

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents 1) Research Background, 2) Limitation of the Study, 3) Problem formulation, 4) Research Objectives, and 5) Research Significances, and 6) Conceptual and Operational Definition.

1.1 Research Background

Major growth and challenges in the educational system have emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 outbreak affects many fields of human life in several aspects especially economic crisis, joblessness, changes of the teaching and learning process, and learning loss. Some of the solutions come up to prevent covid-19 pandemic by announcing some policies like physical distancing through online learning, getting vaccination to maintain the immune system, using masks during face-to-face learning and the changes of latest curriculum. The situation of teaching and learning in education has to change from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction, which is forcing people to step outside of their comfort zones (Mukhari & Sanders, 2023). Therefore, the utilization of technology in the classroom demonstrates rapid growth. Both teachers and students perceive the importance of technology to be used in learning flairs, teaching media, and assessment schemes (Karakose, 2021). In a short period of time, relying on the use of technology is addictive for teachers. In this sense, the student and teacher are having their exploration of digital practices in gaining understanding even sharing the problems faced during the implementation (Tekel et al., 2022).

At present, the process of teaching and learning in school has already started offline (face-to-face learning). It is time to adapt and return to normal situations for educators in experience a new normal learning style. According to Nomnian (2022), now the attention is focused on responses to the new normal situation after covid-19 pandemic which is considering the newest curriculum implementation.

“One’s new normal can be someone else’s normal and vice versa”

This sentence is driven to explain that in the educational system the emergence of technology during the teaching and learning process still loss of track. It means that in some schools the digital practices are still not well established. Hence, the teaching and learning process is activated again to reach out to something fallen behind which causes learning loss.

The educational paradigm has been changed due to the 4th Industrial Revolution which emphasizes students on authentic experiences while learning language. In the current educational system, the important things that students need to note are engaging and serving 6C innovation and learning skills (Duman & Yavuz, 2018). Nowadays, having 21st century skills (critical thinking, communication, creativity, computation, compassion thinking, and collaboration) means being a creator or innovator for their future (Noranizahhafizah et al., 2020; Shabrina & Astuti, 2022; and Somphol et al., 2022). Those skills need to be integrated by the support of educational learning sources. Therefore, preparing an innovative educational system and students’ skills are the crucial factor that must

be considered to take up students' active roles in the learning environment for student's competence.

Therefore, the educational paradigm impacts the changes in the latest curriculum to recover the education system in Indonesia after the pandemic. The new curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which is recognized as the newest curriculum in Indonesia, is proposed to be implemented as the new benchmark in the teaching and learning process. The adaptation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* for all schools which is officially announced by the Minister of Education and Culture in 2022 is needed to enhance the capabilities of the students in this 21st century learning. *Kurikulum Merdeka* aims to give students the freedom to develop their learning by working on project. The method that suits the newest curriculum is Project-based learning method. It is a way of educators to rely on real-world experiences to engage the students through project. It relates to the 21st century learning's demand that freedom is needed for accommodating and give opportunities to develop students' individual skill. Henceforth, the teacher plays the essential role in executing the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* to look after the quality of education system after the pandemic situation particularly in English language teaching.

English language teaching (ELT) in rural school postured any challenges like inadequate sources, learning interest during the implementation of the latest curriculum, and learning loss (Kemaloglu-er & Sahin, 2022). Even in rural school the curriculum implemented has been upgraded to *Kurikulum Merdeka*, but in the real application, it still needs the struggle of the educators to make it more practical

through the project. One of the tricky ways to help the teacher during teaching process is to dig up more on the project activities. It can help the teacher in determining whether the activities can assist the students in developing language skill during the learning process. It used to find suitable learning sources that can support them in English subject based on the quality of how the teacher designs the English learning activities for teaching and learning process in 21st century learning. Therefore, it can be the parameter also to seek their interest and achievement during the implementation of learning activities including the methodology engaged. One of the recommended methods that can be developed in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* as supplementary sources or activities that support the skills' progress is PjBL (Project Based Learning). It is in line with the statement from the Minister of Education and Culture 2022, that the project emphasizes authentic learning which is suitable for developing students' character. According to Somphol et al. (2022), PjBL defines as one of the teaching methods that engaging students in the learning process by exploring real-world project. Mahasneh & Alwan (2018) state that PjBL can develop students' scientific process skill and abilities in questioning, creating ideas, and having conclusion drawing. Others also explained that PjBL is considering a long process of inquiry in English learning (Suwarno et al., 2020).

Additionally, PjBL also provides good praise to support the Pancasila Student Profile. As what has been discussed, students' project-based learning is reinforced through a series of exercises called Pancasila student profiles. Based on Graduate Proficiency Standards, this is intended as an endeavour to attain proficiency and character. This Pancasila Student Profile is essentially an initiative

to reinforce Pancasila ideals that was started by the Minister of Education and Culture to reach Indonesian students' character. In light of this, the Pancasila Student Profile can eventually include a competence formulation that emphasizes the achievement of the Standards of Competence at each level of the educational system. There are six elements of the Pancasila Student Profile such as Having faith, fearing God Almighty, and having a noble character, Global Diversity, Independence, Working together, Critical reasoning, and also Creative. From the explanation above, it can be inferred that a series of character-building exercises can help students better grasp how to compete on a global scale while adhering to Pancasila ideals.

Furthermore, developing supplementary activities for English Language Teaching can be based on PjBL (Project Based Learning) principles as it can help the teacher to organized the learning process effectively. PJBL instructional activities require student to practice their cognitive from low to higher-order thinking skills. Students also have the chance to practice their language and literacy skills. The main purpose of PjBL is to make the students dig up more about their skills and discover something new from the real-world problem that they have discovered. Based on Mahasneh & Alwan (2018), developing activities, there are consisting of the following steps, 1) Defining the topic and subtopics and organizing themselves; 2) Producing their project; 3) Applying the project; 4) Preparing for presentation; 5) Presentation; 6) Evaluation. The procedure seems to help the students enhance authentic interaction with the help of students' real experiences through technology engagement while working on the project. This research used

eight stages of the implementation of PjBL in junior high school compiled by some experts. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture 2016 as cited in Astawa et al., (2017), Hamidah et al., (2020), and The Geroge Lucas educational Foundation (2005) as cited in Purnomo & Ilyas (2019), the implementation of PjBL is consisting of following steps, 1) Choosing project topic, 2) Pre-Communicative Activities, 3) Considering or asking the essential question by viewing the theme or topic, 4) Producing or designing the product design by enquiring the information related to the project, 5) Creating the project timeline from planning, searching data, scheduling, etc., 6) Monitoring for the project finalization (finishing the project) 7) Assessing the project, and 8) Evaluating the project.

Some studies around the development and the use of Project-Based Learning have been conducted in local and international areas. The results showed that there were; 1) positive feedback on the prototype developed using PjBL and it worked properly and was ready to be used by teachers, 2) the learners and the teachers responded positively towards the development activities, and 3) significant effect to improve the quality of ELT in rural education. In terms of research, the use of Project-based Learning has been widely known and merged in schools before now. Nonetheless, this research emphasized the development of Project-based Learning activities which highlight the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* especially for junior high school in rural school to support the teachers in having suitable and prepared activities based on the need analysis.

As the aforementioned above, to ensure the effective learning activities used based on the *Kurikulum Merdeka* standard in the rapid growth of innovation and

facing problems in English Language Teaching in rural schools need to be investigated further. The problem of this research was identified from preliminary observation which indicates that teachers in SMPN 3 Sawan were using one textbook which is emphasizing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and Pancasila Student Profile but in the real application it still need struggle from the teacher to try on the interesting project activities. There were also a few existing literatures that have investigated the same topic in junior high school. As it hoped, the ideal practice is to provide a lot of activities through projects that engage PPP and 6C as the essential part of *Kurikulum Merdeka* for teacher and students especially for English language. As the researcher found in the real implementation done by the teacher, it was still trapped on the execution of a monotone project without considering the essential part of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Therefore, this current study was proposed to fill this gap for various project-based learning activities that can support the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in junior high school because not many project-based learning activities are available, suitable, and ready to use by the teacher in junior high school. The urgency of conducting this research was to develop prototype of project-based learning activities that are appropriate and readily used by English teachers for junior high school as the implementation of the newest curriculum in Indonesia in English subject. Thus, research and development research was required to develop a prototype of project-based learning activities in alignment with *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This current study can give adequate knowledge related to the project-

based learning activities that requires learning by doing activities in 21st century for junior high school.

1.2 Problem Identification

The problem of this research was identified from preliminary observation which indicates that the teacher was using one English textbook as teaching sources with limited practical of the language through project. Meanwhile, the teachers have to upgrade on lot of project activities that can be delivered during teaching and learning process. Several studies exposed limited information on developing project-based learning activities for junior high school which emphasize on implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Even if, the limited information on the developing project-based activities which engaging *Kurikulum Merdeka* seems never been conducting. It indicates that not many researchers have been conducting about the same topic.

Moreover, the problem of this study was identified that there was limited practical language through project in English subject in this setting. Consequently, the teacher, students, and stakeholder could be the perfect subject for this research that aims to develop project-based learning activities for Grade 8 students. This study not only develop the activities but also found any specifications that need in developing the product. By way of, developing project-based learning activities in alignment with *Kurikulum Merdeka* requirements for Grade 8 students was conducted in SMPN 3 Sawan.

1.3 Limitation of the Study

In junior high school, the transition from online to offline learning emphasize on *Kurikulum Merdeka* application raises some challenges. One such difficulty is students' practical on English language proficiency through projects. Related to the explanation in the research background, there are several existing limitations, i.e.,

- 1.3.1 The study was part of larger research that employed ADDIE Model which is stopped in third phase, development phase, and for the rest two phases will be conducted by other researchers.
- 1.3.2 The research was conducted for filling the research gap that there were few existing literatures investigated around developing PjBL activities in junior high school especially in rural school which emphasize on the use of *Kurikulum Merdeka* and Pancasila Students Profile. Based on the observation, it was found that the there was still limited practical through project activities because not many PjBL activities are available and ready to be used by the teachers.
- 1.3.3 The findings of this study highlighted the prototypes of PjBL's activity that focusing on specific user for Grade 8 students.

This study was part of a larger research that need 2 years to finalize. In this stage the research was conducted up to the development stage and was resumed with expert judgment about the quality of the developed project. For the next year will be continued from the implementation until evaluation phases by other researchers.

1.3 Problem Formulation

Based on the above research background, the problem formulation in this research could be formulated as follows:

- 1.3.1 What are the specification of Project-Based Learning activities needed for teaching English classes for Grade 8 of SMPN 3 Sawan?
- 1.3.2 How is the prototype of Project-Based Learning activities designed to support *Kurikulum Merdeka* for teaching English in SMPN 3 Sawan?
- 1.3.3 What is the quality of the developed prototype of Project-Based Learning activities for teaching English in SMPN 3 Sawan?

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the research question, the study was conducted for several objectives as follows:

- 1.4.1 To describe the specification of Project-Based Learning activities that is needed in English Classes of Grade 8 of SMPN 3 Sawan.
- 1.4.2 To describe the prototype of Project-Based Learning activities that is developed for teaching English Grade 8 students in SMPN 3 Sawan to support the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.
- 1.4.3 To describe the quality of the developed prototype of Project-Based Learning activities for teaching English in SMPN 3 Sawan.

1.5 Research Significances

The research findings were expected to have theoretical and practical contribution or significances as follow:

- 1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

This research findings were expected to contribute and enrich the theory or information that related to the development of project-based learning activities as the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* for 8th grade students. In addition, this study exemplifies instructional activities development that is research-based and contribute to enriching the literature and activities development that enhance the quality of teacher and students' pedagogies in teaching and learning process.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

1) For English Teachers

The practical significance for English teachers is especially to do with the availability of ready use activities that are implementable in the classroom. The developed activities can help the teacher in designing an effective and innovative lesson plan that can assist the students in improving 6C.

2) For Future Researchers

This research findings were expected for future researchers to enrich their ideas in developing relevant study around developing activities that could be a model for more research and development project for quality education specifically in the field of English Language Teaching.

3) For Students

This research findings were expected to assist students in improving their English language proficiency and other skills that is necessary to be forced in 21st century learning. By the help of the teaching and learning method used, it can help the students to actively learning by doing (individually and collaboratively).

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding, it is important to provide the definition of key terms used in this research. The definition here comprises conceptual and operational definitions, in which conceptual definition referrer to the notion of a particular key term based on the grand theories used un the research, while operational definition is to do with defining the key term in the context of the research.

1.6.1 Conceptual Definition

Conceptual definition is the idea of a certain key phrase derived from the big ideas applied in the study, as follow:

1.6.1.1 Project Based Learning (PjBL)

The development of the activities is touching PjBL (Project based learning) method as the recommended method to be implemented in English language teaching. According to Suwarno et al., (2020) & Somphol et al. (2022), PjBL defines as one of teaching method that enables students to be involved in learning process by exploring real-world project which can develop students' creativity, scientific skill, enables to questioning and creating the solution. PjBL emphasizes on students getting involved in project that encouraging to be proactively and collaboratively. In PjBL

activities, the activities arranged and organized based on real world task that have brought new challenge for students to solve or create something.

The activities are based on the learning guide or syllabus that already designed for teachers, coaches, school leaders, and students. The prototype of PjBL activities is emphasized in this study. Prototype is widely known as early model or early release of a product created to test a theory or procedure (Lauff et al., 2018). It also refers to early mock-ups of a proposed product. Designers may comprehend the outcome's usefulness and improve the product based on feedback by building a physical prototype.

1.6.1.2 Kurikulum Merdeka

One of the newest curriculums that have been implemented in school known as *Kurikulum Merdeka* as what have been mentioned by The Minister of Education and Culture in 2022. The education serves the different point of view toward the learners and adapt the world changes. In order to accomplish the educational objectives, *Kurikulum Merdeka* is implementing as an arrangement for educators in concerning the demand of 21st century learning. The concept of *Kurikulum Merdeka* is emphasizing on independent learning (Merdeka Belajar) and independent campus (Kampus Merdeka). It is a new transformation of teaching and learning that enables the educators to decide their own passion on the subject. Moreover, the positive aspects of *Kurikulum Merdeka* are underlined in the enhancement of students' skill, competencies in every stages. It enables students to learn in authentic experiences and meaningful process.

1.6.1.3 Activities development

In supporting the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum, it is needed for the teacher in emerging the activities development for students using project-based learning method. The development of teaching activities refers to the improvement of learning activities which consider the students' need and the characteristics of learning purposes which empower innovative and creativity (Susanti, 2021). The content or text, the objectives or activities, and the layout are only a few of the elements deemed crucial when developing educational activities, according to Nunan (1989) and Brown (2008). These are the elements that the researcher's research was founded on.

According to Litz (2005), supplementary activities can take the shape of a textbook that serves as a tool for teaching English for Specific Purposes, which is consistent with the aforementioned principles. According to Darmayanti et al., (2002), supplemental learning activities are any activities used to augment the current learning activities in order to promote situational English. It implies that more reading activities have been added to the book in various forms. Additionally, according to Lestari (2019) and Thakur (2015), supplemental learning activities fill in the gaps left by the current textbook in order to deliver relevant learning

In the framework of PjBL (Project-based Learning), activities development requires procedure for creating the supplementary activities or any resources like activities that can assist the students during learning

process. It covers the content and step of production that was used during the development of students' skill in learning English subject. For the purpose of engaging students in a project, activities development can give the real- world instruction especially in developing the activities based on PjBL (Project-based Learning) involvement.

1.6.2 Operational Definition

The process of operational definition involves defining the key word within the context of the study, as follow:

1.6.2.1 Project Based Learning

In this study, the project-based learning specification is discovered and describe based on the need analysis result. It is discovered using ADDIE Model as the research guidelines in creating effective prototype that use as learning tool. The analysis of textbook or document used in the school also analyse deeply especially the content, activities, and steps' part that involving Project-based Learning. The prototype of the activities of project-based learning was designed based on the need analysis result of the instrument executed. Then, the prototype is designed and developed using the six step or stages of PjBL from Astawa et al., (2017) which is considering the PjBL syntax of The Ministry of Education and Research 2016.

1.6.2.1 Kurikulum Merdeka

In this study, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* used in the school was discovered based on the document analysis (textbook) and the participant

also. The analysis of *Kurikulum Merdeka* used is needed to make sure that the school has already implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Grade 8.

1.6.2.2 Activities Development

In this study, the following factors are taken into consideration while evaluating a textbook before considering to develop a activities (Litz, 2005): the whole textbook package, the layout and design, the activities and tasks, the skills, the language type and activities, and the subject and content. Then the supplementary activities based on PjBL (Project-Based Learning) was designed based on the consideration of designing EFL textbooks above. Further, the product of the activities developed was evaluated using expert judgment form to check for the quality in order to make sure that the prototype activities is ready to be implemented in school.

