

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the answers to the general questions addressed to the current research. This includes the background, the research purposes, the research questions, the scope of the research, the significance of the research, the clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper.

#### A. Background

Today, the world deals with the issues of globalization, national competitiveness, and modern-day world challenges. As Schleicher (2012, p. 5) reports, nations worldwide are beginning large-scaled reforms to better prepare the next generations for high educational demands of life and work challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At this point, the quality of education is seen as a crucial aspect of the nations' development, because education is directly associated with the preparation of going into higher life settings. In this case, Indonesian government has demonstrated their efforts to improve the education's quality over time, which has been formulated in the newest curriculum; 2013 curriculum. In fact, one of the four main reasons of the formulation of the curriculum is suggested by the Indonesian Minister of Education(2012; in Firmansyah, 2015) as "the current global challenges".

The efforts of Indonesian government do not stop there. It is reported by the World Bank (2010) and UNESCO-IBE (2011) that the Indonesian Ministry of National Education which administers formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has increased its investments and made TVET expansion a priority. It means that more Indonesian senior secondary students are expected to enroll as vocational school students. In fact, this has long been the intention of the ministry to shift the ratio of students enrolled in general senior secondary

education to those in vocational senior education school to 40:60 by 2015 (UNESCO-IBE, 2011).

The need of Indonesian government to improve the quality of education and of students for the purpose of future work challenges should also then highlight the need to improve the quality of English teaching and learning at the same time, since English is universally considered as an international language that is used in many professional and educational settings. With that in mind, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) comes into the picture as to answer how English will be useful for specific professional settings for specific kind of students. It is because as a learner-centered approach to language teaching and learning, ESP needs to pay attention to the learner's immediate needs as students and their long-term needs as professionals (Chostelidou; 2010). In this case, ESP may just be the one that is needed for vocational education in Indonesia, since students of vocational education can be categorized as students with specific needs, as they are prepared to function in a wide range of skills and occupational fields, production, services, and livelihoods (UNESCO, 2015).

However, the teaching-learning of English in the 2013 curriculum is set equally for all kinds of students of secondary education level. It was reported multiple times as real-life experiences of some vocational school teachers, including the ones that became the participants of the current research. One of the teachers stated that the English textbook materials used in vocational school were not different from that which were used in general senior high schools. The other teacher simply admitted the urge to integrate the teaching of specific English for her students, but claimed that it was not present in the current curriculum. It means that in the current educational system, ESP is not a basis for English teaching-learning at vocational schools.

The absence of ESP in the 2013 curriculum should not be treated as the curriculum's weakness because the formation and the implementation of the curriculum have their own bases. However, it does not change the fact that

vocational school students are still categorized as students with specific needs, of which the paradigm of ESP is concerned. Then, it is fair to question about how the needs of vocational students could be fulfilled at the same time the 2013 curriculum is implemented. However, in the author's personal opinion, this should and could not be done with the intention of changing or even attacking the credibility of the 2013 curriculum. First, it would be impossible since the curriculum will keep running, and second, it was unnecessary since the curriculum also have other qualities that may overshadow the need of integrating ESP on it.

Therefore, what the author could do was to explore the question from different angle instead, with the quality of education and students' needs as English learners still in mind. This is where the author was fascinated with the idea of investigating English teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to the needs of vocational school students. This idea has to do with three foundations; 1) the quality of education is strongly influenced by teachers, 2) teachers' performance is heavily influenced by their beliefs, and 3) the teachers' beliefs in accordance with the current situations of vocational school students are better investigated around the topic of students' needs.

The first foundation remarks that teachers' contexts are layered underneath the quality of education. It is widely spoken that the improvement of the quality of education relies heavily on the quality and competency of a teacher (e.g. Bourgonje & Tromp, 2011), and the teacher's competence can improve the quality of teaching (e.g. Soepriyatna, 2012) which is an internal part of education. As the result, teachers' role in language teaching and learning is fundamental (Richards & Rodgers, 2003).

The second foundation suggests that in order to better understand the teachers' contexts, one can approach the beliefs and attitudes of the teachers. Freeman and Richards (1996) supports this by underlining the importance of knowing teachers' conceptualization of teaching, their beliefs, and how these

translate to classroom instruction in providing teacher educators with knowledge of how to support and improve teacher's classroom instruction. Teacher beliefs are also one of the aspects of teacher professional competence, among the other aspects which are teacher knowledge (what the teacher knows), skills and practices (what the teacher does in the classroom), and attitudes (what values the teacher adopts in teaching) (see: Armstrong and Baron, 1995; Soepriyatna, 2012, Kunter et al., 2013).

Finally, the third foundation connects the previous foundations to the topic being highlighted, which is about the needs of vocational school students in the absence of ESP at the implementation of 2013 curriculum. Hutchinson & Waters (1987) emphasize that the awareness of the existence of needs is crucial within the mind of a teacher, regardless of whether or not ESP is relevant. This is in line with Bada & Okan (2000) who believe that an effective language teaching and learning can be achieved through teachers' awareness of their learners' needs, capabilities, potentials, and preferences in meeting the needs. This suggests that the awareness of students' needs is to be expected from teachers, which will help maintain the quality of the language teaching and learning regardless of the absence of ESP.

By looking at the three foundations that the author came up with, the author expected to find more studies related to English teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to students' needs at vocational school in the current situation of the national education driven by the 2013 curriculum. The author then found out that as far as secondary education (high school and vocational school) is concerned, the researches on the topic of English language learning in Indonesian contexts have been marginally centered around English as a foreign language (EFL) with many of the topics are focused on teaching practices or English competences. Meanwhile, ESP is usually researched at university level or any higher education. It is also discovered that the studies or literatures related to vocational school/education in Indonesian contexts are not as frequent as those related to general high school, at least from what the author was capable of finding from recent journals. This indicates that there is still a wide range of possibilities that

can be explored from the topic of English teaching and learning at vocational school, especially if ESP, teachers' perspectives, and 2013 curriculum are taken into account.

This concludes that investigating English teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to the needs of vocational school students can provide insightful information regarding—at least—what is really going on with the students' needs at the present national situation. From there, the data may be expanded to answer what to do with it, or even how. On the side note, the data may also reveal the needs of the students themselves to certain degree, even though only from the perspective of the teachers. In addition, the teachers' responses could also provide readers with a fraction of example of how English teachers at vocational school think and how they approach the needs of students.

With such concern, this study is proposed as a qualitative research to investigate the beliefs and attitudes of English teachers related to the needs of vocational school students. Hopefully, the findings of this study will bear some contributions to the improvement of English education in Indonesia.

## **B. Research Questions**

Two questions rise from the background of this research:

1. What are the English teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to their students' needs as vocational school students?
2. What are the factors behind the English teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to their students' needs as vocational school students?

## **C. Research Purposes**

Based on the research questions, there are two purposes of this study:

1. To find out the English teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to their students' needs as vocational school students.
2. To figure out the factors behind the English teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to their students' needs as vocational school students.

#### **D. Significance of the Research**

This study is expected to give some contributions to several part is that deal with the development of English education, which are listed below.

1. To need analysts, this study is expected to give some insights into how English teachers in one of the vocational schools in Bandung perceive their students' needs, which later will help providing a larger picture of the actual students' needs in the said school.
2. To curriculum/course developers, this research may provide some information on what should be considered to further improve the quality of English course and of language teaching and learning.
3. To academic society in language education field, this study is expected to enrich the literature especially relevant to English teachers' beliefs, English teachers' attitudes, and students' needs.

#### **E. Scope of the Research**

This research aims to investigate English teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to their students' needs at one of the vocational schools in Bandung, Indonesia. By doing so, the researcher may be able to find out how the teachers' beliefs play some significance to the English teaching and learning in the said school. To fulfill such aims, this study is designed as a qualitative study and is based on some relevant literatures, mainly in the contexts of teachers' beliefs, students' needs, 2013 curriculum, and ESP plus GE.

## F. Clarification of Terms

The definitions of several terms need to be clarified for specific uses in this paper and research to avoid misinterpretation. They are as follow.

1. **English for Specific Purposes (ESP):** ESP is an approach to language teaching and learning in which all pedagogical decisions (content, method, and aims) are based on the needs of a particular group of learners, and the purpose is to prepare them to be able to carry out specific tasks (Hutchinson & Waters, 1978; and Richards, 2001).
2. **Students' needs:** Students' needs refer to what students need in order to achieve certain goals in and from the learning process. In terms of language teaching and learning, needs are categorized as target needs and learning needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Target needs are what students need in order to be able to function properly in their professional settings by using language proficiency, while learning needs are what students need in order to learn that language. In the contexts of the current research, the language is English and the students are vocational school students.
3. **Needs analysis (NA):** NA is a set of processes or a systematic analysis of collecting subjective and objective information about the needs of a particular group of learners to determine learning goals and objectives that meet those needs (Brown, 1995; Richards & Schmidt, 2002; and Read, 2008).
4. **Teachers' beliefs:** Teacher beliefs are part of teacher cognition, which refers to any internal processes in teacher's mind, including their thinking, decision making, beliefs, theories, and knowledge. In the contexts of this research, the term "beliefs" has a flexible use to refer to any of those elements as long as they come from the teachers' minds and honest responses.
5. **Teachers' Attitudes:** Attitude is a person's tendency to behave in approving or disapproving manners towards something (object or person) based on their psychological evaluation of that thing.

6. **Vocational school:** Vocational school is a school at the secondary education level. In Indonesia, it is at the same level as senior high school. Different from general senior high school, vocational school focuses on training students with the skills needed in a wide range of occupational fields, services, and livelihood (UNESCO, 2015).
7. **2013 Curriculum:** 2013 Curriculum is the newest national curriculum in Indonesia. It has made several changes to the national education system of all educational levels and subjects, including that of vocational school and of English subject.

### **G. Organization of the Paper**

This paper consists of five chapters. The first is introduction which contains general ideas and concepts that become the basis of the research. The second is literature review which presents some theories related to the topic of the research, as well as explaining how they are relevant to the research. The third is research methodology which explains how the research will be done, including how the data will be gathered and analyzed using the theories presented in the literature review. The fourth includes findings and discussion that are the collection of data interpretation. The fifth includes conclusion and recommendation that are based on the interpretation.

### **H. Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has provided the basic information about the current research that will help readers to put together the overall intention of the research. The information will also be useful to describe what this research is about and for what purpose.