EXPLORING TEACHING STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR STUDENTS VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi strategi pengajaran yang digunakan oleh guru dan peran sekolah dalam meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris di sekolah kejuruan. Dengan menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dokumen. Peserta penelitian ini adalah guru bahasa Inggris dan kepala sekolah di SMK Negeri 4 Pontianak, SMK Negeri 2 Pontianak, dan SMK SMTI Pontianak. Wawancara dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik, sedangkan dokumen digunakan sebagai pendukung data wawancara. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi pengajaran untuk meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris di sekolah kejuruan telah diterapkan, namun implementasinya belum konsisten. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi pengajaran seperti brainstorming, problem-based learning, simulasi, diskusi kelompok besar, role play, dan presentasi telah digunakan oleh para guru untuk meningkatkan kemampuan komunikasi siswa. Namun, implementasinya belum konsisten di seluruh sekolah. Selain itu, peran sekolah melalui kebijakan, program, dan fasilitas pendukung dinilai belum optimal dalam memenuhi kebutuhan komunikasi bahasa Inggris siswa. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya kesiapan guru dan peran sekolah dalam memenuhi kebutuhan siswa, yang perlu diperkuat untuk mendorong peningkatan yang lebih efektif dan berkelanjutan dalam keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris. Oleh karena itu, disarankan agar penelitian selanjutnya mengkaji lebih lanjut strategi pengajaran yang mendorong interaksi aktif dan komunikasi kontekstual, serta mengevaluasi peran sekolah dalam merancang kebijakan, program, dan fasilitas pendukung yang konsisten dalam pembelajaran komunikasi bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Pengajaran, Keterampilan Komunikasi, Siswa Sekolah Kejuruan

Abstract

This research aims to explore what teaching strategies used by the teachers and the role of schools to enhance English communication skills at vocational schools. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through semi-structured interview, and documents. The participant of this research are English teachers and headmaster of vocational schools at SMK Negeri 4 Pontianak, SMK Negeri 2 Pontianak, and SMK SMTI Pontianak. The interview was analyzed using thematic analysis and document as supporting the data of interview. The findings of this research indicate that teaching strategies to enhance English communication skills at vocational schools have been implemented, but their implementation has not been consistent. The findings of the study indicate that teaching strategies such as brainstorming, problem-based learning, simulation, large group discussions, role play, and presentations have been used by teachers to improve students' communication skills. However, their implementation has not been consistent across all schools. In addition, the role of schools through policies, programs, and supporting facilities is considered to be less than optimal in meeting students' English communication needs. This study emphasizes the importance of teacher readiness and the role of schools in meeting student needs, which need to be strengthened to encourage more effective and sustainable improvement in English communication skills. Therefore, it is recommended that further research examine teaching strategies that encourage active interaction and contextual communication, as well as evaluate the role of schools in designing consistent policies, programs, and supporting facilities for English communication learning.

Keywords: Teaching Strategies, Communication Skills, Students Vocational School.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid industrial development, English communication skills have become a crucial requirement for vocational high school (SMK) graduates. Communication is not merely the ability to speak or write, but the capacity to express ideas, collaborate, and solve problems effectively in various contexts, particularly the workplace. As stated by Eggen (2004), communication skills involve both verbal and non-verbal interactions that enable individuals to question, collaborate, and engage meaningfully. Similarly, Hargie (2012) emphasizes that communication competence includes speaking, listening, and understanding social context, which are essential for interpersonal and professional success.

Vocational education is designed to prepare students with technical and soft skills that are aligned with industrial needs. According to Hanafi (2013), vocational education should not only focus on technical expertise but also foster employability skills, among which communication is paramount. York and Knight further argue that the industry increasingly demands graduates who possess not only technical qualifications but also strong communication and teamwork abilities. This expectation is echoed in the Indonesian educational regulation, Permendiknas No. 22 of 2006, which highlights communication as a core competency for vocational school graduates to function effectively in professional settings.

Although national policies emphasize the importance of communication skills, many vocational school students still struggle with English communication. Empirical studies (Clement & Murugavel, 2018; Fitriyanti & Wilani, 2019) reveal that students often face anxiety, lack of vocabulary, limited speaking opportunities, and low motivation barriers that hinder their ability to communicate fluently and confidently. These challenges are also reflected in the real classroom context, as observed in vocational schools in Pontianak, where students frequently exhibit a lack of confidence, speaking anxiety, poor pronunciation, limited vocabulary mastery, and low interest in using English actively. These issues are often exacerbated by the continued use of traditional, teacher-centered teaching strategies, which provide minimal space for students to engage in authentic, communicative language use. As a result, students are not adequately prepared to meet the communication demands of the workplace, especially in industries where English is frequently used.

The novelty of this research lies in two aspects, namely exploring the teaching strategies used by English teachers in vocational schools at Pontianak, and second, exploring the role of schools, including school programs, policies, and facilities, in supporting English communication skills. Unlike previous studies that often focus narrowly on a single method or general educational context, this study offers a comprehensive and vocational-oriented perspective. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, this study aims to answer two main questions: (1) What teaching strategies are used by vocational school teachers to enhance students' English communication skills? and (2) How the role of schools to fulfill the English communication skills needs of vocational schools?

METHODOLOGY

This research applied a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the teaching strategies used by English teachers and the role of vocational schools in enhancing students' English communication skills. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of social phenomena and participant perspectives in a natural context (Ary et al., 2010). The research was conducted in three public vocational schools in Pontianak, namely SMK Negeri 4 Pontianak, SMK Negeri 2 Pontianak, and SMK SMTI Pontianak. These schools were selected because they have industrial engineering majors, which are directly linked to the needs of the workforce and the use of English in professional contexts.

The research participants consisted of 15 individuals: 12 English teachers and 3 school headmasters. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria, including their active role in teaching English in schools with industry-based vocational programs. According to Lewis and Sheppard (2006), purposive sampling is a technique where participants are deliberately chosen based on their expertise and relevance to the research topic in this case, teaching English in vocational schools with industrial majors. The data in this research were collected through interviews and document. Interviews were conducted to gather detailed information about the teaching strategies applied by teachers and the role of schools in providing support English communication skills. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency during data collection while still allowing for flexibility in exploring emerging issues. In addition to interviews, documents such as teaching modules, Certificate of English language competition and cooperation agreements with industry partners to support and validate the interview data. These

documents provided insights into the formal strategies and programs designed to support students' communication skills.

The data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006). This method allowed the researcher to identify patterns, categorize relevant themes, and draw conclusions based on the qualitative data collected. All data were interpreted to reflect how teaching practices and institutional roles align with the enhancement of students' English communication skills in vocational education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Finding

This research aimed to explore (1) the teaching strategies used by vocational school teachers to enhance students' English communication skills, and (2) How the role of schools to fulfilling the English communication skills need.

1. Teaching Strategies Used to Enhance English Communication Skills

    This research found that teachers implemented a variety of teaching strategies to improve students' English communication skills. Each strategy was selected based on its relevance to vocational education and real-world workplace scenarios. The key components are as follows:

    a. Brainstorming

        The implementation of the Brainstorming strategy in the three vocational schools was carried out through a variety of contextual and interactive activities designed to promote active student engagement. These activities not only enhanced students' English communication skills and boosted their confidence but also fostered a sense of collaboration and mutual support among peers. The effectiveness of this strategy was closely tied to the selection of relevant and relatable topics, which enabled students to connect learning materials with their daily lives and vocational experiences. In addition, teachers integrated diverse media and learning resources such as visual aids, digital tools, and real-life scenarios to create a dynamic, student-centered learning environment. This approach contributed to a more meaningful and communicative English learning process, aligning with the goals of vocational education to prepare students for real-world communication demands.

b. Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

The findings revealed that teachers at the three vocational schools implemented the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) strategy by contextualizing learning within students' vocational fields and real-life situations. Through the use of challenging topics, teachers stimulated critical thinking and promoted collaboration, expression of ideas, and vocabulary development to improve students' English communication skills in an effective, relevant, and comprehensive manner. However, student engagement in PBL activities remained limited. This indicates the need for teachers to take a more proactive role in facilitating student participation by offering more opportunities for individual expression, employing follow-up questions to deepen responses, assigning clear roles within group work, and utilizing interactive techniques such as question and answer sessions and quizzes.

c. Role Play

That the implementation of role-playing activities in vocational schools varies in form and approach. While role-play is generally conducted through dialogues or dramatizations that simulate real-life situations to train students' communication skills and build confidence, its application is not yet consistent across all teachers. Some teachers design engaging role-play activities through systematic, module-based planning, taking on the role of facilitators who effectively manage classroom dynamics and time. These activities provide students with opportunities to be independent and creative, fostering active participation and enhancing their confidence in using English communicatively.

d. Simulation

The findings show that simulations in communication learning at vocational schools are generally implemented by integrating workplace contexts into classroom activities, such as role plays and the writing of procedural texts. These simulations are often supported by the use of relevant media and creative tasks that aim to strengthen students' practical communication skills. Teachers utilize simulation strategies by aligning English language materials with students' vocational fields and the real demands of the working world. This includes the incorporation of technical vocabulary and activities such as writing job applications, composing CV, and conducting mock job interviews, which

contribute to more meaningful and contextualized learning experiences. However, the implementation of simulations remains inconsistent across teachers. In some cases, the activities are not conducted regularly or lack clear alignment with learning objectives. Therefore, efforts are needed to improve and standardize the application of simulation-based strategies to fully optimize their potential in enhancing students' English communication competencies.

e. Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

The implementation of role-playing activities in vocational schools varies in form and approach. While role-play is generally conducted through dialogues or dramatizations that simulate real-life situations to train students' communication skills and build confidence, its application is not yet consistent across all teachers. Some teachers design engaging role-play activities through systematic, module-based planning, taking on the role of facilitators who effectively manage classroom dynamics and time. These activities provide students with opportunities to be independent and creative, fostering active participation and enhancing their confidence in using English communicatively.

f. Large Group Discussion

The teachers at vocational schools play an active role in fostering students' communication skills by implementing planned and structured strategies during classroom discussions. These include the use of balanced group arrangements, fair role distribution, appointment of group leaders, and continuous monitoring to ensure that each student has the opportunity to participate. Teachers also apply clear classroom rules and use motivational techniques such as individual assessment, rewards, and in some cases, corrective consequences to encourage students to be more confident and engaged in English communication. Additionally, a personal approach combined with positive reinforcement is employed to support students who may be reluctant to speak, thereby promoting equal participation and building a supportive environment for active learning. Through these combined efforts, discussions become a practical medium for improving students' communicative competence in a fair, inclusive, and motivating way.

g. Presentation

The findings indicate that presentation strategies play a vital role in enhancing students' English communication skills in vocational schools, particularly in fostering self-confidence, encouraging students to speak publicly, and expanding their vocabulary. Presentations are viewed as an effective and relevant approach to prepare students for real-world communication demands in the workplace. Although some students continue to face challenges such as anxiety, limited vocabulary, or lack of fluency teachers consistently implement presentation activities as part of their instructional strategies. They facilitate student interaction by clearly distributing roles, conducting individual assessments, and actively guiding the process as facilitators. These efforts help ensure that all students are given the opportunity to speak, promote active engagement, and contribute to creating a supportive and safe learning environment. As a result, the use of presentation strategies not only improves language proficiency but also increases student motivation and participation in classroom communication.

2. The Role of the School in Supporting English Communication Skills

In addition to teaching strategies, this research found that schools play a crucial role in creating an environment that supports the enhancement of students' English communication skills. The institutional role can be categorized into the following three key areas:

a. Schools Policies

School policies aimed at promoting English communication include initiatives like English day and English club activities. However, implementation was inconsistent. In some schools, English day had been discontinued or poorly monitored, and English clubs existed in name only without structured activities. SMK SMTI Pontianak maintained an active club, but its impact was limited by the absence of routine programs and competitive practice. This shows a lack of sustained policy enforcement and follow-up, which affects students' motivation and opportunities to use English outside the classroom.

b. Schools Programs

Schools implement programs that provide real-world exposure and opportunities for communication practice. The most prominent program is industrial internship (Prakerin), where students work in real companies. However, the integration of English usage during internships varies. For example, SMK SMTI Pontianak

showed awareness of using English in technical fields, while other schools had no structured English preparation for internships. Some schools also organized English competitions and guest speaker sessions, though these were irregular and not systematically linked to curriculum goals.

c. Schools Facilities

School facilities play a significant role in supporting communicative learning environments. These include language laboratories, multimedia equipment, internet access, and even co-working spaces for discussions. Unfortunately, in most of the observed schools, such facilities were underused or unavailable for English learning purposes. According to Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), learning happens through social interaction, and thus facilities that enable student collaboration such as discussion rooms and digital learning platforms are essential for promoting communication skills.

B. Disscussion

This research was conducted to explore the teaching strategies implemented by English teachers and the role of school programs, policies, and facilities in supporting the enhancement of English communication skills among vocational school students. The analysis of the data revealed two main findings: first, that teachers employed diverse strategies to promote English communication skills, and second, the school role in support through programs, policies, and facilities was present but inconsistently implemented.

One key finding of this research revealed that teachers at vocational schools implemented various communicative teaching strategies to enhance students' English communication skills. These included brainstorming, problem-based learning (PBL), role play, simulation, project-based learning, large group discussion, and presentations. These strategies were adapted to suit the needs of vocational students and were often contextualized using topics related to daily life, industrial settings, or students' future workplace environments. The use of brainstorming, for example, helped students activate background knowledge and build speaking confidence through relatable topics such as daily routines, real-life issues. This approach aligns with Conklin's (2006) emphasis on the importance of involving students in contextual activities that are meaningful and reflective of their own experiences. In addition, Richards and Rodgers (2001) support the integration of interactive methods and relevant content to facilitate language use in real communicative situations. The Problem-Based

Learning strategy was also prominent, where teachers posed real-world problems and engaged students in critical thinking, collaborative tasks, and contextual vocabulary development. This is in line with Hasibuan et al. (2020) who emphasize the value of active participation, self-confidence, and real-world engagement in language learning.

The other strategies, such as Project-Based Learning (PjBL) strategy was applied through video-based projects, procedural texts, presentations, and mini-dramas aligned with vocational contexts, consistent with Muyassaroh & Prasetiyowati (2024), who found PjBL effective for practical speaking skills. However, implementation varied across classes, with some teachers applying it inconsistently. Teachers also used the role play strategy through conversations and drama resembling real-world interactions, supported by structured role-sharing to build confidence. This aligns with Ambarsari (2024), who noted the effectiveness of combining role play with media and authentic dialogues. While not all teachers applied it regularly, those who did used module-based planning and acted as facilitators, giving students space to be independent and creative (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The presentation strategy was recognized by most teachers as effective for improving communication skills, building confidence, and encouraging public speaking. Presentations provided practical English use and workplace relevance, as shown by Suardika et al. (2023). Teachers promoted interaction through clear role division, individual assessment, and supportive facilitation. This aligns with Ferawaty et al. (2024) and Waluyo & Rofiah (2021), who emphasized teacher scaffolding and the importance of a safe, supportive environment.

In the simulation strategy, teachers integrated workplace contexts through role plays, procedure texts, job applications, CV, and mock interviews. These were supported by media and creative tasks to enhance realism (Avinta Ika Nurrahma et al., 2023). Simulations also included technical vocabulary aligned with vocational fields, consistent with Moyer et al. (2017), reinforcing communication relevance and professional readiness. However, application varied and required improvement for optimal impact. For Large Group Discussion, teachers ensured equal participation by using balanced grouping, individual assessments, rewards, and positive motivation. This supports findings by Asgawanti et al. (2025), who emphasized emotional involvement and student comfort. Teachers also applied strategies like clear role division, group leader appointments, continuous monitoring, class rules, and a reward-punishment system to train communication skills and promote active engagement in English.

Another finding that relates to how do the schools support students' communication skills through the roles such as programs, policies, and facilities. While some schools implemented relevant initiatives such as English Day, English Clubs, and industrial internships (Prakerin) the research found that these were often not carried out in a sustainable or structured manner. For instance, English Clubs in some schools lacked consistent guidance and activities. English Day programs were introduced but not maintained, often due to the absence of clear enforcement or teacher involvement. This finding is consistent with DeVito's (2019) interpersonal communication theory, which underscores the importance of consistent social context and support systems in fostering communication behavior. In terms of facilities, most vocational schools are equipped with language laboratories and English learning spaces. However, issues such as limited equipment, damaged or outdated infrastructure, and underutilization reduce their impact. Often, facilities are only used for listening activities rather than interactive communication. Some schools have taken more structured approaches, providing dedicated spaces and using laboratories for self-study and extracurricular programs. These findings support Iwan Kurniawan (2020), who reported challenges such as insufficient computer availability and the limited pedagogical use of labs in promoting active communication.

CONCLUSION

The research explored the teaching strategies employed by English teachers and the roles of vocational schools in enhancing students' English communication skills at SMK Negeri 4 Pontianak, SMK Negeri 2 Pontianak, and SMK SMTI Pontianak. The findings indicate that teachers have implemented various communicative strategies such as brainstorming, problem-based learning, presentations, and large group discussions effectively. However, strategies like project-based learning, role play, and simulation were not consistently applied due to challenges in planning, classroom dynamics, and student participation. Each strategy was designed and contextualized to match the needs of vocational students and their future workplace environments. Teachers utilized real-life topics, collaborative tasks, and creative projects to encourage student participation and build communication confidence. Some teachers applied these strategies consistently and in a structured manner, while others teachers apply some of these strategies inconsistently. These inconsistencies point to the need for more structured planning and support to ensure that all students benefit equally from these teaching strategies.

While all schools possessed language laboratories and had initiated programs like English day and English club, these initiatives were inconsistently implemented and lacked sustainability. Internship programs involving English communication and industry collaboration also remained limited. The role of schools in supporting students' communication skills was evident through various programs, policies, and the provision of learning facilities. Initiatives such as English Day, English Clubs, and internship programs were introduced as platforms to promote communication in English. However, these initiatives were often not sustained due to lack of consistent management, limited teacher involvement, or insufficient school-level commitment. Facilities like language laboratories and English rooms were available in all schools, but their usage was often limited by inadequate equipment, poor maintenance, or underutilization for interactive learning. Overall, while both teachers and schools have made efforts to enhance students' English communication skills, these efforts need to be more systematic, consistent, and well-integrated. Stronger collaboration between instructional practices and institutional support is essential to create an effective and sustainable learning environment for communication development.

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