

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of The Research

We have entered the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 as a result of keeping up with rapid technological advancements. According to Klaus Schwab (Schwab, n.d.), industry 4.0 is defined by the convergence and complementarity of emerging technology domains such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, new materials, and Advanced Digital Production (ADP) technologies. On the other hand, the Industrial Revolution, which includes 3D printing, AI, and human-machine interface (HMI), has changed the industrial landscape globally. The era of revolution is sometimes referred to as the era of disruption, given the many advancements and widespread application of new technologies for the benefit of society. One of the things that has changed in the modern world is the change in public interest in various fields, including technology, economics, education, and social issues. Education is also changing to Education 4.0 as we enter the fourth industrial revolution.

The advent of Education 4.0 shows the substitution of modern education for traditional education. Students generally find traditional education to be boring and too repetitive. That is one of the origins of contemporary education. It is expected that developments in education will result in higher standards for human resources at every level, from primary and secondary education to post-secondary education. "Education 4.0" describes the progress described with a focus on the learner. One of the main ideas of Education 4.0 is to equip human resources with diverse skills to deal with the changing environment. Modern education can grow to meet the

needs of a society that is becoming increasingly literate. Higher education, as the highest level of education, should be able to equip graduates with various skills, such as technological literacy, data literacy, and the ability to adapt to the changing social environment. Producing graduates with mastery of science and technology is another goal of higher education. Universities are therefore the best educational institutions, with a humanistic duty to develop human resources with proficiency in science and technology.

Education System 4.0 facilitates the development of modern innovations, especially in higher education, where graduates will soon face job competition. The World Readiness Standards, developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), places a strong emphasis on literacy, real-world applications, and 21st-century skills as global competencies that enhance students' communication abilities and lay the foundation for them to be competitive in the twenty-first century. According to Uzoamaka (2021), 21st-century skills consist of six Cs: Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, Citizenship/Culture, and Character Education/Connectivity. Creating an autonomous learning curriculum in Indonesia requires a strong foundation in the six 21st-century skills: critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, citizenship/culture, and character education/connectivity. To achieve this and produce the best graduates, the Indonesian government has put in place several creative initiatives aimed at improving the quality of Indonesian education. The concept of Merdeka Belajar was introduced by Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Nadiem Makarim in his 2019 National Teacher's Day

speech. In light of the 4.0 revolution, the concept of autonomous learning offers the Indonesian education system a necessary change.

The basis of the Kampus Merdeka idea is a cutting-edge teaching method that produces excellent learning outcomes. Furthermore, Nadiem Makarim explained that the core principle of independent learning is to give students the freedom to think for themselves and make their own decisions, and to create a positive learning environment for them. This independent campus program provides an excellent opportunity for students from public and private universities across Indonesia to recognize, develop, and apply their potential through work practice or hands-on learning experience in the workplace as a means of preparing themselves for the real world of work.

In its conceptual framework, Kampus Merdeka consists of four policies related to higher education: (1) Opening of new programs, which gives autonomy to public and private universities to launch or create new programs; (2) Higher Education Accreditation System; (3) Public Service Agency, State Universities, and Work Unit Freedom to Transform into Legal Entity State Universities; and (4) Student Rights to Take Courses Outside the Study Program and Change the Semester Credit System (SKS). According to the policy, students are allowed to study for three semesters without participating in their study program. They can participate in an outside program for two semesters, or 40 credits, or they can spend one semester (20 credits) at the university taking courses that are part of a different study program.

The concept of an independent campus gave rise to the latest innovation called the Teaching Campus Program. The Teaching Campus Program, also known as Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM), is one of the initiatives of the Independent Campus Program. Independent Campus is a flexible and autonomous higher education learning program that can create a creative and innovative learning culture that suits students' interests and talents (Tohir, 2020a). These demands encourage skill demands in the 21st century, encouraging distance learning is learning that is carried out outside the classroom, without direct face-to-face contact by utilizing an internet connection (Kusuma & Hamidah, 2020). So, this program can be used as a way to unite students from various educational backgrounds and all campuses in Indonesia to improve education. In its implementation, this policy requires collaboration and cooperation with partners or other parties related to their scientific fields and participation in supporting the desired learning outcomes (Wulandari, 2021). The form of learning activities by Permendikbud No. 3 of 2020 Article 15 paragraph 1 can be carried out in the Study Program and outside the Study Program.

Through the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program that is well designed and implemented, students' hard skills will be formed strongly. The Merdeka Learning Program - Merdeka Campus is expected to be able to answer the challenges of higher education to produce graduates who are by the times, advances in science and technology, the demands of the business world and the industrial world, and the dynamics of society. One of the soft skills that today's youth must hone and have to face the progress of the twenty-first century is the ability to speak and understand English. In many international communication contexts, English is

used as the international language. English proficiency counts in the workplace. Simply put, students must go through the process of learning English to reach the highest level of language proficiency. The need for English proficiency is growing in the twenty-first century due to the abundance of English-language resources and information available in the business, scientific, and technological domains. In the technology sector, software development, technical documentation, and international networking related to technology projects are all done in English. English is also used in scientific publications and international technology conferences. English is used in reports and presentations, in communication between multinational companies, and business dealings with partners and clients around the world. The primary language used in textbooks, scientific journals, and educational materials for science and technology worldwide is English. In addition, English is used in applications and technology platforms such as social media and e-learning that support international collaboration and distance learning.

The soft skills of English Department students can be directly involved and contribute to the selection of the study program of choice through the MBKM program. The idea of "freedom of learning" allows students to participate in a semester-long course of study that is not part of their regular curriculum. This is called "cross-major student exchange". This can help students enhance and develop their knowledge of education. In practice, this student exchange program also creates a new paradigm in that every scientific field has the opportunity to collaborate in developing science in people's lives (Faiz & Purwati, 2021). As in learning practices, students majoring in English can practice their English skills through internships or student exchange programs at MBKM. Thus, the MBKM

program provides opportunities for students to develop their potential and competence through various programs, including entrepreneurship training, research, independent projects, and job training. Through the application of new information or the acquisition of diverse learning experiences, these programs allow enrolled English students the means to improve their language proficiency and also gain new knowledge that they did not acquire in their main program.

Astuti and Rosiawa (n.d.) in their research entitled "Student Responses to the Implementation of MBKM (Study on FEB Students who follow International Course Asia University)", used a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis. Through data collection techniques such as observation, FGDs, interviews, and documentation, they sought to explore and evaluate the program. Of the 37 students who attended the course, all were invited to participate in FGDs to give their opinions. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 informants to get a more comprehensive analysis. The results show that students have a positive perception of the program and understand that its main objective is to strengthen their academic competence through the courses offered. This shows that the MBKM policy, particularly in student exchange, is successful in improving students' academic competence.

The research journal by Sahril Nur et al. (2022) entitled "Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy of Students Attending Online Courses Through MBKM Program" highlights the importance of analyzing students' self-esteem and self-efficacy in attending online courses of the MBKM exchange program organized by three participating universities through SPADA DIKTI. This study used quantitative

methods with an online questionnaire to collect data from 80 participating students, and statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.

The findings of this study show that self-esteem and self-efficacy have a significant and positive influence on students who take online courses. Tests using the F-test and T-test confirmed the substantial impact of both variables. Specifically, students' self-esteem increased through the online teaching and learning system, and their self-efficacy also increased as they were able to accept and complete new challenges.

This study revealed that the regression coefficients for self-esteem and self-efficacy had a positive effect on online courses, so modifying the program to increase students' awareness of online courses made sense. In addition, this study closed the gap that existed in previous studies regarding self-efficacy and self-esteem in online learning across universities. The researcher found that students' confidence in lecturers from other universities in the context of online learning is superior to offline learning. Therefore, this study provides important insights on how to improve students' learning experience through online MBKM programs.

In addition, research conducted by Shelly Andari, et al. (2021) in their research entitled "Student Exchange Program of Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) in Covid-19 Pandemic" highlighted the urgency of managing the MBKM student exchange program during the Covid-19 pandemic. Given that previously student exchanges were carried out directly, this research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand the adaptations that occur. Data collection techniques include interviews, observation, and

documentation, with interviews conducted with the Head of the Education Management Department, the Secretary of the Education Management Department, two lecturers managing the course, and MBKM student exchange participants.

The results show that student exchange management includes planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. The three main aspects evaluated are the program, the implementing organization, and the target group. The program aspect is considered less successful due to obstacles in planning, program indicators, and learning processes and outputs. The implementing organization aspect was also not fully successful due to the lack of maturity in the process before, during, and after implementation. However, the target group aspect was considered quite successful because the results obtained by students were positive, although there were obstacles in the implementation process. This study emphasizes the importance of improvement in program planning and implementation to overcome existing obstacles and achieve the desired results.

Based on research conducted by Astuti and friends in their research entitled "Student Responses to the Implementation of MBKM (Study on FEB Students who follow International Course Asia University)", Sahril Nur and friends in 2022 with the title "Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy of Students Attending Online Courses Through MBKM Program", Shelly Andari and friends in 2021 with the title "Student Exchange Program of Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) in Covid-19 Pandemic", it can be seen that the thesis research conducted by the current researcher has differences from several previous studies. The current researcher seeks to explore in depth the perceptions of students majoring in English who take part in cross-major student exchange activities in the MBKM program and about



the MBKM program itself which has been implemented on several campuses including UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. So, based on the background of the description above, researchers are interested in taking the title “English Department Students’ Perceptions of the Student Exchange Program of MBKM and its contribution to their English Language Development”. In this study, the researcher focuses on the perceptions and experiences of students majoring in English following the student exchange program by following the cross-departmental learning process, which is selected based on their respective interest tendencies. As such, there is no element of intentional plagiarism in this study.

### **B. Statement of Research Problems**

1. What is the student perception of the MBKM student exchange program?
2. What is the student's perception of the contribution of the MBKM student exchange program to their English language development?

### **C. Objectives of The Research**

Based on the research background and the problems listed above, the author states the objectives of the research as follows:

1. To find out the perceptions of English students about the existence of student exchange programs in MBKM as well as their considerations in choosing the courses they take for the MBKM program.
2. To find out how students obtain and utilize contributions for the development of their soft skills and soft skills, especially in the development of their English language skills.

#### **D. Significance of The Research**

Basically, the MBKM program is relatively new in the world of education and has not been implemented for a long time in several universities in Indonesia. But with this program, the world of education gave birth to a new transformation that made education in Indonesia more advanced. Through the research conducted, it can help and provide important insights to improve or optimize this program to achieve the goals of educational transformation. In addition to the new transformation in the world of education, the MBKM program provides a new innovation in the world of education in teaching and learning methods.

- a. Benefits for students, this research aims to make students more active in participating in the MBKM program and can motivate students to continue to be enthusiastic in learning and can develop skills, proficiency, and knowledge that they can apply in their future careers. In addition, they will also have a strong mentality in preparing themselves to face challenges in the real world.
- b. Benefits for lecturers, this research provides an opportunity for lecturers across the country to be involved in the development and management of more innovative education, in accordance with the needs and interests of students.
- c. For researchers with the results of this study, the researcher hopes to enrich his understanding of the independent curriculum and the MBKM program which is currently being implemented in several Universities in Indonesia. As well as gaining more in-depth understanding of the concept and implementation of the MBKM program.

- d. Benefits for readers and prospective researchers, the findings of this study can potentially expand the scope of knowledge of readers. And this research can be used as a valuable reference source for those interested in applying similar methods in conducting similar research, especially in the context of implementing the Merdeka curriculum in the MBKM program.

### **E. Scope and Limitation of The Research**

To avoid misunderstanding, this research will be limited and narrowed in focus. More specifically, this study will examine the extent to which English major students participate and contribute through the student exchange program under the MBKM program. As follows:

1. Activities of English students who participate in the cross-major student exchange program under the MBKM program.
2. The involvement of English students who participated in the cross-major student exchange program under the MBKM program.
3. Contributions made by English students who participated in the cross-discipline student exchange program through the MBKM program.
4. Utilization of the contribution obtained for the development of English language skills by participating in the cross-major student exchange program through the MBKM program.

### **F. Definitions of Key Terms**

In this section, there are some explanations related to the title mentioned in the previous item, namely "English Department Students' in The Students' Exchange Program of MBKM Program and Its Contribution to Their English

Language Development." In order for the reader not to experience any confusion, it is important to establish the definitions of key terms as follows:

### 1. Perception

Perception is a process in which the sensory organs receive stimuli from outside and then interpreted by each individual, so understanding can vary from one person to another. Good affirmation will greatly affect a person's assessment of something. Conversely, poor affirmation will result in a negative assessment of something planned. Therefore, it is important to provide positive affirmations to constructively influence an individual's perception and judgment.

### 2. Contribution

Contributions can be in the form of materials or actions. Contribution in the sense of action includes individual behavior that has a positive or negative impact on others. Contribution also means that individuals try to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their lives by sharpening their role position, which then becomes their field of specialization, according to their competence. Contributions can be made in various fields, such as thought, leadership, professionalism, finance, and others. Therefore, contribution not only benefits the recipient, but also helps the individual to develop in his competence and play a more effective role in society.

### 3. Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)

Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) is one of the policies to address learning concerns. Referring to Permendikbud number 3 of 2020 concerning National Education Standards to improve the quality of learning and

higher education graduates. Political objectives other than the Merdeka Campus to increase the level of skills, both sweet and difficult skills, to be more ready and relevant to meet the needs of the times, prepare graduates as the nation's previous leaders and superior personalities, experiential learning programs with flexible walks will be able to facilitate students to develop their potential according to their interests and talents.

#### 4. Merdeka Student Exchange

The Merdeka Student Exchange Program in 2023 is a semester-long student mobility initiative with the aim of gaining learning experience at various universities in Indonesia while strengthening the sense of unity in diversity.