

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a brief explanation of some theories that support the study. The theories are related to *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, English learning in *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, and teaching strategies.

#### **2.1 Description of *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum**

Conceptually, *Merdeka Belajar* is an idea for reforming the educational system introduced by the Minister of Education and Culture in 2019. The term *Merdeka Belajar* consists of "*Merdeka*" and "*Belajar*". In the comprehensive Indonesian dictionary, *Merdeka* means freedom from slavery or independence. In this context, independence is thinking freely and deciding one's fate (Azmi & Iswanto, 2021). While, *Belajar* is learning means a change in a person that occurs because of experience rather than the development or growth of his body or characteristics from birth (Nurhayati et al., 2022). Therefore, *Merdeka Belajar* can be interpreted as independent learning that determines how to behave, think, and apply them creatively for each individual's self-development by selecting his future.

*Merdeka Belajar* has three main characteristics, based on Kemendikbudristek (2022), those characteristics as follow:

- 1) Project-based learning for soft skills and character development according to the profile of *Pancasila* students;
- 2) Focus on essential materials so that there is sufficient time for in-depth study of basic competencies such as literacy and numeracy;
- 3) Teachers can use differentiated learning according to students' abilities and adjust to local contexts and content.

In addition, there are five main aspects in *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum as follow:

- 1) Curriculum framework, the curriculum framework is the main foundation design in developing the curriculum and the curriculum structure;

- 2) Learning outcomes fulfilment (*Capaian Pembelajaran/CP*) is divided into six phases, namely: Phase A (grades 1 and 2 of elementary school), Phase B (grades 3 and 4 of elementary school), Phase C (grades 5 and 6 elementary schools), Phase D (grades 7, 8, and 9 of junior high school), Phase E (grade 10 of senior high school), Phase F (grades 11 and 12 of senior high school);
- 3) Curriculum structure, there is no difference in total lesson hours in implementing project activities; only lesson hours (*JP/Jam Pelajaran*) for each subject are allocated for two learning activities: (1) intracurricular learning and (2) projects to strengthen the *Pancasila* student's profile (Kemendikbudristek, 2022);
- 4) Learning and assessment principles;
- 5) Teaching tools are various sources and teaching materials used by the teachers in order to achieve a *Pancasila* student profile and learning outcomes fulfilment. Teaching tools include textbooks, teaching modules, learning videos, etc. Teaching tools are distributed through a digital platform developed by the Minister Education and Research and Technology so it can be accessed more widely in a short period of time.

*Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum is an intra-curricular learning curriculum that optimizes material so students have sufficient time to explore topics and strengthen competencies (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Teachers are required to design the learning process based on learning outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran/CP*) provided by the government and adapt to students' needs, abilities and the school's circumstances. Thus, teachers have the flexibility to choose and use various teaching equipment so that learning can be adapted to the needs and interests of students.

In summary, the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is an education policy implemented by the Indonesian government to promote student-centred and competency-based learning. In addition, the teachers have opportunities to adapt and design the national curriculum based on school circumstances. Moreover, the



curriculum is designed to give students more freedom to choose what they want to learn and how they want to learn it, and it is intended to empower students to take responsibility for their learning. Therefore, it is the government's strategy to reach good educational goals.

### **2.1.1 Characteristics of *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum**

The transformation of the previous curriculum to *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum resulted several paradigms and contrasting systems. The previous curriculum focuses on improving and balancing attitude and knowledge competencies with categories in the choice of class majors (Rohimajaya et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum focuses on developing students' character and competence, honing their interests and talents (Pertiwi and Pusparini, 2021). Therefore, current curriculum is focused to character education.

Education should develop not only a generation of experts in various disciplines but also the strength of character, ethics, and noble character. The goal of character education is for learners to have the basic information, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and skills necessary to live independently and pursue higher education (Walker, 2020). Moreover, in the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, students are required to be able to form or carry out a project. Project-based learning can develop students' soft skills and character in accordance with the profile of Pancasila students, focusing more on literacy and numeracy (Usman et al., 2022). Moreover, according to Kemendikbudristek (2022), there are several characteristics of *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum as follows.

#### **1. Differentiated Learning**

Differentiated learning is one of the characteristics of the *Merdeka* curriculum. Differentiation is a teaching and learning strategy that tailors the study object matter to match students' abilities, interests, and specific needs, to prevent disappointment and failure throughout their educational journey (Wahyuningsari et.al., 2022). Hence, teachers need to organize the course materials, learning tasks, daily activities, and the

ultimate evaluation, in accordance with students' readiness, preferences, and the teaching methods that align with their learning profiles.

Teachers have a chance to design the lesson based on their students. In this context, according to Tomlinson (2013), differentiated learning involves three aspects that are within the control of teachers:

- a. Content, which pertains to what students need to learn and how they will access knowledge, ideas, and skills;
- b. Process, addressing how students will effectively acquire and grasp the knowledge, ideas, and skills;
- c. Product, focusing on how students will demonstrate their understanding and mastery of the subject matter.

Teachers have the capacity and opportunity to incorporate these elements into the classroom's teaching and learning process, as they can tailor them to align with the learning styles of their students. These elements are entirely within the purview of the teacher, allowing for customization based on students' needs. Hence, teachers should recognize that various approaches and methods are available when it comes to implementing differentiated learning. Gusteri and Neviyarni (2020) stated effective preparation is essential for implementing differentiated learning. This preparation can be achieved through various means: (a) Analyzing the curriculum to be employed in teaching while considering the strengths and weaknesses of the students. (b) Developing school plans and strategies by making curriculum and instructional adjustments that align with students' requirements. (c) Describing the support provided by teachers to accommodate students' diverse learning styles. (d) Periodically reflecting on and evaluating the achievements of the planning process. Moreover, differentiated learning offers several advantages (Purba et al., 2021) These advantages include encouraging students to engage in more profound learning, enabling students to take on roles as peer



tutors, and emphasizing the fact that a uniform teaching approach is insufficient to meet the diversity of all students.

In summary Differentiated learning takes a dynamic and diverse approach to understanding students, with teachers adopting multiple perspectives on their learning. It is important to note that differentiated learning does not equate to individualized learning. Thus, differentiated learning can serve as a beneficial strategy for teachers to meet their students' diverse needs.

## 2. Strengthening Pancasila Students' Profile

One of the independent curriculum's project activities is carrying out projects to strengthen Pancasila student profile activities. The project to strengthen Pancasila student profile activity is an activity in the form of a project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (Nurhayati et al., 2022). The project to strengthen Pancasila student profile activities can be carried out through two primary stages: the conceptual and contextual steps. In this project to strengthen Pancasila student profile activity, students are given a flexible learning structure in the school that can adjust to the division of time to create more active learning activities (Pamungkas and Sudigdo, 2022). The activity aims to strengthen many competencies in the Pancasila students' profile (Rachmawati et al., 2022). Thus, the implementation of projects to strengthen Pancasila student profile activities can increase the level of confidence in students in their work, increase students' potential, and discover the interests of students' talents in a certain field.

The project to strengthen Pancasila student profile is activities to improve students attitude. It can make students more active because learners are exclusively involved in the learning process, such as having discussions with their peers about the project they will show (Usman et al., 2022). The aim of the project to strengthen Pancasila student profile is carried out to improve students' skills in creating projects that are adjusted using Pancasila student profiles (Aditia et al., 2021).



Therefore, it has the goal to produce a generation of the nation that has the values of the Pancasila student profile.

The values of *Pancasila* are then further explained, which are called dimensions. According to *Dimensi, Elemen, dan Subelemen Profil Pelajar Pancasila pada Kurikulum Merdeka* (Kemendikbudristek, 2022), there are six elements or dimensions of *Pancasila* student's profile in *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum as follow.

- 1) Have faith, fear God Almighty and have a noble character.

Students in Indonesia must have good morals and relationships with God Almighty and understand religious teachings and beliefs to implement these things in everyday life. This dimension has five key elements: religious morals, personal morals, morals to people, nature, and state morals;

- 2) Global Diversity

In the current era of globalization, *Pancasila* students must maintain their noble culture, locality, and identity and remain open to interacting with other cultures so that it fosters mutual respect and the possibility of the formation of a new culture that is positive and does not conflict with the noble culture of the nation. Key elements of global diversity include knowing and appreciating culture, intercultural communication ability in interacting with others, and reflection and responsibility for the experience of diversity;

- 3) Worked together

Working together is a characteristic that *Pancasila* students must possess to carry out activities collectively and voluntarily. It is essential because Pancasila students' cooperation will facilitate activities to run smoothly and lightly. Elements of mutual collaboration are collaboration, caring, and sharing;



4) Independent

At a young age, Pancasila students must be independent and have a sense of responsibility for a process. On the other hand, *Pancasila* students must also regulate their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour to achieve their learning goals. The key elements of independence consist of awareness of oneself and the situation and self-regulation

5) Critical reasoning.

It is a student who can process qualitatively and quantitative information, build relationships between various information, analyze information, evaluate, and conclude. The elements of critical reasoning are obtaining and processing ideas, analyzing and evaluating reasoning, reflecting on thoughts and thought processes, and making decisions.

6) Creative, namely being able to modify and produce something original, meaningful, useful, and impactful. The key element of being creative consists of generating original ideas and producing original works and actions.

It can be concluded these six elements are addressed by enhancing Indonesian cultural values and *Pancasila*, the foundation for all national development objectives. The *Pancasila* Profile Strengthening Project is a cross-disciplinary learning technique that uses a project-based learning approach to observe and solve problems in the surrounding environment. Therefore, these characteristics will be developed from everyday life and instilled in students through the education unit's culture, intracurricular learning, projects to raise the *Pancasila* student's profiles, and extracurricular activities.

In summary, based on the characteristics of *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum above it can be called that *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum stresses freedom for both teachers and students. The essence of *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is to explore teachers' and students' best potential to innovate and improve the quality of



learning independently. Therefore, by implementing *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum the next generation of students who have Pancasila character can be achieved.

### **2.1.2 Learning Activity in *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum**

The *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is an intracurricular learning program that streamlines material, allowing students sample time for in-depth exploration of subjects and the enhancement of their competencies (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Teachers need to structure the educational process in accordance with the learning outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran/CP*) provided by the government while also tailoring it to the student's needs, capabilities, and the school's circumstances. Thus, teachers possess the freedom to select and employ a range of instructional tools to ensure that learning is customized to suit the students' requirements and interests.

The aim of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is to transform learning from being a mere obligation to a purposeful and enjoyable experience. Teachers are expected not only to deliver excellent instruction using differentiated teaching approaches but also to make it more profound and meaningful. Learning outcomes fulfilment (*Capaian Pembelajaran/CP*) is divided into six phases, namely Phase A (grades 1 and 2 of elementary school), Phase B (grades 3 and 4 of elementary school), Phase C (grades 5 and 6 of elementary school), Phase D (grades 7, 8, and 9 of junior high school), Phase E (grade 10 of senior high school), Phase F (grades 11 and 12 of senior high school). Therefore, the achievement of learning objectives is not restricted to one academic year but also has a more flexible duration.

The *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum offers various themes that can be adapted to align with the specific conditions and requirements of each school. According to *Kajian Akademik Kurikulum Untuk Pemulihan Pembelajaran* (Kemenikbudristek, 2022), the *Merdeka* Curriculum has seven themes:

1. Sustainable Lifestyle (for elementary school until senior high school/vocational school)
2. Local Wisdom (for elementary school until senior high school/vocational school)



3. *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (for elementary school until senior high school/vocational school)
4. Build the Soul and Body (for elementary school until senior high school/vocational school)
5. Voice of Democracy (for elementary school until senior high school/vocational school)
6. Engineering and Technology to Build the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (for elementary school until senior high school/vocational school)
7. Entrepreneurship (for elementary school until senior high school/vocational school).

The total lesson hours remain consistent when implementing project activities, with the allocation of lesson hours (*Jam Pelajaran/JP*) for each subject being divided into two learning activities intracurricular learning and projects designed to enhance the *Pancasila* student's profile (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Additionally, in contrast to the previous curriculum, there is a reduction in the number of lesson hours specifically for regular in-class learning activities (extracurricular).

It can be concluded that there are differences between the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum and previous curriculum. The time allocation of lesson hours in *Merdeka Belajar* is divided for the enhancement of the *Pancasila* student's profile through project activities. Therefore, *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is more focused on enhancing students' characteristics development.

## **2.2. English Learning in *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum**

English subjects teach English language skills and practices while also developing a global perspective in which students may better recognize cultural differences and build tolerance. According to *Kajian Akademik Kurikulum Untuk Pemulihan Pembelajaran* (Kemendikbudristek, 2022), English learning is one of the areas given priority in the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum in order to achieve the government's goal of improving all dimensions of the *Pancasila* students profile,



including global diversity. As a result, English learning is increasingly being applied at the elementary level.

Moreover, General English learning in the national curriculum at the Primary and Secondary School levels allows students to gain insights about themselves, social relationships, culture, and internationally available career prospects (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Then, students can acquire access to the outside world and learn diverse ways of thinking by studying English.

The objectives of the English subject for the students are to be able to:

- 1) Develop communicative competence in English with various multimodal texts (oral, written, visual, and audiovisual);
- 2) Develop intercultural competence to understand and appreciate the perspectives, practices, and products of Indonesian and foreign cultures;
- 3) Develop self-confidence to express as an independent and responsible individual;
- 4) Develop critical and creative reasoning skills.

Additionally, learning English focuses on improving the capacity to utilize English in six language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting in many sorts of texts in an integrated manner. Moreover, The learning outcomes of these six English skills are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEFR) (Pertiwi & Pusparini, 2021). According to Kemendikbudristek (2022), English Learning Outcomes of Phase D (SMP/Junior High School or equivalent) are as follows:

- 1) Listening – Speaking Element

At the end of Phase D, students use English to engage and exchange ideas, experiences, interests, opinions, and viewpoints with instructors, peers, and others in a growing number of familiar formal and informal contexts. They understand the major concepts and important details of talks or presentations on a variety of general interest topics with some repetition and rewording. They participate



in debate by expressing their thoughts, making comparisons, and proclaiming their choices. Students explain and clarify their replies using fundamental sentence structure and verb tenses;

2) Reading – Viewing Element

At the end of Phase D, children can read and reply freely to known and new texts with predictable structures and vocabulary. They find and analyze primary concepts and particular information in texts of various genres. These writings may be printed or digital, and may include visual, multimodal, or interactive elements. They identify the intent of texts and begin to infer from them in order to comprehend implicit information in the text;

3) Writing – Presenting Element

By the end of Phase D, students communicate their ideas and experience through simple, organized paragraphs, demonstrating a developing use of specific vocabulary and simple sentence structures. Using models, they plan, create and present informative, imaginative and persuasive texts in simple and compound sentences to structure arguments and to explain or justify a position. They include basic information and detail, and also vary their sentence construction in their writing.

It can be concluded that the goal of phase D is for students to use spoken, written, and visual texts in English to interact and communicate in a broader context in both formal and informal situations. Learners can use various types of texts such as narratives, descriptions, procedures, special texts (short messages, advertisements), and authentic texts are the main references in learning English in this phase. As a result, English learning in *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum emphasizes the competencies in using English in the six language skills namely, speaking, listening, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting in various types of texts. Thus, English learning in *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum has a purpose which is the students have ability to maintain interaction and convey something desired

in various contexts with clear articulation, express the main idea to be conveyed comprehensively, and practice communication even though it is not yet fluent.

### **2.2.1 English Learning Characteristics in Merdeka Belajar Curriculum**

English is a globally dominant language. According to Nurchalis, (2020) English is used in various sectors such as education, business, trade, science, law, tourism, international relations, health, and technology. Thus, learning English provides individuals the opportunity to communicate with individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds worldwide.

General English education in the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, at both the primary and secondary school levels, provides learners with the opportunity to gain insights related to themselves, social relationships, culture, and global job prospects (Solikhah, 2022). Learning English enables students to access the world beyond and comprehend diverse modes of thinking. Crucial to this sociocultural and intercultural understanding is the enhancement of critical thinking skills (Pratikno et al., 2022). Therefore, gaining an understanding of other cultures and their interactions with Indonesian culture leads to a comprehensive comprehension of Indonesian culture. This, in turn, enhances one's self-identity and appreciation for diversity. According to Kemendikbudristek (2022), there are several characteristics of English learning in *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum as follows.

1. The types of texts taught in general English are diverse, e.g. narratives, description, exposition, procedure, argumentation, discussion, specialized texts (short messages, advertisements), and authentic texts. These texts are presented in various forms, including written, spoken (monologues or dialogues), visual, audio, and multimodal (texts that contain verbal, visual, and audio aspects). They can be either authentic or created for instructional purposes and may be singular or multiple texts, produced on paper or screen. This program aims to enhance students' proficiency in using technology (technological literacy), thereby improving their ability to navigate and process digital information;



2. Teachers should adapt their texts to the classroom environment. Learning can start from text types that contain topics that learners are already familiar with to help them understand the content of the text. learners are familiar with to help them understand the content of the text;
3. The learning process should be learner-centered (Tyler, 1990), meaning that it must aim to alter learners' behaviour from inability to ability, and apply English skills across various text genres;
4. Moreover, General English learning should prioritize the language skills of learners, as per their different developmental stages.

In summary, the English curriculum in Merdeka Belajar provides students with the opportunity to acquire global perspectives. Mastering English offers learners a greater chance to interact with various texts, enabling them to acquire the knowledge, skills, and behaviours essential to prosper in a diverse global society. Therefore, English learning in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum can be one way for Indonesia to achieve its goal of global advancement.

### **2.2.2 English Learning Phases in *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum**

In the introductory section of the *Merdeka* curriculum English language curriculum document, which was issued by the Standards, Curriculum, and Educational Assessment Agency of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022), state that the English language education under the *Merdeka* curriculum framework emphasizes the enhancement of language skills in alignment with learning objectives corresponding to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment (CEFR), equating to a level B1 proficiency. It is also evident that the enhancement of language skills among students in the *Merdeka* curriculum is divided into several phases.

Table. 2.2.2 Student's Language Proficiency Development Phases

Phase	Description
Phase A	Focused on introducing English language skills.
Phase B	Focused on spoken English skills. On the other side, students are introduced to the written form.
Phase C	(SD/MI/Program Package) Focused on written and spoken language skills.
Phase D	(SMP/MTS/Program Package B) Focused on the development of spoken and written language competencies.
Phase E & F	(SMA/MA/Program Packaged C) Focused on the development of spoken and written competencies which B1 Level of CEFR is the target.
Advance Phase	The advance phase, right above Phase F, focuses on the development of advanced spoken and written competencies. The text types in this phase of learning are narrative, exposition, and discussion.

This demonstrated that the Indonesian Government viewed the outcome as the initial stage in curriculum design. Consequently, according to Prakoso (2021), the English language curriculum design under *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum can be characterized as a regressive curriculum. Moreover, due to the effort to incorporate the CEFR as the guiding framework in this curriculum, we can classify the English language curriculum design in *Merdeka* curriculum as a curriculum that follows established standards. According to McKay in (2000) insights, as cited in Richards (2013), it is explained that when implementing standards in language curriculum development, students have the opportunity to develop an understanding of how texts relate to their specific contexts, how they incorporate cultural references, how a text's purpose and structure are



interconnected, and how linguistic features within texts are interconnected. In order for students to attain their intended learning outcomes, teachers need to possess extensive knowledge of languages and teaching methodologies.

It can be concluded that learning English using the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is in accordance with the CEFR. It can improve students' understanding of text in their specific context and how linguistics in text are connected, besides that teachers must have the ability to understand language and learning methodology. Therefore, the goal of *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum can be achieved through English learning.

### **2.3 Teaching Strategy**

The teaching strategy is a conceptual decision that will be taken by the teachers in the implementation of the teaching-learning process. Senthamarai (2018) stated that a teaching strategy is a series of instructional acts designed to achieve certain goals. Moreover, Hamid et al (2022) stated that a teaching strategy is an educational methodology, or plan of classroom actions or interactions designed to achieve specified teaching/learning goals. In short, teaching strategy refers to how teachers design the classroom, from preparing all of the students' needs to conducting a teaching process that consists of the classroom setting and teaching material to achieve learning outcomes.

The teaching strategy applied by the teacher will depend on the approach used. According to Killen in Hayati et al. (2022), there are two approaches to teaching, namely the teacher-centred approach and the students-centred approach. In *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum students-centred is used. Students centred approach means the students are at the centre of the teaching and learning process where the teachers must consider the needs of their students, both as a group and as individuals, and encourage them to engage in the learning process at all times (Emaliana, 2017). In English language teaching there are many effective teaching strategies that can be used. Killen as cited in Hayati et al. (2022) proposes some language teaching strategies, namely direct instruction, discussion, small group work, cooperative learning, problem solving, and students-research. There are no specific teaching strategies that are superior to others. As Killen (2007) stated that

the effective teaching strategy is teaching strategy can lead the students grasping the learning objective. Thus, every teaching strategy has its strengths and weaknesses.

In the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, there are no concrete rules about how teachers should plan, teach and conduct assessment. The government only regulates the principle of teaching, learning and assessment. According to Kemendikbudristek (2022), there are five principles of teaching learning and assessment, namely:

1. Learning is designed according to the current level of students' achievement and students' needs and reflects the characteristics and development of various students, it can be implemented by teaching at the right level of students. In this context, the teachers should find out students' readiness, characteristics, and abilities through diagnostic assessment. The teachers arrange or choose the learning objectives flow based on current students' development. Teachers can independently design the learning objectives flow based on CP given, modify examples provided or use the examples provided by the government.
2. Learning is designed and implemented to build capacity to become life-long learners, it can be implemented by integrating the value of sustainable living into the learning process. In this context, the teachers encourage students to reflect on their competencies and the areas that need to be improved, give feedback to encourage students' competencies in order to be lifelong learners, and motivate the students to actively participate in order to build independent skills.
3. The learning process supports the development of the students competencies and characteristic holistically, it can be purposefully implemented to foster the development of individual students initiative, self-reliance and self-improvement. In this context, the teachers use various teaching methods and should be students-centered.



4. The learning is designed according to context, environment, and culture of students and involving parents and the community as partner, to engage student social interaction related to real life context
5. The learning is oriented into sustainable living. It can be implemented by integrating the value of sustainable living into the learning process.

Thus, learning and assessment can vary according to conditions and context of learning in each class and educational unit, but all are based on the same principles. Therefore, the teachers freely design the best strategy in teaching that can be adjusted to the students' profile and school circumstances based on the principles of learning and assessment.

In conclusion, strategy can be defined as an effort and process that teachers use. In the use of strategy, the teachers plan and prepare the teaching and learning process. The teachers' teaching strategy will be determined by the approach used; numerous teaching methods can be employed to carry out the strategy. In the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, teachers freely design the learning based on the principle of Teaching-Learning and Assessments so they can arrange the best teaching strategies. Therefore, with proper and suitable teaching strategies teachers can teach English effectively and the students can achieve the learning objectives.

#### **2.4 Study of the Relevant Research**

Before the researcher decided to do this research, the researcher studied previous research regarding *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. The prior studies will be discussed in the following order:

The first one is the study conducted by Pertiwi and Pusparini (2021) that researched vocational high school teachers' perspectives on *the Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. The subject of this study was 8 English teachers in different vocational high schools in Surabaya. The result showed that all the teachers understood the concept of *the Merdeka Belajar* curriculum even though need more workshops or socialisation to get deeper understanding of this curriculum. All of the teachers agree that *the Merdeka Belajar* curriculum gives teachers and students more freedom in terms of methods, place and time. They also stated

that *the Merdeka Belajar* curriculum could improve the quality of human resources. Moreover, the result of the study showed that all teachers have applied and understood the simplification of the lesson plans. Overall, the teachers already understand the concept of *the Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, and the major problem is the lack of dissemination.

The second one is the study conducted by Juliani et al. (2022) regarding the investigated English teachers' preparations for *the Merdeka Belajar* curriculum of *Sekolah Penggerak* in Palembang. The study result regarding the English teachers' preparation in *the Merdeka Belajar* curriculum have been carried out carefully; even though there are several difficulties, but they could overcome them. The study result showed that the teachers already know what needs to be prepared in learning *the Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, namely, *Tujuan Pembelajaran/Learning Objectives*, *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran/Learning Objective Flow*, and *Modul Ajar/Teaching Modules* (includes material, goals, methods, teaching steps, various media/props, students' worksheets/LKPD, and students' assessments).

Other related research was conducted by Gusteti and Neviyarni (2022). This study presented that differentiated learning on mathematics in implementing *the Merdeka Belajar* curriculum can be one of the strategies teachers can use. The study result explained that the differentiation approach could be integrated with several methods, such as Problem-based Learning and Project-based Learning. It also showed that differentiated learning could be used in mathematics learning because it can support students' learning based on their ability, profile, learning style and learning readiness.