



Teachers' Strategies in Teaching English at Vocational High School

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of teaching strategies of the English teachers at the Vocational High School in Luwu. The qualitative method applied to analyze the strategies implemented by two English teachers of the Computer Network Department in a Vocational High School in Luwu. The data indicated that both teachers followed the 2013 curriculum by applying Scientific Learning Approach which consists of observing, questioning, experimenting, associating, and communicating as the core activity in the learning process. Moreover, both teachers commonly applied cooperative learning method, such as small group discussion and pair work. Unfortunately, the English instructions applied was the same as general English, whereas we knew that teaching English in vocational secondary education should be taken into account as English for Specific Purposes. Other than that, the teachers even use the same textbooks as general high school where the contents are frequently inadequate to the vocational students' needs. Teacher argued that they have limited time and lack of understanding on how to design the specific teaching materials for students.

Keywords: Computer Network, English for Specific Purposes, teaching strategy

Introduction

As a person who provides instruction or education, a teacher plays vital roles in the lives of the students in the classroom. The role of teacher is also to impart education and encourage learning, it is never ending topic in all educational setting. One of the main roles of teacher is to motivate learners to

develop their ability and aspiration to learn. Teachers need to develop their pedagogical, didactical competencies, critical analysis, curriculum design and implementation. As agents of change, teachers want to help their pupils to find their place in life and to prepare them for an ever-changing future. These ambitions make teachers continuously trying to reflect on strategies they use in teaching.

According to Wegner, Minnaert and Strehlike (2013), in education system students are expected to possess an increases degree of autonomy and show initiative in learning process, inspecting learning materials and understanding contents. Additionally, they noticed that many students are not able to use learning strategy successfully as they had not learned them in school. As a teacher, we must support students to be able to succeed in learning, hence in order to the students learn best, one of the main points that must be in the teaching and learning process is variability in teaching methods and materials. Yelon (1996:3) promoted the ten powerful instructional principles that he believed excellent to apply in teaching, which are meaningfulness, prerequisites, open communication, organizes essential ideas, learning aids, novelty, modeling, active appropriate practice, pleasant conditions and consequences and consistency. Students come from different background, experience and ability. Thus, students learn with different styles, at different speeds, different levels of prior knowledge and different environments when the subject matter is given by way of a variety of teaching strategies (Shinn, 1997:3). Being an effective teacher therefore require the implementation of creative and innovative teaching strategies in order to meet students' individual needs.

In teaching, teachers have to know kinds of strategies to use in the classroom. According to Heather (2009:38) understanding and using specific strategies will allow teachers to improve student achievement levels, provide a wider range of instruction alternative, and promote diversified learning methods for any degree of student ability. Teaching strategy is a teaching activity that must be done by the teacher and the student so that the purpose of teaching reached effectively and efficiently. Cohen and Macaro (2007) said that the term 'strategy' means general ship or the art of war. More specifically, strategy involves the optimal management of troops, ships, or aircraft in a planned campaign.

The thing that caught researcher attention is regarding the teacher's strategies in teaching English for the Computer Network department students because this is related to English for Specific Purposes. English for Specific Purposes have different approaches and assumptions with General English. The purpose of English for Specific is to enable students to learn the English language in the field of the learners needs. Thus, contents, methods or teaching strategy are based on the learner's reason for learning.

In vocational school, English teachers face the challenge of making their

teaching suitable to different vocational programmed in different grades. Teachers have to give the pupils English skills they need in their later working lives. One of the hot issues that are being talked about in Indonesia is relate to the quality of vocational school graduates. Some of the issues discuss about competency gap between vocational graduated with the industrial needs. Throughout 2017 it was reported that many vocational graduates are unemployed. Some factors might influence this phenomenon, one of them is the lack of ability of graduates in foreign language, especially English language skills.

Teaching English language in Computer Network majors has some differences with other majors. The students' needs of English are closely related to the computer network field. Therefore, teachers are required to master two fields of knowledge not only English language but also Computer Network, at last the teacher knows computer network vocabulary and its lexical and contextual meanings. It would be better if the teacher who taught English language at school had experience in the field of computer network. Vocational pedagogy is influenced by a pragmatic perspective on teaching and learning. The pragmatic perspective is inspired by the thinking that learning through practice and experience. According to Mjelde (2002), this perception leads to a lack of understanding of the diversity in the vocational traditions.

In teaching English at vocational education, it is clearly stated in the government regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 29 of 1990 concerning secondary education, chapter I general provisions, article 1 (3) which implies that vocational education should focus on the development of students' skills in specific field. Thus, teachers of vocational education should prepare the students with skills and knowledge to enter the workplace and developing professional behavior. According Esfandiari and Rahman (2015), English for Specific teachings should be totally different from General English (GE) instructions which is very general in nature; serving the students with the teaching of all four language skills and stressing them equally. In teaching English, there are various teaching methods and strategies can be adopted to motivate students and sustain their interest in learning English. The English vocational teachers are expected to possess adequate and sufficient practical experience necessary for imparting the skills to the students through the use of appropriate teaching methods (Joseph & Godstime, 2016). For those reasons, the main purpose of this study was to analyze the teaching strategies of the English teachers at vocational high school in Luwu majoring in the Computer Network.

Research Method

The qualitative research method attempted to explore the teaching strategies of the teachers in teaching English for vocational education. It was

conducted at one public vocational high school in Luwu, South Sulawesi for three months. The study carried out in a Computer Network major, and there are only two teachers who taught English in the school for all grades and both of them were chosen as respondents in this study. As qualitative research, direct observations, questionnaire and interviews were conducted in gathering data. The data analyze by following four components of Miles & Huberman model (2014); data collection, data reduction, data display and the last drawing conclusions. It is important to note that, the findings of this study are not possible generalized to other classes in the same research site.

Results

The aim of this study is to analyze the teaching m strategies used by the English teachers at vocational high school majoring in the Computer Network.

In accordance to the 2013 Curriculum (K-13), all teachers in Indonesia implemented Scientific Approach in teaching and learning process as what Kemdikbud (2013) suggested. Scientific approach has the characteristics of “doing science” that allows teachers to improve the process of learning by breaking the process down into steps which contain detailed instruction for conducting student learning (Tang et al., 2009).

There are five steps of applying scientific approach in teaching learning process, they are observing, questioning, experimenting, associating, and communicating. The implementation of scientific approach in teaching English for Computer Network students is related to the process of the teaching four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The current curriculum also emphasizes the mastery of communicative competence both in spoken and written. Thus, teachers as expected to implement various teaching learning method and strategies in the classroom.

There are two English teachers as participants in this study and both of them composed their lesson plan based on scientific approach. In the lesson plan, teachers wrote step by step teaching process including method and strategy that they will apply in the class.

At the beginning of teaching learning process, both teachers did apperception activity. In this step teacher greet the students, pray before study, checking the attendance list and homework and sometimes review previous lesson. After that, teachers moved to the core activities where Scientific Learning Approach began to be applied. This approach consisted of five steps, they are observing, questioning, experimenting, associating and communicating.

The first step is *observing*. It was the activity to introduce the learning materials to be learned. Even though this step can be done through reading, listening, or seeing the object, but commonly teachers asked the students to listen to the teacher' explanation or focus to the page on the textbook. The next

step is *questioning*. Both teachers always gave chances for students to make questions related to the learning materials being taught, unfortunately only one or two students actively asking. Up to this step, teachers used lecture method in teaching. When the researcher checked the Lesson Plan, it was written that the method to be used was Discovery Learning method. Problem solving situation where the learners draw on their own experience and prior knowledge or situation where the students interact with their environment by exploring or manipulating objects were not applied.

The third step is *experimenting*. In this step both teachers often guided the students to work in a small group, then asked them to discuss and then share ideas to other groups. Moreover, in pairs work both teachers often asked the students to do dialogue or reading the conversation in the textbook. Other than that, teachers sometimes asked students to do the task in the textbook individually. This step spent a lot of time in teaching process about thirty to forty minutes. The researcher noted that during this activity, teacher should be more active in guiding or interact to the students while they were doing the task. Unfortunately, both teachers mostly watched while sitting on the teacher's desk and sometimes they left the class for several times. In this step, the teachers should supervise the learning process to ensure that all learners are actively involved in the discussion and also directing the group that need help.

The next step is *associating*; it is related to the process of analyzing the information to find the link of the information gathered and to find the patterns of interrelationship of the information so that student can make conclusion from the patterns found. In this step, both teachers asked the students to discuss the topic given in group or pair. This activity is a reasoning activity; students should be able to make different responses and thinking logically and systematically over-the empirical facts. However, not all students were active in this process, some of them passively and do not convey their opinion both in English and Indonesian.

The last step is *communicating*; here teachers are expected to provide opportunities for students to communicate what they have learned and observed. Teachers asked students to read their work to the class and asked each group to listen well and provide additional input. After that, teachers gave explanation after the group discussion ended. However, due to the lack of English skills, the discussion was carried both in English and Indonesian.

The researcher inferring that all English teachers used similar teaching methods and strategies in the classroom. Both of them commonly applied cooperative learning method such as class or small group discussion, pair work and individual work sometimes. Those strategies were applied in teaching four skills; listening, writing, reading and speaking.

Related to learning material, both teachers used the same textbook. This book is the same book that can be found in market or bookstores, it is the same book used in public high school. The teachers did not use vocational English

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book for Computer Network major to teach vocational student. Whereas, teaching English for computer network major can be classified as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Widodo (2016) said that teaching English in vocational education, particularly in secondary education, should be taken into account as English for Specific Purposes. Therefore, it was unfortunate that teachers did not have English vocational textbook to be used in the classroom. When researcher asked them about need analysis in developing suitable teaching material, both of them said that they have lack of knowledge and limited time to do so.

Need analysis has been considered as the crucial factor and an integral part of establishing an ESP course as it is only through the process of need analysis researchers, course designers, and material developers are able to determine and refine the content for an ESP course that meet the learners' need (Mahbub, 2018). Other than that, teachers also have lack of knowledge on ESP material for Computer Network major. It can be seen by teacher' instructions where grammar is emphasized in teaching instead communication skill and vocabulary related to computer network field or work. ESP courses are designed to meet the needs of learners and other stakeholders to communicate for work or study purposes in specific disciplines (Vogt & Kantelinen, 2013). These were the reasons why the students do not get appropriate learning experience.

Besides that, school facilities were also one of the factors which influenced how teachers teach and what strategies or methods they will implement in teaching. In this school, there are no language laboratory, internet and limited facilities such as projector and audiovisual aids for supporting teaching and learning process. Consequently, students only focus on learning through textbooks. Teachers also said that when they have to use internet, students used their mobile phone or laptop to access it. Unfortunately, not everyone has a mobile phone or laptop. The lack of facilities makes it difficult for teachers to teach according to the direction of the applicable curriculum.

Conclusion and Limitations

Consistent with the research findings, English teachers applied Scientific Approach based on the 2013 curriculum and it's written in the lesson plan. However, teachers were less able to apply the approach well. The researcher concludes several shortcomings in the teachers' strategies of English teaching-learning at Computer Network Department. These shortcomings included the lack of knowledge about need analysis before teaching, teachers did not understand English teaching for specific purposes, lack of facilities, the lack of creativity in developing material, and limited time.

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