

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING CHALLENGES IN STATE VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS IN SURABAYA

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by English teachers in their English Language Teaching in state vocational high schools in Surabaya and whether any significant differences in response of the challenges among them based on their ages, education level and teaching workload per week. This study was conducted in 10 state vocational high schools in Surabaya which involved 69 English Teachers. This study used survey research as the research design. SPSS. 20 was employed in the study as the tool for analyzing the data from the questionnaires to answer all the research questions. The findings of the study show that teaching challenges included the difficulty to transfer English knowledge to their students, mismatch situation between the student's lack of English proficiency and high-stake curriculum, inadequacy of language laboratory to support ELT, and the English teachers also have too much workload. There was no significant difference in responses the English Language Teaching challenges among English teachers based on their age, level of education, and teaching workload. It can be concluded that the ESP teaching challenges in previous study (which conducted by Marwan in 2009) also present in this study, in other words the English Teachers in state vocational high schools in Surabaya also voice the same challenges in their English Language teaching and only factor of English Teachers' teaching workload differs in response the challenge which probably caused by fatigue in their teaching.

Keywords: *English Language Teaching, ESP, English Teachers, State Vocational High Schools, Challenge*

Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti tantangan-tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru bahasa inggris dalam mengajar bahasa inggris di sekolah menengah kejuruan negeri di Surabaya dan jika ada perbedaan signifikan dalam merespon tantangan-tantangan tersebut berdasarkan usia, tingkat pendidikan, dan jam mengajar per minggu. Studi ini diadakan di 10 sekolah menengah kejuruan negeri di Surabaya yang melibatkan 69 guru bahasa inggris. Studi ini menggunakan penelitian survey sebagai desain penelitian. SPSS. 20 digunakan sebagai alat untuk menganalisa data dari angket untuk menjawab semua pertanyaan penelitian. Hasil dari studi ini menunjukkan bahwa adanya tantangan kesulitan dalam mentransfer pengetahuan bahasa inggris kepada peserta didik mereka, ketidaksesuaian antara kurangnya pengalaman dan kemampuan bahasa inggris peserta didik (kenyataan) dengan tuntutan kurikulum yang tinggi, laboratorium bahasa yang tidak mendukung kegiatan *English Language Teaching*, beban kerja terlalu banyak. Tidak ada perbedaan yang signifikan dalam merespon tantangan-tantangan dalam *English Language Teaching* diantara guru-guru bahasa inggris berdasarkan usia, tingkat pendidikan, dan beban mengajar tiap minggu di sekolah menengah kejuruan negeri di Surabaya. Dari hasil yang ditemukan, dapat disimpulkan bahwa tantangan mengajar ESP di studi sebelumnya (yang dilakukan oleh Marwan pada tahun 2009) juga terdapat di studi ini, yang berarti bahwa guru bahasa inggris di sekolah menengah kejuruan negeri di Surabaya juga menyuarakan tantangan *English Language Teaching* yang sama dan hanya faktor beban mengajar per minggu guru bahasa inggris yang membedakan respon terhadap tantangan yang kemungkinan disebabkan oleh kelelahan dalam mengajar.

Kata Kunci: *English Language Teaching, ESP, Guru Bahasa Inggris, Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Negeri, Tantangan*

INTRODUCTION

The successfully reformation of Indonesia as an industrial country had become a consideration in

establishing a vocational high school or SMK (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan*) as a part of vocational education. Although still in a process of adjustment with overseas technology, Indonesia needs professional workers,

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particularly skilled and managerial ones (Schippers & Patriana, 1994, p. 4) In modern and plural great industrial society, job divisions of the society cover a number of aspects that are included in complex structure. The demands for interest, capability, work, individuals' potential and workers must be considered in deciding the target ('who does, what, where and when?'). As a result, formal education system comes in relation to guarantee for fulfilling the demands for job seekers.

The learning process of vocational high school students is particularly purposed at preparing the graduates to gain supporting skills of any careers and ability of self-improvement in order to adapt with science and technology evolution. In response, the training and education program in vocational high school are divided into three groups, there are *Kelompok Mata Pelajaran Wajib A*, *Kelompok Pelajaran Wajib B*, and *Kelompok Mata Peminatan (Kejuruan)*. In this case, English subject in vocational high school, which is included into *Kelompok Pelajaran Wajib A*, taught for 36 hours per semester for X grade, XI and XII grade. Each season runs for 45 minutes

However, in 2013 Curriculum English subject for SMA/MA and SMK/MAK has equal contents which consist of content of curriculum (KI/KD) and content of subject (*mata pelajaran*) (Kemendikbud, 2012, p. 15). Teaching English at vocational high school is a process in education world that prepares trainees for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, and totally related to a specific occupation or vocation. The ultimate aim of teaching English at the vocational high school is to prepare students to master the English language skills and knowledge base which will support the achievement of competencies and skills to implement the program expertise and skills mastery of English language skills in oral and written communication at an advanced level (Kemendikbud, 2013, p. 9).

Yuana and Kurniasih (2013) suggest that in an educational setting, a learners' needs analysis supports students categorize where they are in terms of their knowledge, skills and competences, versus where they wish to be and their learning goals. By knowing exactly what they learn in school will be benefit for their future, therefore, it could motivated them to learn English better because they have their purpose of learning. Moreover, TEFLIN (2013) in Sucihati (2013, p. 10) recommend that English in vocational high school should be directed at English for Specific Purposes (ESP) since it has specific characteristic. Moreover, English in vocational high school need more attention in 2013 Curriculum in all aspects such as the allocation time of teaching, language focus competence, and other language aspects. In other words, English subject between at senior high school and vocational high school should be diverse based on the student's need to learn English.

On the other hand, rather than give a specific English course, such as ESP (English for Specific Purposes), which related to the students' programs and needs, curriculum generalizes English for senior high schools and vocational high schools instead. As a result, students

in vocational high school became less motivated and treat English as secondary subject, despite it is important for their future life. In Indonesia, TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) has been required for vocational high school students since 2000 (Dikmenjur, 2007, p. 1). It is in accordance with the demand of some companies toward the applicants. Besides, English as international communication language has become essential to equip students to compete in global industry and workplace. Based on the 2006 Curriculum, vocational students have to pass three levels of English proficiency: 1) Novice level for the first grade, 2) Elementary level for the second grade, and 3) Intermediate level for the third grade. Thus, vocational graduates are required to pass intermediate level. Whether or not the students have passed each level is indicated by their TOEIC score (Sri Retnaningsih, 2011, p. 2).

As Kavaliauskienė (2012, p. 1) mentions the well-known fact about studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP) represents a considerable challenge for undergraduates worldwide. Students in state vocational high school have the same challenges, as well as the undergraduates, when they graduated from school. Students are expected to be able to master English skills related with their majoring which will support their futures in world of work. Besides, the challenges from the English teachers also need to be considered as an important matter. Related studies regard to English teachers conditions of ELT practices and English teachers in Indonesia conducted in Java indicates that they do not mastered the language they are teaching (Dardjowidjojo, 2000). Besides, they depend a lot on textbooks and curriculum rules but often without having full understood of the viewpoint behind those materials and method. Considering the fact and problems in the classroom, English teacher professionalism in Indonesia needs to be examined carefully and redefined (Yuwono & Harbon, 2010, p. 149)

A study conducted by Marwan (2009) which the findings of his study was investigating the challenges faced by an English teacher in ESP teaching in an Indonesian vocational higher institution. The participant of this study was Kelvin (pseudonym) one of the ESP teacher in Department of Engineering. The instrument for data collection was using semi-structures. From the findings of the Marwan's study, the four challenges such as students' motivation, mismatch between reality (students' English proficiency) and expectation (curriculum), lack of quality resources, and teachers' heavy workload have significant influence on the quality of ESP teaching. Given the limited scope in Marwan's study which only involved one ESP teacher in one vocational high institution (university level), his research findings cast doubts whether English Language Teaching in general also voice the same challenges. More importantly, a research about the differences in choosing the challenges among English teachers in state vocational high school in Surabaya based on their ages, education level, and teaching workload were important to be found out.

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Therefore, this study investigated the: (1) students' motivation challenges, (2) challenges between reality (students' English proficiency background) and expectation (curriculum), (3) quality resources challenges, (4) workload challenges, and (5) the differences in responses of the English Language Teaching challenges among English Teachers in state vocational high schools in Surabaya based on their age, level of education, and teaching workload per week

RESEARCH METHODS

A survey research is used as the research design. According to Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Walker (2010, p. 372) a survey research can be used to answer questions which proposed to investigate about peoples' beliefs, thought, characteristics, and behaviour. There were several steps in survey research which has been done by the researcher such as Planning, Defining the Population, Sampling, Constructing the Instrument, Conducting the Survey, and the last is Processing the Data (Ary et al., 2010, p. 378). One-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data with more than two groups (Ary et al., 2010, p. 178). It was conducted to compare the choices of ELT challenges between the English teachers' ages, level of education, and teaching workload.

The participant of this study were all of English teachers in 10 state vocational high schools in Surabaya. The researcher chose the location in Surabaya considering that it has different varieties of vocational high school. The English teacher are also varied, they come from different education background and different teaching experience.

In Surabaya, there are 80 English teachers in all state vocational high schools such as SMKN 1 Surabaya, SMKN 2 Surabaya, SMKN 3 Surabaya, SMKN 4 Surabaya, SMKN 5 Surabaya, SMKN 6 Surabaya, SMKN 7 Surabaya, SMKN 8 Surabaya, SMKN 10 Surabaya, and the last is SMKN 12 Surabaya. But due to any circumstances there were only 69 teachers who participated in this research. This number is obtained from the researcher's calculation based on the field.

In this study, questionnaire was used as the instruments with purposes to collect quantitative data. It was adapted from the result of interview by Marwan (2009) entitled ESP Teaching Challenges in an Indonesian Vocational Higher Institution. It was used to identify the challenges faced by the English teachers in vocational high schools in Surabaya. The four type challenges which has been classified are students' learning motivation challenges, mismatch challenges between reality and expectations, lack of quality resources challenges and heavy workload challenges.

Data analysis was conducted after obtaining all the data from the questionnaires. In this study, statistical analysis conducted by using SPSS.20 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data to answer the first, second, third, and fourth research questions. Data analysis consist of determining the frequencies and percentages of responses for the questions of students' learning motivation

challenges, challenges between reality and expectations, quality resources challenges and workload challenges. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data to answer the fifth research question. It was conducted to compare the choices of (1) ELT challenges between the English teachers' ages who are 26-35 years old, 36 -45 years old, and ≥ 46 years old; (2) ELT challenges between the English teachers' level of education who has been completed college Graduate (4years), Master's Degree, and Doctoral Degree; and (3) ELT challenges between English teacher's teaching workload per week who has 12-20 hours, 21 – 29 hours, and ≥ 30 hours. Data analysis consists of determining the mean score, significant value in Test of Homogeneity of Variances table, significant value in ANOVA table, and Post Hoc Comparison. The dependent variables were the result of the first, second, third and fourth research questions. While the independent variables were the English teacher's ages, level of education, and teaching workload.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first finding was gained to answer the first, second, third, and fourth research question that are about the English Language Teaching challenges faced by the English teachers. The second findings was obtained to find out whether there is any significant differences in responses the English Language Teaching challenges among English teachers based on their ages, level of education, and teaching workload..

Based on the table, the result showed that most of the English Teachers had and experienced all the types of English teaching challenges. First, item no.2 "It is difficult to transfer knowledge to my students because English is not their main intention" with mean score (M) 4.94, median score = 6.00, and mode score = 6 was the highest challenge chosen by 72% of English teachers. Second, item no.11 "The curriculum formulated by the institution requires the students' completion of their studies to be proficient in English both for general and specific use" chosen by 73.9% of English teachers with $M = 5.62$, median score 6.00, and mode score=6 was the highest item and following item no.8 "My students do not have good English proficiency background" with $M = 4.71$, median score=5.00, and mode score 5 chosen by 72.4% in this section. Third, "The condition of language laboratory in school is adequate to accommodate effective English teaching and learning" (item no.14) with $M = 3.99$, median scores=5.00, and mode score 1 was the highest item chosen by 43.4% of English teachers. item "I have been assigned too much workload" (item no.20) with $M=3.49$, median score=3.00, and mode score 1 chosen by 39% was the highest challenge in this section.

Moreover, based on the ANOVA tables the result showed that there was no significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in responses' motivation challenges (item no. 2) and workload challenges (item 20) between English Teachers' ages ($F(2.66) = 0.095$, $p = 0.909$; $F(2.66) = 0.417$, $p = 0.661$), education level ($F(2.66) =$

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2.21, $p = 0.117$; $F (2.66) = 0.474$, $p = 0.624$), and teaching workload ($F (2.66) = 1.28$, $p = 0.286$; $F (2.66) = 1.193$, $p = 0.310$). Moreover, there was no significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in responses the challenges between reality (item 8) and expectation (item no.11) among English Teachers' ages ($F (2.66) = 0.614$, $p = 0.544$; $F (2.66) = 0.166$, $p = 0.847$), and education level ($F (2.66) = 0.734$, $p = 0.484$; $F (2.66) = 0.673$, $p = 0.514$).

Despite there was no significant difference in responses item no. 8 between English Teachers' teaching workload ($F (2.66) = 3.017$, $p = 0.06$), however, there was significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in responses item no.11 for the three groups of English Teachers' teaching workload ($F (2.66) = 3.598$, $p = 0.033$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was medium. The effect size, calculated using *eta squared*, was 0.09. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 English Teachers who has 12-20 hours teaching per week ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 0.793$) was significantly different from group 3 English Teachers who has > 30 hours teaching per week ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 3.215$). Group 2 English Teachers who has 21-29 hours teaching per week ($M = 5.65$, $SD = 1.627$) did not differ significantly from either group 1 or 3.

There was no significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in response the quality resources challenges (item no. 14) between English Teachers' ages ($F (2.66) = 0.042$, $p = 0.959$) and education level ($F (2.66) = p = 0.824$). In contrast, there was significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in response item no.14 for the three groups of English Teachers' teaching workload ($F (2.66) = 4.244$, $p = 0.018$) The actual difference in mean score between the groups was medium. The effect size, calculated using *eta squared*, was 0.11. Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 English Teachers who has 12-20 hours teaching per week ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 2.301$) was significantly different from group 3 English Teachers who has > 30 hours teaching per week ($M = 1.00$, $SD = 0.000$). Group 2 English Teachers who has 21-29 hours teaching per week ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 2.153$) did not differ significantly from either group 1 or 3.

Based on the findings above, it is clear that most English teachers had and experienced all the types of English Language Teaching challenges. Moreover, there is no significant difference on ELT challenges among the English teachers' ages, education level, and teaching workload which accepts the null hypothesis and rejects the research hypothesis and alternative hypothesis. The discussions of the findings presented as follows.

First, most English Teachers in Surabaya were difficult in transferring English knowledge to their students. There were some problems such as the students' low consideration that English is important for their future and students' gave small attention towards English subject. In the same challenge, many English Teachers in Surabaya felt distress with their English teaching due to the facts above. Clearly, this issue need to be solved as

soon as possible to avoid long-term negative impact on the students and the English teachers' professionalism.

Second, the existence of the mismatch between reality (students' English proficiency background) and expectation (curriculum) challenges can be considered a serious matter that needs evaluating. It showed that 72.4% of English Teachers admitted that their students do not have good English proficiency background. However, 73.9% of English Teachers agreed and dealt with the curriculum which requires the students to be proficient in both general English and specific use. In other words, this mismatch situation between the student's lack of proficiency and the demand from the curriculum raised a problem. It might be because the students mostly taught general English rather than specific use. In this case, General English means the English subject taught commonly in senior high school and the curriculum formulated by the government. While, specific use or ESP means English that support the students major in school, for example, the students who major in Hotel Administration (*Akomodasi Perhotelan*) in SMK Negeri 1 Surabaya. After graduated from school, these students are expected to master English related to the major such as how to handle customer and how to deliver information both in English.

Third, the issue of quality resources, such as the condition of language laboratory in school which far from satisfied to support an effective English teaching and learning raised by most English teachers in Surabaya. Even there is a language laboratory, but seems like the condition is inadequate to accommodate an effective English teaching and learning. Another reason might come not only from the challenge alone, but also from the English teachers, whether or not they can optimize the use language laboratory well.

Fourth, with regard to the workload, the result showed that many English Teachers in Surabaya has disproportionate teaching workload. 78.3% of them has teaching workload 21-29 hours per week, 17.4% assigned only 12-20 hours per week, and 4.3% assigned ≥ 30 hours per hour. While normally, it has been outlined in *UU No.14 Th. 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen pasal 35 ayat (2) that "beban kerja guru mengajar sekurang-kurangnya 24 jam dan sebanyak-banyaknya 40 jam tatap muka per minggu"* (PMPTK, 2008, p. 3). In fact, from the numbers above there were still some teachers who has less workload and too much workload. Especially for them who has this issue, it raised some problems. Some of them, then, reuse the materials that they been using for many years due to the limitation of time. Although they probably know that the material was already out of date.

Fifth, the findings showed that all English teachers who: (1) are between 26-35 years old, 36 -45 years old, and ≥ 46 years old; (2) has been completed college Graduate (4years), Master' s Degree, and Doctoral Degree; and (3) has teaching workload per week 12-20 hours, 21 - 29 hours, and ≥ 30 hours have the same feelings in response the students motivation challenge (item no. 2), mismatch between reality (item no. 8) and expectation (item no. 11) challenge, lack of quality (item

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no. 14) resource challenge, and heavy workload (item no. 20) challenges.

Only English Teachers' teaching workload variable with $p < .05$ statistically significant differs in responses the item no. 11 "The curriculum formulated by the institution requires the students' completion of their studies to be proficient in English both for general and specific use" with $F(2,66) = 3.598$, $p = 0.033$. English teachers who has 12-20 hours teaching per week (the lowest teaching workload) has the highest mean score ($M = 6.08$) which indicated that the lower the English teacher's teaching workload, the more they confuse about the continually-revised curriculum. Studies have also reported that imposed the changes of curriculum in Indonesia influence the teaching force and teacher professionalism (Budiwalujo; 2006; Hadiyanto; 2003, Hanafie; 2007 in Yuwono and Harbon; 2010, p. 146). Besides, English Teachers' teaching workload variable with $p < .05$ statistically significant differs in responses item no. 14 "The condition of language laboratory in school is adequate to accommodate effective English teaching and learning" with $F(2,66) = 4.244$, $p = 0.018$. It is probably because, again, the English teacher' fatigue due to their much workload which affect to their limit opportunity to have activity in language laboratory. However, Patra (2013, p. 9) in his study mentions that there are greater benefits in using such language laboratories, because it offers the students, the chance to work by themselves on language drills, monitored by the teacher from time to time

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and data analysis, it can be concluded that the ESP teaching challenges in previous study also present in this study, which means that the English Teachers in state vocational high schools in Surabaya also voice the same challenges in their English Language teaching. In addition, there was no significant difference in responses the English Language Teaching challenges among English teachers based on their age, level of education, and teaching workload. Only the group of English Teachers' teaching workload differs in response the challenge which probably caused by fatigue in their teaching.

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