

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates challenges faced by teachers in preparing learning materials for vocational students in the online classroom setting. This chapter presents the background of the research, research questions, research objectives, scope of the research, the significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced teachers to shift their lesson to online mode and created an urgency of teachers' professionalization of digitalization (Spoel et al., 2020). In terms of learning materials in online learning, preparing online learning materials is still one of essential steps in preparing teaching and learning activities but it may raise challenges, especially due to sudden classroom transformation into online learning. Many studies in EFL have been dealing with learning materials, in terms of evaluating textbooks, developing learning materials, and preparing the needs of learning materials, for examples like studies from Ilham et al. (2020), Nurhalimah et al. (2019), and Susanti and Trisusana (2017). However, not many studies focus on the challenges faced by vocational high schools' English teachers in preparing and providing learning materials, as most research commonly focused on how to develop materials and improve their quality. Therefore, this research was conducted and expected to fill the gap in learning material research in terms of investigating challenges in preparing learning materials for vocational high schools. Thus educators could develop materials reflecting on those challenges.

As a facilitator, not only a teacher has to guide learners to acquire language skills but also has provide resources for learners (Harmer, 2002). Learning material could be everything that is used for the teaching and learning processes to help learners understand the course and meet the requirements (Tomlinson, 2011). Generally, the most common learning materials used for learning are a coursebook or a textbook (Akil et al., 2018). Educators could adapt, evaluate, or develop existing materials in preparing learning materials (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Hence, educators or materials developers could prepare their own materials that suit learners' needs and teaching objectives, for example like research done by Susanti and Anis (2017). However, preparing learning materials could be challenging for educators, especially if they need to adapt the materials to match learners' special needs and nationally standardized curriculum at the same time.

In terms of educational level, besides general senior high schools in the Indonesian educational system, there is also a vocational high school that directs students to acquire vocational skills (Government Regulation Number 29 of 1990). As stated in the regulation of Ministry of Education and Culture Number 20, 2016, the learning objectives for vocational high schools are more related to vocational skills, including the English subjects' objectives that are slightly related to occupational purposes. Ironically, in practice, vocational high schools (VHS) in Indonesia mostly do not match the ESP characteristic (Zurniati & Kustati, 2015, as cited in Purwanti, 2018), even though the English that was taught in VHS theoretically should be closely oriented to vocational purpose (Widodo, 2015; Widodo, 2017).

In terms of learning materials of English subjects for vocational high schools, the Indonesian Ministry of Education commonly publishes learning materials in the form of e-books. Those learning materials in the form of e-books are available for free and accessible from bse.belajar.kemdikbud.go.id. The Ministry of Education provided the textbook as national standardized learning materials, which include exercises and lesson plans that teachers could use as a guide for instructions. However, even though many teachers use provided learning materials, most materials provided by the government might not accommodate vocational students' needs as they have similarities to the general English context (Purwanti, 2018; Sumarsono et al., 2017, as cited in Prayoga et al., 2021). Even though teachers got benefited from using government-made materials to save more time to prepare the course, there might be a mismatch between the materials and the vocational students' needs. To prevent the issues mentioned above, ideally, teachers should prepare the materials that match students' and the course's needs. Nevertheless, teachers as materials providers need to consider teachers' expertise, teachers' training experiences, students' cultural background, teaching styles, students' needs,

readability, and students' motivation to provide appropriate materials for students (Prayoga et al., 2021).

With the current pandemic COVID-19, educational practices have transformed into online learning (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021) or emergency remote teaching (Li, 2021) in which raises the online courses trend. Nevertheless, the situation allowed teachers to use various online platforms for educational courses, training, and skill development programs (Petrie, 2020, as cited in Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Online learning also raises opportunities to develop or design online learning models, and to widen research and technology innovations (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). However, the sudden change to online learning has raised some challenges as summarized by researchers, for example, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning, heavy workload, human's interruption, limited digital literacy, assessment, and educational policy (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Murgatrottd, 2020, as cited in Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).

Taking into consideration the previous research, this research was conducted to investigate challenges in preparing online learning materials for vocational students. The previous research related to learning materials mostly focused on developing or evaluating a coursebook (Akil et al., 2018; Kehtarfard, 2014; Ilham et al., 2020; Nurhalimah et al., 2019). Meanwhile, previous studies related to online learning commonly focused on the practice of online learning with its challenges (Anggraini, 2020; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Li, 2021; Tosh et al., 2020). Therefore, the reason for doing this study is to investigate challenges in preparing appropriate and suitable learning materials for vocational students in the online learning environment. Another reason to conduct this research was to discover how they cope with those challenges.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the arguments above, in regard to fill the gap, this research makes attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What were the perceived challenges that teachers faced in preparing learning materials for vocational students in online teaching?

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2. How did vocational school teachers cope with the challenges in preparing learning materials in online teaching that meet vocational students' needs?

1.3 Research Objective

In relevance to find answers from research questions presented in the subchapter above, this study is aimed to:

1. Identify the challenges faced by vocational school teachers in preparing learning materials for their students in the online classroom setting.
2. Find out how teachers cope with the challenges in preparing learning materials and the solutions to prepare materials suitable for students' needs in the online classroom environment.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This research focused on identifying and investigating challenges faced by teachers in preparing learning materials for vocational students. This investigation is limited only to challenges and solutions in preparing learning materials for vocational high schools in the online learning environment, especially in the Indonesian context. The solutions are based on the teachers' experiences also literature reviews in facing the challenges in preparing materials, and the theories of learning materials, especially learning materials for vocational context

Considering that the topic of this research mentioned ESP and vocational contents, it does not make this research focused on the research on ESP content. Generally, the vocational program is supposed to use the ESP approach on teaching-learning activity. Therefore, this research slightly mentioned ESP only to grasp a better understanding of how English learning materials should be designed based on the theories and previous related studies. Furthermore, as the research site is a vocational high school that is focused on Engineering and Computer fields, some previous studies that were used to support this study are related to the Engineering context in general.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is conducted in regards to giving contribution in the English language teaching (ELT) field of study. It is specifically aimed and expected to give contributions about challenges and solutions of preparing learning materials. It is hoped to be an enrichment to today's ELT learning materials, especially at the vocational secondary education level. Therefore, this study aims to provide theoretical, practical, professional, and political contributions to learning materials development in the online teaching-learning environment.

In regard to the expected theoretical contribution of the study, this study is expected to enrich the EFL learning materials study in the online teaching setting for vocational context. This study is hoped to broaden the horizon and be a reference for future researchers or educators in finding solutions regarding challenges faced by teachers in learning materials development.

In addition, for the practical contributions, the study is expected to become a reflection for English educators and policymakers in preparing suitable and appropriate learning materials that could meet vocational students' needs. Along with that, this study is expected to help teachers that face the same problems in preparing learning materials in the online classroom setting.

As for professional advantages, the study is expected to help and encourage teachers to solve problems in preparing and developing learning materials and improve the quality of learning materials that suit vocational students and content.

Furthermore, regarding political advantages, the result of this study is expected to be an evaluation to English educators and education stakeholders to design an English course and materials that suit vocational majors in vocational high schools.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

There are several key terms utilized in this study. Therefore, this subchapter is presented to define and clarify those terms to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation. Here are the key terms used in this study, as follows:

- **Learning materials.** Learning materials are also known as teaching materials used in teaching-learning activities. In this study, the learning material refers to all documents and contents used by teachers in English language learning.
- **Online learning materials.** It refers to the learning materials that are prepared and used in online learning that is presented in the form of digital documents.
- **Online teaching** refers to the online classroom setting that is currently practiced in teaching-learning processes due to the prevention of COVID-19. The online teaching defined in this study also refers to any form of the online classroom, which is synchronous, asynchronous, and a combination of those two.
- **Students' needs** refer to contents needed by students that are relevant to their vocational disciplines. For the record, the students' needs mentioned in this study were only gathered through a literature review as most Indonesian vocational schools have not implemented English for specific purposes (ESP) courses.
- **Preparing learning materials** is a step of learning material development. In this study, the preparation refers to the process of providing materials from the beginning until it is done, including choosing, revising, adapting, developing, and evaluating learning materials until they are ready to be presented to students.
- **Challenge.** This term refers to all problems faced by teaching in the process of preparing learning materials for students in the online classroom setting.

1.7 Organization of Paper

In terms of the organization of this paper, this study covers five chapters. Each chapter also presents several sub chapters and topics that elaborate the research and findings.

Chapter I is the **Introduction**. This chapter is focused on providing the elaboration of the background of this study, along with the questions raised in this study, and the aims of the research. In addition, this study also consists of the

elaboration of the scope of the research, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II is the **Literature Review**. This chapter provides theories and information used in this study. The theories provided in this chapter are a brief description of learning materials in the EFL context, materials development in the vocational context, digital learning materials.

Chapter III is **Methodology**. This chapter discusses the methodology and procedures of this study. It contains an explanation of how this study was conducted and the participants who are involved in this research. Therefore, this chapter is divided into several subchapters, namely research design, participants, data collection, research procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter IV is **Results and Discussions**. This chapter presents the results and discussions of the study gathered from the participants and learning materials provided to students. The chapter includes several subchapters that are categorized by the theme found in the analysis.

Chapter V is **Conclusions and Recommendations**. This last chapter sums up the results of the study as well as concludes the research along with the implications of the study and the recommendation for future research. In addition, the limitation of this study is also presented here.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

Studies that specifically discuss teachers' perspectives of online learning materials for vocational students are still limited. Among many studies about online learning materials for vocational high school, most studies discuss materials development or the perception towards the practice of online classrooms in general. Acknowledging there is a gap among the previous research, this research attempts to fill the gap in terms of teachers' perspectives of challenges faced in preparing online learning materials for vocational classrooms. This study also attempts to identify teachers' responses in order to solve the challenges. Therefore, this study is hoped to give contributions and impacts to the EFL field and the educational policy of English for vocational classrooms.

This chapter has presented the background of this study, followed by the research questions raised responding to the background. This chapter also elaborates on the scope and significance of this study. Apart from that, the clarification of terms is used to avoid the ambiguity of the terms used in this study.