TEACHERS’ PERCEPTION ON ENGLISH CURRICULUM AND MATERIAL IN VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT
Vocational High School (VHS) Students are expected to work directly upon completing their study. Thus, the curriculum and material should be relevant with their majors since the skills are necessary to enter the workforce, including their English skills. The implementation of curriculum and material in VHS should have different characteristics from the ones implemented in Senior High School. English curriculum and material in VHS should contain and produce the aspects of work skills. The aim of this study is to investigate the VHS English teachers’ perception on curriculum and material implemented in VHS. The research applied descriptive qualitative research design that involved three VHS teachers in Depok as respondents. Semi-structured interview was conducted to collect the data. The study shows that teachers have unfavorable perception towards the English curriculum and material implemented in VHS. The result implies that the content of English curriculum and material are similar to the ones taught in Senior High Schools and thus are not relevant to VHS students’ needs to enter the workforce. They suggest that English curriculum and material in VHS should be integrated to the students’ majors and propose ESP as the type of English implemented in VHS. Having ESP in VHS will enable students to improve their English skills relevant to their needs of working and eventually help them to compete in the global workforce.

Keywords: English Curriculum and Material, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Teachers’ Perception, Vocational High School (VHS)

1. INTRODUCTION
The urgency of having proficient English Language skills nowadays has become the main issues all over the world. Proficient English skills can bring the owners to open any possibilities, with no exception in the workplace (Ferdaus & Novita, 2023). It is indispensable for pre-employment qualification according to Durga (2018) and becoming a crucial requirement for career growth demands (Shu-Hie et al (2017) in Ferdaus & Novita, 2023). Local and international enterprises seek for candidates with fluent English to conduct effective communication, build international cooperation, explore a variety of fields and industries and improving the knowledge of the employees themselves. Considering how important the skills are to enter the workplace, English subject should be taught carefully and thoroughly especially in Vocational High School (VHS) in which the students are expected to find the jobs directly upon their study completion. With adequate English skills, VHS students will be able to seek for the jobs not only in local markets but also in international enterprises.

Vocational high schools (VHSs) have recently received significant attention from the government of the Republic of Indonesia as a means of educating future Indonesian
workers. This measure is in reaction to the Central Bureau of Indonesian Statistics' (BPS) forecast that Indonesia will experience a demographic boom between 2020 and 2035. The productive population is anticipated to reach 64% of Indonesia's overall population (297 million) during this time. 305.6 million people are expected to live there in 2035 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2013). Depending on the country, a vocational high school may refer to a secondary or post-secondary educational institution that offers technical training or vocational education to prepare students to carry out the duties of a particular and specific career (Fauzi & Hanifah, 2019). Vocational School (SMK/MAK) is one of the high schools that produces graduates who can work in the industries, according to Republic of Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture's number 34 of 2018 regarding the National Standard of Vocational High School (SMK/Vocational Madrasah Aliyah (MAK)) (Republik Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). Additionally, the National Education System Act of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003, article 15, states that vocational education is a secondary education program designed to prepare students for a particular employment (Republik Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). In fact, VHS is preferred by individuals who want to enter the workforce and want to concentrate on the skills they will need in the workplace (Khasanah et al., 2018). The government regulation No. 29 of 1990 on secondary education, chapter I general provisions, article 1 (3), had previously specified that vocational education should concentrate on the development of students’ talents in certain fields. Article 3(2) of the (Peraturan Pemerintah RI, 1990) clearly states that vocational education should place a high importance on preparing VHS students for the workforce and helping them acquire professional behavior. These regulatory statements unambiguously recognize that VHS should give students the chance to study and develop certain abilities or professional skills in a particular field in order to prepare them to compete in the workforce nowadays.

In fact, the government has also established a Revitalization Program through Presidential Instruction Number 9 Year 2016 to enhance the quality and competitiveness of Indonesian Human Resource in order to support and enhance the quality of VHS (Instruksi Presiden RI, 2016). One of its program is conducting the Bilingual Learning Ecosystem in VHS (Kemdikbud, 2017 in Fadlia et al., 2020). At this moment, it is clear how the government placed a strong emphasis on foreign language proficiency program for VHS in order to prepare students who intend to enter the workforce immediately after completing their studies, particularly English.

Though the development of English language proficiency as a component of the special skills is crucial to assist VHS students in entering the workforce, still in practice this issue has not received strong concerned from different stake holders in education field. As a result, several researches also have shown that students of VHS have low competence in English communication skills (Apriliana & Basikin, 2021; Mahbub, 2018; Nasihin, 2020; Purwanti, 2018; F. P. Sari & Wirza, 2021). Therefore this research aims to investigate teachers’ perspectives on English curriculum and material applied in Vocational High Schools. Knowing teachers’ perspectives will reveal the current situation of English teaching in VHS and provide the insight for the education stake holders about the quality of curriculum and material designed by the goverment and their relevance to students needs.

To enable the students entering the workforce, Vocational High School needs innovative curriculum to build English communicative skills that fulfil the standard of work field (Nasihin, 2020). Therefore English for Specific Purposes (ESP), such as English for working or business is proper to be applied in VHS (Prachanant (2012) in Nasihin, 2020). Students who receive ESP training can develop language skills that are appropriate for the workplace. This topic focuses on improving communication abilities in the English language in particular fields, like studying the language for academic demands and purposes (Dewi et
al., 2019). Therefore in the context of VHS, ESP should be suitable to be used as the foundation for designing the curriculum and resources for Vocational High School (VHS) students. Following this, several studies have shown the important of curriculum development in teaching English. Nasihin (2020) had conducted research about teaching English for motor cycle technique students which result reveals that English material contained technical language is effectively increasing students’ motivation and skills.

To gain deeper insight on English curriculum and material in VHS, teachers’ perception is required in this research. According to Robbins and Judge (2008) in (R. A. Sari et al., 2021) is a process in which individual manages and interpret their sensoric senses in order to give meaning towards the phenomena existed around them. Therefore, there are negative and positive perceptions that will influence someone’s real action in accordance to its respond. As a result, positive perception will lead to positive action while negative perception will create negative action. Irwanto (2002) in (R. A. Sari et al., 2021) further explains that positive perception describes the knowledge of the person on certain object that makes him support its usage, while negative perception includes all knowledge on certain object that make him against its usage. Related to this definition, teachers’ perception also covers the teachers’ knowledge and understanding on English curriculum and material that influence their appraisal on the implementation in VHS.

Though several researches had been conducted on the issue of teachers’ perception on English curriculum and material in VHS in Indonesia, little has strongly concern on promoting the alternative models that suitable with VHS students’ needs. This research is valuable for three main reasons. The first one is to enrich the research literature and encourage the improvement of English curriculum and material in VHS. Secondly, the result reveals the extend of English teaching and learning in VHS relevant to student’s professional needs in the future. Finally, it is expected that English teachers in VHS will consider the implementation of ESP in their classrooms as an additional materials to support students’ learning.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted in descriptive qualitative method to investigate teachers’ perception on English curriculum and material implemented in Vocational High School in Depok, Indonesia. According to Wirartha (2006) in (R. A. Sari et al., 2021) analysis descriptive method aims to analyse, describe and conclude various condition and situation from different sources of data such as interview and observation on the phenomena existed in the real field. This research used descriptive qualitative method to gain information about teachers’ perception on English curriculum and material implemented in Vocational High School.

The data were gained through semi-structured interview to three English teachers of Vocational High School in Depok. The selection the participants were decided solely by the researchers by using purposeful sampling method. Patton (2002) in (R. A. Sari et al., 2021) states that purposeful sampling method is a method to determine certain informative-rich participants based on the strategy and goal aimed by the researcher. In this research, the participants were selected based on their teaching education back ground and teaching institution. The interview was conducted online and the data were analyzed qualitatively by using the stages of Mathew B, Miles A, (2016) namely data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

To gain the data, semi-structured interview were conducted to three VHS teachers who teach in three different VHS in Depok. They have different length of teaching
experiences that strengthen the quality of the data. The questions given to the teachers cover their understanding on the difference between General English (GE) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), whether the English curriculum and material applied in VHS include in GE and ESP, whether the English curriculum and material in VHS are relevant for VHS, what are the reasons underlined their opinion, and finally whether the English curriculum and material are already relevant to students’ needs to enter the workforce after they finish their studies.

Based on the interview, it is found that three teachers have the similar understanding on both GE and ESP. In different ways of delivering, they believe that GE is the teaching of English for general communicative goal, such daily greetings and conversation while ESP focuses more on specific goals that relevant to students’ needs or major. At this point, their understanding is in line with the definition of GE and ESP according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in (Apriliana & Basikin, 2021). Based on their understanding on GE and ESP, they share the same idea to answer the second question, that is the English curriculum and material in VHS classified as GE. The content are broad and do not in line with students’ majors. In addition, they also find that the English curriculum and material in VHS is similar to General High Schools. Therefore, they all come the similar conclusion, that is the VHS English curriculum and material are not relevant to VHS students’ need since the content is not in line with their majors and eventually will not fulfil the requirement of the workforce. The second participant who has been teaching for twelve years proposes the idea of creating a clustering program to write an ESP modules for VHS relevant to their majors.

The result of the interviews revealed that English curriculum and media in VHS categorized as GE since the content is not specified to the major of the students. Any major in VHS use the same types of English without considering the content of the majors that may support students’ learning. GE is also applied in Senior High Schools. GE focuses on teaching English applied in general situations: performing English on personal or social levels or using English in casual conversation, meanwhile, ESP is based on the learners’ needs by analyzing the linguistic characteristics of learners’ specialist area of work or study. GE contains words, structure and context that are commonly found in daily situation thus it can be said that GE is the pre-requisite lesson for ESP. For VHS, teaching ESP enable students to master the language skills compatible with the need of the workforce. Therefore, teaching ESP in VHS is actually very crucial for students to enable them communicating in the context of their professional field.

Equiping VHS students with English skills compatible with their majors will help them to reach out the job markets both local and international. Hence, having ESP curriculum and material can be alternative proposal to improve the qualification of VHS students when they start seeking their first jobs. ESP provide VHS students with specific words, language expressions, types of texts and other language components that relates to other specific lessons they learn in the classroom. By then, students can see the content of English subject is also reflected in other lessons. This creates strong meaningful learning process for students that will give them insight on the implementation of their skills in the workfield. For example, ESP for VHS students from the management major will lead them to understand the words, sentences and expressions use in the office. Then, they will practice the language skills in the context related to their major as well. Having this types of learning process in the classroom will encourage students motivation that eventually sharpen their language skills. This phenomena can be seen from the research conducted by Nasihin (2020)

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigates teachers’ perception on English curriculum and material in Vocational High Schools. The result shows that all English teachers interved give
unfavorable perception on the implementation English curriculum and materials in VHS. They state that GE is being taught both in VHS and General High Schools. Thus, different majors in VHS learn the same English lesson with the general content. The contents do not relate to their major thus less relevant to their actual needs once they enter the workforce.

The analysis of the data and the conclusion propose ESP to be taught in VHS. ESP equips students with English skills compatible with their majors. ESP curriculum and materials is an alternative solution to increase VHS students qualification to enter the job markets both local and international. Further study is required to give critical analysis toward the existed curriculum and material for VHS and eventually contribute towards the improvement of teaching English in VHS.

REFERENCES


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