THE PROBLEM ANALYSIS FOUND IN FOUR ENGLISH SKILLS AT STATE VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL KEBONAGUNG STUDENTS

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Abstract

Learning English is very important for education and the future. It is because English is one of the international languages learned by many people in the world. However, the degrees of difficulties in the process of language learning are inevitable including at State Vocational High School Kebonagung. Henceforth, this case study aims at analyzing the difficulties of learning English in grade 10 students at the vocational high school level. This research was conducted at SMK Negeri Kebonagung involving 70 students as subjects. Researchers employed the interpretative qualitative method to explore the phenomenon. Further, the data was obtained using a google form which was distributed to 70 students of class x in various majors, observation, and interview. The data was then analyzed by Miles and Huberman procedures: data reduction, display, and conclusion. Triangulation was used to obtain credibility; whereas, peer reviews and peer debriefing were used to obtaining the dependability of this research. Finally, the findings showed that students’ English learning difficulties are: (1) a sense of coercion; (2) low mastery of basic concepts; (3) lack of self-confidence; (4) forgetting factor; (5) low opportunity to practice. Referring to these findings, it is suggested to teachers and institutions facilitate and support the students’ English learning process and uses compatible approaches for improvement.

Keywords: Learning, English, Difficulties, Vocational High School

Introduction

The means of communication throughout the world is language. Language is a symbol system in the form of sound, arbitrary, used by the community to speak, work together, communicate, and identify themselves (Keraf & Chaer, 2006). Therefore, the study of the language is necessary to connect people's ideas and communication across communities in the world. In this age, English dominated the mediation of world communication.

English is one of the keys to overcoming various problems for graduates in the future when the competition is getting tougher. Modern language learning systems are ideally based on needs analysis. Needs analysis is a procedure for gathering information about learning needs at a certain level of learners, namely to formulate learning objectives and content (Richards, 2001b: 51-90; Gall, 2003: 557). At the vocational level, the needs analysis focuses on mastering language skills. The various aspects to acquire the needs involve the roles of teachers and students. Teachers have the same role regarding assumptions about language and language learning at the level of their approach (Cunningsworth, 1995; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Modern language learning involves institutions, teachers, learners, and teaching (Richards, 2001b: 198) and prioritizes learning experiences. The mastery of English is also been a means to improve the quality of Indonesia's human resources, which according to the Human Development Index is the lowest category in Asia. The Human Development Index (HDI) is used to classify whether a country is a developed country, a developing country, or an underdeveloped country and also to measure the influence of economic policies and policies on the quality of life (Davies & Quinlivan, 2006).

Global competition in all fields demands an increase in the quality of human resources, including teachers. According to Suparlan (2008), teachers are one of the instrumental input elements that greatly determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of education and training. To be able to carry out their duties and functions properly, teachers must have adequate qualifications, competencies, and welfare standards. One of the efforts to realize
the above is to improve the quality of learning English. Mastery of the language will open their horizons to the development of science and technology, including education which is currently easily accessible from various sources.

In this case, learning English is very complex because English consists of four skills, namely reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Language is a system of arbitrary conventionalized vocal, written, or gestural symbols that enable members of a given community to communicate intelligibly with one another (Brown, 2000). To achieve optimal English language skills, professional language instructors are needed to produce quality students. In addition, mastery of the material and practice must be given in a balanced portion (Megawati, 2016).

Mutually importantly, the difficulties in learning English were often faced by students, especially in a vocational school. Initial observations showed that their English intakes are very low. The quality of the input will certainly affect both the process and learning outcomes. In addition, the frequency of learning in vocational school is also less supportive of improving the quality of English learning. Education is a conscious and planned effort to realize learning, learning atmosphere, and learning process so that students actively develop their potency (Syah, 2006). Moreover, the time for learning English is relatively less proportional to the needs of students. Additionally, the student's difficulties are mainly in the area of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

In listening, students are difficult to decide and recognize the spoken words. Listening is complex in terms of its active intellectual of decoding, understanding, interpreting, and evaluating messages. It is a particular way to communicate just as important as the others like speaking, reading, and writing (Wah, 2019). In this case, the difficulties are rooted in a lack of language exposure and practices. However, the lack of authentic sources and supporting materials will cause language input deficiency.

Additionally, the difficulties faced or felt by the students also occurred in speaking. It can be divided into two kinds of problems namely linguistic problems and non-linguistic problems. There were three difficulties related to linguistic problems. They were ‘lack of vocabulary’, ‘lack of grammar knowledge’, and ‘poor pronunciation.’ While, the 9 difficulties dealt with non-linguistic problems were, ‘not being brave to speak’, ‘not being confident to speak’, ‘being afraid of speaking’, ‘being afraid of making errors’, ‘being afraid of being mocked by friends’, ‘being nervous to speak’, ‘not used to talking in class’, ‘difficult to express words or sentences’, and ‘confused how to use appropriate words’ (Heriansyah, 2012).

Furthermore, the student’s problem is in reading. The number of problems and difficulties which reduce the comprehension efficiency process from what is stated in the educational literature (Shubaylat, 2010; Manasrah, 2007; Nasr, 2003; Asr, 1999; Kamahi & Catts, 1991). The most important problems are: 1) limited previous knowledge of the reader with an inability to integrate new knowledge to the previous one; 2) limited vocabulary; 3) lack of oral language; 4) excessive concentration of teachers in the early grades on teaching the skill of decoding symbol; 5) focus on accurate reading performance at the expense of meaning; 6) lack of listening comprehension skills; 7) parents' carelessness to communicate with their children for follow up them at school; 8) lack of exposing children in the early grades for printed materials; 9) create negative attitudes among students towards reading and materials; 10) lack of dedicated time for independent reading; 11) the weakness of the students' self-confidence in their abilities to read.

Finally, in writing skills, students also face the complexity of its indicators. Writing places, the final attainment of human language after other skills. It means, it is an important stage of human history (Caroll, 1990). It provides a relatively permanent record of information, opinions, beliefs, feelings, arguments, explanations, theories, etc. Writing is an essential skill. But, many students in high school are not interested in it. Many students were never required
to learn proper spelling or grammar. These poor students come to think that “English and “Writing” are nothing but spelling and grammar. To them, writing means inevitable failure.

Regarding the above analysis, this research is important to reveal the student's problems in detail and with vivid explanations. The information about learning difficulties can be used as a basis for determining goals, methods, strategies, and learning materials that are relevant to the needs. Based on the search of the researchers, this research is new and different from previous research. For instance, Heriansyah's research (2012), entitled "Speaking Problems Faced by The English Department Students’ of Syiah Kuala University" at the Students in English Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Syiah Kuala University. Based on the research findings and discussions, it can be concluded that the 10 students of the English Department at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Syiah Kuala University faced some problems in speaking. The scope of the research is different. This research explored the difficulties in learning English for vocational students in four aspects, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Moreover, viewed from the locus of the research, there had no similar research carried out at the state vocational school Kebonagung. From this fact, the researchers believe that this research is truly necessary as a basis for working out a solution to the problems. Finally, this research was aimed at revealing percentages of students’ difficulty in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and the causes of the problems.

Method

It was kind of a descriptive qualitative research method type case study. The place of the research was at State Vocational High School students at Tenth Grade Kebonagung for the academic year 2022/2023. Meanwhile, the technique of data collection was a questionnaire, deep interview, and observation. The questionnaire instrument was in the form of a Google Form platform distributed to ±70 Students. The questionnaire was concerned about: a) difficulties in learning English; and b) feeling and responses to the teaching and learning. Further, the instrument of the interview is the interview guideline. Then, field notes are employed as the instrument of observation. Finally, after the data was collected, the researcher conducted the following analysis stages: data reduction, display, and conclusion. To ensure the credibility of the data, the researchers employed triangulation of the collection method and instrument as well as triangulation of theories. While the dependability of the data was acquired through peer discussion and debriefing.

Findings and Discussions

From the results of the result of analysis, it was known that 58.3% of students had difficulty learning English, especially in the speaking aspect. Most students thought that the most difficult thing about learning English was speaking caused of a lack of vocabulary. They felt insecure, could not pronounce well and the students' lacked the motivation to speak English. Whereas motivating students was very important for their development and willingness of students to learn. Learning a second language was not easy for some people. Because used Indonesian as a daily language. However, someone who is motivated to understand the target language tends to try to study harder to understand the new language. In contrast to people who do not have motivation, they will tend to be passive and unmotivated. Usually, they learn this language only because they are told and not on their own. They will still tend to be passive even though they do not understand the material being taught (not trying to ask the teacher).

The student's difficulties in learning English are speaking because they find it difficult to pronounce English vocabulary due to different writing and pronunciation. In addition, students also have limitations in mastering English vocabulary, making it difficult for them to express what they want to convey. Some students feel insecure to speak in public because they are not fluent in speaking English. The lack of students' learning motivation also affects their difficulty in learning to speak English. Student's difficulties in speaking must be overcome
because learning the language is to be able to communicate, if this is not immediately addressed, students will continue to feel that communicating in English is difficult and even impossible. According to Diknas (2003), "The competence of English subjects is students able to communicate both orally and in writing using a variety of languages appropriate, fluent and accurate”.

18.1% of students found it difficult when learning to listen. They couldn’t analyze what the speaker said. So, they were unable to know what the speaker means. From the deep interview, students also said that when listening some did not understand what the speaker meant at all because they thought the speaker spoke very quickly and they lacked mastery of pronunciation. This problem must be a concern because listening was important. Listening has been regarded as the most frequently used language skill in the classroom. Besides, listening skill is important in the workplace, the family, and the community. Students have difficulty listening because they do not understand what the speaker is saying, especially if the speaker is a native speaker. Students also cannot control the speaking speed of the person conveying the information, and they feel that the information conveyed is lost before they can understand the meaning of the information. When students can understand one piece of information, at the same time other information is lost. Students do not have the opportunity to ask the speaker to repeat or clarify the information conveyed by the speaker, so students must be able to understand what it is. Errors in interpreting the information received so that the content of the message conveyed is received or interpreted differently by students.

It was also known that 19.4% of students felt that another difficult thing in English was reading. Students who found it difficult to read think that they find it difficult to memorize and read English vocabulary because of the different genres in writing. Some students said that what makes reading English difficult is the spelling and meanings: homonymy, homophone, homograph, polysemy, etc. Some students also have difficulty understanding English texts due to not having proper reading strategies, lack of understanding of grammar, and not forming a good reading habit. Students have difficulty reading English texts during the learning process. Several obstacles make students find it difficult in this regard, including students having difficulty determining the main idea, identifying specific information, identifying references, and identifying the meaning of words. The main causes of students' reading comprehension difficulties were unknown/unfamiliar vocabulary items, while long passages, limited time, and lack of practice in reading and learning English were considered as other causes. According to Widiasworo (Rosnaningsih et al., 2019) the problems that barrier of students to learning English in class, namely not responding to lessons, being passive, and lack of confidence.

Moreover, some students find it difficult the writing aspect because they are difficulty memorizing English vocabulary. Therefore, even though students have good ideas they have not succeeded in expressing these ideas in English written works well. In conformity with the result of the interview, some students said that they had to repeatedly look at the dictionary when writing an English sentence to make sure that their writing was correct. Students tend to be passive, bored, and sleepy in teaching and learning activities. Moreover, they do not have sufficient mastery of vocabulary and grammar skills. This situation is very influential on student learning outcomes. For that, we need to find a solution to why it happened. This is motivated by various factors, including a lack of interest in learning English which may be caused by a lack of mastery of vocabulary, supporting books, and grammar. In addition, it is possible that the teacher does not use the right method and delivering the subject matter is less interesting.

According to (Kurniawati, 2019) writing means pouring a thought into a written form or telling something to others through writing, so writing is a person's activity in expressing ideas, and thoughts, telling something the idea that he wants to convey through words that are assembled into Complete and clear sentences, in other words, writing is also interpreted as indirect communication. The results showed that students experienced difficulties in every aspect of writing, namely difficulties in content, organization, language use, and vocabulary.
Students have difficulty memorizing written vocabulary in English, so when writing they have to repeatedly look at a dictionary or book to ensure that their writing is correct. This makes it difficult for students to express their ideas through written work.

Conclusion

This research revealed that the result of the student’s difficulty in four English skills is as follows: a) 58.3% of students had difficulty in the speaking aspect; b) 18.1% of students found it difficult when learning to listen; c) It was also known that 19.4% of students felt that reading is difficult; d) the rest is the writing skill difficulty. Moreover, based on the result of the interview and observation, the causes of the problems are in the following keys: lack of language exposure, lack of various used methods, and lack of support in the academic milieu.

References


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