

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design employed in this study was phenomenology. Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology that seeks to understand and describe individuals' lived experiences as they perceive them (Van Manen, 2016). It allows researchers to explore how participants make sense of a particular phenomenon by capturing the essence of their subjective experiences. In phenomenological studies, the goal is not to explain or theorise but to illuminate the meaning of experiences as lived by individuals (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This approach typically involves in-depth interviews and reflective analysis to identify themes representing the core of participants' experiences (Given, 2008). This research methodology was employed to investigate the perspectives of English teachers on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in EFL classrooms.

3.2 Focus of The Research

This research focused on examining the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in teaching English to EFL learners from teachers' perspectives by assessing how the curriculum was applied in the teaching and learning process activities.

3.3 Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at a secondary high school that is already listed on the official website of the Ministry of Education and Culture as one that has implemented the *Merdeka Curriculum*. The school was located in Tasikmalaya City, West Java, Indonesia. Therefore, the reason for selecting this school as the research site was that they had begun to use the *Merdeka Curriculum* as an applicable educational framework in their institution.

The participants of this research were two English teachers at a secondary school in Tasikmalaya. They are between 35 and 39 years old and graduated

from the English Education Department at a university in Indonesia. Each week, they teach from Monday to Friday. Additionally, they have experience implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum in their English teaching to EFL students. They were carefully chosen as research participants due to their experience with the Merdeka Curriculum for over two semesters and represent everything the researcher researched. To gather data, participants completed a consent form to prove their willingness to participate.

3.4 Technique of Collecting the Data

This research utilised the semi-structured interview methodology. Young et al. (2018) stated that the semi-structured interview was the most advantageous method because it allowed for a detailed understanding of processes and issues. Meanwhile, the interview questions mainly followed the interview guidelines set by the author.

Several questions were addressed to the participants, covering their teaching experiences while teaching English to EFL students using the Merdeka Curriculum. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, and the data were transcribed and translated into English. Additionally, the researcher used an audio recorder to capture the data during the interview process.

In order to conduct the research, the researcher adapted a semi-structured interview approach from Adam's (2015) study. The steps were as follows:

1. Selecting the participant and arranging the interviews.
2. Drafting the questions and interview guidelines.
3. Conducting the interview.
4. Polishing the interview techniques.
5. Analysing and reporting the semi-structured interview data.

A relevant document checking and literature review will be conducted in order to support and strengthen the result of the interview

3.5 Technique of Analysing the Data

After the interviews were recorded and transcribed, the data was analysed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that thematic analysis is a method often employed to detect, interpret, and report patterns in data. In this research, the researcher extracted data from the interview transcripts and then interpreted it using thematic analysis. According to Marks and Yardley (2004), thematic analysis was the most suitable method for any research aimed at eliciting interpretations.

The process of thematic analysis consists of six steps: becoming familiar with the data, creating preliminary codes, looking for themes, examining themes, defining and labelling themes, and creating the report.

1. Becoming familiar with the data:

In this step, to fully understand the data, the researcher will read the data several times.

2. Creating preliminary code:

In this step, the researcher will colour-code the data to represent potential patterns that correspond to the study's objectives. Colouring will be used to distinguish the many elements that would eventually comprise the initial codes.

Table 3.1. Searching for Initial Codes

Interview Transcript	Initial Codes
"... According to my understanding, the Merdeka Curriculum is a framework that allows teachers to instruct based on their students' abilities. There is no mandatory baseline content, nor is there a requirement for materials to be completed by a specific deadline. Teachers are permitted to deliver lessons tailored to the students' capabilities. Additionally, students are expected to seek out information relevant to what they will learn..."	Teachers' understanding: Merdeka Curriculum as flexible framework for adapting lessons to students' diverse skills and needs
"... personally, I don't feel any significant difficulties in directly implementing the Merdeka Curriculum"	Teachers are getting used in implementing the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum

<p>because the process flows naturally, much like how I previously taught English to the students using the former curriculum...”</p>	
<p>“...in this new curriculum, English teachers, especially myself, must be more creative in finding ways to make English more interesting for the students...”</p>	<p>Teachers have to be more creative</p>
<p>“... one of the students may... be knowledgeable in English. One of them may not. So, when considering some students... for instance, there are fifteen students who are proficient in English, and there are fifteen who aren’t...”</p>	<p>Students have different level of English language skills.</p>
<p>“...the Merdeka Curriculum leaves me a bit confused regarding the preparation of teaching models and learning objectives. Compared to the previous curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum lacks any official templates or examples of how to prepare effective teaching models and learning objectives, whereas the previous curriculum had clear guidelines. Thus, when teachers are given the freedom to prepare these elements, it can be somewhat confusing for me...”</p>	<p>Teachers are confused with the preparation of teaching models and the flow of learning objectives</p>
<p>“... one of the many ways that can be used in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is that teachers must always be updated with the latest knowledge to provide an engaging lesson...”</p>	<p>Teachers must always be updated on knowledge to provide interesting learning</p>
<p>“...as a teacher, I have to be more active and never stop learning to renew my knowledge so my English teaching and learning activities will always interesting for the students...”</p>	<p>Teacher must be more active in learning to renew their knowledge</p>
<p>“...Teaching material in the Merdeka Curriculum is adjusted to the abilities of the students, for example when the students’ English abilities were only just beginner, it means that we, as an English teacher, are free to provide the learning materials that suits their abilities...”</p>	<p>Learning materials are tailored to the abilities of students</p>

<p>“...because in the Merdeka Curriculum, English is focused on students’ speaking skill, me and other teacher wants to encourage the students to have the courage to speak English both in the classroom and in their learning activities...”</p>	<p>English in <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum focus more on students speaking skills</p>
<p>“...what I know from this Merdeka Curriculum is I can freely provide the learning material that I want to teach to the students. Well, of course, it is adjusted with the students’ abilities so then I can further maximize their potential in the future...”</p>	<p>Teachers are given freedom in preparing teaching materials that are tailored to the abilities of each student</p>
<p>“...so, the role of English teacher is very important to help students to be good at English speaking. For example, in my class, I usually teach English mostly by English rather than Bahasa Indonesia. By doing so, I can give the role model to my students to try to speak English...”</p>	<p>Teachers help students to improve their English skills</p>
<p>“...as an English teacher, I don’t always have to require the students to study in class only but outside the classroom also to make the learning more fun...”</p>	<p>Learning outside the classroom (outdoor learning) in order to make students having more fun in learning English</p>
<p>“...maybe a student who did not comprehend the given material is actually a student who has such a big potential in sport or maybe art. So, in the Merdeka Curriculum, we must appreciate the potential of each student more than before...”</p>	<p>Teachers supports and prioritizes the interest, talents, and the abilities of each student</p>
<p>“...teachers are required to make ice breaking in accordance with the material being taught because in the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are required to make learning and teaching activities in the classroom more fun for students...”</p>	<p>Ice breaking and games make the learning processes becomes more fun and easier to be understand by the students</p>
<p>“...actually, teachers are given freedom to take teaching references sourced from relevant sources. However, the references that I use to design English teaching and learning activities in order to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, I usually take it from platform Merdeka</p>	<p>Teachers are free to take teaching references sourced from relevant sources</p>

<p>Mengajar (Merdeka Teaching platform), websites and YouTube channels that are relevant to the learning material that I am going to teach to my students. I even still use textbooks that are available on relevant websites and some other relevant medias...”</p>	
<p>“... in my opinion, in the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are required to be more creative in developing the learning media and teaching materials because in the Merdeka Curriculum, teacher have must try to make students interested in English since this effects students’ interest in learning English so that students are interested in taking English enrichment class...”</p>	<p>Enrichment classes are tailored to the interest and students’ talents</p>
<p>“...for me, Merdeka Mengajar platform is really help me in finding various teaching material references that I could use to prepare teaching material...”</p>	<p>Platform Merdeka Mengajar makes it easier for teachers to prepare teaching materials</p>
<p>“...Then in the Merdeka Mengajar platform (Merdeka Teaching platform) there are also some teachers’ administrative guidelines that’s really helpful for the teachers...”</p>	<p>Platform Merdeka Mengajar assists teachers with providing administrative guidance</p>
<p>“...And then, in Merdeka Curriculum there’s a featured program that becomes the hallmark called as The Strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile Project student (Program Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5)). The program encourages teachers to have the opportunity to conduct a collaborative learning or a collaborative learning between two teachers from two different subjects; as an example, an English teacher collaborates with another teacher from different subject....”</p>	<p>Program to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5)</p>
<p>“...in the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are given the freedom to design and develop our own flow of learning objective and learning outcome which have to be in accordance with the learning material that we are going to teach to the students...”</p>	<p>The flow of learning objectives is adjusted to the material that will be given to the students</p>

“...the Strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile Project (Program Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5)) which allows teacher to have the opportunity to do a collaborative learning with another teacher with us, as an English teacher...”	Teachers have the opportunity to collaborate on learning with teachers from other subject through a program to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5)
“...every year when we have a new school academic year, we had a training which trained us how to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. The aim of the training is to prepared us to implement the Merdeka Curriculum at school or to our students. So, the training is called In House Training (IHT). The training is held before the beginning of new school academic year. It is usually every first June. In the training, there is a mentor who teaches us how we should implement the Merdeka Curriculum...”	In House Training (IHT) provides training on the application of the Merdeka Curriculum for teachers

3. Looking for themes:

The researcher will use grouping in this section to emphasise significant data and to count the frequency of data shows in the interview.

Table 3.2. List of Initial Codes and Their Frequency

No.	Initial Codes	Total
1.	Teachers' understanding: Merdeka Curriculum as flexible framework for adapting lessons to students' diverse skills and needs.	4
2.	Teachers are getting used in implementing the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum.	5
3.	Teachers have to be more creative.	2
4.	Students have different level of English language skills.	3
5.	Teachers are confused with the preparation of teaching models and the flow of learning objectives.	9
6.	Teacher must always be updated on knowledge to provide interesting learning.	2
7.	Teacher must be more active in learning to renew their knowledge.	2

8.	Learning materials are tailored to the abilities of students.	6
9.	English in <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum focus more on students speaking skills.	3
10.	Teachers are given freedom in preparing teaching materials that are tailored to the abilities of each student.	4
11.	Teachers help students to improve their English skills.	3
12.	Learning outside the classroom (outdoor learning) in order to make students having more fun in learning English	2
13.	Teachers supports and prioritizes the interest, talents, and the abilities of each student.	3
14.	Ice breaking and games make the learning processes becomes more fun and easier to be understand by the students.	1
15.	Teachers are free to take teaching references sourced from relevant sources.	2
16.	Enrichment classes are tailored to the interest and students' talents.	2
17.	Platform <i>Merdeka</i> Mengajar makes it easier for teachers to prepare teaching materials.	2
18.	Platform <i>Merdeka</i> Mengajar assists teachers with providing administrative guidance.	2
19.	Program to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5).	2
20.	The flow of learning objectives is adjusted to the material that will be given to the students.	3
21.	Teachers have the opportunity to collaborate on learning with teachers from other subject through a program to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5).	2
22.	In House Training (IHT) provides training on the application of the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum for teachers.	2

4. Examining themes, defining and labelling themes:

The researcher will analyse the themes in this step to make sure they are pertinent and to determine how well the classified colours correspond to the research's objectives. Within the main theme, several codes were

categorised into sub-themes. These themes serve as keywords to reflect the participants' perceptions regarding the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum in teaching English to EFL learners. Codes with similar meanings are grouped into one sub-theme, which is then analysed and integrated into the relevant main theme.

Table 3.3. List of Emerging Themes

No.	CODE	THEME
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers' understanding: Merdeka Curriculum as flexible framework for adapting lessons to students' diverse skills and needs. - Teachers are getting used in implementing the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum. 	The ease of Merdeka Curriculum
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers have to be more creative - Students have different level of English language skills. - Teachers are confused with the preparation of teaching models and the flow of learning objectives. 	The challenge of <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher must always be updated on knowledge to provide interesting learning. - Teacher must be more active in learning to renew their knowledge. 	The solution to overcome the challenge of <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning materials are tailored to the abilities of students. - English in <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum focus more on students speaking skills. - Teachers are given freedom in preparing teaching materials that are tailored to the abilities of each student. - Teachers help students to improve their English skills. - Learning outside the classroom (outdoor learning) in order to make students having more fun in learning English. - Teachers supports and prioritizes the interest, talents, and the abilities of each student. - Ice breaking and games make the learning processes becomes more fun and easier to be understand by the students. 	The advantage of <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum

	- Teachers are free to take teaching references sourced from relevant sources,	
5.	- Enrichment classes are tailored to the interest and students' talents.	The disadvantage of <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Platform <i>Merdeka</i> Mengajar makes it easier for teachers to prepare teaching materials. - Platform <i>Merdeka</i> Mengajar assists teachers with providing administrative guidance. - Program to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5). - The flow of learning objectives is adjusted to the material that will be given to the students. - Teachers have the opportunity to collaborate on learning with teachers from other subject through a program to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5). - In House Training (IHT) provides training on the application of the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum for teachers. 	The strength of <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum

5. Creating the report:

The analysis of the data has come to a finish. The researcher will use the data analysis to draw conclusions and produce a report.

3.6 Steps of the Research

The researcher will first acknowledge what has come to be used as a measure of curricular effectiveness in order to establish the questions that will be presented to the study subjects. The steps the researcher will take to obtain information from participants are as follows:

1. Acknowledge the *Merdeka* Curriculum
2. Arrange the questions to interview the research participant
3. Notify the targeted school that the researcher will be conducting research there in order to secure approval to conduct research pertaining to the area of the study.

