

## **Preliminary Study on Contextual Digital Book and AI Audio Media for English Learning in Vocational Culinary and Tourism Programs**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research intends to examine the difficulties and educational needs of students in English classes at SMKN 1 Hu'u Dompu, particularly within the culinary and tourism programs. Data were gathered using a qualitative approach via semi-structured interviews with two educators of English. The results indicate that students consistently struggle with speaking and pronunciation, which is aggravated by low motivation stemming from the use of generic and irrelevant educational resources. Educators observed an absence of contextualized materials that represent students' career interests and local culture, which complicates the effective engagement of learners. To address these concerns, this research suggests creating a dedicated English digital textbook designed for culinary and tourism learners. What distinguishes this resource from current tools is its incorporation of Dompu's local culinary and tourism aspects, enhancing the relevance and cultural significance of language learning. Furthermore, the book will include AI-enhanced audio elements aimed at assisting students in refining their pronunciation abilities through immediate feedback and personalized listening exercises. In contrast to traditional e-books or fixed audio recordings, the suggested media will incorporate interactive pronunciation modeling and contextual dialogues based on the students' everyday experiences and career aspirations. By combining local cultural elements with cutting-edge technology, the digital book seeks to connect theory and practice, enhancing both language skills and student involvement. This technology-driven, context-focused strategy presents an encouraging method to enhance English skills for vocational learners in deprived regions such as Dompu

**Keywords:** Contextual Digital Book; AI Audio Media; English Learning; Vocational School

## INTRODUCTION

With notable departments in tourism and culinary arts, SMKN 1 Hu'u, Dompu Regency, is a school situated in a vital location—that is, in the heart of the gold mining industry and worldwide tourism hub, Lakey Beach Hu'u. Given this setting, graduates are anticipated to seek jobs in the culinary and tourist industries in local eateries, lodging facilities, and multinational corporations. Hu'u District, one of eight districts of Dompu Regency, receives between 100,000 and 200,000 international visitors annually, excluding foreign laborers employed in the hotel and mining industries, (Kurniansah & Wirawan, 2019; Rusdin & Ismail, 2024; Rusdin et al., 2024). For graduates of the culinary and tourism departments at SMKN 1 Hu'u, proficiency in English, particularly speaking, becomes essential due to the high level of interaction between employees and foreign visitors.

Since international communication is crucial in the culinary arts and tourist industries, it is imperative that English language instruction be incorporated into vocational education. However; Most students majoring in culinary and tourism have difficulty in constructing sentences and expressing ideas in English, especially in the context of culinary and tourism, such as speaking to guests in English, explaining tourist or culinary attractions, etc.

Conventional approaches to teaching English frequently fall short of meeting the unique requirements of students pursuing vocational education. There is a rising recognition of the need for contextualized, skill-oriented English learning materials at SMKN 1 Hu'u Dompu, a vocational school in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. New technical advancements offer fresh chances to close this gap, especially in the areas of digital media and artificial intelligence (AI).

Digital instructional materials, such as AI-assisted modules, interactive multimedia, and audio-visual information, are very beneficial for learning English. These resources offer adaptable, easily available, and captivating educational opportunities that can be customized to meet the unique requirements of students pursuing vocational education. For instance, it has been demonstrated that AI-assisted audio-learning modules improve academic achievement, reading engagement, and student motivation; they are especially advantageous for students with a range of needs (Jafarian & Kramer, 2025). This initiative is as way to motivate students in learning that can help them to solve every single problem faced by them during learning process, (Ismail, 2022; Ismail & Indriani, 2023). The aim of this study is to identify students' needs and challenges in learning English, particularly speaking skills in vocational culinary and tourism programs at SMKN 1 Hu'u.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Previous Related Study

The first previous study is (Kandriasari et al., 2024) which aims was to design and assess interactive multimedia as a digital literacy tool for teaching napkin folding. The study used the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) approach for data analysis and the 4D development model. The results suggested that the interactive multimedia was very practicable, with a user validation score of 0.41, material expert validation scores of 94.6% and 85.7%, and media expert validation scores of 86.4% and 81.8%. A feasibility score of 84.38% was obtained from a field trial that included 30 culinary students. According to the study's findings, the interactive multimedia can be used as a teaching tool in the Food and Beverage Service course.

The next previous study is (Eka et al., 2023). This study identifies suitable topics for teaching English for Tourism and Hospitality (ETH) in vocational higher education, such as taking reservations, welcoming guests, and room service. These topics can enhance students' language skills and motivation to learn English.

The next previous study is (Li, 2020). This study aims to explore the advantages of the teaching model based on digital audio media. The teaching model based on digital audio media has the advantage of allowing the students to control their study independently, increasing interaction in learning, and improving the psychological superiority, which can make up for the insufficiency of the existing college English teaching model effectively. Meanwhile, the questionnaire survey results also suggest that the situation of college English teachers and learning characteristics of college students in our country can meet the human resources requirements for implementing the flipped classroom teaching model based on digital audio media. Hence, it is feasible to apply the flipped classroom teaching model based on digital audio media in college English teaching in China.

The last previous study is (Puspitasari, 2018). This study explores the viewpoints of the stakeholders regarding the knowledge and subjects needed in Banyumas' tourism sector, as well as the difficulties faced. The results show that speaking abilities are most in-demand (100%) and listening skills are second (75%). Stakeholders are also very interested in topics pertaining to lodging and travel. Cooperation with the tourism sector and a lack of experience in describing the city map for tourists are among the difficulties. The creation of English for Tourism resources can benefit from these insights.

Based on prior study, a number of research gaps can be found in the Preliminary Study on Contextual Digital and AI Audio Media for English Learning in Vocational Culinary and Tourism Education at SMKN 1 Hu'u Dompu. These gaps include the particular requirements for studying English of SMKN 1 Hu'u Dompu students, the usage of digital media and AI audio in certain circumstances, and the English language requirements of the school's culinary and tourism industries. The

purpose of this study is to determine the demands and challenges that students face when learning English and to establish a foundation for creating learning materials that are better suited to the requirements of the students.

### **Contextual Digital Media**

Contextual digital media refers to digital resources such as multimedia presentations, movies, digital book, and interactive platforms that are intended to represent real-world scenarios relevant to students' future careers, (Raju & Raju, 2024). In vocational high schools, multimedia applications in spoken English instruction have been shown to improve students' speaking abilities, raise motivation, boost self-confidence, and reduce anxiety. Students often choose multimedia-assisted methods over traditional ways, because they make learning more exciting and relevant to their career prospects, (Sumenep, 2024). In this study, contextual digital media refers to digital book which is relevant to the students' context.

### **AI Audio Media**

AI audio media comprises language learning apps, digital audio classes, and AI-powered pronunciation feedback. These services promote personalized learning, provide rapid feedback, and help students to improve their listening and speaking skills at their own speed, (Li, 2020). Digital audio media, such as micro-lectures and flipped classroom models, have proven viable and successful in improving English language abilities, particularly listening and speaking. Despite the advantages, problems include restricted device and internet access, as well as different levels of digital proficiency among students and teachers. Addressing these difficulties demands an investment in infrastructure and continual teacher training, (Raju & Raju, 2024).

### **English Learning in Vocational High School**

Vocational high schools aim to prepare pupils for the workforce, hence English proficiency in specific contexts (such as culinary and tourism) is essential. Integrating digital and AI audio media into English learning raises student engagement, promotes digital literacy, and better prepares students for real-world communication, (Dewanti et al., 2022). Teachers appreciate the importance of authentic and digital materials, saying that they make teaching more practical and relevant. Students strongly prefer digital media, finding it more fascinating and accessible than older techniques, (Handayani & Dewi, 2021).

### **Contextualization in Culinary and Tourism**

Contextual learning is essential in vocational education, which focuses on practical skills and real-world circumstances. Studies have proven that multimedia resources—such as movies, animations, contextual digital book, and interactive simulations—are helpful in teaching English for tourism and hospitality, including duties like accepting reservations, receiving guests, and offering room service, (Eka et al., 2023).

## **METHOD**

### **Design and Samples**

The purpose of this study is to investigate students' needs and obstacles in learning English, specifically speaking abilities, in vocational culinary and tourist programs at SMKN 1 Hu'u. This study was conducted utilizing a qualitative technique. Participants in this study were two English teachers from SMKN 1 Hu'u's culinary and tourism studies programs. Because the probable pool of participants is already constrained, the sample size is deemed enough for the chosen (purposive) sampling approach (Marshall, 1996, as cited in Ismail et al., 2023)). Before data collection began, it was made clear that the study was voluntary. Though the number of participants is limited, it is justified by the scope and focus of the study. At SMKN 1 Hu'u, only two English teachers are assigned to teach across both vocational programs. Therefore, these teachers represent the entire English instructional staff responsible for delivering the curriculum to the broader student population in the culinary and tourism departments. Their perspectives provide comprehensive insights into the common challenges faced by students, as well as the instructional gaps that need to be addressed. Since they regularly interact with the students and are directly involved in curriculum delivery, their observations serve as credible reflections of students' learning experiences and needs. Thus, while the sample size is small, it effectively captures the full range of instructional realities within the targeted vocational programs.

### **Instrument and Procedure**

To achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data. This method was chosen because it is appropriate to obtain an in-depth investigation of students' needs and barriers in learning English, especially speaking skills, in the culinary and tourism program of SMKN 1 Hu'u. Semi-structured interviews are very effective in understanding individual experiences and perspectives in more depth (Knott et al., 2022, as cited in Ismail et al., 2022)). Interview sessions were conducted in Indonesian to ensure data accuracy and avoid misunderstandings. Interviews were also recorded to protect oral data. The questions asked focused on students' needs and barriers in learning English.

### **Data Analysis**

Once the interview data is obtained, the data is then evaluated using thematic analysis, which is a technique for detecting, analyzing, and reporting data patterns (themes). The steps of data analysis, as described by Braun & Clarke (2006), consist of six phases: (1) understanding the data, (2) creating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) creating a report.

## RESULT

### Current Challenges in English Learning at SMKN 1 Hu'u

#### *Difficulties of Culinary and Tourism Students in Speaking English*

Culinary and Tourism students generally have difficulty in constructing sentences and expressing ideas in English, especially in the culinary and tourism context. English teachers admit that existing learning materials are not yet effective enough in improving students' speaking skills. Here are some interview results from teachers

*"In my classes, I've noticed that students have difficulty articulating their thoughts in English, particularly in situations related to food preparation, presentation, or tourism services. The textbook we use doesn't provide enough relevant examples or exercises to help them improve their speaking skills in these areas."* (Teacher 1)

*"One of the biggest challenges I face is getting students to confidently express themselves in English in contexts relevant to their field. The culinary and tourism students need to be able to communicate effectively with customers and colleagues, but the current materials don't adequately prepare them for these interactions. We need more targeted resources to help them develop their speaking skills."* (Teacher 2)

#### *Students' Difficulties in English Pronunciation*

Students' lack of pronunciation is one factor that affects their English speaking ability. Students have difficulty pronouncing words or sentences in English because of the difference between spelling and pronunciation. This can be caused by a lack of exposure to native speakers who can help students understand and master correct pronunciation. Here is the result of interview which support this statement

*"I think one of the biggest challenges my students face is pronunciation. They're not used to hearing native speakers, so they don't know how to pronounce words correctly. For example, they might see the word 'knight' and pronounce it as 'k-n-i-g-h-t' instead of /naɪt/. This is because they're relying too much on the written form and not enough on the spoken form. If*

*they had more exposure to native speakers, I'm sure their pronunciation would improve significantly". (Teacher 1)*

#### *Low Motivation in Learning English due to Irrelevant Textbooks*

The next problem that students have is the lack of student motivation in learning English which is caused by the books used in the learning process that are not relevant to their majors. Students majoring in culinary and tourism feel that learning materials that focus on general English do not help them in developing language skills that are specific to their fields.

*"Honestly, I think one of the reasons why some of my students lack motivation to learn English is because the textbook we're using doesn't relate to their field of study. They're studying culinary arts or tourism, but the textbook is all about general English topics like politics or news. They don't see the relevance of what they're learning to their future careers, so they don't get excited about it. If we could use materials that are more specific to their field, I think they'd be more engaged and motivated to learn." (Teacher 2).*

In this interview result, the English teacher admitted that the lack of students' motivation in learning English was caused by learning materials that were not relevant to their majors. The teacher suggested that using more specific materials for the culinary and tourism fields could increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process.

#### **Students' Needs to Address Challeges in English Learning**

##### *Specialized English Language Resources for Culinary and Tourism Students to Enhance Speaking Proficiency*

The needs of students in learning English in the culinary and tourism department at SMKN 1 Hu'u Dompou are very urgent, especially related to mastery of speaking skills. Based on interviews with two English teachers in the department, it was found that students often have difficulty in communicating effectively in English, especially when talking about specific terms related to culinary and tourism. Here are the interview results

*"I noticed that our culinary and tourism students have great difficulty in speaking English, especially when it comes to using specific terms related to their field. They often struggle to express their ideas and thoughts effectively in English." (Teacher 1)*

*"In teaching English in culinary and tourism majors, I found that our students have difficulty in communicating effectively in English. They often*

*have difficulty using appropriate and accurate vocabulary when talking about culinary and tourism-related topics.” (Teacher 2)*

### *Contextualizing English Language Instruction through the Integration of Local Dompu Culture: A Strategy for Improved Learning Outcomes*

Integration of English materials with local Dompu culture, such as traditional food and tourist attractions, is a strategic step to increase student engagement in learning. In interviews, both English teachers emphasized the importance of introducing local culture as part of the learning process.

*“Integration of local culture in English learning is essential to increase student engagement. By learning about Dompu's traditional foods and tourist attractions in English, students can better understand their own cultural values and develop better language skills.” (Teacher 1)*

*“Using local cultural examples in English language materials can make learning more relevant and interesting for students. Students can see how English can be used in real contexts that are close to their daily lives, such as in tourism promotions or descriptions of traditional Dompu food.” (Teacher 2)*

### *AI-Assisted Digital English Books for Pronunciation Enhancement*

In today's digital era, the use of technology in English learning is becoming increasingly important, especially in improving students' pronunciation skills. Digital books equipped with AI-assisted audio can be an effective solution to help students learn correct pronunciation.

*“Digital technology can help students improve their English pronunciation skills more effectively, especially with the AI-assisted audio feature.” (Teacher 1)*

*“Digital books with AI-assisted audio can provide students with immediate feedback on their pronunciation, so they can correct their mistakes more quickly.” (Teacher 2)*

Research by Harmer (2020), Rahman and Yuliana (2021), and Nunan (2019) shows that relevant and contextual materials can improve students' motivation, speaking skills, and self-confidence in English, so the development of English books that focus on culinary and tourism with an interactive and context-based learning approach is very important to improve students' communication skills at SMKN 1 Hu'u Dompu. This statement also is supported by some previous studies Kandriasari et al., (2024); Eka et al., (2023) which stated that English books that focus on culinary and tourism can significantly enhance students' confidence and motivation in speaking.



Research by Sari and Prasetyo (2022), Johnson (2021), and Budiarto (2020) shows that integrating local culture into English learning can increase students' sense of belonging, motivate them, and help them understand the language in real contexts. By learning vocabulary and phrases related to traditional foods and local tourist attractions, such as "Uta Palumara" and "Pantai Lakey", students can recognize and appreciate their cultural heritage while practicing their English speaking skills, so that it can enhance their motivation in actively participating in the learning process

Research by Putra and Lestari (2023), Chen (2021), and Hasan and Rachman (2022) show that the use of audio technology in language learning can significantly improve students' listening and speaking skills. AI-assisted audio can provide accurate pronunciation examples from native speakers, which is very important for students who want to improve their speaking skills. By listening and imitating correct pronunciation, students can reduce common pronunciation errors. The teaching model based on digital audio media has the advantage of allowing the students to control their study independently, increasing interaction in learning, and improving the psychological superiority, which can make up for the insufficiency of the existing college English teaching model effectively, (Li, 2020).

The development of digital books containing AI-assisted audio is an innovative step that can meet the needs of students in learning English at SMKN 1 Hu'u Dompu. The combination of technology, local context, and relevant materials can create a more engaging and effective learning experience for students majoring in culinary and tourism. Interactive digital books can also include speaking exercises that allow students to record their own voices and compare them to the original audio, providing immediate feedback that can accelerate the learning process

## CONCLUSION

This research finds that students at SMKN 1 Hu'u Dompu face several significant challenges in learning English, particularly in the areas of speaking, pronunciation, and motivation. These difficulties largely stem from the absence of appropriate and contextualized learning resources. As a direct response to these findings, the development of a digital English book and AI-supported audio content is guided by three main areas. First, the speaking challenges highlight the need for context-specific activities such as conversations and role-playing tailored to culinary and tourism environments. These elements will be integrated into the digital book to help students engage in authentic communication scenarios that align with their vocational studies. Second, pronunciation issues point to the importance of AI-supported audio features that provide native speaker models and real-time feedback. To address this, the e-book will include interactive audio tools, such as listen-and-repeat and self-recording exercises, to support accurate pronunciation practice. Third, the lack of motivation, often caused by the use of irrelevant materials, underscores the need to connect learning content with students' career goals and personal interests. Therefore, the digital book will incorporate topics related to the

local Dompu culture, such as traditional cuisine and tourist attractions, to increase relevance and engagement. By grounding the development of the digital book and AI audio content in these specific insights, the final product is designed not only to overcome current learning obstacles but also to promote a more meaningful, motivating, and culturally connected English learning experience.

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