CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Chapter I discusses the introduction of the study, consisting of the background, the reason for choosing the topic, research question, research objective, research significance, and the terminology of key terms.

1.1 The Background of The Study

Over the past few years, the teaching of English in Indonesia has been ruled by the government through the ministry of education, culture, research, and technology. Educational institutions have been implementing strategies to abide by and fulfill the expectations of this Indonesia national policy. In doing so, the institutions have increased the number of hours for teaching English, started to work with content-based instruction, and adopted English textbooks. It is common to see adapted texts offering evidence training programs for teachers, promoting traditional one-size-fits-all methodological models, and commercializing educational materials such as textbooks and software (Alvarez, 2008). Many educational institutions have taken for granted that commercial textbooks supply what is needed to help a language learner to become fluent. However, these textbooks, which are not produced for a specific context, may have a negative effect on students' motivation due to the fact that they typically contain content which tends to generalize students' needs and does not fulfill both learners' and teachers' expectations (Núñez & Téllez, 2008). In this sense, Harmer (2012) affirms that students learn better when they engage with the knowledge that is frequently about themselves and their life. Therefore, in the Indonesian context, there is the need to explore the effects of developing materials by Indonesian teachers for their specific contexts, especially for vocational students. However, this leads teachers to an extra workload which as expressed by Núñez, Téllez, & Castellanos (2012), that teacher is not always supported by institutions. As a result, one of the multitasking activities that teachers have to perform is materials development.

Material development is one of the important factors that determine the success of the language teaching-learning process. It is a practical undertaking of

the production, evaluation, adaption, and exploitation of resources designed to aid language development and acquisition (Tomlinson, 2012). Materials are a key component in language programs. Materials, whether commercially developed or teacher produced, are an important element within the curriculum, and are often the most tangible and visible aspect of it. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education and Culture has provided an English textbook for the senior high school named *Bahasa Inggris*. Tthe Ministry of Education and Culture proposes that both senior high school and vocational high schools use *Bahasa Inggris* in the teaching and learning process. In contrast, senior high school and vocational high school have different orientations in learning English. Law no. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System stipulates that the purpose of vocational high school orientation is to encourage students to acquire specialized skills in preparation for their participation in business and industrial work after graduation. Due to the different orientations of vocational high schools, 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, 2015).

Selection of materials for vocational students is a challenging task for a language teacher as it provides a platform through which students learn the English language. Dudley-Evans (1998), highlights the same and emphasizes the importance of materials in exposing language learners to the language. Presentation of developmentally appropriate, relevant, and engaging materials is, therefore, the prime responsibility of the material developers and the teachers. Kiato (1997), emphasizes the same and asserts that materials are the center of instruction and one of the most significant influences on classroom activities.

Recently, Indonesia officially launched a new curriculum known as the Merdeka curriculum which was used gradually among schools in Indonesia. Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intra-curricular learning where the content will be optimized so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. Teachers have the flexibility to choose various

teaching tools so that learning can be adapted to the learning needs and interests of students.

In the previous curriculum, the syllabus and English teaching materials used in vocational school generally are the same as in the senior high school. General English is used instead of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). However, one of the considerations in developing materials is based on the students' needs (Brown, 1995). Thus, in the Merdeka curriculum, the syllabus and teaching materials used in vocational school must be different with in the senior high schools. In the Merdeka curriculum, especially in the learning material for vocational school, teaching modules must be completed by teaching materials or exercises according to concentration or skills that will be learned by students. Teaching modules can be arranged based on Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI) and or compiled with world partners' work. However, until now the government has not provided a special book for vocational students, the book that has already shared is still too general. The substances include, learning objectives and basic competencies also are the same with the senior high schools. Therefore, the teacher needs to be creative in developing teaching materials to make it appropriate to the students' needs.

There are some previous studies which similar to this study. The first study was conducted by Rahmawati, Rochsantiningsih, & Handayani (2021) which discussed the process and challenges faced by English teacher in developing materials at vocational school. The result of the research showed that the challenges encountered by the teacher in developing materials are defining the appropriate learning activities in online learning and there are many school's works to do. Second, the research studied by Wahyuningsih, Wahyono, & Nugroho (2021) that focus on identifying difficulties in developing learning resources. Here, the study found that there are three main problems that teachers faced when developing learning resources: 1) the technical ability to use tools and devices to create digital learning resources; 2) the strategy of organizing learning materials to be applied to

learning resources, and 3) the lack of skills in managing learning materials to be applied to digital learning resources.

Third, the study conducted by Rahayuningsih (2016). His study found that the challenges faced by student teachers in developing material include; (1) the lack of student teachers' knowledge of students' field; (2) the lack of supervision time, and (3) the confusion in selecting media for the students. The fourth study was conducted by Kusumarasdyati, (2014) that focus on identifying and describing the challenges faced by college students in developing materials. In this study, she found three challenges in developing materials: making the book cover, outlining, and writing the contents of the book.

The last was a study conducted by Islam, Hossain, & Rahman (2020). In this research, they found that the challenges faced by material developers while developing materials at tertiary level were lack of infrastructure and investment that ultimately creates deficiencies in many areas like lack of experts, unavailability of small class room/desired class size, lack of planning from the very beginning, lack of budget for materials development and training for the materials developers, interpersonal conflict among the teachers, and developers, lack of motivation from the materials developers' side for various reasons and lack of awareness among the students and their background knowledge.

Based on the problems and the previous studies above, the researcher is interested to do research in the same matter but with a different number of participants and focus. Since the problems of material synchronization for vocational education in Indonesia is still very complex for many years and the curriculum applied recently in this country is also change, therefore the study in this field requires more in-depth research. In addition, the results of preliminary study were also shown that the vocational teachers did not receive training, especially in how to develop the materials that related to the Merdeka curriculum. The learning objectives and the government books that provided for the meantime were also still same with the senior high schools. Hence, it caused lack of understanding and create new challenges for the teachers. As considered, the research will focus on

identifying the teachers' challenges in developing English teaching material based on the new curriculum at vocational high schools. This study is expected to provide some new information that will be helpful in understanding the challenges faced by the English teacher in developing the appropriate materials related to the Merdeka curriculum and students' needs.

1.2 Reasons for Choosing the Topic

Considering the problems, the previous studies, and the results of the preliminary study above, the researcher choses this topic because of several reasons:

1. First, the researcher has a special interest in studying this field because based on the researcher's knowledge, most of the materials used by teachers to teach vocational students are not in accordance with the needs of students. In general, most teachers in vocational schools still use the materials available and provided by the government without making any adaptations or modifications towards the students required. This problem of material synchronization for vocational education in Indonesia actually has become a lengthy discussion and study for many years and seems not really received more attention from the government. Moreover, the material presented and learned by vocational students was the same as the high school material, in this case, the teacher still taught General English. After the government launched a new curriculum, now teachers are in demand to create teaching materials that must in accordance with the needs of students. This is because vocational graduates are expected to be able to apply their knowledge in the world of work.

2. Based on the previous studies above, the study which focused on investigating the teachers' challenges in developing materials for vocational students, especially in the new curriculum is quite rare. In addition, the curriculum which was applied in the vocational level recently has changed from the 2013 curriculum to Merdeka curriculum.

Therefore, since the rules and regulations will also be new, certainly the institution including the educational teachers will also need time to adapt and will face so many challenges.

1.3 Research Question

Concerning the background of the study previously outlined above, the researcher formulate a research question to guide this research.

"What are the challenges faced by English teachers in developing teaching materials based on the new curriculum at vocational high schools?"

1.4 Research Objective

Based on the research question, the objective of this study is:

"To find out and describe the challenges faced by English teachers in developing English teaching materials based on the Merdeka curriculum at vocational high schools."

1.5 Significance of The Study

This study has significance both theoretical and practice.

1) **Theoretical**

Theoretically, this study will enhance knowledge about the challenges faced by the teacher in developing English teaching materials based on the Merdeka curriculum at vocational high school that can be referenced for other teachers. The other is, it can be as a reference too for the educational institution or the material developers to provide or find a solution towards the challenges. For other researchers, it can be a reference to investigate more about the other challenges when developing English teaching materials for students at vocational high schools.

2) **Practical**

Practically, this study will provide a helpful for other teachers in analyzing the challenges in developing teaching

materials especially based on the Merdeka curriculum in order they might find the possible way to overcome those challenges.

1.6   Definition of Terminologies

The researcher writes down some design of key terms in order to support the readers to understand this study easily and have the same interpretation as the writer.

1.   Teachers' Challenges

A challenge is something difficult that demands significant effort and determination, something that tests strength, skill, or ability (Toynbee, 1987). These are the factor that affects teachers in the discharge of their activity at school. In this research, the teachers' challenge refers to the difficulties and other inhibiting factors during the process of developing teaching materials.

2.   Material Development

Material development is a partial undertaking involving the production, evaluation, adaptation, and exploitation of material intended to facilitate language acquisition and development (Azarnoosh, Zeraatpishe, Faravani, & Karzogari, 2016). The material developed was utilized to assist the teachers in facilitating more students' needs in teaching and learning process (Kuiper & Ottevanger, 2013). Material development in this research is defined as the procedures used by the teachers in developing teaching materials through the process of replenishment, collection, adaptation, and evaluation.

3.   Merdeka Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intra-curricular learning, where the content will be optimized so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies (Kemendikbud, 2022). In addition, this curriculum emphasizes in creating Pancasila students that attempt to actualize the ideal of Indonesian education

by realizing the advancement of Indonesia, which is sovereign, independent, and has a personality (Anggarda, Nurhizzah, Alwen, and Fris, 2021).

4. Vocational School

Bukit (2014, p. 13) explains that vocational school is education that is more practice-oriented and less academic-oriented and describes education and training for job seekers. In contrast to public schools which focus on academic abilities in general, vocational education is oriented directly to various work skills as the comepetence development of the student.