

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the introduction of the research. There are several discussions mentioned in this chapter, those are the background of the study, research problem, research objective, significance of the study, scope and limitations, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of Study

A curriculum is a set of plans and regulations relating to learning materials, content, objectives, and methods, which are used as guidelines for implementing learning activities to achieve educational goals. The curriculum consists of plans and arrangements that specify the goals, subject matter, instructional strategies, and materials serving as a framework to organize learning activities to achieve educational objectives (Anisa,2022). Indonesia's education system has undergone several curriculum changes, including the introduction of the new Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka curriculum combines intra-curricular (70-80% from JP) and co-curricular (20-30% from JP) learning through projects aimed at reinforcing the Pancasila student profile. The educational curriculum holds significant importance in education (Setiawati, 2024). The Merdeka curriculum is an educational program with various interactive learning systems where the content will be more suitable for learners to have sufficient time to learn about the subject and develop skills. Teachers will have the flexibility to choose various teaching tools to adapt to the needs and interests of students, (Qamariah and Zidan 2023). Under the Merdeka curriculum, students are encouraged to be more creative allowing teachers to implement differentiated learning (Mahfudz, 2023). Teachers employ various teaching methods to meet the individual

needs of each student, which may include learning styles, interests, and subject understanding (Ahmad, Hesmatantya, and Mayasari).

The Merdeka curriculum has at least three benefits, including (1) it focuses on the core of learning and essential material so that there is a more meaningful deepening and development of competencies; (2) teachers are free to teach according to the achievements and development of students; (3) it gives teachers and students opportunities to engage in Merdeka learning so that they can explore every topic and subtopic; and (4) it is designed to help students develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Location and time are also included in a Project on the Merdeka Curriculum (Maharani, 2022),(Fauzan, Ansori et al., 2023).

Implementation of the Merdeka curriculum has the potential to stimulate motivation for students to enhance their English learning, thereby boosting their skills and creativity. (Indraprastha & Pawiro, 2023). The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum at the high school level by (Azkiya, 2023) has been successful, but various obstacles have been encountered, including educators' lack of training, suboptimal differentiated learning, and unchanged mindsets. Efforts to address these challenges involve attending internal/external training, enhancing educator creativity, and promoting idea-sharing among educators (Azkiya, 2023). Sulistyorini et al., (2022) stated that the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum should be integrated into teachers. Mulyatno (2022) stated that teachers play a key role in the implementation of education, and are very influential when comes to learning. In implementing the Merdeka curriculum, teachers are required to be able to understand more about the procedures of the implementation (Muayyadah, 2023). Therefore, Teachers must

understand how to implement the Merdeka curriculum to lead the teaching and learning process effectively.

In this era, the Merdeka curriculum is a curriculum that sets teaching and learning processes freely which the teachers and students have free opportunity to create learning and teaching process. The Merdeka curriculum is implemented across all academic subjects, encompassing the study of English as well. English, which falls under the adaptive subject category, is taught to enhance students' language proficiency (Aizawa et al., 2023; Elas et al., 2019; Rose et al., 2019). English is a very important subject in formal education for implementing the Merdeka curriculum. For every person, learning a foreign language is always required for various purposes and English has become the global language. English functions as an international language because it is implemented and used by people in different countries to communicate Kharimah (2023).

The learning process in the classroom is a series of adjustments made to the way of learning developed to achieve changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior of the learner through interaction with teachers and other students in a learning environment (Setiawati, 2024). In the English teaching and learning process at MAN 3 Blitar, students actively participate in the learning process by doing activities that can help the learning process. They also receive learning materials from the teacher. The teacher uses forum group discussion as the learning model. Then, the teacher divides the students into 5 groups and asks the students to present each subtopic of the material. This learning model gives the student difficulties because the student's English ability is still basic.

English competence is one of the things that needs to be considered by teachers in preparing high school students for further higher education (Habiburrahim et al., 2022). Curriculum reform is needed to improve the quality of education (Dewi, 2021). As a suggestion, teacher readiness can be increased through training, for example using concept maps for SMK teachers (Ruaya et al., 2022).

In this study, the researcher collected data from English teachers and students at MAN 3 Blitar as research subjects. Several reasons why this research investigated the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning at MAN 3 Blitar. First, the Merdeka curriculum has been implemented for two years, and of course, each school has its way of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The second researcher wants to know the challenges of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning at MAN 3 Blitar, and the teacher's strategy employed in overcoming the problems in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning at MAN 3 Blitar.

Several previous studies are related to this research. The first related research was conducted by Rafi and Zaitun (2023), "A literature study on the implementation of Merdeka curriculum". This research explains about format and implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in this modern era. It states that the main purpose of this curriculum is to use tech as usefully as possible and also to develop each unique ability that students have. The second related research was conducted by Ali & Syahfitri (2023), "Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to Improve the Quality of Learning English". This research analyses the application of the Merdeka curriculum in improving the quality of learning, especially English, and whether this approach can strengthen creativity and English language proficiency among educators and

students. The third related research was conducted by Amelia,” Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in English Subjects (a qualitative research SMP NEGERI 1 Caringin and MTSN Kota Bogor) (2024)”, This research aims to discover the learning patterns in the Merdeka curriculum, the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English subjects, and the difficulties and efforts made in implementing Merdeka curriculum. The research gap in this study pertains to the challenges and the teachers’ strategies employed in overcoming the problems in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning at MAN 3 Blitar.

Based on the explanation provided, the researcher carried out a study titled "The Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in English Language Teaching and Learning at MAN 3 Blitar”.

B. Research Problem

1. How is the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning at *MAN 3 Blitar*?
2. What are the challenges in implementing the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning at *MAN 3 Blitar*?
3. What are the teacher’s strategies for overcoming the problems in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning at *MAN 3 Blitar*?

C. Research Objective

1. To investigate the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning at *MAN 3 Blitar*.

2. To find out all challenges of implementing the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning at *MAN 3 Blitar*.
3. To find out the strategies teachers employed in overcoming the problems in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning at *MAN 3 Blitar*.

D. Significances of the Study

1. For schools, the institution can improve the treatment by implementing the Merdeka curriculum based on the research results. In addition, the results of this research aim to provide information and assessment to the school regarding the planning and implementation of the teaching and learning process in the English language according to the Merdeka curriculum.
2. For the English teacher, the teacher can improve several creative methods in teaching English by using the Merdeka curriculum approach, in which the teachers should know the rate of students' knowledge.
3. For future researchers, it is hoped that future researchers are encouraged to build upon this study by exploring additional variables and refining their research instruments to gather more precise data that accurately reflects real-world conditions.

E. Scope and Limitations

This research focused on the extent of implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning, the challenges of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in English language teaching and learning, and the teachers' strategies employed in overcoming the problems in implementing the Merdeka

curriculum in English language teaching and learning at MAN 3 Blitar. This research limited the problems to avoid interpretation in this research.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Merdeka Curriculum

Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum designed to concentrate on essential materials and character development to achieve the learning goal. The Merdeka Curriculum involves freedom in achieving learning goals, methods, teaching materials, and assessments for both educators and students.

2. Implementation

Implementation is the process of putting a plan into action. Consequently, a plan is not merely a theory, it must be implemented in reality.

3. English Language Teaching and Learning

English Language Teaching and Learning is a process in which teachers instruct students in the English language.