# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains introductions which present the reason why the research was conducted through the background of the study. Some research questions also mentioned in this chapter. Furthermore, the researcher writes all purpose of the study, hypothesis formulation, and significance in order to help the reader understand the objectives and beneficial aspects of this research. The scope and the limitations define the mine focus of this research, and the definition of key terms is presented to avoid misunderstandings that always happen.

## A.    Background of Study

Education is an effort to help the soul of students physically and mentally, from their natural nature, towards a better character in the future. Education is also a process that continues and will never end (a never-ending process), so it expects to produce sustainable quality for the future that is installed in the cultural values of the nation and *Pancasila* (Sujana, 2019). Referring to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the function of the national education system, namely in article 3, which states that "National education functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in the context of educating the nation's life, aiming to develop the potential of students to become Humans who believe and fear God Almighty, have a noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens"

(National, 1982).

Notice that with the development of education and technology nowadays, language also has become an important rule for human life-being. By using language, humans can interact with other people; express their ideas, emotions, and desires. It can also be used as a means to interact with one another to fulfill their daily needs. English has been the most important language in internal communication. People all over the world speak the same language when they meet one another in every international meeting, workshop, or conference. All countries in the world have set language as one of the compulsory subjects studied at school. Nowadays, English is important language in Indonesia. It can be seen that English becomes the first foreign language that is taught in Indonesia starting from as one of the essential subjects in the curriculum in Indonesia education. It seems the development of English language teaching in Indonesia touches the recent English curriculum objective. The goal of teaching and learning English in schools isto improve students understanding and skill in the language.

The government is shifting from teacher-centered education (K13) to student-centered through the Merdeka Curriculum. In this curriculum, students are the axis or pivotal point of education. In its implementation, the government implicitly formulated this curriculum to adjust the learning corridors to the characteristics of students and levels of achievement. The basis for curriculum development can be interpreted as an idea, an assumption, or a principle that becomes the basis or starting point in

developing the curriculum. Currently, the Merdeka Curriculum teaching module is considered a sufficient tool crucial for the smooth implementation of learning with different modes or paradigms new, mainly when associated with the transformation of the industrial revolution and also digital (Maipita et al., 2021). The Merdeka Curriculum teaching module refers to several media tools or facilities, methods, instructions, and guidelines designed in a systematic, engaging, and specific way, according to the needs of students. The teaching module implements the Learning Objective Flow (ATP) developed from Learning Outcomes (CP) with the *Pancasila* Student Profile as the target. Teaching modules are arranged according to the phases or stages of student development. The teaching module also considers what will be learned with clear learning objectives. Of course, its development base is also long-term oriented. Teachers also need to know and understand the concept of teaching modules with the intention of making the learning process more exciting and meaningful. In fact, most of the teachers still have difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum because in Merdeka curriculum use modern technology in the process of learning such as using smartphone, Google, Ka hoot duo lingo, quizzes, etc. Seeing that not all teacher in young age to able to operate smartphone. As the result, the learning process cannot work well yet. During the English class, most of the students are not responding actively, so the teacher also has difficulties in increasing their English skill. In this case, it is necessary to find out the problems and difficulties of implementing Merdeka curriculum. To handle these new

adaptations for the new curriculum education system, all education stakeholders should collaborate.

In Tulungagung there are many levels of high schools or vocational high schools and their equivalents, both public school and private school. Meanwhile, schools that have been integrated with the Merdeka curriculum have been implemented in several schools, especially senior high schools and several private vacational schools. Meanwhile, currently there are still a few vocational high schools, both public and private, implementing the Merdeka curriculum at this time. This is especially for vocational schools in Tulungagung. There are still several schools that implement an Merdeka curriculum.

Until now, private vocational school in Tulungagung which is considered successful in implementing the independent curriculum in its teaching learning process is SMK Sore Tulungagung. In Tulungagung itself, SMK Sore Tulungagung is one of the largest private vocational schools. This school has been established since 1975 and currently the accreditation of SMK Sore Tulungagung is A. In 2022, SMK Sore Tulungagung has implemented an independent curriculum. The advantage of SMK Sore Tulungagung is that it is ISO certified. Apart from that, this school has opened international classes using English teaching in all subjects (immersion classes) for the Automotive major. Therefore, there are many interested people who want to be enrolled in this school.

So, to manage the new curriculum process as a whole as a pilot private

vocational school, SMK Sore Tulungagung requires an organized level of management. Thus, the educators and administrative staff also conduct online meeting to obtain information related to issues and challenges teachers in implementing Merdeka curriculum are facing so that the learning and teaching process runs smoothly. There are still various issues and challenges to ensure the learning process runs smoothly and fully implemented, especially among the students who are badly and directly affected by the pandemic. This is because an organization like this encompasses a large number of staff and an organizational chart that runs extensively. It is highly believed that the sudden change in teaching and learning methods can create communication struggles among the teachers, and these areas worthy of further exploration.

There are previous studies related to teachers' perspectives on *Merdeka Belajar* indeed have been conducted by some researchers such as Lestyani on *Analisis Persepsi Civitas Akademika Terhadap Konsep Merdeka Belajar Menyongsong Era Industri 5.0*. The result of the study showed that only 40% of 50 teachers understand the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*. The study used closed interviews and questionnaires, but the finding did not explore the results of the interviews, then it was only in the form of percentages. Then what makes it different is this current research tries to seek further teachers' perspectives through questionnaires combined with semi-structured interviews and the results are presented in form of a description. Since this study used interviews, teachers' perspectives can be explored further

including their understanding of the concept, the obstacles they faced, and their voice regarding this issue. Then the curriculum gap can be found by analyzing their answers rather than only testing their understanding of whether their familiar with the concept or not.

That studies relevant to this study because the studies also discuss about Merdeka Curriculum. The researcher is interested in how English teachers implement Merdeka Curriculum and what the challenges in teaching English using Merdeka Curriculum. Based on the relevant research, the author would like to conduct a study entitled "The Challenges of Teaching English Using Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Sore Tulungagung."

## B. Research Question

Based on the background study that stated above, researcher has come up with 2 research questions as follow:

1. What are the challenges when teaching English using Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Sore Tulungagung?
2. How to overcome the challenges in teaching English using Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Sore Tulungagung?

## C. Objectives of the Study

1. To find out what challenges encountered during implementing English language learning through the Merdeka Curriculum.
2. To findings the solution to overcome the challenges in teaching English using Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Sore Tulungagung.

## D. Significance of the Research

The result of this study is expected to be useful both theoretically and

practically. The benefits of this study are:

1.  Theoretical Benefits

    The results of this research are expected to add insight into the challenges faced by teachers in implementing Merdeka Curriculum and several ways to overcome these challenges.

2.  Practical Benefits
    a.  For Students

        It is hoped that Merdeka Curriculum is carried out well so that learning objectives are achieved by students.

    b.  For Teachers

        This research is useful for teachers to know more about how to implement Merdeka Curriculum and how to stimulate students in the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum.

    c.  For Further Researcher

        From this research, the further researches could use some of the findings as a starting point for their further research. This research is also expected to be continued by other researcher in areas that not covered in this study.

**E.  Scope and Limitation**

To avoid misunderstanding, the researcher would like to narrow the scope of the problem. This study is focuses on the challenges of teaching English using Merdeka curriculum at SMK Sore Tulungagung. conducted at SMK Sore Tulungagung, because SMK Sore Tulungagung is one of the

schools in Tulungagung that implements the Merdeka curriculum. The limitation of the research is all English teachers grade X at SMK Sore Tulungagung. This research is limited to what are the challenges that teachers experience in implementing Merdeka curriculum learning and how to overcome these challenges.

F.  **Definition of Key terms**

1.  Merdeka Curriculum

According to Reiga (2021:12), Merdeka Belajar containing the policy of simplification of the RPP/Lesson Plan. There in explained about the new format of lesson plan that only need to put or include 3 core components which are; Learning objectives, learning activities and Assessment rather than putting all of the components from the usual lesson plan.

2.  Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK)

In order to optimize human development, Indonesia through vocational high school (SMK) tries to develop attitudes and work habits so that the students can meet the social, political, and economic demands. One of the main purposes of SMK as a secondary education institution and formal educational institution is preparing students to enter the workforce by equipping professional attitudes and to prepare the middle-level workforce to fill the demand of the business world and the World of Industry (DUDI) for this time and in the future (Dharma, 2013).

3.    Challenges

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (2005: 385) it is explained that challenges are obstacles or hurdle. That is, the inhibiting factors of a situation or event that can become a challenge or difficulty in the process of achieving goals. Inhibiting factors are also defined as internal and external resources that can hinder the implementation of a particular program.