

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in English language learning, as it enables students to communicate ideas, express opinions, and engage in meaningful dialogue (Harmer, 2007). However, in many classrooms, current English materials fail to effectively address key linguistic features such as pronunciation, grammar, and fluency in a manner that is engaging and contextually relevant (Brown, 2007). This lack of focus on linguistic features results in students struggling to communicate effectively, particularly in situations requiring intercultural communication. In today's globalized world, where students interact with peers from various cultural backgrounds, it is crucial for English materials to incorporate these features in ways that promote both linguistic competence and intercultural understanding (Byram, 2012).

Intercultural competence is increasingly important, especially in diverse classrooms like those in Indonesia, where students come from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Deardorff, 2009). Education must not only teach linguistic skills but also foster understanding and respect for different cultures. Unfortunately, many existing English textbooks fail to integrate intercultural content that encourages students to explore and appreciate diverse cultural perspectives (Setiawati, 2023). This gap in the curriculum limits students' ability to engage with others effectively in multicultural settings and inhibits their capacity for empathetic communication. Integrating intercultural themes into speaking activities will enable students to better understand, navigate, and respect cultural differences, ultimately contributing to their development as global citizens (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Peace education, which focuses on building values of tolerance, empathy, and conflict resolution, aligns with national values such as Pancasila (Mishra, 2015). Despite its importance in fostering a peaceful and inclusive society, peace education is often underrepresented in English language teaching materials (Arikan,

2009). The lack of emphasis on peace education in speaking activities means students miss out on the opportunity to develop critical skills in resolving conflicts and communicating respectfully with others. By embedding peace education values into English speaking materials, this research aims to provide students with the tools they need to engage in respectful dialogues, understand different viewpoints, and collaborate peacefully, both within the classroom and in the wider community (Galtung, 1969).

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, inclusivity, and the development of competencies such as critical thinking, communication, and cultural awareness (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This curriculum calls for the integration of intercultural competence and peace education, as well as a focus on linguistic proficiency. However, there is a significant gap between the curriculum's goals and the existing English materials. While the Merdeka Curriculum promotes these values, current materials often fall short in providing opportunities for students to practice speaking skills in ways that align with the curriculum's emphasis on diversity, peace, and inclusion (Risna, 2023).

This study addresses these gaps by developing intercultural-based speaking materials that aim to improve linguistic competence, promote intercultural understanding, and incorporate peace education values. Using the Successive Approximation Model (SAM), the research ensures that the materials are designed through an iterative process that is responsive to students' needs and aligned with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum (Allen, 2012). The materials will not only foster language skills but also help students develop the values and competencies needed to navigate a diverse, globalized world.

This research is significant as it bridges the gap between the theoretical goals of the Merdeka Curriculum and the practical application of teaching speaking skills. By integrating linguistic features, intercultural understanding, and peace education values, the developed materials aim to equip students with the competencies and value to thrive in a diverse and interconnected world.

1.2 Problem Identification

A key challenge in Indonesian classrooms is navigating religious and ethnic diversity, particularly in areas with a history of conflict, such as Poso Regency in Central Sulawesi. Known as a "red area" of terrorism due to its past radicalism and violence, Poso faces significant difficulties in effectively implementing peace education. Schools in conflict zones like Poso have introduced peace education programs, interfaith dialogues, and teacher training to address radicalism and promote reconciliation (Mashuri et al., 2022). However, the success of these initiatives in mitigating the long-term effects of past conflicts and fostering tolerance among students remains uncertain.

This situation highlights the need for more inclusive educational materials that cater to the diverse needs of student populations, particularly minority groups who might face subtle discrimination or exclusion due to biases not addressed in the curriculum (Husaeni, 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, communication, and intercultural understanding (Risna, 2023), seeks to address these challenges. However, current English textbooks, including English for Nusantara, fall short in incorporating peace and intercultural education. Despite efforts to highlight Indonesia's cultural diversity, these materials often fail to sufficiently enhance students' speaking skills or promote inclusivity. This gap hinders students from developing the communication skills needed for effective interaction in Indonesia's diverse society.

Moreover, speaking tasks in Indonesian classrooms tend to focus on surface-level communication skills while overlooking critical linguistic structures, such as grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. These neglected linguistic elements are essential for fostering effective communication, especially in intercultural interactions. Without these foundational skills, students may struggle to express themselves clearly, interpret cultural nuances, or engage in meaningful discussions across diverse contexts.

To address these shortcomings, this research adopts the Successive Approximation Model (SAM) to develop speaking materials that integrate intercultural competence, peace education, and essential linguistic features. These

materials will align with the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives of promoting inclusivity, critical thinking, and effective communication. By embedding peace education and linguistic accuracy into speaking materials, this study aims to bridge the gap between curriculum goals and classroom practice, equipping students with the skills and values necessary for meaningful communication.

1.3 Limitation of the Research

This research is limited to developing intercultural-based speaking materials for seventh-grade junior high school students, focusing on linguistic practice and the integration of peace education within the Merdeka Curriculum.

1.4 Statements of Research Questions

Based on the background of the study and the identification problems, research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are the needs of 7th grade students for intercultural-based speaking materials in the Merdeka Curriculum?
2. How are intercultural-based speaking materials developed for 7th grade students to improve speaking skills and integrate peace education?

1.5 Purposes of the Research

Considering the research questions outlined above, the following objectives have been established:

1. To identify the needs of 7th grade students for intercultural-based speaking materials that support speaking skills and align with the Merdeka Curriculum.
2. To develop and evaluate intercultural-based speaking materials that enhance speaking competence and integrate peace education values for 7th grade students.

1.6 Significance of the Research

The significance of the study offers both theoretical and practical benefits. These aspects are discussed in the following section.

1. Theoretical Significance

This study can serve as a point of reference for educators and researchers interested in integrating intercultural competence, peace education, and linguistic features into language materials. It provides insights into how these elements can be applied in classroom settings. Additionally, it offers a basis for future studies exploring similar approaches in diverse educational contexts.

2. Practical Significance

a) For students

The materials developed in this study may help students improve their speaking skills and intercultural understanding. However, the effectiveness of these materials will depend on various factors, such as how consistently they are used and the specific classroom context.

b) For teachers

Teachers can use these materials to integrate intercultural and peace education into their lessons. However, their success will depend on how well teachers adapt them to their individual teaching styles and the needs of their students.

c) For other researchers

This research can be beneficial to fellow researchers by providing a framework for developing intercultural-based speaking materials. It offers insights into integrating intercultural and peace education into language teaching. Future studies can build on this work to explore its effectiveness in diverse educational settings. Additionally, it may inspire further research into the long-term impact of such materials on students' linguistic and intercultural skills.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To ensure precision and eliminate any potential misunderstandings regarding the emphasis of this research on the development of intercultural-based speaking materials, the following sections will provide thorough explanations of the key terms employed throughout this study.

1. Intercultural-Based Speaking Material

Intercultural-based speaking material refers to English language teaching resources specifically designed to enhance students' speaking skills while fostering intercultural competence. These materials incorporate culturally diverse contexts, enabling students to understand, respect, and engage with different cultural perspectives in line with the Merdeka Curriculum.

2. Linguistics Features.

Linguistic features refer to core components of language learning, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, that are explicitly practiced through the developed speaking materials. These features are targeted to enhance students' communicative competence as part of their English learning process.

3. Peace Education.

Peace education is an approach to teaching that integrates principles of understanding, tolerance, empathy, and conflict resolution into learning activities. In this study, it focuses on promoting these values through speaking exercises to encourage respectful communication and harmonious interactions among students.

4. Merdeka Curriculum.

The Merdeka Curriculum is Indonesia's education framework designed to foster student-centered learning by promoting creativity, autonomy, and character development. This curriculum integrates intercultural competence and peace education, aligning with national values and supporting diverse, inclusive learning environments.

5. SAM (Successive Approximations Model).

The Successive Approximation Model (SAM) is an iterative instructional design framework that emphasizes rapid prototyping, continuous feedback, and adaptive development. In this study, SAM guides the creation of intercultural-based speaking materials to ensure alignment with students' needs and the Merdeka Curriculum.