The Development of Vocational English Materials from a Social Semiotic Perspective: Participatory Action Research

Handoyo Puji Widodo

BA in English Education (Jember University, Indonesia)
MA in TESOL (Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA)

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Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Linguistics
School of Humanities
Faculty of Arts
University of Adelaide
Australia

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ABSTRACT

This study documents the design and use of vocational English materials informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as social semiotic theory. Extensive studies in language materials development have been undertaken particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs in the higher education context (see Harwood, 2014) but only a few in the secondary vocational education sector (see Hua & Beverton, 2013). The study extends the scholarship of ESP materials development in the context of schooling, integrating context analysis, materials creation, and materials enactment (see Singapore Wala, 2013).

Grounded in a participatory action research design, this study, conducted over a 13-month period, provides a detailed account of the design and use of the materials in one Indonesian vocational school. School administrators, English teachers, vocational teachers, and 142 students volunteered to participate in the study. Data for the study included field notes, non-participant and participant observations, curriculum documentation, focus group and individual interviews, reflective journals/diaries, and photovoice. The data were qualitatively analyzed using critical thematic and SFL based analyses.

The context analysis revealed that while the current language policy provided teachers with full autonomy to design their own materials, the teachers consistently based their instruction on published textbooks, which contained decontextualized exercises geared towards school and national examinations. This situation did not provide students with opportunities to engage with vocational texts. With the support of the school, the teachers and the researcher in consultation with the students created and used text-based materials based on students’ vocational specializations. The analysis of the actual use of the materials by the teachers and the students revealed that they had opportunities to explore different vocational texts, to analyze how language works in these texts, and to use the language as a tool for communication, knowledge building, and social participation. From a teacher perspective, the teachers viewed the materials development process as professional learning and a way to understand SFL theory and apply it to pedagogical practices, such as content based instruction and text based instruction. This study offers evidence of how social semiotic theory can contribute to ESP materials development and instruction.
DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

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Signed:____________________________________  Date__________________________
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over a period of three and a half years, doing a PhD and completing a PhD thesis has been a spiritual and intellectual journey for me. Doing a PhD as a spiritual journey involved self dialog and my dialog with Allah Swt, as the Greatest Motivator. I had to motivate myself and sustain this motivation to complete this mission. As an intellectual journey, I had engaged in staged-oriented meaning making processes from proposal writing, fieldwork, to thesis writing. I had dialogic conversations with my supervisors, with scholars through the readings of books and articles, and with my participants. With this in mind, this PhD thesis is a representation of different voices of my research participants, experts, and mine. This journey has shaped my identities as a PhD student and scholar alike. As a Muslim scholar, I would like to express my great gratitude to Allah Swt who has always guided me throughout my PhD journey. He has bestowed this as Amanah (Arabic: آمنة) or godly trust and as an earthly reward. This spirituality has sustained my motivation to complete my PhD. There were also always people who had made the completion of my PhD possible.

At the outset, I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Peter Mickan, my principal supervisor for his sustained guidance and sincere personal and professional support. I felt fortunate that he introduced me social semiotic theory (Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics). He challenged me to translate this theory into ESP materials development. He also motivated me to experiment with Hallidayan SFL informed vocational English (VE) materials development in particular. I have learned much from Dr. Mickan about this theory as pedagogical and research tools. He guided me to fully understand the contribution of Hallidayan SFL to educational research in general and ESP research in particular. I am really grateful for 3.5 years of Dr. Mickan’s generous support and guidance.

I am also extremely grateful to Dr. John Walsh, my co-supervisor for his professional and administrative support. I felt blessed to have him as my co-supervisor because he introduced me the concept of discourse analysis (language appraisal and critical discourse analysis) that I did not know before. He encouraged me to use this tool for data analysis. I was fully aware that the use of language is always fraught with discourses. Under Dr. Walsh’s guidance, I saw the interconnectedness between SFL and discourse analysis. Dr. Walsh also assisted me with administrative stuff, such as providing useful course book resources and revival of lost data. His generous personal support sustained my motivation to complete my PhD.

This work would not been possible without the support of the school where the fieldwork took place and the involvements of the teachers, the students, and the parents. I had learned a lot from my research participants. Immersing myself in the school community made me realized the importance
of educating and empowering teachers and students. I spent a great deal of time talking with the participants. We successfully broke the big wall between us. We are a big family who are concerned about the value of education.

I am very fortunate to have a family that has always supported my professional and academic careers. I feel a tremendous sense of obligation to my wife, Ririn Pusporini, and my kids, Tsabita Rosaria Qonnita and Reyhan Naufal Hafidz, for allowing me to stay away from them while doing a PhD. They also provided both personal and spiritual support to me. Their kind understanding, love, and patience as well as their continued prayers made this PhD journal possible. I am also indebted to my parents: Saim, Misnah, Suyono, and Sunarsih who ceaselessly offered me their prayers and best wishes.

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Undertaking a PhD has been a journey that has shaped who I have been and what I have done academically and professionally. Completing this journey is a reward and point of departure for continuing my professional and academic journey. This is another chapter of my life.
DEDICATION

My Wife
*Ririn Pusporini*

My Jewels:
*Tsabita Rosaria Qonnita* and *Reyhan Naufal Hafidz*

My Parents:
*Saim* and *Misnah*
*Suyono* and *Sunarsih*
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBI</td>
<td>Content Based Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTL</td>
<td>Contextual Teaching and Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>English for Academic Purposes</td>
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<td>EGP</td>
<td>English for General Purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>English language teaching</td>
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<td>ER</td>
<td>Extensive Reading</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a second language</td>
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<td>ESP</td>
<td>English for Specific Purposes</td>
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<td>EVP</td>
<td>English for Vocational Purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td>GE</td>
<td>General English</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGMP</td>
<td>Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran [Teacher Development Groups]</td>
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<td>PAR</td>
<td>Participatory Action Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLCs</td>
<td>Professional Learning Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>School based Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBPD</td>
<td>School Based Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFL</td>
<td>Systemic Functional Linguistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBLI</td>
<td>Text Based Language Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBLT</td>
<td>Task Based Language Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>VE</td>
<td>Vocational English</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOER</td>
<td>Vocationally Oriented Extensive Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOLL</td>
<td>Vocationally-Oriented Language Learning</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

( ) : short pause

... : normal pause

\ : falling accent

(( )) : non-linguistic events

? : question remarks

-- : truncated talks

( ) : Particular word/phrase

bold : particular expressions