A THESIS

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FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

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Certify that thesis entitled "Teachers' and Students' Perceptions Toward Implementation Merdeka Curriculum in Learning English at Junior High School 1 Palembang" is my own work and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethics and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic Indonesia Number 19, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Palembang, 28 Desember 2024

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Alm. Rahmadiawan, and Titin Aryanti. I want to elevate their degree. My dearest brother M. Kenzie Zio. I will love you guys forever. To myself who continue and finish this thesis, to stay believe and overcome up and down situations.

MOTTO:

Life can be heavy, especially if you try to carry it all at once. Part of growing up and moving into new chapters of your life is about catch and release, knowing what things to keep, and what things to release.

(Taylor Swift)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore teachers' and students' perceptions at SMP Negeri 1 Palembang toward the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English learning. This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Palembang. The participants of this study were 2 English teachers and 54 eighth-grade students. This study used mixed methods, a quantitative study through a closed-ended questionnaire, and a qualitative study through interviews and observations. From the results it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has been going well, teachers and students have positive views, and the Merdeka Curriculum which provided improvements to the development of students character, courage, and involvement in learning. But there are still several obstacles experienced during its implementation, and more efforts are still needed to overcome existing challenges to achieve the desired learning objectives.

Keyword: Teachers' and Students' Perception, Merdeka Kurikulum, Learning English

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces (1) the background of the study, (2) the problems of the study, (3) the objectives of the study, (4) the significance of the study.

1.1.Background of The Study

Education is one of the most important aspects and is also the foundation that builds the future of a country. According to (Ekawati, et al., 2024) education is one of the many aspects that greatly influences human civilization. This is because education can give someone an understanding, insight, and skills that can be used to compete in the current era. With the existence of an education system, the standard of living of the people of a country can increase, this is because education allows a person to develop the potential that exists within him in a directed manner. Apart from that, the aim of education is to maximize the potential of students as well as a means of educating the nation's life (Marliani, 2023).

In the 21st century, education is growing more vital for equipping students with the abilities to learn and create, utilize technology resources, and be prepared for employment while applying their life skills (Muliastrini, 2020). Students are expected to be able to find out for themselves the information they need from various sources, be able to formulate problems and solve them by working together and collaborating, and be able to think critically and analytically. Therefore, education must be able to adapt to the changes that continue to occur today. Recognizing the significance of education, the government must focus intently on addressing different issues related to enhancing education from primary school to higher education. As in Alpian et al., (2019), this attention is demonstrated, among other things, by providing meaningful budget allocations and making policies related to efforts to improve the quality of education. In this case, there are many

factors that can support the development of education to achieve the desired goals, one of which is the curriculum.

The curriculum consists of plans that serve as a guide to meet educational goals. Susetyo (2020) defines the curriculum as a collection of strategies and frameworks that include goals, subject matter, and resources for learning, along with methods that will serve as a roadmap for managing activities and education to reach the objectives of learning. The curriculum is very important in the sustainability of the education system because the curriculum has a role in preparing the learning program that will be implemented. Ismailia (2023) stated that the curriculum is one of the core components in the implementation of an education system. The curriculum is what determines whether learning has met the expected targets or not. Apart from that, the curriculum also has a function as a tool for students to achieve their learning goals. The curriculum is in the form of a set of rules and guidelines regarding objectives, subjects, teaching materials, and methods used to carry out teaching activities in the classroom. According to Coşkun Yaşar and Aslan (2021), decisions made regarding the curriculum provide an important indication of how the entire teaching and learning process will be impacted. Therefore, through the curriculum, the government can ensure that the learning received by all students can run following the established guidelines and can achieve learning goals.

On the other hand, policies regarding the curriculum continue to change and are flexible, this is one of the government's efforts to find the best curriculum that is by global information developments and adapted to the needs of each school agency. Badriyah (2021) stated that the curriculum itself must be dynamic, and able to change according to developments over time so that it can always be relevant to the educational goals that will be achieved according to the times. In Indonesia itself, the curriculum has changed several times, starting from the 1947 curriculum, 1994 curriculum, 2006 curriculum (KTSP), and 2013 curriculum, to the Merdeka curriculum which is currently being implemented.

Merdeka's curriculum offers a learning approach that differs from 2013 curriculum. This curriculum is more adaptable and diverse compared to other programs. This aims to provide freedom to teachers and students in adapting the learning process as needed and according to the characteristics of the students so that they can optimally strengthen their competencies and reduce their dependence on textbooks in classroom learning. (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022) This curriculum allows teachers the greatest flexibility to create lessons that meet the needs and traits of their students. This curriculum aims to provide a more holistic and inclusive educational approach that emphasizes character development, creativity, and critical thinking skills, in addition to academic knowledge. (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024) stated that the curriculum focuses on enhancing skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, creativity, and communication, which are vital for contemporary education. Merdeka's educational program aims to be more adjustable and responsive to the needs of individual students, placing a stronger focus on learner-centered education and technology integration. This adaptability enables the inclusion of local subject matter, modification of instructional resources, and creation of creative learning opportunities that connect with the actual experiences of students. (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024).

In addition, the new Merdeka curriculum has been implemented from 2022 to 2024 following the readiness of each school in Indonesia. The Education Curriculum is dynamic. Curriculum development must follow the needs and characteristics of students according to their time (Cholilah et al., 2023). One example is the Merdeka curriculum, where educators can select different teaching resources to tailor learning according to student's needs and interests. Initiatives aimed at enhancing the Pancasila student profiles are created based on specific themes set by the government. These traits will be nurtured from daily experiences and embedded in students through the culture of the education unit, extracurricular activities, projects to promote the Pancasila student profiles, and other enrichment programs (Kemendikbudristek, 2021).

Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in the "Freedom to Learn" program, which is an extraordinary change movement. Nadiem Makarim, serving as Indonesia's Minister of Education, revamped Curriculum 13 into the Merdeka Curriculum to cultivate exceptional human resources rooted in Pancasila student initiatives. (Mulyadi, et al., 2023) Stated that Merdeka Curriculum also referred to as the freedom curriculum was officially introduced via a Ministerial Decree at the beginning of 2022 and has been led by Minister Nadiem Makarim since 2019, to establish a more independent and student-focused learning atmosphere. Enhancing the identity of Pancasila students emphasizes fostering values and skills in daily life, which are cultivated in each student via the educational environment, extracurricular activities, and initiatives aimed at reinforcing the Pancasila student profile and work ethic (Rahayuningsih, 2021). With the Pancasila profile project, it is hoped that it can produce students who are of good quality in terms of literacy, competence, and character.

However, the significant changes that occurred from Curriculum 13 to the Merdeka curriculum created challenges and difficulties for teachers and students, because these changes were not only changes in terms of learning but also in terms of learning tools, assessments, and others. Astuti et al. (2024) mentioned that applying the Merdeka Curriculum faces a few major challenges for educators and learners, with the key issues being tailored teaching, restrictions in technology, and a requirement to move towards a learner-focused method. The role of teachers greatly influences the implementation and development of innovations in the learning process using the Merdeka Curriculum. According to Daga (2021), the execution of this autonomous learning policy promotes a positive role for educators in the development of the curriculum through new innovative approaches to the learning experience. A challenge that arises in applying the Merdeka curriculum is that educators must be capable of preparing content in a creative, innovative manner while also adapting the curriculum suitable for each class. In preparation, the school held seminars and training for teachers regarding the curriculum and how to implement it. Apart from training and seminars held by schools, teachers also take part in external training independently to strengthen their understanding of the Merdeka curriculum.

Based on several problems mentioned above, the researcher assumes that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia has not been fully implemented properly in several schools. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting research on how teachers and students perceive the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This study aims to determine the opinions of teachers and students and how they are applied to English learning in junior high schools with the title "Teachers and Students Perceptions Toward Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Learning English at Junior High School 1 Palembang.

1.2 The Problems of The Study

- 1. How do the students and teachers perceive the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at SMPN 1 Palembang?
- 2. How is the Merdeka Curriculum implemented in teaching English at SMPN 1 Palembang?

1.3 The Objectives of The Study

- To find out how the students and teachers perceive the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at SMPN 1 Palembang.
- 2. To find out how the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in teaching English at SMPN 1 Palembang.

1.4 The Significance of The Study

It is expected that the results of this research can provide information to teachers, students, and other education personnel about the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the junior high school level. This study is important because considering that the Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that has only been implemented for the last 2 years in the Indonesian education system, therefore, researchers here by conducting this research hope to provide information about how the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in the Indonesian education system at the junior high school level. And also identify the effectiveness of implementing the curriculum. Thus, this research can be useful for teachers whose schools have implemented a Merdeka Curriculum. And, teachers can find out how to properly implement the curriculum so that they can achieve learning goals effectively. Meanwhile, for students, this research can provide information about the Merdeka Curriculum system, so that they can adapt their way of learning to the curriculum.

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