



THE RELEVANCE OF TEACHING MATERIALS OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOL AND THEIR UTILIZATION IN *KRETEK* INDUSTRY IN KUDUS

Nuraeningsih

Fajar Kartika

Muria Kudus University

Ning_pbiumk@yahoo.com

Abstract

Nowadays, technology development demands candidates of employees to be highly qualified workers as companies or manufacturers make use of machinery. Therefore, they are supposed to master English as the language of operation manual. With good English proficiency, workers are able to operate the machine in their workplace correctly and human errors could be eliminated. In other words, the companies will not get loss if all workers understand English in practical way. To answer this challenge, vocational schools play an important role in providing ready-work graduates. Through curriculum design and appropriate teaching materials, students are taught to achieve the competence stated there. This research was conducted to describe the utility of English teaching materials of vocational schools to the application in work places, in this case, kretek industry in Kudus. A descriptive need analysis was used to analyze the data that was collected through a deep interview. The result of the research shows that employees perceived that vocabulary is the most important language component to learn. In addition, they considered skill mostly needed is reading comprehension. In other words, the materials are not very relevant to the need of kretek industry in Kudus. Hopefully, this research can assist English teachers of vocational schools to consider the students' need and develop the suitable materials for them.

Keywords: English teaching materials, vocational school, employment, kretek industry

Introduction

Nowadays, technology advances significantly. It is in line with the development of all levels of industries that gives more opportunities for people to get jobs. Otherwise, the advance of technology demands them to have high quality competence. But with the development of technology, worker candidates are demanded to have good competence in accordance with the field work. Both prospective employee or worker must have a good knowledge and skills

related to existing industrial areas. Since companies and factories utilize machineries for efficiency, workers are required to be proficient in English because almost all the manual procedures of machines in the factory are written in English. With good English mastery, workers are able to understand the procedures manual machines at the plant, so they can operate it properly. Human error (human error) on the operation of the machine can be eliminated so that the losses in the production sector can be reduced. Dealing with these conditions, vocational schools that prepare learners to be ready to work after graduation has an important role and wider opportunities to prepare students as prospective employees to get jobs. Designing appropriate school curriculum and teaching materials is conducted to make sure that the exercise or practice that has been done during the study is really useful and used when working.

SMK got direct and indirect support from the development of industries, especially the areas where many industries are found, such as Kudus. As an icon of Kretek, Kudus is widely known for the tobacco industry. There we can find a lot of cigarette factories from home industry level to large factories that use very modern technology. Thousand of people depend on this industry. Thus, tobacco industry plays a very important role in employment. At least 96, 403 people in Kudus earn in this industry. They mostly work in the five major cigarette manufacturers and a number of small factories that are members of the union of Kudus Cigarette Company (PPRK). There are about 14,887 day laborers, 50 890 *borongan* laborers, 30, 616 *bathil* laborers, and about 2,000 monthly workers (Suara Merdeka, July 4, 2012). Among the 3 big factories, PT Djarum is the biggest with thousands of employees. The use of plant machinery has diminished the employment but it does not mean the need for labor in the tobacco industry does not get special attention. Precisely, this condition results in the importance of certain training that enable them to operate the production machinery. Such training and concern should be conducted not only by the factory as users, but also the graduate providers (vocational schools). They can analyze what stakeholders really need and then it can be further developed into syllabus and teaching materials which enable students to achieve necessary skills for their work in the future.

English is taught in vocational schools as an adaptive subject to equip students with ability to communicate in English in the context of their department, both oral and written. PP of the Minister of National Education of 2006 number 23 states that the purpose of teaching English at SMK was to

demonstrate the skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing in English. English is taught covering the following aspects:

1. Basic English communication at novice level
2. Basic English communication at beginners level
3. Basic English communication at intermediate level

To achieve the standard competency of English at novice level, the basic competencies to be achieved, namely: (1) understand the basic expressions in social interaction for the sake of life, (2) Mention and describe objects, people, characteristics, time, day, month, and year, (3) produce simple utterances for basic functions, (4) explain on-going simple activities, (5) Understanding the memo and a simple menu, schedule of public transport trips, and traffic signs, (6) Understand the words and terms and simple sentence based formula, and (7) Writing a simple invitation.

While, the basic competencies of English at elementary level to be achieved, namely: (1) Understand the simple day-to-day conversations both in professional and personal contexts with non native speakers, (2) Record a simple message in both the interaction directly or through a tool, (3) list detailed job descriptions and educational background in oral and spoken, (4) Tell a job in the past and the future work plan, (5) Disclose various intentions, (6) Understand simple instruction, (7) Make short messages, instructions and a list with correct word choice, spelling and acceptable grammar.

To communicate with the competency standard English equivalent intermediate level, the basic competencies to be achieved, namely: (1) Understanding the monologue that appears in certain work situations, (2) Understanding the limited conversations with native speakers, (3) presenting the report, (4) understand the use of the manual equipment, (5) understand simple business letters, understand technical documents, and writing business letters and simple reports.

The curriculum used is KTSP (School Based Curriculum). This curriculum gives more space and opportunity for schools to develop the syllabus based on their condition, regional characteristics, socio-cultural aspects, and learners. By doing so, the English curriculum for vocational schools in Kudus is most likely to be developed and adapted to the characteristics of the Kudus as a city where many found clove cigarette industry. Some possible materials that can be incorporated into the curriculum of the vocational English materials related to the potential of religious tourism in the tomb of Sunan Kudus and Sunan Muria, the manual use of the machines used by the tobacco industry, and other things associated with the traits or characteristics of Kudus. For this reason, the material adapted is called ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which aims at preparing students to meet the demands of

the workplace, i.e. the English skills. It should be more contextual, real life, and the here and now. If the material is authentic and in accordance with the needs of learners, they will likely be ready to work as the demands of the employer. With these objectives, the English materials need to be adjusted to the needs of users (stakeholders) so that after graduating from vocational school, freshmen can directly work or create jobs according to their expertise. To assist learners in mastering language skills, teaching materials must be designed based on the characteristics of the Kudus as written in the curriculum. To design and develop materials that suit the needs, need analysis is necessary to be done.

Needs analysis has an important role in the process of designing and implementing language education both ESP (English for Specific Purposes) or General English Course. ESP is a design approach must consider the needs of learners. Needs of the students seen in the formatting requirements analysis framework that includes the target situation and learning needs framework. In the analysis of the target situation, Hutchinson and Waters (1989: 59) say that the language needed for several things: to study, to work, to training, or a combination of all three, or for other purposes such as status, test, and others. This gives the consequence that in designing the language material (read English) should be tailored to the needs of learners. Within the scope of vocational, teaching materials designed specifically according to their expertise. English skills taught in the program engine are quite different from English that is taught in the program of electrical expertise. Furthermore, Hutchinson and Waters explains: 1) how language is used if the speaking, reading, writing, etc. by means of the telephone or face to face, 2) type of text or discourse that is used as an example is a technical manual, catalogs, informal conversations, etc., 3) Fill material covers the field of machinery, shipping, etc., 4) level for technicians, craftsmen, students, etc., 5) in which the language is used whether in the office, in hotels, in the garage, or in the factory.

Relevant previous research was conducted by Setiyadi and Santoso (2013) who examined the employment analysis on the tobacco industry in the Kudus in the year 1993 to 2010. The study showed that a variable number of business units and a significant positive effect on employment in Kudus cigarette industry. This is consistent with the hypothesis that says that an increasing number of business units increase the number of workers absorbed significantly. While, this research aims at describing the utilization of English teaching materials of vocational school by kretek industrial workers in Kudus.

Methodology

To get answers to the problems listed above, the selected research method is descriptive. It is in accordance with the purpose of this study is to describe the extent of the usefulness of English language materials by SMK graduates working in the tobacco industry in Kudus. The writers interviewed five production machine operators in SKM (Sigaret Kretek Mesin) of PT Djarum which is located in Oasis Djarum kretek factory Kudus. They were all graduates of vocational schools majoring machine department coming from different town. Two were graduates of a private vocational school in Kudus, one graduated from a state vocational school in Semarang, one was alumnus of a state vocational school in Salatiga and the last was a graduate of a public vocational school in Blora.

The interview guidance consisted of eleven questions that can be classified into five items. They deal with respondents' perception about the importance of English to be taught in vocational schools, teaching materials used in workplace, ways in learning how to operate machines and necessary teaching materials taught to vocational school students. The result of the interview was then analyzed descriptively to provide a comprehensive conclusion about the utilization of English teaching materials by cigarette factory employees.

Discussion

The result of interview reveals some findings. The first question investigates workers' perception on English as a compulsory subject. All respondents perceived that English should be taught in English. It means that it is necessary to keep the position of this subject as a compulsory course taught to vocational school students. Furthermore, the respondents had two different reasons to the question of "Why is it important to teach English to vocational students?" First, they deal with machines in which the manual books are written in English. Therefore, they think that it is important for them to know well about it. All respondents admitted that they must learn the manual book especially when they got problem or troubleshooting in operating machines. The second reason is they claimed that they need to enable them to speak English with foreign engineers who assemble the machines in their workplace. It happened since these two respondents experienced having interaction with German engineers who assembled new machineries in their department. Thus, they believed that speaking skill is an important competence to acquire. These statements are closely related the second question about the importance of English materials for vocational graduates working in kretek industry. Two respondents said that English has very important position. The others think that English is fairly important. It can be concluded that we should keep English as a compulsory subject taught in vocational school, especially mechanical engineering department.

The second point questioned to respondents is about terms or vocabularies specifically used in operating machines. Summarizing the answer of the respondents, the writers found that the terms used in production machines are *direction (left, right), turning, separating, roller, danger, manual book, position of cam, glue pot, tools, flow chart, machine's components/parts, suction play, machine's function, service, safety, danger, procedure, sign, etc.* All words listed above describe about machine which are found in *manual book* of production machineries. This finding is contradictory to the fact. If we notice the syllabus, there is only one topic about manual which is taught in the eleventh grade. Therefore, students should have more exposure to texts telling about manual of tools.

Third point of the interview is about the way respondents learn how to operate machines. All of them said that they joined a training before being placed in their site. There is a certain department in the factory, it is engineering department whose job to guide and train new employees. It took around three months, although they got a year as a probationary period. After three months, they were placed in their site. They can consult to their senior if they find problems in operating the machine or have independent study to learn the manual book. Unfortunately, there is not any particular training in relation to the terms or technical language of operating machine. Consequently, machine operators must learn the manual book independently or consulting to dictionary.

Next point is about respondents' opinion about the usefulness of English materials learned in vocational schools. All of them claimed that the course content they learned is quite inadequate to the need in workplace. They think that they were lack of knowledge about manuals because of insufficient exposure of manual texts during their study in vocational school. They perceived that they should know a lot about vocabulary dealt with manual. In addition three respondents said that we do not ignore grammar but should have less attention to it and it is necessary to discuss more about technical terms in operating machines.

Responding to the next item about respondents' opinion about the most important language skill should be achieved by kretek factory employees, they got two varied answers. Three people said that reading is the most important skill to study, but the others thought that speaking ability is the most urgent skill to acquire. This is due to their different experience in utilizing English in their workplace to support their job. Those who put speaking in the first priority had experience in practicing English with German engineers. Therefore, they think that speaking can facilitate them in accomplishing their work. But the other three operators never have such experience and they learned the manual book by themselves.

The next point is about respondents' suggestion to schools relating to English materials that should be taught to vocational students to enable them to be ready to work, especially in the cigarette industry. Most of them said that the course content should cover four language skills, but reading and speaking should have more emphasis. It is absolutely important to discuss about texts telling about manuals. Teachers should expose them to vocabularies relating to tools and flow chart of machineries. They also think that they need to acquire speaking skill, especially being able to have conversation. Suggested topics are about daily conversation, and procedures or how to operate things. In addition, they suggested daily practice should be reinforced to students to accustom them to speak in English.

The last point is the percentage of the usefulness of English teaching materials for vocational students. There are various perceptions for this item. First respondent said only 40% of the course content used to support his job. Second respondent thinks that it is 60% of the materials are useful for him. The third person believes that it is just 40%. The next employee said 90% of the English materials are utilized. And the last respondent perceived that 60 % is used in his workplace. It means that the materials taught to vocational school students have not satisfied the need employees got in their workplace. In other words, the materials are not very relevant to the need of kretek industry in Kudus.

Conclusion

Considering the finding mentioned before, the writers draw some conclusions that English teaching materials designed to vocational school students has not been able to satisfy the need of kretek industry in Kudus. This research could be a beginning step to develop suitable English syllabus and the course content that match between the idealism and reality. It is an attempt to identify the needs of vocational school graduates who work in kretek industry in Kudus. Hopefully, it can attract more attention to English teachers of vocational schools, headmasters, and kretek industry management to consider the importance of English as a need in employment. Furthermore, similar research could be conducted for further researchers analyzing target and learning needs of vocational school students in different place of work.

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Biodata:

Nuraeningsih was born in Tegal thirty five years ago. After finishing her master degree on English teaching in UNNES, she started teaching in Muria Kudus University. She has worked there for more than five years. Due to her concern to English teaching, she conducted some research in that area.

Fajar Kartika, born in Semarang thirty seven years ago, graduated from Gadjah Mada University majoring American Studies. He is a lecturer of English Education Department of Muria Kudus University. Several research have been conducted dealing with literature and applied linguistics.