

## EFL TEACHER'S STRATEGIES IN PREPARING CLASSROOM ACTIVITY FOR VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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**Abstract:** The research reported on teachers' strategies in preparing classroom activities for vocational high school students. It was obvious that vocational school prepares students to work in particular industries. Thus, the teacher can provide classroom activities that were able to increase the student's skills. A case study methodology was employed in this research and the data were obtained from classroom observation and non-structured interviews. The topic of this research is an English teacher at a vocational high school. The result found that the teacher prepared the learning materials based on the major that the student had taken and provided the classroom activity that adjusted to the student's skill program. However, the study also showed that many students still seemed unmotivated and less focused. The teacher explained that it could be the students' less vocabulary mastery that made them hard to pay attention to the learning activity. The findings concluded that (1) the teacher can provide effective classroom activities even though it is still hard to manage the students, and (2) the teacher has provided the classroom activities based on the student's needs, backgrounds, and skills.

**Keywords:** *Classroom Activities, Teacher's Strategies, Preparation.*

### INTRODUCTION

Vocational High School offers an educational program where students are taught and trained in their chosen majors. Students are expected to be well-educated and skilled in their chosen fields. Therefore, it is not enough for vocational high school students to learn theory in the classroom. They also get the opportunity to put what they have learned into practice by going into the field. The students have been equipped with various skills such as automotive engineering, electrical engineering, accounting, etc. Those skills will help them to compete in a professional field since they are prepared to be ready to work. Furthermore, the students should be equipped with English language skills which can get them more value and opportunities to looking for a job.

English teaching in vocational high schools is necessary to improve students' basic language skills, which will be especially useful in the workplace. The goal is enable students to speak and comprehend in a context that is appropriate for their skill program. To improve their English language abilities, students must be given opportunities to practice their basic English skills such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening through well-designed activities that require them to

communicate actively. For instance, the teacher can employ the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) method because it involves the usage of a specific language for a specific working area.

It is not easy for the teacher to teach English. Therefore, the teacher should prepare all the teaching-learning procedures as well as he can. The teacher can prepare the learning strategies because the success of language learning depends on the strategies that the teachers apply (William & Burden cited in Maulidar et al., 2019, p. 82). Furthermore, the teacher should prepare their emotional management since it has a massive impact on achieving successful teaching-learning goals development. As a result, a positive environment, creating activities, improving teachers' teaching techniques, and motivating the students in teaching-learning activities are formed (Rahmawati, Abdullah, Fatimah, Hidayati, & Saputra, 2021, p. 196)

The teachers play important roles in the teaching-learning process so they must be able to adjust the classroom including establishing and maintaining the instructional environment to reach the educational objective (Savage & Savage cited in Qassimi, 2021). Moreover, the teacher should design effective classroom activities that require the teacher and the students to keep away from being passive. To attract learners' attention and create an interactive classroom atmosphere, the teacher must adopt authentic material and interactive activities (Masita 2017 cited in Agustin et al., 2019).

However, many students seem less motivated to learn English because teachers did not deliver the material or unsuccessful teaching strategies implementation so the students found it difficult to receive the material. It can happen because the teacher did not prepare the teaching-learning process properly so the teacher is struggling to lead the classroom and is not able to provide effective learning activities. For instance, the teacher does not recognize what to do when facing with certain situations in the classroom. Then, the teacher does not understand the learning material so the students cannot receive information properly. It should be prevented because it can hinder learning objectives.

There are several studies related to this research. The first study conducted by Wulandari, Tantra, and Santosa (2021) analyzes the teacher's ability to prepare a lesson plan and students' obstacles in online learning. This mixed method study revealed that the teachers are less capable and encounter several challenges when it comes to adopting a type of technique, an instrument, assessing a technique, or selecting instructional media. The second study conducted by Hapsari et al., (2019) explains the process of teachers in developing and using English teaching resources in a vocational high school. The findings revealed that the process of designing instructional materials includes a process of analyzing students' needs and a process of material adaptation. Meanwhile, the materials that had been developed were used in a planned discussion activity. Mahbub (2019) conducted the third study that focused on examining what students require in vocational schools for the implementation of English teaching and students' learning target and needs. The findings revealed that the student's perceptions of their needs, wants, and deficiencies varied. The last study conducted by Starkey (2020) examines research into teacher preparation for the digital era and adopts a well-order systematic literature review of publications released between 2008 and 2018. The findings reveal what has been examined and what has not passed through across a wide spectrum of literature, and also the connection with the larger context of digital integration in schools.

The previous studies above tend to only on teachers' ability to prepare lesson plans in online activities at vocational high schools, adopting literature in online learning, and the implementation of the lessonplan in the learning process and development using English teaching resources.

However, a study discussess on the teachers' preparation for conducting teaching-learning activities at vocational high schools is still restricted. Therefore, to fill the gap, the researcher researched the teachers' strategies in preparing classroom activities for vocational high school students to provide more information regarding preparing classroom activities for vocational high school students. Based on the background of the study mentioned, the research questions on this study are formulated as follows:

1. How do the EFL teacher's preparation strategies affect the vocational high school student's classroom activities?
2. What are the EFL teacher's strategies in preparing classroom activities for vocational high school students?

## **METHOD**

The researcher employed qualitative design principles in this study, particularly the case study. The case study is the type of research design that makes use of naturally occurring data sources, such as individuals and their interactions, that are relevant to the case (Hyett et al., 2014). It is in line with the aim of this study to reveal the EFL teacher's strategies in preparing classroom activities for vocational high school students. The researcher is allowed to focus on a single unit, such as an individual, a group, a program, or an organization, to obtain a complete description and understanding of the entity (case).

The researcher selected the subject of this study by using purposive sampling to gain the data. This study involved one English teacher at one of the vocational high schools in Ciamis that was selected by using purposive sampling to obtain specific data and information based on the study's objective. The subject has been teaching English in vocational high schools for over five years. Besides that, she has experienced teaching English in junior high school for over eight years. Furthermore, she is known as an expressive teacher when conducting the teaching-learning process. Therefore, the researcher chose her as the subject of this study because she had classifications that were fit for the study's requirements.

In this research, the data were collected through two research instruments that were non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews. First, the observation has been done on an English teacher in an Automotive class to explore the teaching-learning process regarding the implementation of learning media, material delivery, communication and interaction, emotional management, and classroom management. Furthermore, the researcher also observed the student's responses, enthusiasm, and interaction. The researcher was in the back of the classroom during the observation while recording the classroom activity using a video recorder and field notes.

Second, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview which consists of eleven questions. The aspects explored by the teacher are preparing the learning materials, learning methods, learning media, challenges, and problems faced by the teacher. The researcher conducted interview in the school environment after the students' lesson hours were over and the teacher has finished all of her activities. In addition, the researcher used an audio recorder to capture the teacher's responses during the interview section.

The data transcript from observation and interview is processed adopting the Miles & Huberman (1994) procedure, which is classified into three main stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. In the first stage, the researcher reduces the data from

observation and interviews to select relevant data to support the research. Next stage, the data is presented simply in the form of narration. By displaying the data, it will be easier for the researcher to understand the phenomenon that happened and plan based on the situation that was understood. The last stage is drawing conclusions where the researcher records important information from the results of the previous stages in the form of a statement.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Data was gathered by observation and interview with the English teacher at one of the Vocational High Schools in Sindangkasih to find the answer to the research questions of this study. The research findings include an overview of the results of the data collection conducted by the researcher, which focused on analyzing EFL teachers' strategies for preparing classroom activities for vocational high school students.

### **How Do the EFL Teacher's Preparation Strategies Affect the Vocational High School Students' Classroom Activities?**

To answer research question number one, the researcher utilized non-participant observation. The researcher took videos, field notes, and observation sheets to observe the teacher as the subject and the classroom activities during the observation. After collecting the data, the researcher transcribed the results of the observations. The findings of the observation are divided based on the result of observation from the teacher and the students.

The result from the teacher observation revealed that the teacher used an LCD projector as media to support her teaching-learning activity. In this case, the teacher used an LCD projector to show the student's assignment videos of procedures text from the previous meeting. Moreover, she used the LCD projector as media to describe the material about procedures text. The strategy the teacher used to deliver the materials is by inviting the students to discuss the presented material. The teacher discussed the language feature of the procedure text since some of the student's videos were still incomprehensible. Furthermore, the teacher discussed the substance of the student's video. In this case, the teacher provided feedback to the students by asking the students to explain the name of the tools needed. It is aimed to make the students understand the name of those tools in English which can increase their vocabulary about Automotive terms.

In terms of communication, the teacher uses her loud voice to communicate so that it can be heard clearly by the students, even the researcher who stands by in the back of the classroom. But sometimes, she is too fast when speaking and describing the material. The teacher also used her body language when conveying the material. She often moves her hand as if demonstrating something according to what she is trying to convey. Meanwhile, the teacher provides some jokes when interacting with the students to lighten the mood in the classroom. It can be seen from the relaxed atmosphere of the classroom that the students look unstressed when the learning process takes place. Then, the teacher actively gives questions and responses to the students regarding the material that has been taught including giving opinions, and expressing her idea when discussing something.

At the beginning of the teaching process, the teacher was angry and gives reprimanded the students who were late back to the classroom. In this situation, the teacher managed her emotions to not hurt the student's feelings by not speaking harshly to them. After that, the teacher overcame her emotions to calm down and gradually improved so that the learning activities

became conducive and ran well. This effort is made to maintain the student's learning motivation in positive emotion so that they still feel comfortable, and were not fearful so that the learning process is getting more active. Furthermore, the teacher conducted the classroom routine during the learning process such as greeting the students and giving tasks. The teacher sometimes provides the students with a joke to develop the relationship between the teacher and students.

On the other side, the findings from the student's observation showed that some of the students were enthusiastic about the material presented by the teacher especially when the teacher showed their videos in front of the classroom. They paid attention when the teacher gave feedback on their videos. However, the findings of the observation also revealed that some of the students did not seem enthusiastic to accept the lesson. They did not pay attention to the teacher when explaining the material, then they did not show good enthusiasm for learning, and they were passive to interact with the teacher. Moreover, some of them showed an undisciplined attitude by being late for class.

### **What Are the EFL Teacher's Strategies in Preparing Classroom Activities for Vocational High School Students?**

The researcher took semi-structured interviews to answer research questions number two. During the interview, the researcher took an audio recorder to record all the interview sections. After collecting the data, the researcher transcribed the results of the interview. The interview aims to explore the teacher's strategies for preparing classroom activities. The findings of the interview were divided into three categories, namely teaching-learning preparation, challenges and problems during the learning process, and classroom management.

In the first category, the teaching-learning preparation, the interview findings showed that the teacher prepared the lesson plan first including the learning material, learning method, and learning strategy, and prepared the learning media that would be used to support the learning activity. Then, the teacher arranged the learning material adjusted to the topic or material that would be presented to the students. The teacher selected the learning materials that were relevant and adjusted them to the student's background that was in accordance with the context of the student's skill program. The strategies implemented by the teacher in her teaching-learning process were adjusted with the material being taught to the students. In this case, the teacher implemented the CTL (Contextual Teaching Learning) strategy when teaching procedures text. Then, the teacher gave the students assigned to make a procedures text video with an Automotive subject.

In the second category, based on the teacher's interview responses, she stated that there are some challenges that she often faced. First, the students were not paying attention to the material being taught, especially in the Automotive class since an average of the students is male which sometimes, they are more difficult to handle. Second, the students found it difficult to engage with the English learning process because one of the reasons was the limitation of the student's vocabulary mastery which made it harder for the students to understand the material in English. Meanwhile, the teacher added that the problems that she faced when teaching English to Vocational High School students was due to the limitation of the student's vocabulary mastery which resulting in difficulties for students to accept and understand the material presented by the teacher.

In the classroom management category, the strategy that the teacher used when the classroom was not conducive was by involving the students' discussion on the material being

presented presented and giving them motivation. Involving students in discussions was aimed to provide opportunities for students to be actively engaged in learning even though the teacher was still the main control. Furthermore, motivation from the teacher is needed so that students were enthusiastic to engage in the learning process and they could receive the material well. Motivation is important to get the students participation in classroom activities. Furthermore, there was some agreement that had been committed between the teacher and the students. First, the students had to come to the classroom on time. Second, the students had to submit the assignment according to predetermined deadlines. These agreements were made by the teacher to train the students to become disciplined and responsible.

Several points need to be discussed about the topics of this study, particularly the point about the EFL teacher's strategy in preparing classroom activities for Vocational High School students. In this case, there are two main research findings of this study that are based on the research questions presented by the researcher concerned with how the EFL teacher's preparation strategies affect the vocational high school student's classroom activities and what are the EFL teacher's strategies in preparing classroom activities for vocational high school students.

Based on the observation findings, the teacher used learning media as a tool to facilitate her learning process that provides information to the students about the language (Tomlinson, 1998). In this case, the teacher used an LCD projector to show the student's videos and to describe the material. Meanwhile, the approach that the teacher used to convey the material was by inviting the students to have discussion (Killen cited in Akbarjono, Hayati, & Afriani 2021). The strategies that the teacher used to communicate were verbal and non-verbal communication which is in line with Ukor (2018) where the teacher employed spoken communication, and also she was active in using her body language. Meanwhile, the way the teacher interacted with the students was by providing some jokes to release the classroom tension, asking questions, and giving opinions which parallel with Flanders (cited in Wragg 2011). So, the teacher' interaction with the students is in the form of feedback.

During the learning process, the teacher was angry and gives reprimanded to those who were late back to the classroom. In this case, the teacher managed her emotion by keeping her word smoothly and politely as well as by not saying rude words that could hurt students' feelings. The teacher also realized that her emotion had a massive impact on achieving successful teaching-learning in order to keep a positive environment in the classroom (Rahmawati et al., 2021, p. 196). Furthermore, it is in line with one of the emotion regulation strategies stated by Gross & John (2003) and Moore et al (2008), namely expressive suppression, which aims at regulating the expression of an emotion that was already experienced (also referred to as response-focused or surface-acting strategies). Then, the way the teacher organized the classroom was parallel with some components of classroom management argued by Garret (2014). First, the teacher provides routines to the students such as greeting them, inviting the students to discuss, and giving assignments; then, the teacher develops a relationship with the students by providing some jokes.

Meanwhile, the findings from the interview showed that the teacher organized the learning materials that was adjusted to the topic or material and would be presented to the students. In this case, the teacher realized that teacher should not be selected haphazardly. Therefore, the teacher selected appropriate materials to achieve the learning objective (Ukor, 2018). Then, the teacher selected the learning material by the skill program that the students have taken. It is in line with Ukor (2018) that the selected learning material must be relevant to goals

and specifically address the learners for whom the materials are intended. Besides using a projector, the teacher also ever used real objects that was simple and easy to obtain as the learning media. In this case, the teacher demonstrated for brewing coffee in English. Consequently, the students can enhance their skills through the media that is real in front of them by employing this media ( Gagné, & Reiser, 1983, p. 18).

The findings of the interview also revealed the strategies that the teacher used in learning English were by using CTL (Contextual Teaching Learning) which were adjusted with the student's interests and experience and related to the student's real-life situation (Ukor, 2018). In this case, the teacher adapted the learning strategy to the student's skill program (Automotive engineering) into the students to utilize English in a specific discipline or communicative setting (Liu et al., 2011). Therefore, the teacher instructed the students to make a procedures text video with the Automotive subject at which they had to describe the step in English. It is matched with *Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan* (BSNP) that the main goal of English instruction at Vocational High School is to give students the fundamental knowledge and abilities needed to communicate effectively in contexts appropriate to their skill program. Furthermore, the teacher used discussion the to convey the material which was parallels with the findings of the observation that the teacher also used discussion (Killen cited in Akbarjono, 2021).

Then, the teacher implemented some approaches to make the students keep their attention during the teaching-learning process and a strategy when the classroom was not conducive by providing engaging motivation and involving the students in discussion to increase their interest to follow the learning process (Garret, 2014). Furthermore, the teacher made several agreements with students including the regulation for the students to enter class on time and assignments submission according to the predetermined deadline to train the students to be disciplined and responsible (Garret (2014). However, the findings from the observation showed that some students were the late entrance to the classroom. The students show an undisciplined attitude by breaking a pre-established agreement created by the teacher which was not in line with the teacher's objective. Furthermore, based on the teacher's interview response, it was revealed that the problem and challenge that was often encountered by the teacher in the teaching-learning process is the lack of student's motivation (Lynch, 2008). It is in line with the observation findings that showed some students had less attention to the material being taught by the teacher. The teacher argued that one of the reasons ws the limitation of the student's vocabulary mastery. Moreover, the average of the students in the Automotive class was male who were sometimes more difficult to handle.

Meanwhile, some previous studies have been added to enrich the present study. Wulandari et al., (2021) undertook the previous study that focused on exploring the teacher's capability and limit in preparing lesson plans and barrier factors of the foreign language learner in the learning process adopting Google Meet during the pandemic. The result showed that teachers struggle to create lesson plans because they have less capability and face several challenges when selecting learning strategies, choosing instruments and evaluation, and learning media. Furthermore, Starkey (2020) undertook the previous study that focused on the teacher's preparation for the digital era by adopting literature review of publications released between 2008 and 2018. Digital teaching competencies were developed with an integrated environment in mind to prepare teachers to use technology in the classroom, evaluate it critically, and instruct students who used digital devices for learning.

In this study, the results from both observation and interview revealed that the teacher could provide the classroom activities that provide the students the basic information and skills necessary to communicate effectively in situations. Those results of the previous study re in line with the result of the present study in that both of these studies could had complement to each other. It can be concluded that teachers had a massive role in creating an appropriate learning activities that supported the students to be able to develop their professional abilities, especially the vocational students and to compete in today's workplace.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study raised the topic of EFL teachers' strategies in preparing classroom activities for vocational high school students. Several conclusions drawn from the results of the observation and interview. In this case, two general conclusions can be drawn to answer the research questions.

The first conclusions are that the teacher' ability in providing an effective classroom activities even though it is still difficult to manage the students. In this case, the teacher delivered the material by involving the students to discuss the material presented. The teacher is also active to communicate with the students by using verbal and non-verbal communication and she provides some jokes, gives question and opinions when interact with the students, and is able to manage her emotion to keep the positive classroom atmosphere. However, some students still does not look enthusiastic and less pay attention to the material being presented by the teacher. The students still find it difficult to engage with the English language teaching since the limitation of vocabulary mastery. This problem can hinder the students from comprehending and accepting the learning materials. Moreover, some of them showed an undisciplined attitude by being late for class.

The second conclusions are that the teacher is able to provide English classroom activities that is in accordance with the student's needs, background, and program skills. These classroom activities are important for the students to give them basic information and skills necessary to communicate effectively in situations that are appropriate for their skill program. In this case, the teacher selected the learning materials that were relevant and related to the student's background. Also, the teacher gave the students assignment to make a video of procedures text with the Automotive subject; and they have to practice them in English. This activity is an effort to train the students to use English that is appropriate to their program skills. Besides improving the student's skills, these classroom activities are hoped to increase the student's English skills to improve their quality so that they have more value to compete in the workplace.

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