

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the introduction to this research. It explains the reason and process of how the author chose the research topic. It consists of the research background, problem identification, research questions, research objectives, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Research background

In today's globalized world, it cannot be denied that English is an essential and universal language. English has played a significant role in several sectors, such as science, medicine, education, tourism, technology and information, business, commerce, etc. Therefore, English has become the language of choice for people in various countries, specifically Indonesia. Having proficiency in English as soon as possible assists Indonesia face worldwide competition. One of the most important things to prepare for education is the ability to communicate in an international language, such as English.

Seeing the importance of English language skills, many countries make English a second or foreign language. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language that can be taught formally or informally. Education itself has a vital role in a maintainable future, which provides a better quality of life. Education is a way that produces systematic knowledge and abilities so that a person is ready to face life and enter the world of work. Good education depends on the curriculum because the function of the curriculum guides the education system and determines the characteristics that will develop in a society. Coşkun Yaşar and Aslan (2021) say

that decisions made regarding the curriculum significantly influence and impact the entire education process. Therefore, an innovative curriculum is needed to meet society's needs effectively. According to Findıkođlu and İlhan (2016), innovation has a very significant role in the teaching and learning process, starting from the curriculum.

The curriculum implementation in Indonesia has been changed and improved several times. Since the beginning of independence, around ten curriculum developments have impacted learning styles since 1947. The Curriculum for "Merdeka Belajar" has recently been hotly discussed. Merdeka curriculum is applied in every school with readiness in 2022–2024. This can be seen from the decision of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (*Mendikbudristek*) of the Republic of Indonesia number 56 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Implementing Curriculum in Recovery Learning Settings. The new curriculum was designed to overcome the learning loss or gaps during the COVID-19 pandemic. Arifa (2022) stated that to accelerate educational improvement, three main factors must be considered namely providing the availability of special regulations, setting up a specified financial budget, providing supportive human resources, and adequate facilities or infrastructure for the learning process. The Minister, Nadiem, noted various advantages of applying the Merdeka Curriculum. The curriculum focuses on essential learning material and adapting the development based on students' knowledge. Teachers must teach based on the levels of students' achievement and psychological development (Sari, 2023).

The shift in the 2013 Curriculum, which the Merdeka Curriculum has replaced, caused several variations in the planning, implementation, and evaluation

stages of learning, including Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP), Modul Ajar (MA), Capaian Pembelajaran (CP), Kriteria Ketercapaian Tujuan Pembelajaran (KKTP), Profil Pelajar Pancasila, diagnostic assessments, student reflections and teacher reflections, all of which aim to strengthen the competence of both students and teachers (Hardanie, 2022). Due to these changes, teachers are encouraged to keep learning and adjusting the situation in order to build effective implementation of the new paradigm in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum requires a lot of procedures, time, and readiness, which creates several differences in the learning process, including teaching English. It is hoped that the Merdeka Curriculum implementation will be conducted optimally to accommodate the relationship between teachers and learners. Before applying this curriculum, teachers should comprehend Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP), Modul Ajar (MA), and Project Modules, and evaluate student progress (Nurhidayat et al., 2022). This shows that there is a shift from the teaching strategies used in the previous curriculum as applied before the pandemic to teaching strategies after the pandemic. This shift is motivated by the need for adaptive strategies to overcome the extraordinary situation during this pandemic.

Numerous experts have implemented relevant studies on teaching strategies used in the Merdeka Curriculum. Research by Ayuningtyas (2023) discusses the strategies aided by English teachers in speaking lessons based on the Merdeka Curriculum at the Junior High School level. Furthermore, Azizah (2023) conducted research regarding EFL teachers' Teaching Strategies in Implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at Junior High School. Apart from that, research by Fitri (2023) and Shofiyuddin et al., (2023) regarding student perceptions in implementing

Merdeka Kurikulum in speaking and reading classes, shows that there is an impact on the learning process. However, not all relevant research focuses on teaching strategies in the Merdeka Curriculum at the vocational high school level and students' perceptions regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in general in EFL classes, this is the novelty of this research.

Based on the research background, the study examines what strategies teachers use and how students perceive their EFL teachers' teaching strategies in the English classes they experience. Further, the researchers want to study research entitled "ANALYZING STRATEGIES USED IN TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS IN EFL CLASSES IN MERDEKA CURRICULUM AT SMK RESTUMUNING."

1.2 Problem Identification

From descriptions of the research background, the problem in this study can be identified into several parts those are:

1. Phenomena as the result of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Merdeka Curriculum now days challenge the teacher to be creative and adaptive by implementing innovative strategies.
2. The use of strategies is necessary in the education process. Learning strategies can create faster, easier, more enjoyable, interesting, effective, and more independent learning. Teachers play a significant role in choosing effective strategies to enable learners to learn the material.

1.3 Scope and limitation of the Study

The scope of the study emphasized English teaching at SMK Restumuning. The problem was limited to teachers' strategies in the new Curriculum for teaching English to the tenth graders at SMK Restumuning.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What strategies do English teachers use to teach English in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in SMK Restumuning?
2. How are the teachers' strategies for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum perceived by students in teaching English at SMK Restumuning?

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the strategies the English teacher uses to teach English in the Merdeka Curriculum in SMK Restumuning.
2. To determine students' perceives regarding teachers' strategies in teaching English at SMK Restumuning.

1.6 Practical Significance

1. Theoretical Significance

The study provides adequate information about teachers' strategies in teaching and learning in the Merdeka Curriculum. It also provides a complex description for future researchers who desire to research a similar topic. Therefore, the study contributes valuable knowledge and references for future research.

2. Practical Significance

- a. For the teacher

The results of this study are expected to serve as a useful reference for other teachers in implementing English teaching strategies. Teachers should consider ways of enhancing the teaching and learning process of English. By doing so, they can help make the Merdeka Curriculum at Vocational High School more active, effective, and efficient.

b. For students

Using the right strategy, this research is expected to make students happy in teaching and learning. Students may not feel compelled to learn English, but they will enjoy learning because they will be put in a place where the situation is pleasant.

c. For the Researcher

It is hoped that the research findings can be used as consideration or review material for future researchers conducting the same research field.

