

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

English education is central to developing international communication skills and improving students' language skills. English is an international language in various fields, such as technology, media, and communication across cultures. In Indonesia, English has become a subject that must be studied from elementary to high school level for three main reasons: a need for all Indonesian children, alignment of the English curriculum, and equalization of learning quality. Teaching the English language requires careful planning to strengthen the foundation of English, in line with the government that wants to prioritize English education in the *Merdeka* curriculum. This happens because there is confusion in the 2013 curriculum, which is in the competencies that must be achieved in junior high school students in English subjects who must reach the intermediate level without obtaining primary English education at the elementary level.

The latest curriculum determination by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Nadiem Makarim, is the *Merdeka* curriculum, which will begin to be used in the 2021/2022 school year. This curriculum must be applied to all schools spread across 34 provinces and 111 districts/cities, including one of which is MTs Negeri 8 Banyuwangi. MTs Negeri 8 Banyuwangi has begun implementing the *Merdeka* curriculum in stages starting from grades VII and VIII, while grade IX is still

using the old curriculum, namely K-13. In implementing this curriculum, teachers must be able to understand correctly and well regarding the established curriculum.

Teachers should have curriculum knowledge, because it combines instructional practices, learning experiences, and students' performance assessments designed to bring out and evaluate the target learning outcomes of the particular course. The curriculum, also called the teaching process, contains several disciplines arranged systematically and is needed to complete the process in educational activities and achieve the desired educational goals properly (Fauzan, 2017). The curriculum has a reasonably central influence and position in the world of education in various parts of the world because it will help as social control and as a tool for students to develop all the potential of Dhomiri et al. (2023). Based on law no. 20 of 2003 Chapter 1 Article 1 states, "The curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, and learning materials as well as the methods used as guidelines for organizing learning activities to achieve certain educational goals". The curriculum is made to facilitate the educational process, but in reality, the curriculum is often changed, causing confusion among several parties and hampering the educational process (Vhalery et al., 2022). In 2019, the education curriculum in Indonesia was altered by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, previously the 2013 curriculum to the MBKM curriculum (*Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka*).

*Merdeka* curriculum is a curriculum that implements quite diverse intracurricular learning because students are given more optimal content so that they can explore learning concepts and competencies with sufficient time. With this curriculum, teachers can choose teaching tools for learning activities tailored to

students' learning needs and interests. This curriculum change is based on studies showing an educational gap between regions and social groups in Indonesia, so this curriculum was created to overcome this crisis. This *Merdeka* curriculum includes intracurricular activities, projects to strengthen the Pancasila learner profile and extracurricular activities. There are many changes in subjects in this *Merdeka* curriculum. For the elementary level, skill subjects are merged into art subjects. For the junior high school level, informatics subjects become compulsory subjects. In contrast, workshop subjects are combined into one, namely art lessons, while for high school, the majoring system so that students will choose topics according to their interests and talents, which start from classes XI and XII. In implementing this *Merdeka* curriculum, the Ministry of Education and Culture issued a program for driving teachers whose aim is to become leaders in the process of changing for the better in the educational environment in Indonesia.

Implementing *Merdeka* learning in this curriculum still reaps many pros and cons from various parties. Implementing the *Merdeka* curriculum still requires much time and preparation from different educational institutions in Indonesia. As already explained, implementing this *Merdeka* curriculum will lead to several changes in the learning system. Learning activities in the *Merdeka* curriculum are made as comfortable as possible to facilitate the interaction process between teachers and students. The learning system in the *Merdeka* curriculum is designed in such a way as to create learning that is fun and according to student character (Hattarina et al., 2022). Therefore, the *Merdeka* curriculum introduces differentiated instruction, which is an essential aspect of the *Merdeka* curriculum.

Differentiated Instruction is a way or effort made by teachers to meet the needs and expectations of students (Pitaloka & Arsanti, 2022). The purpose of differentiated instruction is to adjust student-centred learning, so based on the concept of differentiated instruction, students have a position as leaders in learning so that learning is tailored to their abilities and supported by various strategies and technology that have been adjusted (Santika & Khoiriyah, 2023). Based on the statement of Faiz et al. (2022), differentiated instruction is based on decisions made by teachers and is student-oriented, which is explained in the following indicators: 1) How to create a learning environment that can stimulate students to achieve the learning objectives set; 2) How teachers respond to students' learning needs which include different lesson plans, learning resources, learning media, learning strategies, assignments and assessments; 3) How to organize an effective classroom according to the procedure without disrupting the routine in the classroom despite doing different activities. The main point in differentiated instruction is that there are differences in learning, so teachers must be able to understand students with various student potentials. Teachers must also facilitate students to develop optimally according to their potential so that students can achieve learning objectives well.

Implementing a *Merdeka* curriculum is one of the tools in education in Indonesia, so the implementation process requires a lot of technique and time for readiness. As in applying differentiated instruction strategies in classroom learning activities, teachers must have high sensitivity to students in each subject they teach or teach. Students must achieve at least six English language skills in English language learning. This refers to the Common European Framework of Reference for

Languages: Learning, Teaching Assessment (CEFR), which provides specifications for students to maintain interaction and convey what is desired. In differentiated instruction in this English subject, the teacher must support interaction with students because the teacher will facilitate students to achieve their learning goals. In addition, in this 21st century, English is a subject that needs its ability in society.

Several studies are relevant to implementing differentiated instruction in the class. Research from Febrianti & Dafit (2023) explains the implementation and problems in implementing the *Merdeka* curriculum, specifically in class IV of SD Negeri 005 Hangtuah. This descriptive study found that the fourth-grade teacher had implemented differentiated instruction with four components. However, in the implementation, the teacher found problems related to the difficulty of finding content that attracts students' learning interests and still needs help in implementing this differentiated instruction because of the different needs of students.

The following study from Susila & Aryasuari (2023) where this research analyzes the advantages and challenges of implementing differentiated instruction. This qualitative research used two English instructors with English for culinary and English for FB service training subjects by conducting in-depth interviews. The study found several advantages in implementing differentiated instruction, such as presenting material according to students' interests, and the teaching provided correlates to students' lives and can motivate students. However, there are also challenges faced in its implementation, such as requiring more time in preparation, managing time well, treating students ideally, and needing more time to focus on individual student development.



The following study from Unyishi & Sefotho (2020) describes the implementation of differentiated teaching in inclusive classrooms. This study used a descriptive survey using 382 teachers as the research sample where data was collected using the Teachers' Use of Differentiated Instruction Questionnaire (TUDIQ). The results of this study show that the application of DI is still low among teachers because teachers still need more information related to the development of student assessment rubrics and how to implement large-scale classes with DI. Teachers also still need to have a lot of training related to DI and the need to provide stone tools or learning support facilities at school.

The last study from Shareefa (2021) conducted research related to teachers' experiences in implementing differentiated instruction in multi-grade classes. The data of this study were obtained through semi-structured interviews with teachers, classroom observations, and analyzing teachers' lesson plan documents. The results of this study show that there are positive benefits to differentiated teaching in terms of student academics and student psychosocial development. However, in its implementation, the research shows that there are challenges that hinder teachers, such as the lack of teacher competence related to understanding differentiated instruction, lack of time in preparing teaching materials due to high workloads, and a complicated student assessment system.

From some of the studies, the implementation of differentiated instruction has been exceptionally well done especially in *Merdeka* curriculum. It has become a research subject that is very important in education today, because there are still need researches about differentiated instruction in *Merdeka* curriculum. Based on those

study, found that there are still some challenges and obstacles that teachers must face when implementing *Merdeka* curriculum especially in using differentiated instruction learning model. Based on these conclusions, researchers are interested in investigating the implementation of differentiated instruction that focuses on English language learning subjects. Also, to explore the teaching materials and tools teachers used to teach in the class. This is based on the explanation, which states that English is one of the subjects aimed at implementing the *Merdeka* curriculum in school, and it is needed for the next investigation about the challenges and how to overcome the challenges that faced by teacher.

### **1.2 Identification of the Problem**

Based on the background of the problem above, the researcher identified some problems as follows:

1. The *Merdeka* curriculum allows students to improve their potential, hence the differentiated instruction approach based on the students' needs and interest in learning process.
2. The implementation of differentiated instruction in schools still finds obstacles and challenges.

### **1.3 Limitation of the Problem**

To avoid misinterpretation of this study, the researcher provides limitations to the problems in the study. This study only analyzes teachers' perceptions of applying differentiated instruction in English language learning and how teachers use this learning model. This study was conducted at MTs Negeri 8 Banyuwangi, which

implemented the *Merdeka* curriculum in the VII and VIII and used a differentiated approach in the class. The implementation of *Merdeka* curriculum only conduct for grade VII and VIII because this school carried out the curriculum in the 2022/2023 school year whereas grade VIII now is the newest students at that time. Also the school made decision to implement the *Merdeka* curriculum for new students. The researcher also limited the research subject only to English teachers at MTs Negeri 8 Banyuwangi.

#### **1.4 Problem Statements**

Based on the background of the study, the researcher identifies the problem statement of this research that is:

1. How is the implementation of differentiated instruction learning model in the English language class?
2. What challenges do teachers face when implementing differentiated instruction learning model in the class?
3. How do teachers overcome the challenges of implementing differentiated instruction learning model in the class?

#### **1.5 The Objective of the Study**

Based on the statement of the problems, here are the objectives of the study:

1. Describe how teachers implement the differentiated instruction learning model in the English language class.
2. To investigate the teachers' challenges when implementing differentiated instruction learning model in the English language class.



3. To investigate how teachers overcome the challenges when implementing differentiated instruction learning model in the English language class.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

Here are the benefits of the study based on the objective of the study above:

1. Theoretically

This study can contribute to understanding the implementation of differentiated instruction in English teaching learning based on *the Merdeka* curriculum. Also, the findings of this study are expected to be used as references for other researchers who want to know more about the implementation of differentiated instruction in English teaching-learning.

2. Practically

- a. For Students

This study can give students insight about differentiated instruction learning model in the *Merdeka* curriculum program. Also as an understanding for students that differentiated instruction is carried out based on learning characteristics and students needs in the learning process which aims to increase students' potential in their interest.

- b. For Teachers

This study can contribute to the literature on the knowledge about implementing the *Merdeka* curriculum in learning and teaching activities. This research also has a vital role in education as knowledge material on the effectiveness of using differentiated instruction learning model in learning activities and what challenges will be faced when implementing these learning model. In addition, this research is also a

reference material for teachers to improve professionalism in teaching and learning activities based on differentiated Instruction.

c. For Society

This study can be useful for the community to know what the *Merdeka* curriculum is and also one of the learning model in the program, namely differentiated instruction. The *Merdeka* curriculum is a renewal curriculum that must be known by the community, especially parents who are agents to assist teachers in understanding students. This study also contributes to developing more effective language learning resources and promotes cultural diversity and understanding.

