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Vocabulary Skills in English of The Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences Students: An Input to Vocabulary Enhancement Program in the New Normal

Kristine Carla P. Mahaguay

Vicente Madrigal Integrated School
kristinecarlapascual@yahoo.com

Abstract: The study aims to determine the status of the vocabulary skills of the Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences students in understanding word meaning, spelling, pronunciation, and appropriateness of usage to develop a program that will help enhance student's vocabulary skills. The research was conducted during the academic year 2020-2021 at Vicente Madrigal Integrated School. Descriptive Developmental research was employed in the study since its purpose is to determine the status of vocabulary skills of the respondents as well as to develop a program that will cater to student's vocabulary enhancement. The participants of the study are 60 students, meanwhile, the questionnaire checklist was the main instrument in gathering data. The data were treated through percentage and rank distribution and weighted mean. The study revealed that students are aware of the different strategies on how to understand word meaning like using dictionary and understanding context clues.

Meanwhile, in terms of spelling students found it easy to spell simple words as well as identifying words in incorrect spelling nonetheless they found it difficult to spell complex spelling. With regard to pronunciation, the respondents are not fully aware of reading transcription symbols in the dictionary and found it difficult to pronounce complex words. Moreover, when it comes to appropriate usage, students tend to use the newly learned words in their daily lives and used them in n appropriate situations. The following recommendations were offered: Students must be taught in understanding the meaning of the word through the use of word parts or morphology such as various affixes, suffixes, and prefixes; a lesson in reading transcription symbol or basic speech symbols must be given to students; spelling quiz should be incorporated in the lesson to stimulate skills in spelling complex words; understanding how parts of speech function must be given priority to ensure the correctness of developed sentences. Lastly, an enhancement program for vocabulary development must be proposed especially in this new normal.

Keywords: vocabulary skills, HUMSS, student

Introduction

A great German philosopher and linguist named Ludwig Wittgenstein once said that "The limit of your language is the limit of your world." He is then reiterating that the world is not the immediate suspect in the hardship and the struggle of man, rather it is man's attitude on how he sees the world and deal with it through language. He is then pointing towards the incompetence of man in the use of language to his advantage.

Let us put it this way, students failed in different examinations not because they are not capable to answer the questions or the exam is hard, the common reason is that most of the time they failed to understand the question due to some vocabulary which is alien to them. Here, the simple limitation of vocabulary will bring series of problems like, from the misunderstanding of the question going to the failure to the examination.

This paper will bridge the senior high school students' limitations in vocabulary. In a bigger perspective, this small way of adding vocabulary to their reservoir will help in facing their other problems such us in making reports in the immersion program (Mahaguay, K. C. P., Mahaguay, J. M., 2020) and developing critical thinking (Mahaguay, 2018; Mahaguay, 2020).

Based on the result of the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment or (PISA) in which among 79 participating countries and economies, the Philippines scored the lowest in reading comprehension. Both boys' and girls' performances in reading ranked lowest among PISA-participating countries. Reading comprehension is crucial for inclusive diversity of human activities starting from the following instruction from a manual, finding out the detail of information of an event, in communicating with others for a specific purpose and the like. With this thought, one vital factor

of the low reading comprehension can be attributed to the limited vocabulary of Filipino learners.

Further, Marzano & Pickering (2005) stated that one of the key indicators of students' success in school and life, in general, is contributed to the stored vocabulary they have. One may not easily understand something if there are a lot of alien words to them, thus making things harder to comprehend. Further, vocabulary strengthens students' ability to understand ideas and think logically. It also allows students to express their minds freely and confidently, giving them the power to communicate well both oral and written communication.

In this line of thought, the researcher wished to strengthen students' vocabulary which is one by designing a program for vocabulary enhancement even in this trying times of the Covid-19 pandemic. Though the program may not be the panacea for all students' academic struggle, still it is important to point out one of the fortresses in increasing their communication and comprehension skills to help students to be more equipped in facing the ever-challenging life after school.

This paper sought to answer the following research questions.
1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of
    1.1. age;
    1.2. sex;
    1.3. section?
2. What is the status of the vocabulary skills in English of the respondents with respect to:
    2.1. meaning of the word;
    2.2. spelling;
    2.3. pronunciation
    2.4. appropriate usage?
3. What program can be proposed to help students develop their vocabulary skills in English?

Review of Related Literature
To further enhance the study the researchers' made some readings on books, journals, and theses. These readings vary from foreign to local sources.
Learning vocabulary can serve as the backbone of comprehension which includes reading, listening, writing, and speaking. One cannot understand a specific text if he/she does not understand the words written in it thus, having wide vocabularies can improve students' academic performance. This is supported by Miller (1993) stating that vocabulary is critical to a child's achievement for the following reasons: vocabulary growth has a direct relationship to school achievement, the size of a child's vocabulary in kindergarten predicts the ability to learn to read, it helps children to think and learn about the world and it provides unlimited access to new information.

Further, Alexander (2020) claimed that words are the currency of communication, a vigorous vocabulary overestimates the importance of communication which includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing hence can build the self-confidence and self-esteem of students. Also, according to Perfetti & Hart (2002) reading comprehension rest on having knowledge of words and their orthographic, phonological, and semantic elements. Hence, reading skill progresses when the reader has more high-quality vocabulary and can draw synchronously upon an understanding of their form and meaning (Perfetti, 2007). Indeed, the importance of widening vocabulary will benefit learners however, difficulties in learning it is all around the corner. *According to the study conducted by Rohmatillah (2014), various kinds of difficulties were faced by the students in learning vocabulary are pronouncing words, spelling, grammatical form, choosing the appropriate meaning of words, idiomatic expressions.*

Understanding a particular text or material can be hard when words are alien to the readers, the limitation of vocabulary is very crucial for comprehension, thus, in deciphering the meaning of a word, students need to acquire various strategies to make learning new words easy and fun. One of the famous strategies is finding the meaning through context clues. Dictiory.com defines *context clues as* hints that an author gives to help define a difficult or unusual word within a book. The clue may appear within the same sentence as the word to which it refers or it may follow in the next sentence. When trying to decode the meaning of a specific word, looking at the words that surround it may be useful, the words that surround the word to be decoded can provide the readers is called context clues. Context clues served as a guide to know the meaning and structure of the word, as well as on how to apply it in written and oral communication. Another way of understanding word meaning is the knowledge of synonyms, homonyms, and antonyms. Understanding how these works can build one's vocabulary. Learning the same meaning with multiple words can be used to replace a word that is used most of the time. It can provide more ways of saying the same thing. Moreover, this can also provide an opportunity to learn multiple meanings of a word.

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Fathira (2017) suggests that students should practice more in antonyms vocabularies to get the highest ability in advanced difficulties level. The students need to be familiar with vocabularies of higher or advanced level. In this case, the students need to have some extensive reading of academic papers. Furthermore, a way of understanding word meaning is through word parts or morphology. Based on the dictionary meaning Morphemes is defined as a word or part of a word that has a meaning and that contains no smaller part that has a meaning." It includes understanding the *base* words and *roots*, *prefixes*, and *suffixes*. These can be joined together in different ways and form a new word in order to fill its specific grammatical role. Anglin, Miller et. Al. (1993), lexical development can be characterized in terms of increasing morphological complexity. Complex words were unlocked by the children by analyzing the morphological structure of the word.

Vocabulary and spelling are intertwined, once someone knew that word, one should know its spelling as well since the problem in spelling may contribute to a lack of confidence and poor performance in school. One single incorrect spelling in public would mean humiliation thus, many refused to write on public boards. The problem in spelling is not only for children but also for some adults. According to Terry (2020), auditory processing affects spelling difficulties, it includes auditory discrimination, auditory-visual integration, and auditory closure.
Auditory discrimination refers to the ability to tell the differences between individual sounds and words that are slightly different whereas, auditory-visual integration means the ability to accurately relate an auditory sound with a visual symbol. Further, auditory closure is the ability to combine sounds that are presented orally to make words.

Meanwhile, Treiman (2004) stated that learning to spell requires much diligence and attentiveness but little linguistic skill or creativity. Further, Venezky as cited by Treiman, pointed out, one can forecast which form will occur based on the position of the letter or phoneme in the word and the word's morphological structure. Moreover, Treiman (2000) revealed that continued experience with print allows children to learn about more complex orthographic and morphological conventions of the language. Research and practice must take into account the complexities of phonological, orthographic, and morphological knowledge as they relate to spelling development.

Pronunciation has a significant role in effective communication. Knowledge in pronouncing words correctly can even contribute to the self-confidence of the learners hence, pronouncing words in English correctly became a must since it can help them to compete globally. However, it is a fact that it is not easy to pronounce words easily for a second language speaker. According to Pachina, (2019) Filipino speakers have what we call "Filipino Accent", which can be difficult to comprehend by native English speakers. One of the most prominent mistakes that Filipino students make is the mix-up of several consonants and vowels like /p/ and /f/, /v/ and /b/, /i/ and /e/, and the sounds that are close together. Similarly, the study conducted by **Hassan,** (2007) revealed that Sudanese Students of English whose language background is Sudanese Spoken Arabic had problems with the pronunciation of English vowels that have more than one way of pronunciation in addition to the consonant sound contrasts e.g. /z/ and /ð/, /s/ and /θ/, /b/ and /p/, /ʃ/ and /ʧ/. Thus, the study concluded that factors such as interference, the differences in the sound system in the two languages, the inconsistency of English sounds and spelling militate against Sudanese Students of English (SSEs) competence in pronunciation.

Meanwhile, in the study of Wei & Youfu, et.al (2002), Thai students found pronunciation problems with consonants and vowels and the causes of these problems and the solutions suggested were include the following: provide pronunciation training courses to language teachers, have teachers lecture in English, and provide students with articulatory descriptions of the mother tongue and target language. Indeed, pronunciation is significant and problematic concern that non-native English speakers have to look into in studying English since inappropriate pronunciation can lead to undesirable impressions, confusion, and ineffective communication.

Using appropriate words matters a lot both in speaking and writing. One incorrect use of a word can give a bad impression and deliver an incorrect message.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the principle of Mathew Effect by Richard Merton and his wife, Harriet Zuckerman (1968). Later, **Keith Stanovich**, a psychologist done extensive research on reading and language disabilities, and applied it to education, particularly in reading. In the educational setting, "Matthew Effect" refers to the idea that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

This hypothesis is consistent with Stanovich's (1986) proposal that the volume of the reading experience is the key mediating variable between reading skill and vocabulary, with collective advantages gained due to "the effect of reading" the vocabulary growth also increases.

When a child was not exposed to reading at an early stage, he/she will begin to dislike reading and as a consequence, he/she will not gain vo   cabulary, background knowledge, and information. However, in the other way around, when a child was exposed to reading at the very beginning, he/she will like reading and gain more vocabulary. In short, the word -rich get richer and the word poor gets poorer. This applies the idea of the "Mathew Effect"

Methodology

This research is descriptive since its purpose is to determine the status of the vocabulary of Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences Strand. The study also dealt with the developmental method of research since it focused on the development of a program that will help students improved their vocabulary skills. Questionnaire-checklist was developed focusing on two parts. The first part covered the profile of the respondents consist of the age, sex, and section they belong to. On the other hand, the second part focused on the status of the vocabulary skills in English by the respondents with the following variables: understanding word meaning, spelling, pronunciation, and appropriateness of usage.

First, the researcher sought a permit to the office of the principal to conduct and distribute a questionnaire checklist to the target respondents. The developed questionnaire checklist was validated by five (5) experts to ensure its validity. Moreover, in order to analyze and interpret the data, the following statistical treatment was utilized: percentage and rank distribution as well as weighted mean.

Findings

The following are the results gathered from the analysis of the data through the questionnaire checklist administered to the respondents. It specifically shows the interpretation and analysis from the application of various statistical treatments.

Table 1. Frequency, Percentage, and Rank Distribution of the

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Age			
17-18	48	80%	1
19-20	10	16.67%	2
20-21	2	3.33%	3
Sex			
Male	27	45%	2
Female	33	55%	1
Section			
Mt. Pulag	13	21.67%	4
Mt. Sierra Madre	17	28.33%	1
Mt. Mariveles	16	26.67%	2
Mt. Labo	14	23.33%	3

Table 1 shows that the ages of respondents are 17-18 years old which got the frequency of 48 or 80%, 19-20 years old got 10 or 16.67% and 20-21 years old got 2 or 3.33%. In terms of sex, out of 60 respondents, 27 or 45% were male and 33 or 55% were female. With regard to the respondents' section, 13 or 21.67% came from Mt. Pulag, 17 or 28. 33% from Mt. Sierra Madre, 16 or 26.67% from Mt. Mariveles, and 14 or 23.33% were from Mt. Labo.

This means that majority of the respondents belonged to the age bracket of 17 to 18 years old, while the mainstream of the respondents was female and belonged to section Mt. Sierra Madre.

The Status of the Vocabulary Skills in English of the Grade 12-Humanities and Social Sciences Students

Table 2. Computed Mean on the Status of Vocabulary Skills in English by the respondents with Respect to Word Meaning

Understanding Word Meaning	Mean	SD	VI	R
1. Understanding the meaning of word with the use of context clues	3.57	1.14	High	2
2. Understanding the meaning of unfamiliar words in the reading text/material	3.28	1.10	Moderately High	4
3. Finding unfamiliar words using dictionary	3.77	1.00	High	1
4. Understanding the meaning of word through the use of word parts or morphology (the meaning of various affixes, suffixes, and prefixes	3.23	1.25	Moderately High	5
5. Learning new words by understanding synonyms, antonyms and homonyms	3.50	1.14	High	3
Weighted Mean	3.47		High	

This implies that students knew various strategies in understanding word meaning such as utilizing dictionary, context clues, and synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms. These skills helped them in unlocking word meaning and understanding unfamiliar words found in reading material/text. Fathira (2017) suggests that students should practice more in antonyms vocabularies to get the highest ability in advanced difficulties level. The students need to be familiar with vocabularies of higher or advanced level.

However, skills in morphological awareness should be given attention since this is one of the best ways in deciphering the meaning of a word. According to Anglin, Miller et. Al. (1993), lexical development can be characterized in terms of increasing morphological complexity. Complex words were unlocked by the children by analyzing the morphological structure of a word.

Table 3. Computed Mean on the Status of Vocabulary Skills in English by the respondents with Respect to Spelling

Spelling	Mean	SD	VI	R
1. recognizing incorrect spelling.	3.57	1.25	High	2
2. spelling out simple word correctly.	3.83	1.05	High	1
3. spelling out difficult word correctly.	3.02	1.14	Moderately High	4.5
4. distinguishing the spelling of homonyms. (blue-blew)	3.02	1.20	Moderately High	4.5
5. listening to teacher in order to spell out word correctly.	3.45	1.18	High	3
Weighted Mean	3.38		Moderately High	

It can be seen from the table that skills in spelling obtained a weighted mean of 3. 38 with a verbal interpretation of Moderately High. The table showed that item 2 "Spelling out the simple word correctly" obtained the highest computed mean of 3.83, followed by item 1 "recognizing incorrect spelling, with a computed mean of 3.57 both verbally interpreted as High. The lowest in rank are items 3 "spelling out the difficult word correctly" and 4 "distinguishing the spelling of homonyms" with a computed mean of 3.02 verbally interpreted as Moderately High.

It only suggests that the respondents could spell out simple words correctly. Simple words are words that are commonly used. Since these are common,

familiarization may contribute to remembering the spelling of a word. Treiman (2000) revealed that continued experience with print allows children to learn about more complex orthographic and morphological conventions of the language.

On the other hand, difficult words are words that are rarely used as well as it requires a complex combination of letters regardless of its sounds. Thus, research and practice must consider and focus on the intricacies of phonological, orthographic, and morphological knowledge as they are related to spelling development.

Table 4. Computed Mean on the Status of Vocabulary Skills in English by the respondents with Respect to Pronunciation.

Pronunciation	Mean	SD	VI	R
1. distinguishing short vowel sound from long vowel sound.	3.38	1.22	Moderately High	2
2. reading transcription symbol.	2.60	1.10	Slightly Low	5
3. pronouncing simple words correctly.	4.63	1.10	Very High	1
4. pronouncing complex/difficult words correctly.	2.93	1.14	Moderately High	4
5. distinguishing /v/ from /b/ and /p/ from /f/ while pronouncing.	2.95	1.18	Moderately High	3
Weighted Mean	3.18	1.15	Moderately High	

It can be garnered from the table that the computed weighted mean of the vocabulary skills in English by the respondents obtained 3.18 with a verbal interpretation of Moderately High. The table showcased that item 3 "pronouncing simple words correctly" ranked first with a computed mean of 4.63 verbally interpreted as Very High. It was followed by item 2 "distinguishing short vowel sound from long vowel sound" with a computed mean of 3. 38 with a verbal interpretation of Moderately High. On the other hand, item 2 "reading transcription symbol" obtained was least in rank with a computed mean of 2.60 verbally interpreted as *Slightly High.*

This only implies that the students are aware of how to pronounce simple words as well as distinguishing short and long vowel sounds. However, the respondents lack knowledge in reading transcription symbols and found difficulty in pronouncing close sounds like /v/ and /b/, and /p/ and /f/. This may be due to less exposure to how to read symbols of sounds. There is no formal

subject that focuses on the discussion of transcription symbols.

Pachina, (2019) Filipino speakers have what we call "Filipino Accent", which can be difficult to comprehend by native English speakers. One of the most prominent mistakes that Filipino students make is the mix-up of several consonants and vowels like /p/ and /f/, /v/ and /b/, /i/ and /e/, and the sounds that are close together.

Table 5. Computed Mean on the Status of Vocabulary Skills in English by the respondents with Respect to Appropriate Usage

Appropriate Usage	Mean	SD	VI	R
1. recognizing parts of speech.	3.35	1.00	Moderately High	4.5
2. constructing sentences using specific word with its part of speech correctly.	3.47	1.20	High	3
3. using new learned word in a sentence.	3.55	1.10	High	1
4. finding error in the usage of word in a sentence	3.35	1.24	Moderately High	4.5
5. choosing the appropriate word in specific context/situation	3.52	1.20	High	2
Weighted Mean	3.45		High	

It can be seen from the table that the vocabulary skills in English of the respondents with respect to appropriate usage obtained a computed weighted mean of 3. 45 with a verbal interpretation as High. The table revealed that item 3 "using the newly learned word in a sentence" has a computed mean of 3.55, followed by item 5 "choosing the appropriate word in specific context/situation" with a computed mean of 3.52 both are verbally interpreted as High. Whereas, items 1 "recognizing parts of speech" and item 4 "finding error in the usage of the word" obtained a weighted mean of 3.35 with a verbal interpretation of Moderately High.

This suggests that the respondents are aware and knowledgeable when it comes to how the words will be applied in a conversation as well as how the word functions based on its part of speech. The skills in recognizing parts of speech of a certain word can imply that they can also use the word in a sentence correctly. Moreover, their ability in finding errors in the usage of the word in a sentence needs more practice.

Table 6. Composite Table on the Extent of Difficulties Encountered by the TVL-ICT Computer Programming students in Work Immersion with Respect to the Different Aspects

Status of Vocabulary Skills in...	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
A. Understanding the Meaning of Word	3.47	High
B. Spelling	3.38	Moderately High
C. Pronunciation	3.18	Moderately High
D. Appropriate Usage	3.45	High
Average Mean	3.37	Moderately High

It can be viewed from the table that the status of vocabulary skills in English by the respondents with the different aspects obtained a computed average mean of 3.37 verbally interpreted as Moderately High.

Specifically, understanding the meaning of the word and appropriate Usage obtained a computed mean of 3. 47 and 3.45 respectively. Both with the verbal interpretation of High. Whereas, spelling and pronunciation got a computed mean of 3. 38 and 3.18 verbally interpreted as Moderately High.

This only implies that students' skills in English vocabulary when it comes to the understanding meaning of words using different strategies such as using dictionaries, context clues, morphology, and synonyms are good. These strategies helped students in understanding reading materials. They also understand how to use and apply the newly learned words in a specific context.

On the other hand, students' skills in English vocabulary in it comes to spelling and pronunciation require more practice and enhancement.

This further strengthened the idea of *Rohmatillah (2014), when he explained that the various kinds of difficulties were faced by the students in learning vocabulary are pronouncing words, spelling, grammatical form, choosing the appropriate meaning of words, expressions that are idiomatic.*

Proposed Program

Based on the result of the study, a program entitled "PROJECT W.O.R.D (Widening Of the Reservoir of Diction) in the New Normal will be proposed. This will be through the development of a Facebook Page where new words will be posted in a form of a video. This will be done starting January 4, 2021. In order to reinforce the activity, teachers of English will be requested to encourage their handled section to visit and like to FB Page of the program. They will require their students to listen and write down the words for the week in the students' activity sheets. To address issues concerning internet connectivity, the words for the week will be sent to the students' respective group chats in a

form of text. This is ungraded however, through this, while students are writing the words, they can familiarize themselves with the meaning, spelling, and usage of the word.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Students are aware of the different strategies on how to understand word meaning like using dictionary and understanding context clues.
2. Meanwhile, in terms of spelling students found it easy to spell simple words as well as identifying words in incorrect spelling nonetheless they found it difficult to spell complex spelling.
3. With regard to pronunciation, the respondents are not fully aware of reading transcription symbols in the dictionary and found it difficult to pronounce complex words.
4. Students are aware of appropriate how the word functions based on its part of speech; students tend to use the newly learned words in their daily lives and used them in an appropriate situation.

Recommendations

Based on the above-mentioned conclusions, the following recommendations were offered:

1. Students must be taught in understanding the meaning of a word through the use of word parts or morphology such as various affixes, suffixes, and prefixes.
2. A lesson in reading transcription symbol or basic speech symbols must be given to students
3. A spelling quiz should be incorporated in the lesson to stimulate skills in spelling complex words.
4. Understanding how parts of speech function must be given priority to ensure the correctness of developed sentences.
5. An enhancement program for vocabulary development must be proposed especially in this new normal.

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