourse which generally more free so that the children will be trapped into it.

The learners’ outcomes of marginal schools commonly have low ability in comprehending and using English. It is caused by the low level of learners’
motivation, unmotivated teachers, non-English teachers who predictedly have low-proficiency and the learners’ difficulties in comprehending the required text (Beh: 1997). Moreover, most people label the learners of the schools as “exile learners” which mean unwanted, undisciplined and naughty ones. The students from the schools mostly feel that they are one of the “less smart learners”, they accordingly become more unmotivated ones to learn the subjects. Furthermore, most of the learners have low abilities in comprehending English because they only learn English in their schools comparing to their mates in urban schools who learn English both in the schools and their private courses. The learners from urban schools commonly come from more sufficient economical family. Only little bit number of students who have high motivation to study the subject. The learning ethos of marginal school students is included into the average to less to learn in school. This low learning ethos is caused by low reading interest, competitive passion, self-autonomy, and learning responsibility (Wahyono, et al: 2015). Regarding those different backgrounds, it can be predicted that the outcomes of both kinds of schools will absolutely contribute the differences as well.

The result of labelling the marginal schools is not only affected the learners, but it also influence the teachers’ performance in teaching their students. More teachers feel hopeless to teach them because they do not have motivation and passion to learn the subjects. Some teachers from marginal schools unfortunately said that they are not quite serious to participate Curriculum 2013 training which needs the students to be more critical and active because it cannot be implemented in teaching the learners in their schools (Waliyadin: 2014).

**EFL Learners**

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners refer to the non-native English learners of countries which English is generally not a local medium of instruction or communication but it is only taught and used in school environment (Nordquist:2015). The learners may not freely practice what they have learnt in schools with their family, neighbours or people in their environment since English is not used by those people. They will learn, use and practice English only
with the community in the environment which was created by their teachers. Due to the different background on language, those kind of EFL learners typically require different, specialized and modified instructions and media in their courses. Moreover, they will predictedly encounter much more obstacles in learning the language such as first language interferences, limited time and environment to practice the language and so forth.

**Characteristics of Indonesian EFL Learners**

Indonesian learners is culturally catagorized into more passive, compliant and unreflective learners who tend to feel shy and difficult to express their ideas. One of the study conducted by Pikkert and Foster (1996) as stated in Exley (2005), they compared the Indonesian university learners and American secondary and university learners. The result of their study was that the Indonesian learners’ score were lower. Another study conducted by Beh (1997). She reported that English language teaching in Indonesia cannot be said as successful because she found that 85% of students’ ability in using English both spoken and written form is still low. She grouped them into “less than good” category. It is shortly concluded that Indonesian EFL learners tend to be passive in practicing English during learning process even in their daily activities.

**Internal Factors that Influence EFL Learners**

Every learner have their own uniqueness and differences among others. Accordingly, they tend to succeed their learning process through their own ways. Talking about the internal factors in language learning means various factors existed inside the learners. Internal factors in language learning are some existance variables inside the learners which influence the language learning outcome; *[age, gender, motivation, intellelgent and personality]* (Madrid, 1995; Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi, 2015).

Regarding the age of the learners, young learners will learn differently comparing to adult ones. Thus, the teachers should be aware of it. Moreover, the consideration of choosing materials and strategies, also knowing their age characteristics are really needed. Relating to contrastive gender, it is considered
that male and female tend to be superior in distinctive certain learning way. Furthermore, males learners are including to be more visual ones. They will learn well when they are motivated by their mates, and they mostly learn inefficiently in listening way. On the other hand, females tend to be good learners when they are in quite situation. They tend to be the auditory learners, so they will be superior in listening. (Marcus, 1999; Pizzo, 2000; as cited in Tatarinceva, 2009). The next factor is about the learners’ motivation. It is assumed that the students with higher motivation will learn the language better than the lower motivated ones. Therefore, it is a great responsibility for the teacher to help the students to create their own motivation in learning language. Additionally, the students’ intelligence also have the important role to the success of learning language. It is revealed that some studies finds a correlation between the students’ intelligence and the ability of the students to learn a certain language. It accordingly reflects that the intelligence of the students will support their language achievement. The last is about personality factor in which it will lead the students to act and respond the learning differently among each other. An extrovert students will learn the language actively, sociably and tends to be an risk-taker. Thus, he/she will be good in speaking skill. In contrast, an introvert learners tends to be a silent one who will be more motivated in non-social activities, such as reading and listening activities.

A. Age

The different age learners considerably have their own abilities, intelectual skills, needs. Consequently, the differences will contribute the various impact in learning language as well. (Ghania:2013). It possibly will support the success of learning language; it in contrast will unfortunately lead them to the failure of learning language. Second language acquisition is influenced by the age of the learner. Children, who already have solid literacy skills in their own language, seem to be in the best position to acquire a new language efficiently.

Young learners more intuitively can learn new languages in terms of social and communicative situation. Besides, the the older learners can readily get the
languages cognitively in academic field. Furthermore, it is expectable to introduce a new language to the learners in their early ages (Stern 1983: 367). In line with Penfield and Roberts 1959, Lenneberg 1967, The belief that young learners are better at learning languages than adults is supported by the critical period hypothesis. This hypothesis states that the early years before puberty offer the most favourable stage for L2 learning to take place naturally and with ease. After this span of years this capacity decreases.

Some experts said that the younger learners studied language, the more fluent they will be. It is commonly be said that the young learners will have the better outcomes in learning a language. Following are the different characteristics between young, adolescent and adult language learners in learning a new language (adopted from http://www.degreediary.com/post/The-Characteristics-of-Young-Adolescent-and-Adult-learners).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young Learners</th>
<th>Adolescent Learners</th>
<th>Adult Learners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- They can learn through talking about themselves, families and their lives.</td>
<td>- They are in search for personal identity.</td>
<td>- Adults are more disciplined than adolescents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They are curious to learn and discover new concepts on their own.</td>
<td>- They are in need of activities that meet their needs and learning expectations.</td>
<td>- They have a clear understanding of their learning objectives.</td>
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<td>- They like to use their imagination and to discover things.</td>
<td>- They become disruptive when they lose interest in the lesson or feel bored.</td>
<td>- They need to be involved in choosing what and how to learn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They naturally need to touch, see, hear and interact to learn.</td>
<td>- They need help and support from the teacher and to be provided with constructive feedback.</td>
<td>- They prefer to rely on themselves and work on their own pace.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Because their attention span is limited, they need engaging and</td>
<td>- They can draw upon a variety of resources in</td>
<td>- They come to the classroom with a wide range of knowledge.</td>
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entertaining activities in order to not lose interest.
- They like to cooperate and work in groups.
- They need support and encouragement while learning.
- Teachers need to work with their students individually because they need to be guided.

- the learning environment, including personal experience, the local community, and the Internet.
- They need the teacher to build bridges between the syllabus and their world of interests and experiences.
- They can learn abstract issues and do challenging activities.
- Their personal initiative and energy are moved into action through meaningful involvement with relevant and current content.

- expectations, and experiences.
- They are able to do a wide range of activities.
- Adults learn at various rates and in different ways according to their intellectual ability, educational level, personality, and cognitive learning styles.
- They come into the classroom with diverse experiences, opinions, thoughts, and beliefs which need be respected.

B. Gender

Gender differences possibly have the relation to the learners in learning a language. It has been discussed by many studies and it was proved that the gender will influence the success of language learners. One of studies reports that male and female learn through their own different ways. As cited by Marcus: 1999 and Pizzo: 2000 in Tatarinceva: 2009, males tend to learn better by visual way, more motivated when learn in group and worse learning in listening activities. Otherwise, most of female will learn better by auditory way and will learn well in very quite situation. Moreover, male learners will more like doing activity related
to talk in public situation, but female learners will more like talking in private situation.

C. Motivation

All people agree that motivation is a significant influencing factor in learning. Motivation may be defined as force or power possessed by learner to create passion, joy and more willingness to do or learn something new and gives optimism to face a failure (Cebollero:2014). Motivation may lead the learners to have their own behaviours which influence their way of learning. The students with a high motivation will get the more positive achievement. Including to language learning, the motivation gives the learners more power to learn a language. The high motivated language learners will do and try to learn harder that those who have low motivation. Although, the source of every students’ motivation are vary, such as a student is motivated to learn english because he/she has learnt English since he/she was very young and his/ her mates have not, or he/ she is more motivated because he/ she is keen on English more then his/ her classmates, but it still has positive effect to their learning. Nevertheless, the high motivated learners also meet their own difficulties in particular part of language, so that they also feel not easy to improve it (Lightbown & Spada, 1995: 112).

According to Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015; Mahadi & Jafari, 2012; Cicerchia, 2015, out of many kinds of motivation stated, it can be primarily distinguished into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the desire and interest to do or take part in a certain activity because of their own willingness. They do not desire any reward or want something as the result of doing the activity. It is done by their self-initiated and self-regulated. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation can be defined as a kind of desire to do an activity because of other reasons outside of the activity itself, such as accepting a reward, praise, or preventing from any punishment. Those types of motivation will consequently produce different outcomes. Intrinsic motivation will deal with long term success since it is done to actualize their own individuals. Otherwise, extrinsic motivation will have shorter term success because when ones has achieved what they want, surely they will quit to do the activity.
D. Intelligence

There were many studies had been done which reported that intelligent strongly influenced to the success of language learners. The variety of IQ which shows the level of learners’ intelligent plays the important roles on the certain part of a language than other ones, e.g some similar findings showed that intelligent has strong influence to the language learners’ performance in reading, dictation, and writing exercises. It oppositely does not have relation to their performance on listening comprehension and other oral production activities. In short, intellignet will be a convincing aspect in formal language classroom. Nevertheless, it will not be really needed when the learners learn the language in less or non – formal classroom (Lightbown & Spada, 1995; Institute of English Language and Literature, 2014). In line with the Fachurraxy (2014: 105), he cited the the Gardner’s idea of multiple intelligence (MI). MI sees that no students who are smart or not smart based on Intelligence Quatation (IQ) test, but they have their own way to learn something in their own certain intelligeneces.

Hence, there are 9 types of intelligence identified (Fachurrazy, 2014 & Davis, at al, 2012) as follows:

1. Linguistic intelligence; the skill possessed to easily comprehend and produce languages both in spoken and written form.

2. Logical-mathematical intelligence; the skill possessed to easily recognize and use the numerical, abstract and logical reasoning in fixing some problems related to them.

3. Musical intelligence; the ability owned to effortlessly recognize, comprehend and communicate the meaning of resulted particular sound.

4. Spatial intelligence; the skill owned to feel, see and create some visual and/ or spatial images.

5. Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence; the skill owned to easily use their parts or all body to solve the problems and produce something.

6. Naturalist intelligence; the skill possessed to point out the difference among crucial structures of natural surroundings.
7. Interpersonal intelligence; the ability to recognize, feel, appreciate, understand and sympathize others’ feelings, beliefs and intentions.

8. Intrapersonal intelligence; the skill owned to recognize and understand oneself such as strengths and weaknesses, feelings, and desires, then use the information gotten to manage one’s own life.

9. Existential intelligence; the ability to be more sensitive comparing to others to have deeper concepts about the human existence.

By recognizing the learners’ intelligence, they can be helped to sharpen their smartness to learn about the language through their own ways. It should be noted that the learner whose intelligence is strong in the result of IQ test does not always show good achievement in second language learning. It in contrast can be a student who has weak intelligent but shows more successful in learning second language. It can be shortly stated that every language learners with various level of intelligent can possibly learn a language successfully (Lightbown & Spada, 1995: 112).

E. Personality

Another factor believed influences the success of language acquisition is personality. Some studies have been done to prove that learners’ personality will affect their language learning. But in fact, it is not easy to prove that the learners who have the same personality trait will have the same success in learning a language. For instance, some studies generally concluded that extroverted learners will show the better result in learning a language. In contrast, a study reported the different conclusion. It stated that the success of learning a language is often measured with the number of scores. Therefore, some higher scores were surprisingly obtained by introverted learners (Lightbown & Spada, 1995: 38; Madrid, 1995).

Other aspect of personality have been studied too in order to measure the success of language acquisition, such as inhibition, self-esteem, empathy, dominance, talkativeness, and responsiveness. Unfortunately, it was not easy to measure the relation between language acquisition and the learners’ personality.
The primary difficulty is that identifying the learners’ personalities and how to measure them. Some findings showed that personality traits may cause the better outcomes of acquisition on communicative competence, but not to measure the grammatical and accuracy knowledge of linguistic rules. Accordingly, many researchers concluded that personality traits can be one of a factors contributing on the success of language learning, but it may be supported by other factors inserted in language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 1995: 39).

**Conclusion**

Revealing the fact that the learners from marginal schools tend to have their own characters which support them to have low motivation in learning. Those tendency surely influences the result of their learning especially in learning English. Accordingly, it is so much expected to the teachers, more specific is English teachers, decision maker and other educators to help the learners to increase their willingness and motivation in learning. If the effect of labelling their schools is continued, it will surely make the learners more unmotivated and it is extremely possible to have students with unfinished studies in a certain level of education. Regarding to the possible problems caused by the phenomenon faced by marginal schools, it is quite expected for the English teachers especially to explore their approaches and strategies to decrease the problems by conducting at least action researches for instance.
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