

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This literature review defines significant aspects related to this research. This chapter provides some overview about the state vocational high school profile and difficulties in learning English. In this chapter, the researcher also gives the reviews of the previous studies. The last part of this chapter is a conceptual framework.

State Vocational High School Profile

The vocational high school involved in this research is a state vocational high school in Central Java which is committed to prepare qualified human resources through English mastery. This state vocational high school which has five majors is one of favorite school in the district. The five majors are Technical Light Vehicle (TKR), Mechanical Engineering (TP), Motorcycle Engineering (TSM), Computer and Network Engineering (TKJ), and Multimedia (MM). This school established in 1996 implements the newest curriculum from the government. All lessons are taught to support the students continuing to study or go for work.

To support students' ability in English lesson, this school sends their representative students to go to *Kampung Inggris Kebumen* (KIK). KIK is a place in Kebumen which helps the students to learn about English. The environment in this area supports the students to speak English actively. There are many English tutors who help the students in learning English. Besides, the students will stay minimally for two weeks. After finishing the training, the students have to share their knowledge to other students who do not follow the training in KIK.

This school has got the RSBI predicate. RSBI (International Standard Schools) is a predicate for a school which has a good qualification from the government. This school is one of 125 senior and vocational high schools in Central Java which has got this predicate (Dinas Pendidikan Jawa Tengah). Additionally, the predicate influences the teaching learning process. The teaching learning process and the books uses bilingual language, and those books are used to speak English every Friday. Thus, all the teachers in this school are graduated students from reputable universities.

Difficulties in learning English

Learning English in this study means that students learn together, and there is a teacher who teaches and guides the students in formal class. The teacher gives explanation about English lesson. In the class room, the students do the activities such as following teacher instruction and doing task. Language learning in the class room means there is an interaction between teacher and students. They spend their times for completing certain activity such as giving lesson and doing the task (Chen, 2008).

Ideally, students understand what English lesson is. However, in the process of learning English, the students may face difficulties (Wati, 2011). Some difficulties faced by the students in learning English are having lack of vocabulary mastery, grammatical errors, limited exposure, and anxiety (Arifiani, 2017, (Koizumi & In'nami, 2013, Al-Meklaifi & Nagaratnam, 2011, Pallawa & Alam, 2013, Cheng & Dornyei, 2007, Raju & Joshith, 2017, & Aouatef , 2015). Hence, the explanation of

each problem faced by the students in learning English is explained in the following paragraphs.

Lack of vocabulary. Vocabulary is very important in the language use. In a study conducted by Nanda (2016) found that learning vocabulary does not only understand the meaning and form, but students also have to know how to use the vocabulary in accordance with the context of the sentence they made.

Vocabulary has critical position in speaking skill. Koizumi and In'nami (2013) argued that vocabulary size control a central position in the process of making speech with appropriate meaning. Furthermore, in Koizumi's finding, it was explain that vocabulary size has relationship toward the L2 speaking ability. Kormos (2006) said that there are three main of producing speeches namely, formulation, conceptualism, and articulation. Formulation becomes the first step in making speech which the speaker searches necessary vocabulary from their knowledge to make an utterance. Unfortunately, in this step, Kormos (2006) mentioned that the speakers face difficulty in implementing this process. Thus, the vocabulary size has big influences for the speaker to produce an utterance.

Lack of vocabulary also produces difficulty for the students in reading an English text. This case can make the students get difficulty in understanding the text. That way, the students need to understand enough about vocabulary knowledge in order to understand the text. Fen, Hong, and Amster (2013) found that Taiwanese students who have limited vocabulary size face reading difficulties. To make students easier in understanding the text, the great quality of vocabulary knowledge is needed. It can be concluded that vocabulary and reading cannot be separated.

Lack of vocabulary also becomes the difficulties faced by the students in listening skill. In a study conducted by Ardila (2013), it mentioned that the lack of vocabulary delays the students' listening skill. Besides, the participants in Ardila's research have the same difficulties in listening because they do not know the keywords. Further, when the participants sense unknown word, they start to think about the meaning of the words and sometimes miss the following part of the listening because they stop to listen. Hence, lack of vocabulary will make students' have difficulties in listening skill. Also, the students will miss the information in the following part if they only think about the meaning of unknown words. In conclusion, lack of vocabulary make students' get difficulty in listening skill.

The growing awareness of learners about the importance of enhancing their communicative competence of target language and the recognition of vocabulary is needed. Learning vocabulary is not all about the meaning but also about the appropriate strategies to learn. Students who cannot use the appropriate strategies will face misunderstanding about the use of vocabulary based on the context. Additionally, inappropriate use of vocabulary can lead to the difficulties in learning the target language. Sari (2012) stated that students in Indonesia face difficulties in learning English especially in learning vocabulary because they feel difficult to memorize English words. Also, the students who are diligent to write the vocabulary will be able to memorize. Students' behavior determines their ability in mastering vocabulary. She also argued that considering the students' behavior, teacher must also know whether the students are diligent enough or not in rewriting the material since

memorizing vocabulary is essential for them to develop their ability in mastering English.

Inability to memorize the word is another reason why the students find difficulties in learning vocabulary. Arifiani (2017) stated that “some students have difficulties in memorizing the word when they find new vocabulary, and they also may have difficulty to remember various vocabularies” (p.33). However, Webb and Chang (2012) asserted that students faced difficulty in memorizing the word becomes the common problem which appears in learning English.

Grammatical error. In a study conducted by Meklafi and Nagaratnam (2011), one of the results in their research is that the students are able to recall the grammar rules, but they still have problem in applying it in an actual communication. From the statement mentioned, it means that the students are able to recall the material, but they cannot apply it in a real communication. However, there are some learners’ perceptions of grammatical difficulty presented by Shiu (2011) in her thesis. There are five results of her study, and those are knowledge of syntactic constituents, semantics, pragmatics, previous grammar teaching and learning, and L1 influence.

Syntactic constituent is about the rule of the third person, modal auxiliary, and active and passive voice. The difficulties faced by the learners are to know the English rules and memorize English terms in order to create a correct sentence form. Another difficulty is that when the passive voice involves complex tense-aspect, it can create a difficulty to understand the syntactic constituent. The researcher can conclude that the learners’ problem in syntactic constituent is when the learners have to memorize the rules. Besides, the learners do not only have to memorize the rules

but they also have to know how to apply the correct form. Also, learners also get the difficulty when they learn passive and active voice in syntactic aspect.

Knowledge of semantic is also potential to give difficulties to learners. Units of information concerning the semantic aspects of a grammar feature were coded as ‘knowledge of semantics’. Features perceived by the students as “abstract” were reported to be more difficult to learn” (Shiu, 2011). In this case, “abstract” that learners’ perception is the present perfect. Besides, some learners also said that they are confused to differentiate the meaning of modal auxiliaries. “A number of students reported that they have difficulty in fully understanding the meaning of the modal auxiliaries” (Shiu, 2011, p.84).

Knowledge of pragmatic also may raise problem for learners. The responses associated with when and why to use grammar form coded as knowledge of pragmatics. Besides, there are a lot of grammar features which make the students confuse on how to use it. Grammar is not always clear on when or why to use certain features (Shiu, 2011). One of the examples is that when students use the article system. As Shiu (2011) stated, eighteen out of 30 students reported that grammar use is not always clear enough to them when adding or omitting the article “the”. Likewise, grammar has many features which may confuse the learners, and some features which usually make the students feel confused is how and when they have to use article “the” (p.85).

Previous grammar teaching and learning also can be a source of learners’ difficulties. It refers to the grammar instruction that the students receive in the

previous study. To enhance students' learning, teacher frequently tests the features of grammar to the students. In fact, frequent test does not make the students easy to understand the material. Additionally, there are two types of students in doing the test. They are students who do well in the test and students who not do well in the test. Students who do well in the test will face fewer difficulties. On other hand, students who do not do well in the test find more difficulties in learning English. The statement mentioned previously is in line with Shiu (2011) who asserted that the students do not do well on the test tended to perceive the test features to be more difficult to learn, and the students who do well on the test tended to perceive the test features as less difficult to learn.

L1 influence also contributes to the learners' difficulties. There are some differences between L1 and L2 that make the students face difficulty especially in term of grammar. The differences between L1 and L2 influence are about the students' understanding in the use of certain grammar features. Shiu (2011) stated that "A few students commented that L1 and L2 differences adversely influence students' understanding the meaning of certain grammar features" (p.87). In addition, Dekeyser (2005) stated that grammar form is one of the difficulties faced by the students in learning grammar. Also, the students who have many experience in learning grammar, face more difficulties in applying the correct form especially in making English correct sentences both spoken and written. Furthermore, he also stated that the students feel difficulty in learning about how to use verb in grammatical structure. In English, the verb is usually divided into present, past, and past participle, and to use each verb is also different in every situation use.

Mispronunciation. Pallawa and Alam (2013) found that although Indonesian English learners have already had experience in learning English, they still have big problem in pronouncing English words. The students get many difficulties in the use English term when they have to pronounce English vocabulary. Besides, many words in English have letters which are not pronounced (Yule, 2001). Thus, Indonesian and English alphabet are exactly similar, but the way to pronounce is totally different.

Brown (2000) found that the second language learners meet some difficulties, because their L1 affects their L2 especially in adulthood. Likewise, mother tongue has big influence toward the students in learning English. In the previous study conducted by Akuli (1983), the main problem in teaching and learning pronunciation result is from the differences in the sound system of English and native language. The statement mentioned is in line with Ellis (1998) who stated that English pronunciation of non-native English speakers is influenced by their native language.

However, there are some factors influencing L2 learners' pronunciation. The first factor is stress factor in the target language. English has specific criteria in term of pronunciation that is one syllable should be stressed. Besides, putting correct stress in syllable is important and incorrect on putting stress in syllable will change the sound of its words. Differentiation on putting stress will also change the grammatical structure and different meaning. Zhang and Yin (2009) stated that one word that is stressed differently will have different grammatical functions and different meaning. From the statement mentioned, the researcher concludes that putting the right stress in the right syllable is important. L2 learners often make mistakes when they pronounce English words. The main problem is misplaced in stressing syllable.

Misplaced syllable stress in the pronunciation is the main problem which is hard to understand especially for the meaning in delivering the message (Zhang & Yin, 2009). The researcher can conclude that English is a language that pays attention on putting the right stress in the right syllable. Besides, incorrect stress will change the sound, grammar, and the meaning. There are many students who make mistakes in pronouncing the word and mistreat syllable includes into the main problem of learning English.

In addition, the second factor is the intonation in the target language. Intonation of a sentence will determine whether it is a question, statement or suggestion. Zhang and Yin (2009) asserted that intonation pattern in English sentence primarily indicates the degree of certain utterance whether it is a statement, question, or suggestion. The differences of intonation of a sentence influence the meaning of the sentence. Hence, the learners need to pay more attention toward the intonation of a sentence to avoid misunderstanding in accepted the meaning of a sentence.

Limited exposure. In language learning, the students need many sources to support their ability. The sources may come from the book or audio providing the knowledge for the students. However, most of English learning process is imperfect. The students may have English book, but they do not know how to read or to understand the text in the book. That way, to support students' pronunciation ability, the students need to get the input from the native speaker. In some cases, students only hear the word from their teacher. Also, the students often get the input from the unauthentic source which can cause wrong interpretation of the language. Raju and

Joshith (2017) stated that students sometimes watch or listen from the unauthentic source which can produce students' misunderstanding to interpret the language well.

Lack of motivation. Cheng and Dornyei (2007) stated that motivation is believed to act an engine of generating learning, and propelling students helps the students to overcome the difficulties encountered in learning foreign language. Besides, Brown (2007) said that motivation as an affective factor plays as central role in learning second or foreign language. According to Cohen (2010), motivation as a dynamic process which is not stable but it is continuous change.

In learning English, not all students have positive attitude when they learn. Some of the students just think about how to pass in this lesson. Also, the students do not have any interest in learning the language. However, the students do not pay attention to the teacher, and they will be easier to forget the lesson given by their teacher (Raju & Joshith, 2017). Hence, the Students who have lack of motivation in learning English will only focus how to pass the course, and they do not interest on how to master English well.

Anxiety. Anxiety is another problem which appears when learning English. Aouatef (2015) stated that anxiety can be described as individual's feeling of nervous, afraid, and worried. The students who learn English have possibility to feel anxiety. Woodrow (2006) argued that in English learning aspect, anxiety truly happens. Besides, the students who feel anxiety in learning English will show some characteristics. Some of the characteristics show that the students feel panic. Some activities which make students panic are when the teacher asks them to read, but they do not have any idea on how to pronounce the word correctly (Raju & Joshith, 2017).

Moreover, panic can appear when students have to answer the question which they do not understand at all (Stawiarska, 2013). Brown (2007) stated that anxiety becomes one of the significant factors in learning second or foreign language. Besides, anxiety has a big potency to become a problem for students in language learning. In other research, Wu (2010) and Zheng (2008) argued that in language education, anxiety becomes a problem since anxiety is a burden for foreign language learning. From the statement mentioned, anxiety is a burden for student in language learning, so it is better for students to overcome the problem.

Anxiety happens in every skill in language learning especially in writing. Cocuk , Yanpae, Yelken, and Ozer (2016) maintained that anxiety is counted as one of difficulties which happens in writing. From the statement mentioned, anxiety in writing becomes problem in developing writing skill. In other research, Martinez, Kock, and Cass (2011) found that in writing, anxiety becomes complicated thing which can cause negative effect toward the students psychologically. Students who feel anxiety in writing will do negative reaction. The negative reaction felt by the students is such as feeling nervous and uncomfortable. Anxiety in writing will make students not to feel interested in developing their writing skill. Thus, the students' anxiety becomes a problem in learning English since anxiety can be barrier for the students in improving their English ability.

Review of Related Studies

In conducting this research, the researcher finds some previous studies which are similar with this research. Besides, the researcher only takes three related studies. The previous studies explored about learners challenges in learning English. The first

research is a study conducted by Solak and Bayar (2015) that was conducted to investigate the current challenges in English language learning from high and low achievers' perspective. The research used qualitative research. In conducting data collection, the researcher conducted an interview to twenty-two students. Based on the interview, the researcher found some challenges faced by the students in learning English. The students' challenges in learning English were about the challenges in term of overall ideas, language skills, methods, and approach and practice, linguistics differences in two language, personal differences, teachers, material, family, and environment.

The second previous study is a research about external difficulties in learning English encountered by EFL students. The second study related to this study is from Alaraj (2016) which aimed to know how students' opinion about the acquisition of English as a foreign language and its difficulties. This research used quantitative research. In collecting the data, the researcher took 300 male students from beginner level at one of university in Saudi Arabia .The study analyzed some factors causing difficulties in learning English among students. The difficulties faced by the students were insufficient exposure to and practice of language in real life situation, teachers' lack of seriousness and training, lack of motivation, and inappropriate text book.

The third previous study is one about challenges of teaching and learning English. This study is a study conducted by Choi and Lee (2008), which aimed to know the trend on difficulties in learning English in several countries. This study was conducted in eighteen countries in Asia. The countries included Korea, China, Hongkong, Taiwan, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines,

Vietnam, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Israel, and UAE. The aim of this study was to figure out the trend of difficulties in English learning by doing a survey. The finding of this study explain about the difficulties that happen in teaching and learning English in several countries in ASIA. The findings of this survey were the amount of time allotted for English language education, the use of English as the medium of instruction, centralization or decentralization, teachers, and the nation-wide university entrance examination.

The last previous study is about the challenges of teaching and learning by Khan (2011). The researcher used qualitative research. The aim of the research was to find the challenges encountered by teacher and students in language learning. The challenges faced by the students in English learning were the differences between the past and present style, technique of teaching, workload, EFL, and focused teaching evaluation system, hard work and lack of motivation.

The previous studies have similarity with the research which is conducted by the researcher. The purpose of the study is to find out the challenges in English learning. The similarities of the purposes give beneficial information for the researcher to know various perception of the students' difficulties in learning English. In other hand, there are differences between the previous study and the research which was conducted by the researcher. The participant of the previous study is from university level, but in this research, the research participants are vocational high school students. Therefore, the result might be different from the previous study. The differences of the result showed are various challenges faced by students in every level of study, the place even the country.

Conceptual Framework

The title of this research is “Students’ Difficulties in Learning English at a State Vocational High School”. The research question of this research aims to find the students’ problem when they are learning English. Besides, the researcher wants to explore their difficulties in learning English. Hence, the researcher conducts the research in order to identify what kinds of problem faced by the students during learning English lesson in the school.

English becomes one of lesson which is important in the school since it includes in the national examination lesson. In order to make students master English or just pass the exam, it is important to understand about their difficulties during learning English in the school. After conducting this research, it is expected that the teacher is able to help their students to solve the students’ difficulties in learning English.

There are many potential difficulties that students might face during studying. The possibility difficulties are lack of vocabulary, grammatical error, mispronunciation, limited learning environment, cultural diversity, lack of motivation and anxiety. However, there is a possibility faced by the students other difficulties during learning English. Therefore, the researcher wants to identify students’ difficulties in learning English. The following is a chart to simplify the concept of the research.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

