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Process and Challenges in Material Development: A Case Study at Vocational High School in Surakarta

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Abstract

This article describes the process of developing teaching materials and the challenge encountered by the teacher in developing the materials. The participant of the study is an eleven-grade English teacher in a vocational high school in Surakarta. The researcher collected the data from interviews and document analysis. The result of this research showed that the process of developing teaching materials consisted of: (1) identification of needs; (2) exploration of needs; (3) contextual realization of materials; (4) pedagogical realization; (5) physical production of materials; (6) the use of the materials; (7) evaluation of materials. The result of this study also revealed the challenges encountered by the teacher in developing the teaching materials. The challenges are (1) defining the appropriate learning activities in online learning; and (2) there are many school's works to do. This research may help other teachers in developing teaching materials in vocational high schools. The other teacher might identify the lack and the good of the developed teaching materials in this research and take it as a consideration in developing teaching materials.

Keywords: English teaching materials; material development; vocational high school

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning materials have a crucial role in the English Language Teaching process (Hyland, 2006). Materials are anything that is used to facilitate learners and teachers in the language learning process (Tomlinson, 1998, p.2). Anything can be used as learning materials as they inform the learner about the language, they provide exposure to the language in use, and they stimulate and facilitate the learners to discover the language.

There are two types of learning materials: in-house materials and commercial materials (Widodo, 2015, p.23). In-house material or self-designed material is material

developed locally by a particular teacher or group of teachers to meet a group of students with specific needs. Bocanegra-Valle (2010, p.150) explains that in-house materials may be developed either from scratch or by adapting the existing materials. Meanwhile, commercial material is material written by experienced writers or experts for students with diverse backgrounds and different needs (Widodo, 2015, p.23).

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education and Culture has provided an English textbook for the senior high school named *Bahasa Inggris*. The Ministry of Education and Culture recommends both senior high school and vocational high school to use *Bahasa Inggris* in the teaching and learning process. On the contrary, senior high school and vocational high school have different orientations in learning English. It is stipulated in Law no. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System that vocational high school orientation is to promote the students to have a special skill as they will take part in the business and industry work after school. Due to the different orientations of vocational high school, the needs of the students are also different. For this reason, English learning in vocation high school should be considered as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Widodo, 2016). The ESP's crucial point is that English is not taught as a subject separated from the learners' real world. It covers subjects varying from Business or Tourism to Art and Hospitality Management.

Meanwhile, *Bahasa Inggris* contains materials for general English. General English stressed all four-language skills; listening, reading, speaking, and writing equally. Widodo (2015, p.4) states that *Bahasa Inggris* is not suited to be used in vocational high school because it contains de-contextualized materials.

Concerning this problem, English teachers of vocational high schools can provide the students with self-designed material. Block (1991) explains an important advantage of self-designed material is contextualism. Self-designed teaching materials will help to overcome the lack of fit of the coursebook.

Some previous studies investigated the materials development process. Bosompem (2014) investigated teachers' attitudes and practices to materials adaptation in Ghana. Then, Basturkmen and Valle (2018) explained the teacher's beliefs and material development process at two universities in Spain. Previous studies mentioned before have been discussed the importance and the process of material development at a university level. The present study investigated:

1. How does the English vocational high school teacher develop the ELT material?
2. What are the challenges in developing ELT materials in vocational high school?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Principles in Developing Material

Hutchinson and Water (1987, p.106) recommend several principles in defining teaching materials, such as:

1. *Provide a stimulus to learning.*

Good material will consist of interesting text, enjoyable activities, and opportunities for learners to use their background knowledge.

2. *Help to organize the teaching-learning process.*

The material should be a bridge for learners to reach the learning objectives. Material is also arranged structurally to help the teacher in delivering the material.

3. Use nature of language and learning

Materials should point to the nature of language and learning.

4. Provide nature of learning task

The materials should be able to fit with level knowledge of students. In addition, teaching material also provides a clear example to make students more understanding.

5. Broadening the teachers' knowledge.

The material does not only focus on improving students' need but also expect to improve teacher's knowledge.

6. Provide correct and appropriate language use.

The material should provide models of correct and appropriate language use. The materials should be arranged as well as possible to help learners more attraction.

Process for Material Development

Tomlinson (2012, p.143-144) explains that material development refers to all the processes of producing and using the language learning materials including material evaluation, adaptation, design, production, exploitation, and research. Jolly and Bolitho (1998, p.112-113) present a very self-explanatory and easy-to-follow process to apply when creating or adapting teaching and learning material. The process is as follows:

1. Identification of needs

The teacher or the material developer needs to identify the current situation of the learner and the teaching-learning process to create the material.

2. Exploration of needs

The teacher or the material developer needs to explore the problems' area in the case of learning objective, skill, etc.

3. Contextual Identification of needs

The material developer has to find suitable ideas, contexts, or texts with which to work.

4. Pedagogical realization of material

The material developer has to find the appropriate exercises and activities.

5. The physical production of materials

The physical production involves the consideration of layout, type size, visuals, reproduction, tape length, etc.

6. The use of the material

Material for language learning is anything that can be used in the teaching and learning process to support the learners in improving their knowledge and skill of the language (Tomlinson, 1998, p.2). Thus, materials have multiple roles in the teaching and learning process. Cunningsworth (1995, p.7) mentions five roles of material in the ESP context:

- a. material as a resource for presentation;
- b. material as a source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction;

- c. material as a reference source for learners;
- d. material as a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities;
- e. material as a syllabus (that they reflect the determined learning objectives).

7. Evaluation of materials

The evaluation of the materials can be done by the feedback from the students. Besides, the material developer himself can make an evaluation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative study in the form of a case study. A case study is an approach to research that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context using a variety of data sources (Yin, 2018, p.45).

This research took place in one of the vocational high schools in Surakarta. The respondent was a female with 15 years old experience as an English teacher in a vocational high school. In the research time, the teacher taught English classes majoring in Karawitan.

The technique that the researcher used to collect the data were conducting the interview and reviewing the documents. The researcher contacted the participant and asked for her availability to conduct the interview. The time and place of the interview were set on the agreement between the researcher and the participant. The interview process was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to avoid misunderstanding between the researcher and the participant. Additionally, the interview was conducted in approximately 45-60 minutes. Every conversation that happened between the researcher and the participants was recorded using a phone recorder under the permission of the participant.

To cross-check the data, triangulation was needed. The researcher used methodological triangulation using two methods to collect data, such as interviews and documentation. The interview session lasted between 45 - 60 minutes. The document is obtained from the developed materials. The methodological triangulation allows the researcher to be able to see a case from more than one perspective. Moreover, to make sure the validity of the data, the researcher used member checking. The researcher asked the participant about the study, such as whether the description is complete and realistic; if the interpretations are representative and fair.

FINDINGS

1. Process of developing ELT material

a. Identification of Needs

The teacher mentioned that in identifying the learners' needs, she carried out the following:

1) Reviewing the syllabus;

When reviewing the government's English syllabus, Teacher AN identified the listed subject matter. The Teacher mentioned that the syllabus has already been given what materials to deliver. Thus, the listed subject matter would be used as guidance in developing the material.

2) observing the characteristics and the condition of the students in the classroom.

The teacher brought the available materials from the government to deliver to the student in the first meeting. Based on the observation, she found out that: a) most of the students lacked in vocabulary, and b) the necessities of Karawitan students in learning English was to be able to understand what is said and/ or written in English. Those became the Teacher AN's consideration in developing the materials.

b. Exploration of Needs

To explore the students' needs, the Teacher conducted the following:

1) Deciding the learning objective;

The Teacher decided that the learning objectives are a) improving the learner's vocabulary mastery, and b) helping the students to pass the examination. Based on that objectives, Teacher AN decided to follow the syllabus without any changes. She argued that the current syllabus provides a balanced composition between dialogue text and genre-based text. This composition helped her to have the students read. By reading various kinds of text, it was easier to help the students to improve their vocabulary mastery. Besides, she could not change the syllabus was because the examination was made based on the national syllabus. If she changed it, the students would find it difficult in the examination.

2) reviewing the government's English book.

The Teacher stated that if she only used the book provided by the government, it would not suit the condition of the students. Based on the identification, Teacher AN found out that: a) the book contains too many exercises while the time was limited; b) the vocabularies are not suited to the student's level of knowledge.

c. Contextual Realization of Material

In contextual realization of material, Teacher AN did the following:

1) Defining the context of the materials;

Teacher AN had realized that teaching materials in vocational high school should be different from senior high school. However, as Teacher AN follows the syllabus, the context and the topics of teaching and learning were the same as what was written in the syllabus. She took the general English context to her materials. As stated by Teacher AN, *"The context of the material is general English. I followed the topics listed in the syllabus."*

2) collecting and selecting the materials.

Teacher AN stated that she considered the students' competencies in learning English. Thus, she chose the materials that contain familiar words to the students so it would be easier for them to understand. Teacher AN mentioned that she searched the materials from the internet which suit the topic and have a familiar vocabulary for the students. The selected materials were in the form of text and YouTube videos.

d. Pedagogical Realization

In this stage, Teacher AN carried out the following:

1) selecting the exercises;

After selecting the materials, Teacher AN prepared for the exercises. As Teacher AN has selected a YouTube video, she would ask the students to watch it and write down the words they heard. After that, the students have to find the meaning of the listed words. This exercise was intended to help the students to improve their vocabulary mastery. Another exercise was in the form of multiple choices. Teacher AN adapted the questions from the internet based on the student's level of knowledge. The selected questions were put in Google Form.

2) deciding the activities;

Based on the collected materials and selected exercises, Teacher AN decided how the learning should be. Teacher AN explained that the learning activity might not be the same as what was written in the lesson plan. The learning activity was depending on the condition of the classroom. She said that with her students' condition, applying a full student center activity would not work.

In general, the learning activities begin when Teacher AN share the link of the materials. Then, Teacher AN would explain the materials in front of the class. After the explanation, she gave time to the students to ask. If there was no question, she would ask the students to do the exercises. Teacher AN would monitor and motivate the students to do the exercises.

3) planning the instructions.

Considering the students' competencies, teacher SN said that most of the instructions are in Indonesia. If she used full English in class, the students would not understand. Thus, she had to translate it into Indonesia to help the students.

e. Physical Production of Materials

1) determining the platform;

The self-designed materials were arranged in an online platform called Sway Office. Teacher AN mentioned that Sway Office is easy to use for her and the students. The reason why Teacher AN decided to write the material on an online platform was that she wanted to utilize the technology for learning. The school allowed the students to bring their phones. Unfortunately, her students liked to use their phones secretly during the lesson. They used it to play games, to have online chatting, or just to scroll down their social media timeline. Thus, she decided to make online material, so the students had to use their phones to access the material during the lesson.

2) deciding the layout.

The arrangement starts with the introduction of the topic, then further explanation, and the example of the text or dialogue. Teacher AN said the important thing about the arrangement is the readability.

f. The Use of the Materials

The materials were used as a resource for learning. During the pandemic condition in which the students have to learn from home, Teacher AN would share the link of the materials, then the students would learn by themselves. The students could access the materials whenever they want to learn.

“...I sent the link of the materials in Google Classroom. My students learned by themselves. If they did not understand or they had a question, they would ask me by WhatsApp.”

g. Evaluation of Materials

During the teaching and learning process, Teacher AN observed the students' responses toward the materials. She would take notes on which part was suited to the students, which part needs to be improved, etc. The notes would be used to modify the next materials. Teacher AN also kept the unsatisfied feeling toward the material so she would always have the will to improve the materials.

2. Challenges in developing ELT material

The second finding is about the teacher's challenges or difficulties in developing the teaching materials. The teacher had two big challenges in developing the materials. The challenges are:

a. Determine the learning activities in online learning;

She explained that the biggest challenge nowadays is the online learning system. She had to modify the materials, the exercises, and the activities. Teacher AN had no problem modifying the materials because it was easy to get varied materials. However, she found it difficult to determine the activities and exercises. Teacher AN mentioned that she could not have a video meeting with the students to explain the materials. The students would say that their internet signal was bad so they could not join the meeting. Thus, she thought that it would not be effective to have a video meeting with the students. Teacher AN decided to use Google Classroom to share the materials, the tasks, and the assessments.

b. There are many school's works to do.

When Teacher AN had other works like school administration or school events, she would be busy with that. Thus, she would have limited time to develop the materials. Moreover, Teacher AN said that at some points, she was unwilling to develop the materials. When it came, Teacher AN would push herself to develop the materials. Teacher AN did not want to use the same teaching materials over and over. Moreover, she realized that the materials were needed the development.

DISCUSSION

Derived from Jolly and Bolitho (1998, pp.112-113), the teacher AN process of designing the teaching material is explained as follows:

1. Identification of Needs

In line with Jolly and Bolitho (1998: 112-113), the process of developing teaching materials done by Teacher AN is preceded by the identification of needs. Thus, according to McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara (1013), need analysis is termed as context analysis that includes teachers, students, school, administrators, curricular resources (e.g. curriculum guidelines, syllabi, lesson plan, and textbook), and the environment where language is used. However, the needs analysis done by the teacher was likely taken from

the teacher's point of view. The teacher did not apply standardized tools and did not involve the students or other elements to analyze the needs.

2. Exploration of Needs

Exploration of needs means exploring the area of teaching materials in terms of learning objective, syllabus, skill, etc. The language, function, and skill are all written in the syllabus. The teacher did not create the syllabus herself because the syllabus has been decided by the government. The teacher took what is written in the syllabus as the guide in developing the teaching materials. It might seem that the teacher does not explore the syllabus. However, following the syllabus is good to help the teacher to have a clear instruction of what the teacher should do and prevent developed materials run out of the track. It is in line with Hutchinson and Water (1987, p.83) that a syllabus provides a practical basis for the assessment, materials, and learning time.

3. Contextual Realization of Material

The teacher had realized that teaching materials in vocational high school should be different from senior high school. However, in the practice, the teacher decided to use general English. The teacher argued if she specifies the materials as English for vocational high school specifically art school, the teacher is afraid that the students will find difficulties in the examination. Moreover, the students rarely use English in their field. So, the focus of the learning is to help the students to understand what is written or spoken in English. Thus, the materials contain easy-to-understand vocabulary for the students.

4. Pedagogical Realization

Pedagogical realization is initiated by the finding of appropriate exercises and activities. The teacher realized that the activities should be centered on the students. However, the teacher argued that discussion activities or another student-centered activity would not work well. When it comes to discussion, just some students would be active and the rest just stay silent. Thus, the teacher put a YouTube video in the materials. As the students had limited vocabulary, the video would help them to promote their comprehension. In line with Cakir (2006, p.68) that mentions video provides clearer meaning by giving the illustration. Hapsari (2016) found that video gives the students a real model to imitate so they will be able to pronounce the English words correctly.

5. Physical Production of Materials

Physical production contains all things that have been considered in the previous steps. The teacher arranged the collected materials in an online platform called Sway Office. Sway Office is an online platform to make a presentation. The teacher made one presentation for one topic. The presentation contains an introduction of the topic, a language feature of a text, an example of a text or dialogue.

The choice to use an online platform is because the teacher does not want the students to use their phones during the lesson secretly. If the teacher does use online media for learning, the students would like to open social media, play games, or do other things unrelated to the learning. Moreover, Kurniawan (2018) mentioned that the use of the mobile phone in class helps the students to be engaged more in learning.

6. The Use of the Materials

In this case, the teacher used the material as a resource for the presentation. As mentioned by Cunningsworth (1995, p.7) that materials are the resource for the students in learning. Based on the online materials, the teacher would give further explanation to it. The teacher also provides YouTube videos in her class. The YouTube videos are aimed to help the learner to have a better understanding of the materials. Moreover, the YouTube videos were used to show how the words are pronounced.

7. Evaluation of Materials

The evaluation was done not by the students' comments or feedback but the teacher concluded herself through observation during the learning process. Meanwhile, according to Bocanegra (2010), the perception and feedback from the students would help the teacher to find out which part is good, which part is needed to revise or to put away.

As it is a self-adjusting process, the teacher had her challenging in designing the material. In this case, the teacher had the difficulty in defining the appropriate activities for the students in the current condition—which the learning activity should be online. Basturkmen and Bocanegra (2018) in their research found that the experience ESP teachers put much consideration in defining the tasks and activities. Even, the experience ESP teacher had consultations with the related-subject expert and explored the internet and books.

The teacher does not always have the willingness to develop the materials. Besides, sometimes, the teacher felt did not have enough time to develop the material. However, what made the teacher still developing the material is her belief that the students have different needs and conditions.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The result of the study shows that the steps in developing teaching materials done by the teacher AN are the same as the steps which were stated by Jolly and Bolitho (1998, pp.112-113). The differences lied in how the steps were done. The steps done by the teacher were:

1. Identification of needs: the needs of the students were determined based on the teacher's point of view.
2. Exploration of needs: the teacher decided to follow what is written in the syllabus.
3. Contextual realization of material: the teacher selected the materials from the internet.
4. Pedagogical realization: the teacher took the exercises mostly from the internet.
5. The physical production of materials: the materials were arranged in an online platform called Sway Office.
6. The use of the materials: the materials were used as the resource for presentation by the teacher.
7. Evaluation of the materials: the teacher evaluated the materials based on her observation during the teaching and learning process

Another finding shows that the teacher AN had the difficulty in defining the appropriate activities for the students in the current condition—which the learning activity should be online. Besides, at some point, the teacher felt unwilling and did not

have enough time to develop the material. However, the teacher pushed herself to provide the appropriate materials for the students.

The study implies that the process of designing teaching material is not always precisely in the same order. The teacher has her way of designing the material based on her belief and the students' condition. However, the teachers are suggested to conduct the need analysis not only based on the teachers' point of view but also consider students' opinions. Moreover, it is suggested that English teachers should teach vocational students more creative and innovative.

For other researchers who are interested in conducting similar research, they are suggested to analyze the process of developing the teaching material using another framework to gain a various sense of data. Besides, the future researcher can explore more about the development of teaching materials in vocational high school, especially in art class.

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