

Teacher readiness and understanding in implementing teaching English speaking skills using an ecological approach

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to dig deeper into information about three vocational high schools teachers who have applied the ecological approach in their English teaching process. The ecological approach from the perspective of education is a learning approach that emphasizes contextual learning and focuses on the relationship between teachers, students, and the delivery of teaching materials. Applying the ecological approach to learning English at vocational high school can facilitate teachers in teaching English, especially learning English speaking for students. Teachers have an important role in education because a good education is influenced by teacher competence and teacher readiness in teaching. Speaking skills are one of the skills taught by teachers in schools, speaking skills in Indonesia do not receive enough attention, this is because students have not been able to communicate even in simple English. Based on this, the teacher's readiness to find an appropriate approach to the environmental conditions of students is very influential in teaching English speaking skills and an ecological approach can be a solution in improving students' English speaking skills. This research uses a qualitative research approach, and phenomenological as the research design. The participants in this study were English teachers in tenth grade from the three vocational high schools in Bandung district. This research shows that the ecological approach can improve student English speaking skills in three vocational high schools in Bandung district. It is caused by the teacher's activity who has applied the ecology approach indicator, namely coordination, internalization, media, and development.

Keywords: ecological approach, speaking skill, teacher readiness

INTRODUCTION

The ability of English teachers in vocational high schools in the last five years is increasingly worrying (Esfandiari, 2015). It happens because the pedagogical competence, personal competence, social competence, and professional competence of teachers are still very low (Syamsinar, 2016). Meanwhile, based on the mandate of the government regulation of the Republic of Indonesia no 29 of 1990 paragraph 1, it is written that the educational process in vocational high schools must focus on developing students' abilities in specific fields (Asmin, 2019).

The specific field described is English language material and the way of teaching in vocational high schools is different from ordinary public high schools because the needs and abilities of students in vocational schools demand an English language competency that can support students to have specific skills after they graduate from the school (Okri Ronaldo, 2016). The failure of students to have certain skills in English is due to; 1) Teachers who teach in vocational high schools cannot understand, facilitate and develop students' potential (pedagogical competence). 2) Lack of active interaction and communication skills, so the relationship between teachers and students is not well established (social competence). 3) Inability to transfer teachers' knowledge and personal abilities to students (personal competence). And 4) The teacher's inability to develop the subject matter and the lack of practicing the material in the learning process (professional competence) (Syamsinar, 2016). In

addition, a factor in the low ability of students to master English is the lack of variations in learning models/strategies/methods/techniques/approaches used by teachers in the classroom (Arni Irhani). Because the learning model variation will affect students' knowledge and skills in mastering English (Okri Ronaldo, 2016). Thus, one way to overcome this problem is implementing and developing English learning materials with various innovative learning methods and strategies in the classroom (Asmin, 2019).

One of the English skills must have by vocational high school students are good English speaking skills. Because of the ability to speak in English, the students can develop specific skills they learn in the classroom and after graduation and work (Okri Ronaldo, 2016). Because principally, learning English in vocational high schools is included in English Specific Purposes (ESP) that must be learnt by students (Syamsinar, 2016). So that with students' good English speaking skills, it was needed by students while they are in the world of work, such as technician-consumer communication, traders-customers, or doctors and patients (Okri Ronaldo, 2016). Currently, with English subjects existing in vocational high schools, students have good basic English skills, they already understand the grammar, but they are still lacking in speaking skills specifically. Therefore, a learning approach is needed to stimulate and motivate them to continue practicing speaking in English (Chairil Imran, 2022).

Thus, there is a need for readiness and understanding of teachers in vocational high schools in applying more innovative and varied learning models/approaches to improve students' English speaking skills (Tambunsaribu & Galingging, 2021). Because the accuracy of techniques and strategies in a learning process has an impact on good education. In other words, teachers who understand and have careful preparation will guarantee success in its implementation. Therefore, teachers must understand and prepare a specific strategy before starting learning in the classroom (Rooijakkers, 2003). One of the learning approaches that can use by English teachers in vocational high schools is the ecological approach. Conceptually, a language teaching strategy is based on how students learn their first language, or in other words, their mother tongue (Guo, 2016).

If we understand this ecological approach from an educational perspective, it is a learning model that focuses on the relationship between teachers, students, learning materials, and the environment. This learning approach is a method to combine the methodological (textual) teaching style with a broad content (contextual) learning style, which is relevant to the lives, habits, and realities of students (Tudor, 2003). In addition, in principle, the application of the ecological approach to learning aims to combine the subject matter (curriculum) with the lives of students in their social environment, where each material provided must always be accompanied by a dynamic teacher and student interactions, providing examples and analogies that are relevant to their current needs (hobbies/interests/era). Therefore, when students follow the learning process, they are not too fixed and focused on learning outcomes (test/score) but also get more information and experience from the learning. Hence, when a teacher can implement the concept, the learning process will be more active, making it easier for students to understand the content and making them more interested in participating in learning (Van Lier, 2010).

Based on the explanation above, the applied of the ecological approach in the learning process indirectly adopts the concept of social culture, which in the process emphasizes 4 indicators, namely coordination, internalization, media, and development, in practice this ecological approach focuses on preparing material before the lesson started appropriate with the students' ability and the needs, give clear instructions in teaching, actively speaks English during teaching and be able to create a comfortable and effective learning (coordination), motivate and encourage the student to speak English and facilitate the student to communicate actively in English in the classroom (internalization), use diverse media to facilitate student and involving students in the process of selecting learning media (media), and be able to integrate the material learning with technology and student's need (hoby, interest, habit, experience) in during English learning (development) (Guo, 2016).

Although this ecological approach does not offer a structured and packaged learning model or method based on a curriculum whose learning outcomes have been determined, applying this

approach will be a solution to develop students' abilities through relationships and interactions between individuals directly, either from the teacher's experience or habits that occur in the student's social environment (Tudor, 2003). In practice, the teaching process that applies this ecological approach requires teachers not to always focus on teaching materials, materials, or textbooks, but also teachers must be able to pay attention to the environment, needs, and abilities of the students. Thus, with the application of learning models such as the ecological approach, teachers must be able to adjust to the place (school location), the situation of personal students, and their competencies (Guo, 2016).

Based on the problems found in the previous research above, it is currently necessary to have new changes and innovations made by English language subject teachers in vocational high schools, and one of the things that English language subject teachers can do is apply an ecological approach. Because in its actual implementation, the strategy is not too difficult to do. Therefore, on this occasion, the researchers were interested in digging up information about the activities of English subject teachers in three vocational high schools in Bandung district. According to the interviews that the researchers conducted earlier, they said that the student's English speaking skills were very well. It happened because, in the learning implementation, teachers create a dynamic, active learning atmosphere and prioritize practical learning directly in the classroom.

Based on the outcome of the interviews conducted by the previous researcher, the purpose of this study was to dig deeper into information on whether the teachers of the three vocational high schools have applied the ecological approach in their English teaching process. The researcher hopes that this research will contribute to the determination of strategies/approaches/techniques/methods in the learning process of English in vocational high schools, especially in learning English speaking in the future.

METHODS

The author uses a qualitative research approach, and phenomenological as the research design. The author uses phenomenological design aim to find out to examine different responses, or perceptions, to specific experiences (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The data collection instruments were interviews and observatin checklist. The participants in this study were English teachers in tenth grade from the three vocational high schools in Bandung district. Both interview (interview guidance) and observation checklist instruments used by researchers to determine teacher readiness in English language learning refer to the indicators of socio-cultural concepts in ecological approaches (Guo, 2016). Interview was conducted before the lesson, and the observation to verify the factual of teachers' activity was situated in the class. The data analysis technique in this study used the four components coined by (Miles, M.B, Huberman, A.M, & Saldana, 2014), they are data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion, while the indicator of ecological approaches is shown in the following table:

Table 1: Indicator of Ecological Approach

No	Indicator	Activity
1	Coordination	The teacher prepare material before the lesson started appropriate with the students' ability and the needs, give clear instructions in teaching and be able to create a comfortable and effective learning.
2	Internalization	The teacher motivate and encourage the student to speak English and facilitate the student to communicate actively in English in the classroom.
3	Media	The teachers use diverse media to facilitate student and involving students in the process of selecting learning media
4	Development	The teacher are able to integrate the material learning with technology and student's need (hoby, interest, habit, experience) in during English learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the objectives of this study, to understand the results of this study, the researcher revealed the results of interviews and observations of teachers concerning four indicators of the ecological approach, namely; coordination, internalization, media, and development. The first indicator is coordination. The activities of English subject teachers in three vocational high schools in Bandung district have made preparations before carrying out teaching activities. These preparations were covering lesson plans, learning media, and materials that were compiled based on needs and adjusted to the student's abilities. It shows when the teacher entered and taught in the classroom, the teacher maximized the instruments that had been prepared earlier. So when the teacher delivered the material, the students looked enthusiastic and could follow the learning process well. In addition, the teacher asked students to speak in English when commenting or asking questions about the topic being discussed, and the material presented was related to their habits, interests, and needs. Thus, these teaching-learning activities made the learning atmosphere more dynamic, interactive, and fun. Based on the activities carried out by the teachers, the learning process was included in the coordination indicator or ecological approach. Every single activity was carried out by including elements of material preparation tailored to the needs, interests, and abilities of students, addressed direct instructions to students to communicate with English, and also created a learning atmosphere that made students active in the classroom.

The activities carried out by the three teachers were in line with Syabus' statement which explains that before teachers carry out learning, they should have planned and prepared the learning well because the success of each lesson will be determined by how well the teacher prepares (Syabus, 2015). Furthermore, the ability to make preparations before teaching is the first step that must be owned by the teacher because preparation is the estuary of all theoretical knowledge, basic skills, a deep understanding of learning objects, and also learning situations (Darmadi, 2010).

Meanwhile, one of the factors that make students more interested in participating in learning is that the delivered material must be related to the needs and interests of students (Herwina, 2021). Moreover, the improvement of student learning outcomes is achieved if the material presented is in accordance with student requests (Marlina, 2019). Therefore, the development of teaching materials, the learning process, and good communication in the classroom will stimulate students' thoughts, feelings, interests, and attention (Miftah, 2014). Thus, to improve students' ability and independence in learning, teaching materials, formulation of learning objectives, selection and application of strategies, and evaluation of learning outcomes must be tailored to the needs of students. (Walsh, 2017).

Second, on the internalization indicator, teacher activities that often invited students to communicate in English when learning was taking place were appropriate to improve students' English speaking skills. Once the teacher applied active learning techniques stimulating the students to communicate in English in the classroom, it consequently improve students' English speaking skills (Ambun, 2016). In addition, interaction activities and frequent practice of English speaking during the learning process can make students more confident, brave, and made the learning atmosphere fun (Cahyadi et al., 2022; Asrida, 2017).

Based on the interviews and observations of teachers in the three vocational high schools in Bandung district, teachers in the three schools were seen continue motivating and encouraging students to actively communicate in English when learning was taking place. And their efforts to encourage students to speak in English by allowing them to convey responses or comments about the material being studied. The activities carried out by teachers in the three vocational high schools show an activity that is included in the indicators of internalization or applying an ecological approach because from these activities teachers tried to improve students' English speaking skills by motivating and providing opportunities for them to explore their English speaking skills through interactions in the classroom.

The activity of three English teachers is in line with Gudu's explanation that the effective ways to improve students' English speaking skills are: 1) students must be allowed to express their English

skills in class, 2) teachers must be able to integrate learning materials with students' interests and needs, 3) teachers must be able to collaborate between learning materials based on the curriculum with students' socio-cultural backgrounds (Gudu, 2015).

Third, on the media indicator, the results of interviews and observations made by researchers with teachers in three vocational high schools in Bandung district showed that teachers from the three schools also used various learning media when they taught English speaking. The learning media used were social media commonly used by teachers and students, and these media include YouTube, WhatsApp (voice note), movie video clips, and also song lyrics. In addition, when determining learning media, teachers always involve students to determine the media to be used, which aims to make students able to operate the media, and its implementation hoped that students will be able to learn optimally through the media they choose. In essence, learning activities carried out by the teachers indicated that they applied the ecological approach in their learning process.

Educational devices that have a very important role in motivating students to improve students English speaking skills are media (Ihsan, 2016). Especially for now, after the Covid 19 pandemic, students have many media references that they usually use to learn English (Kuning, 2020; John & Yunus, 2021). In addition, media is also one of the determinants of success in the teaching and learning process (Aji & Setiyadi, 2020). In addition, the existence of media in learning can stimulate students' interest in learning the material in depth, become a link between teachers and students, and display information and more detailed explanation of the material being studied (Resmini et al., 2021).

Currently, the use of social media in learning is a core need in learning English, because today's young generation is very familiar and accustomed to using social media in their learning needs, especially learning English speaking. There are 15 social media and digital applications that are often used in learning English speaking by students today, namely; 1) Learn to Speak English with Busuu, 2) Hello English, 3) Learn English Daily, 4) Learn English Grammar Quickly, 5) English Listening and Speaking, 6) English Conversation Practice, 7) Memrise, 8) Duolingo, 9) ABA English, 10) Rosetta Stone, 11) Hello English Kids, 12) Voxy, 13) Basic English for Beginners, 14) Learn English. Speak English, and 15) Listen and Speak (Kuning, 2020).

Fourth, on the development indicator, it showed that teachers have been able to integrate learning materials with the use of technology, which can be seen when teachers taught, they tried to use cell phones or computers during teaching and learning. In addition, to make it easier for students to learn the material for each topic discussed, teachers always relate it to students' daily habits, experiences, and lives in which it aimed to foster students' interest and motivation in learning.

In the current era of the industrial revolution 4.0, the use of technology in the learning process is very necessary. By integrating teaching materials and technology, it will make learning much more effective (Daud et al., 2019). In addition, the relationship between the subject matter and students' habits is something that teachers need to pay attention to because every material is related to students' lives where they will be more motivated to learn. The closer the relationship between learning materials and students' habits, the higher their learning achievement (Lase, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The student' English speaking skills from three vocational high schools in Bandung district was stimulated because the application of ecological approach by the teachers. The positive implication was based on the results of interviews and observations conducted by researchers showed that teachers conducted learning activities by inserting four ecological indicators, namely coordination, internalization, media, and development. Prior to the teaching activity, teachers prepared their teaching materials by considering to the student's abilities and needs, providing clear instructions teaching and learning, and creating a comfortable learning atmosphere for students. In addition, teachers also actively invited the students to communicate in English during the class. Teachers also involved the students in choosing learning media, and teachers also integrated learning materials with technology. Thus, the results of this study indicated the application of the ecological approach in

learning English can improve the English-speaking ability of students, especially in vocational high schools.

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