

## **Revisiting English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Indonesian Vocational High School (VHS): A Current Situation in Curriculum 2013**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study tries to revisit the concept of ESP in VHS under the latest curriculum applied in Indonesia; curriculum 2013 or K-13. The researcher discovers current issues and several suggestions of ESP in Indonesian VHS context. Theoretically, English in VHS should employ ESP approach, but practically, it tends to be more general. The vague concept of ESP in the Indonesian VHS is one of the reasons in developing this study. On the other hand, government with its purpose of AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) eagers to make VHS students ready to work to compete with the foreign workers. However, since the implementation of K-13, English in VHS tends to have more general topics rather than in the previous curriculum (KTSP; curriculum 2006). As a result, it makes the concept of ESP in VHS more vague. The result of document analysis and observation, the researcher found several issues dealing with ESP. They are issues in course design, ESP teachers, ESP objectives, approach, and materials, and also learning assessment. Considering the major issues dealing with ESP in VHS, several countermeasures about redesign of ESP teaching in Indonesian VHS were suggested by the researcher.

**Keywords:** Curriculum 2013, ESP, Vocational High School

### **Introduction**

In recent years, English becomes more needed by people in their lives. The development of technology and information may be one of the reasons why people need English more as a lingua franca. The technology like software, social media, and application are usually made in the western countries where the language used is English. The development of technology also impacts to the education and

employment system. Moreover, the government joined MEA (*Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN*) or AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) in 2016. In AEC, every competent workers are allowed to work in other countries which join AEC. Many foreign workers try to work in Indonesia due to its potential and rich sources. It is very challenging for the jobseeker to compete with the foreigners

since they have good skills in their specialty and in English.

News article from <https://bisnis.tempo.co/read/768118/hadapi-mea-bahasa-inggris-jadi-kelemahan-pekerja-indonesia> (retrieved on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018) stated that one of the weaknesses from Indonesian workers are their English skill. To work as an operator in a factory for example, the HRD will tend to select the ones who are able to use English since many manuals for machines are written in English. Another example is an entrepreneur. If he cannot use English, he will face difficulty in selling his products abroad. Nowadays, we are familiar with online shopping which means that a seller minimally should be able to speak or write basic English as a medium in his website or when negotiating with the consumers.

In that article, Jokowi as the Indonesian president also proposed that he wanted to make more vocational programs which create competent and ready-to-work graduates. To meet the goal, of course it is needed a very professional education system that can build workers with the AEC requirements. It also needs support from many environments, such as teachers, curriculum designers, students, policy-makers, work industries, and so on.

However, since 2013, Indonesia has been implementing a new curriculum which integrates all four English language skills

and relate them to other subjects. Curriculum 2013 or K-13 highlights the communicative skill and team work. The frameworks of this latest curriculum are scientific and text-based approaches. The designed materials seems too general for VHS students who should learn specific English related to their majors.

Based on the issues, the researcher aims to overview the current issues related to ESP in teaching VHS using K-13. She is interested to present this topic since the demand for ESP grows higher in each year, but there is no significant step conducted by related stakeholders to overcome the vagueness of ESP position in VHS. English for VHS in K-13 is an obligatory subject which every student should take it in order to pass the level. It is also tested in the national examination (UN). However, there is no clarity whether English for VHS is General English (GE) or ESP. If we look from the purpose, it should be ESP because the content should be related to the students' major, like engineering, banking, pharmacy, and so on. On the other hand, the materials and the learning objectives differ from ESP context, it tends to GE like English for senior high school.

## **Review of Related Theories**

### **Previous Studies**

There are numbers of study conducted on ESP in Indonesia. The first two studies

highlight the needs analysis and teaching materials for ESP in VHS, and the last study aims to give an overview of ESP in VHS and university level. Zurniati and Kustati (2015) in their study state that VHS concept in Indonesia did not match with the ESP characteristics. The curriculum between VHS and the general high school (GHS) were similar. As a result, the ESP implementation may be rarely found in VHS. It is also supported by a descriptive study from Ronaldo (2016) which concludes that teaching material development in VHS was not appropriate with the concepts of ESP since the data depicted that the teaching material was too general and did not relate to the students' major or specialty. He further explains that this issue should be overcome by stakeholder, teachers, and linguists. It is closely related that selecting ESP materials refers to the goals and objectives derived from needs analysis.

The third study conducted by Kusni (2013) tries to reveal ideas on recent issues and future prospects of ESP in Indonesian contexts. Some crucial issues are the focus of this study, such as ESP course design, teachers, objectives and materials, and its assessment. He states that it was plausible to find out that the goals and objectives of ESP courses at Indonesian universities were not really sound ESP courses if we compare them to ESP course objectives. Then, he

also proposes the future development of ESP for VHS in Indonesia since ESP is growing rapidly nowadays.

### **Definition and Concept of ESP**

ESP differs from GE in many aspects. Bojovic (2006) describes that ESP is a rapid growth approach in fulfilling the demand for English needs in specific profession, discovering discovering the ways in which language is used in real communication, and involving educational psychology which means that students' needs and interests influence their motivation in learning. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) depict ESP as an approach rather than a product which means that ESP does not involve a particular kind of language, teaching material or methodology. They further state that learners' reason and motivation for learning determine all decisions as to content and method of ESP teaching.

Since ESP teaching is based on the learners' needs, it has many branches that are always developed. Bojovic (2016) categorizes ESP into two main areas based on when they take place: 1) English for Academic Purposes (EAP) consisting of pre-experience, simultaneous/in-service and post-experience courses, and 2) English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) for study in a specific discipline (pre-study, in-study, and post-study) or as an independent or

integrated school subject. The second division of ESP is based on specialty areas: 1) EAP involves English for (Academic) Science and Technology (EST), English for (Academic) Medical Purposes (EMP), English for (Academic) Legal Purposes (ELP), and English for Management, Finance and Economics; 2) EOP includes English for Professional Purposes (English for Medical Purposes, English for Business Purposes – EBP) and English for Vocational Purposes (Pre-vocational English and Vocational English). However, in recent years, the branches grow rapidly to meet the professional specific needs.

### Characteristics of ESP

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) propose the characteristics of ESP which consist of absolute and variable characteristics. Absolute characteristics mean 1) ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner; 2) ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves; and 3) ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities. While the variable characteristics are 1) ESP may be related or designed for specific disciplines; 2) ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English; 3) ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a

tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation; it could be used for learners at secondary school level; 4) ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced learners; and 5) Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

### English for Indonesian Vocational High School in K-13

English is a compulsory subject for VHS in K-13. The students also will take a national examination where English is tested. If we look at the following figure drawn by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), we could analyze if the English taught belongs to ESP or not.

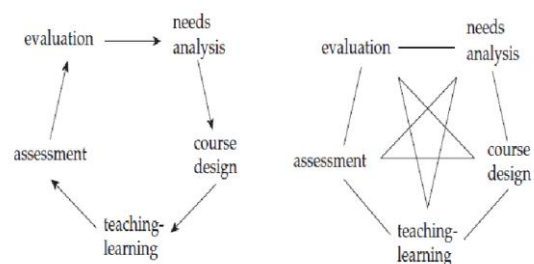


Figure 1. Linear vs cyclical process of needs analysis

The key point of ESP is it has to start with needs analysis to know the students' wants, lacks, and interest. It is the difference between GE and ESP in nature. Of the needs analysis, it will produce a

result how to conduct the course and teaching learning process. In the teaching learning process, the instructors should design or adapt suitable learning materials. McDonough (1984) states that it is better to use authentic materials which relate to the learners' specialty and proficiency level. Authentic materials also will lead to suitable authentic assessment to measure the students' learning. Evaluation is the last but also can be a beginning of the cycle will judge whether the course satisfies and matches to the learners' needs.

By analyzing the aspects, we can determine the position of English in Indonesia, especially VHS. The curriculum itself does not define whether English for VHS belongs to GE or ESP. Theoretically, it should belong to ESP since the learning material and the learning objectives differ from GE. VHS students are prepared to be ready to work. It is also in line with the president's expectation dealing with AEC. Indonesia needs qualified workers to compete with foreign workers. To meet the purpose, policy-makers should take a side to put English for VHS into ESP approach.

Furthermore, another handicap in this new curriculum is the content of English for VHS becomes closer to GE than in the previous curriculum; school-based curriculum (curriculum 2006 or KTSP). The framework of text-based approach also makes the material is too broad, for

example VHS students have to study many text-types, like descriptive, narrative, recount, and so on.

### **Research Methodology**

To meet the objective of this study, the researcher established qualitative method. The data were collected from observation and document analysis, i.e. structure of curriculum 2013 and teachers' lesson plans. The samples of lesson plan were taken from some English VHS teachers in SMK N 1 Mandiraja. Of the lesson plans, the reseracher was able to analyze the course design, the learning objectives and materials, and the assessment. She also did conformation between the practice in the real field with the concept and characteristics of ESP provided in the literature review.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The findings will be divided into some subtopics dealing with major issues the reseacher found in her institution and fellow teachers' lesson plans. The issues about ESP in VHS are crucial and they cannot be left unsolved. Moreover, the government wants to prepare VHS students for AEC. The issues addressed in this discussion are course designs, qualification of ESP teachers, learning objectives, approaches, and materials, the assessment,

and countermeasures to redesign ESP in VHS.

### Issues of ESP Course Designs in K-13

Designing a course is very fundamental process since it will impact the syllabus design, developing materials, classroom teaching and assessing also evaluation. When an instructor wants to start designing a course, the significant difference from GE is the implementation of needs analysis. This concept brings dilemma in VHS. Curriculum designers have never discovered learners' needs specifically based on students' majors. The majors of VHS in Indonesia are vary, but the materials for each major is similar and even getting closer to GE in K-13.

English in VHS is compulsory in each grade and the session is 3 credit hours per week with too many materials due to text-based approach applied in K-13. The topic for each unit is not functional, but text-based. Some materials taken from a course book entitled Bahasa Inggris published by Kemdikbud (2016), they learn Talking about Self, Congratulating and Complimenting Others, Expressing Intention, Which one is Your Best Getaway?, Let's Visit Niagara Falls, and other text-based materials.

One of the reasons why the materials in each curriculum were not focus on ESP was the curriculum was not designed by ESP specialists (Kusni, 2013). Until now,

there was no clear cut between English for general senior high school (SMA) and VHS. Theoretically, it should belong to ESP, but practically, it was far from the concept of ESP. Therefore, the syllabus was also given by government whereas the characteristics of ESP syllabus should be based on learners' needs and proficiency.

Another difficulty in conducting ESP in VHS was the teachers should follow the rules in the curriculum. In case of K-13, all teachers from every subject have to implement scientific approach and its learning models to run the teaching learning process, especially for English teachers, they also have to use text-based approach in teaching. The teachers have no choice, but to follow because the MOEC (Ministry of Education and Culture) proposes the approaches to use.

Actually, in the researcher's institution, there was like MoU when arranging VHS curriculum and their needs in the real work industry (*DuDi or Dunia Usaha dan Dunia Industri*). The representatives of DuDi came from related majors, for example in Mechanical Engineering, the DuDi was from UPTD Logam (*Unit Pelaksana Teknis Daerah*) Purbalingga, and in Banking program, the representatives of DuDi were from several banks, like BRI, Surya Yudha Bank, and BKK Bank. They were always invited in the beginning of academic year to discuss together with the school curriculum

team in adding or reducing some materials based on the needs of related work industry. Nevertheless, the MoU usually pointed only for vocational subjects. To conclude, the issue in the course design was still unsolved, especially in the existence of awareness of learners' needs. Some of the researcher's students also complained what actually the purpose of learning English and other non-vocational subjects because in general, they did not cover their specific needs. In consequences, MOEC should redesign specific English curriculum for VHS.

### **Issues of ESP Teachers**

No matter how excellent a curriculum is, if the teacher is not able to deliver the content of curriculum well to the students, it will be meaningless. In recent years, the approach was shifted from teacher-centered into learner-centered, however, still the role of a teacher is very crucial in running the class activities. There were some teacher issues that the researcher discovered as the researcher was also an English teacher. This issue also discussed by Kusni in his study (2013). Although the demand of ESP grows higher, Indonesia still did not open specific program for ESP teacher training. In university level, English department usually only offered education, literature, and linguistics programs.

Because there was no ESP program in the university, the English teachers who had graduated from the university did not have qualified competency in teaching ESP. They just had been prepared to be English junior or senior high school teachers. Based on the observation, most of them learned by themselves to get acquainted with learners' majors terms. But, there were also many teachers who ignore the use of related authentic materials to teach since they did not realize ESP. They just teach using general materials without connecting them with students' major.

In addition, as long as the researcher and her English teacher colleagues had become English teachers in VHS, they had never invited to join an INSET (In-service Training) or any workshop and seminar about teaching ESP. These problems led teaching English in VHS became further from the concept of ESP. Moreover, it was difficult to teach the students the real specific English because most of them were still lack of understanding in the level of general English due to less exposure of English they received.

### **Issues of Learning Objectives, Approaches, and Materials**

The learning objectives in K-13 are developed based on topic of a text (text-based approach). The objectives derived from core competences (*kompetensi inti* or

KI), basic competences (*kompetensi dasar* or KD), then IPK (*indikator pencapaian kompetensi*) or learning indicators. Due to the purpose of K-13 which not only involve the cognitive, but also affective and psychomotor domains, the core competences represent them in four core competences. It also aims to integrate all four language skills. K-13 has KI-1 for spiritual competence, KI-2 for personal competence, KI-3 for knowledge competence, and KI-4 for skill competence. KI-1 and KI-2 are not assessed directly, but they are integrated in KI-3 and 4. In the first semester of grade X, they have 5 basic competences derived from KI-3 and 5 basic competences derived from KI-4. As a result, each competence should be paired, i.e KD 3.1 with KD 4.1. All of KD 3 discuss the cognitive domain, while all of KD 4 present the performance or presentation of KD 3.

The objectives of this curriculum are to involve all four language skills and discuss grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary indirectly based on the text. Under the approach of scientific approach which derived from scientist stages, the learning activities are learner-centered which employ supported cognitive and communicative learning model, such as discovery model, project-based, problem-based, teaching factory, and production-learning.

Another approach used in K-13 is text-based approach which brought some problems in teaching ESP. The approach employs many text types which most of them do not represent ESP, such as descriptive text about historical and holiday place, narrative text, and recount text. They will directly impact to the learning materials. The curriculum designers need to consider these issues because studying learning materials which are not too related to the students' real-life or specialty will not give many benefits to them, not to mention using authentic materials and assessment.

In terms of ESP course objectives, it was plausible to find out that the goals and objectives of ESP courses at Indonesian universities were not really sound ESP courses (Kusni, 2004 & 2006). English for Economics in a well known university, for example, aims at developing students' mastery of English grammar. English for Chemistry, in other side, aims at preparing students to take TOEFL. English for Biology aims at developing the four English skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in which the ESP course is only one semester (2 credit-hours) along the four-year study time for the students. Those are some examples of deviations from the nature of ESP course objectives happening in Indonesian universities.



In K-13, the frameworks of teaching English were scientific and text-based approaches. They were actually good to improve students; communication and critical thinking skills. On the other hand, the profit also integrated all four English skills.

### **Issues of Assessing ESP in K-13**

Assessment is used to measure the quality of teaching learning process. Assessment in ESP should concern with the ability to perform particular communicative tasks. The researcher thought that the assessment of English in K-13 was already good (it means it has criteria of good assessment; valid, reliable, and practical) and had improvement than in the previous curriculum. In K-13, besides the teachers have to measure the students' cognitive, they also have to measure the affective and psychomotor domains. Cognitive domain could be assessed by standard assessment, like doing some exercises. The point was the exercises should be related to real life and increase higher order thinking skills (HOTS). While the psychomotor (or skill) domain was the implementation of cognitive or knowledge domain. In assessing students' skills, they have to perform or make something. The teachers usually use alternatives in assessment, such as performance-based, project-based,

portfolios and journals. While affective was assessed integrated with other domains.

For the testing, English in VHS still employed paper and pencil test, like summative and formative test, and the last was computerized national examination. Those tests usually in the form of multiple choice. The materials for summative test and national examination were arranged like TOEIC with the adjustment of the materials based on the syllabus.

However, because there was no clarity in the position of English in VHS, the assessment concept here may be differ from assessment in ESP since the materials taught were also different. Despite the difference, the concept of assessment in K-13 was excellent enough to assess students' affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. The way of assessing only based on structural fashion and paper and pencil assessment was out of date. Additionally, alternatives in assessment also supported teamwork skills, like leadership, responsibility and respecting others. These skills were very much needed in the real life and also in the work industry. Most of the job descriptions were done in a team.

Another advantage of this kind of assessment was it highlighted both of the process and product. It would be beneficial if the teachers implemented it in the ESP assessment. For instance in the project-based assessment, the students were divided

into some groups to do some projects related to the materials. The project also could employ more than one subject, for instance English and Mechanical Engineering subject. The teachers looked for the same materials between the subject and discussed with the vocational teachers, i.e. learning manuals making a hammer. The English teacher assessed the written or spoken form of the manuals, then the vocational teacher assessed the product. In doing the project, of course it was needed some periods of time. The teacher then could assessed the draft, then move to the first paragraph, until the whole text. That is the concept of project-based assessment where the teacher not only score the product, but also score and guide each step.

### **Countermeasures to Improve ESP in VHS**

Of arguments above, the researcher could infer that the position of ESP in Indonesian VHS is still debatable whether it belongs to ESP or GE. Practically, English in VHS should be ESP. Here the researcher suggests some countermeasures to redesign ESP in VHS which are also in line with Kusni (2013) and Bingyao (2016).

First thing first, MOEC as the stakeholder should settle the ESP teaching orientation. After deciding, MOEC has to state a new national policy about EFL and design a new national ESP curriculum. In designing a new ESP curriculum, MOEC

should work together with the related work industries in order to design an excellent curriculum which suits to the demand of industries' requirements. The demand for ESP grows higher in the employment as it is also in line with the government's idea about preparing students of VHS in AEC. So, there will be GE and ESP in Indonesian formal school. GE will be pointed for general high school and ESP for VHS. Moreover, by developing a new ESP curriculum, MOEC and teachers also need to implement the characteristics of ESP teaching, like conducting needs analysis before the teaching learning process, applying negotiated syllabus, and doing placement or diagnostic tests to classify the students.

Second, after reformulating the curriculum, it will directly take impact to the teachers as the practitioners of bringing the curriculum into the classroom. It will also take an effect to the universities. They have to prepare ESP teacher programs. So far in Indonesia, there is no specific ESP program, but it is usually only as a two-credits optional course in English education program. Another problem is where do we get the qualified teachers if the universities have not prepare ESP teacher program? MOEC can hold an INSET, workshops about ESP program, or PPG (*Pendidikan Profesi Guru*; a program which aims to improve English teachers' professionalism).

Third, improving teaching materials and methods are must in a very dynamic development of ESP. Improving and adjusting teaching skills and methods to each class or program are not easy things, moreover they also have to adapt and enrich their teaching materials. The materials should relate to the students' specialty, authentic, and beneficial to their real-life. The redesigned of ESP material also takes impact to the book materials or content writers. The last is to assess the students', they have to adjust to principles in ESP assessment. Next, creating an official ESP level certificate test will be advantageous for the graduates in their employment.

### Conclusion

In this study, the researcher examined current situation of ESP in VHS under the newest curriculum applied in Indonesia; K-13. The major issues found and discussed are issues of ESP course design, issues of ESP teachers, issues of ESP objectives, approach, and objectives and issues of ESP assessment. Several countermeasures

to improve ESP teaching in VHS are also discussed by the researcher. The suggested countermeasures are in terms of settling the ESP orientation and designing a new ESP curriculum for VHS, improving teachers' professionalism by establishing ESP programs by universities and INSET or ESP workshop for in-service teachers, and the third is improving teaching materials and methods to meet the ESP purposes.

The redesign of ESP orientation in Indonesia may be a difficult task since it involves many aspects of education, not to mention teachers, students, universities, related stakeholders, book publishers and also work industries. Furthermore, ensuring the stakeholders to shift the EFL orientation needs a lot of reliable research and ESP theories to apply. Despite of the challenging work, reformulating a new concept of ESP will bring many benefits to the Indonesia's development. The nearest one is to enable the VHS graduates ready to work and compete with foreign workers in AEC era.

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