

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MERDEKA CURRICULUM IN ENGLISH SUBJECT

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**Abstract.** Merdeka Curriculum is a brand-new curriculum that was designed to give the students a fun learning experience, without any stress and pressure to reveal their natural talent in learning. The purpose of Merdeka Curriculum is to create a learning environment without any stress and pressure that the students experience in the learning process. This study will analyze the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum of grade X English subject in SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat. The study method that was used in this study is Qualitative approach by collecting information in the observation process in grade X class while conducting English subject, and interview with the grade X English teacher with the data collection type of “what” and “why” subjectively. The results of data analysis shows that there are challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in grade X English subject in balancing the differentiation competency levels of students that were too far. The findings imply that teachers need special training in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum to solve the problem that was mentioned.

**Keywords:** Merdeka Curriculum, Implementation, Challenges

**Abstrak.** Kurikulum Merdeka adalah kurikulum baru yang di desain untuk memberikan peserta didik merasakan proses pembelajaran yang menyenangkan, tanpa adanya stress, serta tanpa adanya tekanan untuk menunjukkan bakat kemampuan alami dalam pembelajaran. Tujuan dari Kurikulum Merdeka yaitu untuk menciptakan suasana pembelajaran tanpa adanya tekanan stress yang di alami peserta didik dalam proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menganalisa tentang pengimplementasian Kurikulum Merdeka di pelajaran bahasa Inggris kelas X di SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu penelitian kualitatif studi kasus dengan mengumpulkan informasi dalam proses observasi di kelas X saat pembelajaran bahasa inggris, dan interview dengan guru bahasa inggris kelas X dengan tipe pengumpulan data “apa” dan “mengapa” secara subjektif. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat tantangan dalam pengimplementasian Kurikulum Merdeka di kelas X pelajaran bahasa inggris yaitu saat menyimbangi perbedaan jarak kemampuan level kompetensi peserta didik yang cukup jauh. Hasil pencarian mengimplikasikan bahwa para pendidik membutuhkan pelatihan khusus dalam pengimplementasian Kurikulum Merdeka untuk mengatasi permasalahan tersebut.

**Kata Kunci:** Kurikulum Merdeka, Implementasi, Tantangan

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## INTRODUCTION

Curriculum is the main key of education that must be assessed innovatively, dynamically, and periodically by the development of the era, science, and technology that the competencies demanded by the citizens and the users of graduates (Kamila & Agus RM, 2023). In an academic system, curriculum becomes the important learning system in education. Fujiawati (2016) mentioned that curriculum is a learning experience device that the students will experience throughout their followings of the academic process. Enyimba (2019) states the importance of a curriculum is to guide the activities of a school and academic efforts to achieve the goals and objectives which cannot be overemphasized.

In Indonesia's education system, the Indonesian Ministry of Education has changed the curriculum many times. In the Indonesian academic year 2004/2005, the curriculum was the *Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi* or it was known as KBK 2004. After the KBK 2004 curriculum was implemented, the next curriculum in Indonesia's education was the *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* or it was known as KTSP 2006 which the curriculum was implemented in the academic year 2006/2007. After the KTSP 2006/2007 curriculum was implemented, the Indonesia's Education Ministry used the new curriculum which was called *Kurikulum 2013* also known as K-13. The main characteristic of this curriculum is the implementation of scientific approach that touches three domains, namely attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Abidin, 2014). And after the Covid-19 pandemic, the Indonesia's Education Ministry implemented the new curriculum that was called *Merdeka Curriculum* which the curriculum is still implemented until now. The *Merdeka Curriculum* was implemented for the first time in 2022/2023 education year, when the schools were still implementing online learning. After the full lockdown and students currently able to study in offline situation, the *Merdeka Curriculum* implemented the hybrid study system that are online learning (*Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh*) and offline learning (*Pembelajaran secara Tatap Muka*). The *Merdeka Curriculum* is a brand-new curriculum that was made by the Ministry with a purpose to improve the quality of Indonesia's learning system.

According to one of the English teachers in SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat, since this curriculum is still new, English teachers in SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat is still discovering the right implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. In the process of implementing this new curriculum, teachers may find challenges as they are not familiar with the new policy. This situation similarly happened in the beginning of the implementation of *Kurikulum 2013* where the teacher finds challenges in term of time, the discrepancies between the materials to be taught and the time allocation, the lack of supported facility, and the complicated assessment

administration (Khasanah & Widyanoro, 2013). Moreover, Rohmah (2019) reveals that the English teachers faced two main challenges in implementing *Kurikulum* 2013 in English. They are the internal challenges which come from the teachers and the external challenges that come from the government, the students, and the facilities.

Implementing a new curriculum will not be easy if the teachers do not have knowledge about the policy. Rizki & Fahkrunisa (2022) stated that implementation of new curriculum has both challenges and positive impact. The main challenge is related to the readiness of the teacher. Yuhastina et al. (2020) mentioned the challenges that the teachers face in implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum is the lack of understanding of the procedures. This happened because there was no structural explanation about the differences between the previous curriculums with the *Merdeka* Curriculum. The results showed that many teachers considered *Merdeka Belajar* policy to be an effective alternative in providing instruction to students in accordance with the resources owned by the school. In SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta, one of the English Teacher mentioned that teaching English subject under the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum allowed them to create their own English learning material that still related to the level of the students comprehension from the references in any sources such as the internet source, text book source, etc.

The implementation process of Curriculum 2013 was researched by Komara, & Supian, (2018) who they stated that Curriculum 2013 is a character and competency-based learning that targeted to the improvement of the education process and result which leads to good students' character building, and able to apply their knowledge in their daily life. Komara & Supian (2018) also stated that the implementation of the Curriculum 2013 was implemented with a scientific approach by focusing on the five (5) aspects such as observing, asking, trying, reasoning, and communication. In this research, the researcher conducted a study about the implementation of the new curriculum which is the *Merdeka* Curriculum. Due to this situation where the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum is still unclear because the curriculum is still newly implemented in Indonesia's school education, this study is important to be conducted because the adjustment of the real-life learning activity is not as experienced as the previous curriculum.

## **METHOD**

In this research, the research material that was collected was a picture of how the *Merdeka* Curriculum was implemented in the English class. The information that was collected was also included the perceptions of the English teacher in implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum in

English subject class. This research used Qualitative research method approach to gather information from senior high school that was conducting the English subject in class, answered the research problem and questions using the information that had been collected, and to display all the important information in a form of Qualitative research. According to Burns and Grove (1999), the qualitative research approach is a Systematic Subject Approach that was used to describe life experiences and situations to provide meaning (Abosedo & Onanuga, 2016). This research was carried out from March until May 2023 in SMAN 85 Jakarta Barat. The researcher who conducted this research have an experience of teaching internship as an English teacher in SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat. The researcher experienced the English teaching under the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum. Additionally, the researcher has the connection with the English teacher in SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat. SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat is public school that was monitored under the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. Due to the status of the school as a public school, SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat was one of the lists of “*Sekolah Penggerak*” program from the Ministry of Education and Culture in implementating the *Merdeka* Curriculum which was the new curriculum. The implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum was only implemented on Grade X in SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat. By using the Qualitative approach, the researcher discussed the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in English teaching such as the learning planning, teaching-learning process, learning assessment, and the challenges that English teachers face while implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum learning in English class.

In this research study, the researcher used the data analysis according to Miles & Huberman (1994) to collect the information from the observation and the interview process. According to Miles & Huberman (1994), there are three (3) types of data analysis in a form of Qualitative method such as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The Data Reduction in this research is where the researcher selected the important information from all the information that the researcher collected while conducting the observation and interview process. Then, the important information that was obtained by the researcher was simplified and abstracted into a few words to become a simple version of research data. The Data Display in this research is where after the researcher obtained all the data, the researcher displayed it into this research in a form of text, due to this research being conducted in the Qualitative method. The information was displayed with sample pictures such as student worksheets, and a teaching module. The Conclusion Drawing and verification in this research is where the researcher concluded the result of the information that has been simplified and verified the information to assist the researcher in easily knowing the result of

this research. The researcher collected information from one of the English teachers who teaches Grade X. This English teacher has 18 years' experience in teaching. In the process of collecting data, the researcher observed the teaching and learning process in the class and collected information such as the situation in class. After the observation process, the researcher interviewed the English teacher using questions that related to the research about the *Merdeka Curriculum* and its implementation in their English class. After the observation and interview data were obtained, the researcher added documentation such as pictures that support the information of the research. All the data that the researcher obtained were processed and analyzed by comparing the observation and the research participant's interview results. Then the researcher reported the result by describing the in-detail way.

## RESULTS

The English teacher shared the teaching module with the researcher and explained that the module was created after analyzing the students' abilities and skills through an appropriate test which is at the new year beginning of the study the module will cover the learning material for the whole first and second semester. The module which was made by the English teacher is shown in Figure 1 below.

**ALUR TUJUAN PEMBELAJARAN**

Satuan Pendidikan : SMAN 85  
Mata Pelajaran : Bahasa Inggris  
Fase/Kelas : XI/10  
Alokasi waktu : 72 JP

**A. Latar Belakang**  
Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran ini disusun berdasarkan tes non-kognitif dan kognitif peserta didik dengan mempertimbangkan kompetensi kognitif, dimensi pengetahuan, kecakapan hidup, dan Profil Pelajar Pancasila untuk mencapai Capaian Pembelajaran pada pelajaran bahasa Inggris di fase E.

**B. Capaian Pembelajaran**  
Pada akhir fase E, peserta didik menggunakan teks lisan, tulisan dan visual dalam bahasa Inggris untuk berkomunikasi sesuai dengan situasi, tujuan, dan pemirsa/pembacanya. Berbagai jenis teks seperti narasi, deskripsi, prosedur, eksposisi, recount, report, dan teks asli menjadi rujukan utama dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris di fase ini. Peserta didik menggunakan bahasa Inggris untuk menyampaikan keinginan/perasaan dan berdiskusi mengenai topik yang dekat dengan keseharian mereka atau isu yang hangat sesuai usia peserta didik di fase ini. Mereka membaca teks tulisan untuk mempelajari sesuatu/mendapatkan informasi. Keterampilan inferensi tersirat ketika memahami informasi dalam bahasa Inggris mulai berkembang. Peserta didik memproduksi teks tulisan dan visual yang lebih beragam, dengan kesadaran terhadap tujuan dan target pembaca.

**Mengiyakn - Berbicara**  
Pada akhir fase E, peserta didik menggunakan bahasa Inggris untuk berkomunikasi dengan guru, teman sebaya dan orang lain dalam berbagai macam situasi dan tujuan. Mereka menggunakan dan merespon pertanyaan dan menggunakan strategi untuk memulai dan mempertahankan percakapan dan diskusi. Mereka memahami dan mengidentifikasi ide utama dan detail relevan dari diskusi atau presentasi mengenai topik yang dekat dengan kehidupan pemuda. Mereka menggunakan bahasa Inggris untuk menyampaikan opini terhadap isu yang dekat dengan kehidupan pemuda dan untuk membahas minat. Mereka memberikan pendapat dan membuat perbandingan. Mereka menggunakan elemen non-verbal seperti bahasa tubuh, kecepatan bicara, dan nada suara untuk dapat dipahami dalam sebagian konteks.

**Membaca - Mampir**  
Pada akhir fase E, peserta didik membaca dan merespon berbagai macam teks seperti narasi, deskripsi, prosedur, eksposisi, recount, dan report. Mereka membaca untuk mempelajari sesuatu atau untuk mendapatkan informasi. Mereka mencari dan mengevaluasi detil spesifik dan inti dari berbagai macam jenis teks. Teks ini dapat berbentuk cetak atau digital, termasuk diantaranya teks visual, multimodal atau interaktif. Pemahaman mereka terhadap ide pokok, isu-isu atau pengembangan plot dalam berbagai macam teks mulai berkembang. Mereka mengidentifikasi tujuan penulis dan mengembangkan keterampilan untuk melakukan inferensi sederhana dalam memahami informasi tersirat dalam teks.

**Menulis - Presentasi**  
Pada akhir fase E, peserta didik menulis berbagai jenis teks fiksi dan non-fiksi, melalui aktivitas yang dipandu, menunjukkan kesadaran peserta didik terhadap tujuan dan target pembaca. Mereka membuat perencanaan, menulis, mengulas dan menulis ulang berbagai jenis tipe teks dengan menunjukkan strategi koreksi diri, termasuk tanda baca dan huruf besar. Mereka menyampaikan ide menggunakan kosa kata dan kata kerja umum dalam tulisannya. Mereka menyajikan informasi menggunakan berbagai mode presentasi untuk menyesuaikan dengan pembaca/pemirsa dan untuk mencapai tujuan yang berbeda-beda, dalam bentuk cetak dan digital.

**PROFIL PELAJAR PANCASILA**  
Beriman, bertakwa kepada Tuhan YME, dan berakhlak mulia, Berkebinekaan Global, Bergotong-royong, Mandiri, Bernalar Kritis dan Kreatif

**C. Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran**

Tujuan Pembelajaran Materi	Materi	Sub Materi/ Bahan belajar	Alokasi Waktu
10. 1. Mengidentifikasi, menganalisa, dan menyimpulkan makna, konteks, topik, gagasan utama. Inferensi dan informasi rinci sesuai dengan fungsi sosial, struktur teks dan ciri kebahasaan dari teks berbentuk <i>descriptive</i> lisan secara kritis, kreatif, komunikatif, kolaboratif dan santun.	Menyimak - Berbicara	Teks 'descriptive' lisan	6 JP
10. 2. Mengidentifikasi, menganalisa, dan menyimpulkan makna, konteks, topik, gagasan utama. Inferensi dan informasi rinci sesuai dengan fungsi sosial, struktur teks dan ciri kebahasaan dari teks berbentuk <i>recount</i> lisan secara kritis, kreatif, komunikatif, kolaboratif dan santun.		Teks 'recount' lisan	6 JP
10. 3. Mengidentifikasi, menganalisa, dan menyimpulkan makna, konteks, topik, gagasan utama. Inferensi dan informasi rinci sesuai dengan fungsi sosial, struktur teks dan ciri kebahasaan dari teks berbentuk <i>report</i> lisan secara kritis, kreatif, komunikatif, kolaboratif dan santun.		Teks 'report' lisan	6 JP

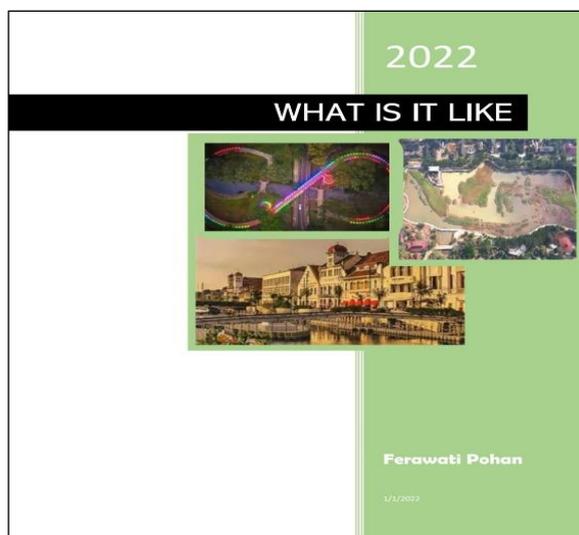
Figure 1. Teaching Modul

Teaching module overall consists of Background of Study (*Latar Belakang*), Objective Learning (*Capaian Pembelajaran*), and Learning Purposes (*Tujuan Pembelajaran*). In the overall students' comprehension, there are different levels of students' competency such as in the English subject, there are the beginner level of students' competency until the advanced level

of students' competency. In the learning activity, the students who are at a beginner level of competency will be encountering that the learning material will be quite difficult to follow in the learning process in class. However, teachers should not abandon the students with the lack of competency level in class. The English teacher mentioned that students have diverse unique skills which are not the same for every student. Therefore, to fulfill the student's competencies and needs, the teacher must create a suitable learning approach for the students in the learning activities in class.

According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), the important skills of the Bloom Taxonomy are reviewing, knowing, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Wilson, 2016). Furthermore, according to Tighe and Wiggins (2005), the important skills of the Bloom Taxonomy are explaining, interpreting, applying, perspective, empathy, and self-reflecting (Dávila Rubio, 2017). In the English teacher's teaching plan, the skills that the English teacher used in delivering the learning material are identifying, analyzing, and summarizing. Additionally, in the teaching process in class, the researcher examined that the English teacher also reviewed the previous learning material which the English teacher apply it in the beginning of the learning process in class.

In the observation process, most of the students' condition have a poor level of English competency in the learning process in class, and due to the condition, the teacher did not give consequences to the students who made mistakes in learning the material since according to the *Merdeka Curriculum* system, it will create pressure and fear to the students in the learning process. However, the teacher gave the students an opportunity to discover the learning material freely. In the interview process, the English teacher shared the students' worksheet that was used in the learning activities in English class which it was shown in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2.** Students' worksheet

The English teacher used the material from all sources including the school's English package book to create their own English learning book which is called the students' worksheet that was made in a form of papers stapled become a book. Inside the students' worksheet, which is mentioned, it has a students' assignments and learning exercise for the students to learn, improve their skills, and gain knowledge. In the students' worksheet, the English teacher added their own creativity by adding a source link such as videos from YouTube that was related to the learning materials which the teacher added a QR Code in the book for the students to access the video, with a purpose to deliver the material to the students by creating their visualization about the material. In this situation, the English teacher applied the one of the principles of the learning activity under the *Merdeka Curriculum* system that collaborates the learning process in class with gadgets which builds the students awareness in technology 4.0 and soon will be technology 5.0.

In the interview process, the English teacher mentioned that there are two kinds of assessments that are implemented while implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum* system, which are the formative test and the summative test. Furthermore, the English teacher explained that the formative test holds intergrated in daily learning process which only assesses in one or two learning objections. However, the summative test is a test designed for middle or full semester which assesses some of the learning objections. In the assessment part of the teaching module, it assesses the students' competency and needs according to the *Merdeka Curriculum* such as Behavior Assessment, Cognitive Assessment, Writing Assessment, and Presentation Assessment which the assessment module part is shown in figure 3 below.

e. Asesmen

1. Asesmen Sikap

- Rubrik Penilaian dan penskoran

No	Profil pelajar Pancasila	K C B SB				Nilai
		1	2	3	4	
1	Beriman, bertakwa kepada Tuhan YME, dan berakhlak mulia					
2	Berkebinekaan Global					
3	Bergotong-royong					
4	Mandiri					
5	Bernalar Kritis					
6	Kreatif					
Jumlah						

- Penilaian Skor perolehan x 100  
Skor maksimal

2. Asesmen kognitif

- Kisi-kisi Asesmen (terlampir)
- Penilaian  
Setiap butir soal yang benar mendapat 1 poin

3. Asesmen menulis

- Rubrik asesmen

56-66	67-77	78-88	89-99
Penggunaan kata, kalimat, struktur tidak sesuai	Fungsi sosial ada. Struktur tepat, dan unsur kebahasaan kurang	Fungsi sosial ada. Struktur, dan unsur kebahasaan tepat	Fungsi sosial ada. Struktur, unsur kebahasaan tepat, dan mulai ada modifikasi

4. Asesmen presentasi

- Rubrik Presentasi

No	Kreteria Penilaian	56-66	C 67-77	B 78-88	SB 89-99
1	Penguasaan Materi				
2	Alat peraga/ media				
3	Kekompakan/ Pembagian				

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**Figure 3.** Assessment module

In the assessment module above, it is not only assesses the students learning skill and knowledge, instead, it also assess the students behavior and the students presenting skills due to the English teacher's teaching style which is encouraging the students to be able to deliver the material that they learn in class, with a purpose not only to know the learning material, instead, the students will have to be able to apply the learning material in their daily activities through their practice of using the learning material in presentation and learning exercises in class. In the assessment process, the English teacher implemented the competencies of the Strengthening Project of the Pancasila Student Profile and encouraged the students to apply the Students Pancasila Profile in class and outside from the class activities. In fact, the researcher noticed that the English teacher consistently remind and build the students character and attitude that related to the Students Pancasila Profile.

The English teacher shared that in her teaching experience in implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum, to maintain the different level of competency and needs of the students in the learning process in class and to guide them to the same learning objective becomes the challenges that the English teacher encountered. Due to the situation, the English teacher must become the stakeholder who had big challenges which is not only in designing modules, designing students' worksheet, and assessment, instead, the English teacher has to control the different level of competency and needs of the students in the learning process in class. The English teacher mentioned that the challenges were experienced not only by herself, however, it was experienced by all teachers in each different learning subjects in SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat. In the interview process, the English teacher mentioned that the differentiation students' level of competencies and needs is the crucial challenge which it affects and create challenges in planning a teaching process, in the teaching process, and the assessment process.

## **DISCUSSION**

In the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum in SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat, the level of students' competency in one class varied in a range that is quite distance such as from the beginner level to the advanced level of students' competency. To guide the students to the same result of the learning objection, the teacher must develop a good strategy for creating a teaching plan which is the teaching module. In the interview process, the English teacher mentioned that to create the teaching module, the teachers need to analyze the class situation and conditions. According to Iwai et al. (1999), needs analysis is an action such as collecting information that becomes a foundation for the curriculum improvements in a purpose to fit the students' needs (Songhori, 2007). Furthermore, needs analysis is crucial in assisting the

teachers in creating a suitable teaching module for the students and solving the gap in the learning activity. The English teacher explained that the teaching module was created to cover the whole phase such as in grade X, the phase that is used in the learning activity is phase E, and for grade XI and grade XII, due to the same learning phase, which is phase F, the teacher will create a teaching module that covers the grade XI and grade XII learning materials in class. Due to the same phase for grade XI and grade XII, the students will automatically continue their grades, from grade XI to grade XII without any possibility that the students will fail to graduate from grade XI.

According to the Standard of Curriculum and Assessment in Education from the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, in order to create a good teaching plan based on the *Merdeka* Curriculum, teachers need to know four points which are knowing to learning achievements, formulating the learning purposes, arranging the plot of the learning purposes, and planning the learning assessments (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan, Assessment Pendidikan, 2022). In the first point, there are important phases which are flexible learning activities, suitable learning activities for the students, and the improvement of the learning plan that is collaborative. In the observation process, the researcher examined that the learning process in class fulfilled the important phases in the first point. In fact, the grade X-7 learning process is quite flexible that the students are not only learning from the English textbook that is provided in school, instead, they collaborate with any learning resources which the teacher will guide the students to be guided to the learning objections in class. And according to the test to know the student's competency and needs, the English teacher apply the teaching process which is suitable for the competency and needs of the students in grade X-7 that was based on the English teacher's teaching module to deliver the learning material. According to T. Mrunalini and A. Ramakrishna (2016), gadget devices and internet sources that is included as an ICT able to facilitate abundance of knowledge, develop policy formulation, and expanding the range of opportunities in accessing the knowledge by reducing sense of isolation (Abdulkareem Alkamel et al., 2018). This is able to assist the teacher and students to search for suitable learning material and learning method in the teaching and learning activity.

According to Hyland (2004), most students use the English language skill in real-life situations are only in listening and reading (Sargsyan & Kurghinyan, 2016). However, mostly they did not apply the English-speaking skill in a reason to avoid making mistakes which it becomes an anxiety for them. Barker (2004) suggested a solution that in order to overcome the anxiety of speaking using English language, it is suitable for the teachers to give the students a speaking assignment in a purpose to encourage them to communicate using English language

(Sargsyan & Kurghinyan, 2016). Due to the condition that is mentioned, the English teacher encouraged the students to present the learning material that they obtained in the class to improve their speaking skill, confident, and public speaking skill. In the students' worksheet, the English teacher added a video link such as YouTube videos that enables the students to access the learning video. According to Sudjana and Rivai (1992), there are benefits of using video in the learning process such as improve the learner's motivation and videos able to deliver the information of the learning material to the learners, clearly (Widahyu, 2021). Yudianto (2017: 234) mentioned that studying with the video media able to assist the students' learning process, especially for students who are slow learners, due to the video provides the information of the learning material in a form of image and sound that makes learning much easier and fun (Widahyu, 2021). According to Nasution (2019), YouTube videos are not only providing videos for people's entertainment, however, there are educational videos that can assist as the learning material in the learning process for any level of learning competency from the beginner level to the advance level (Kristiani & Pradnyadewi, 2021). This can assist the English teacher in improving the students' knowledge, especially in English which has four aspects of English language learning that the students need to learn such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In the *Merdeka* Curriculum, character building for the students is so important in the learning activities in class. The students' character-building program in class was called the Strengthening Project of the Pancasila Student Profile or "P5" (*Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila*). According to *Kemendikbudristek* number 56/M/2022, the Strengthening Project of the Pancasila Student Profile is a curricular activity-based project that was designed to strengthen the effort of achieving the competency and character according to the Student Pancasila Profile that was organized according to the approval of the competency standard (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, and Assesmen Pendidikan, 2022).

In the process of implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum, the English teacher encountered challenges which is maintaining the differentiation of the learning level in class. To create a teaching plan with a far distance of variety level of competency, the teachers need to acquire a good skill level of analyzing. This challenge in teaching is not the first time happened in the era of the *Merdeka* Curriculum education system, in fact, these challenges happened before the *Merdeka* Curriculum was developed. The English teacher mentioned that in the Curriculum 2013 or K-13 (*Kurtilas*) and the previous curriculum, the differentiation of the students' level of competencies was already happening in the learning process in class. However, in the *Merdeka* Curriculum education system, the English teacher mentioned that in SMA Negeri 85

Jakarta Barat, there is no requirement in the student's filtration of accepting the new students in the new year learning activity in school, which affects the competency level of the students in each class. The English teacher mentioned that due to the situation that is mentioned, there are students in beginner level of competencies and advanced level of competencies in one class. According to the English teacher, the level of success in achieving the students' learning objection in a far distance of different competency levels in a minimum hour of the learning subject in school is close to impossible. For the students with a poor level of competencies to keep up in the learning process, the learning hour of a subject needs to be added, except for the students who attend the study course outside of the learning activities in school which able to learn the learning material in extra time. Due to the situation, it will be quite challenging for the teachers who do not acquire a good level of analyzing the students' competency and need to create a teaching plan with a far distance of the differentiation of the competency level in the minimum subject learning time. According to the English teacher, teachers in SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta only obtain dissemination about the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which it explains about the teaching plan that teachers are allowed to create their teaching plans based on the references from the previous curriculum such as the Curriculum 2013 or it was known as K-13 (*Kurtilas*).

In the assessment process, the English teacher mentioned that in the grading system, the teachers are encouraged to find solutions to assist the students in graduating to the next grade. The English teacher explained that in the school system with the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, most of the assessment process will be assessed through the students' Strengthening Project of the Pancasila Student Profile, good behavior and characteristics, and their willingness to study in school. Furthermore, the students who have a bad grade in the learning subject will be assisted to pass the grade due to a good score on the Strengthening Project of the Pancasila Student Profile, good behavior, and a good characteristic. However, the English teacher mentioned that students who failed in their grades are usually the students who never attend school activities or go to school (absent).

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum in SMA Negeri 85 Jakarta Barat brought several changes to the teaching and learning process compared to the previous Curriculum 2013 (K-13/*Kurtilas*). The new curriculum introduced a teaching module with more features in less components than the previous *Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran* (RPP) which is able to save time for the teachers in creating a lesson plan. The teachers that implement the *Merdeka* Curriculum were required to conduct a needs analysis to assist them in maintaining the variety

of students' competency levels in the class. This allowed them to create flexible teaching plans that covered the whole specific learning phases such as phase E and phase F. In this curriculum, it provides freedom for the teachers and students to create their own teaching and learning activity using ICT resources, such as YouTube videos and other internet sources, that was able to enhance the learning material and facilitate the learning activity in class. The *Merdeka* Curriculum emphasized character building through the Strengthening Project of the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). This project aimed to develop students' identity, ideology, Indonesian ambition, and abilities to face 21st-century challenges. Despite the curriculum's advantages, some challenges were experienced by the teacher while implementing this curriculum. One of the main is managing the differentiation of students' competency levels within a class. Teachers had to employ effective strategies to guide all students toward the same learning objectives. In the *Merdeka* Curriculum, the assessment process will not only assess the academic results of the students, however, it also assesses character development, good behavior, and willingness to study.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of the study, it is suggested that to improve the implementation quality of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, the teachers need special trainings such as simulation in planning, conducting, and assessing a teaching and learning activity in class. It is also needed for the teachers to obtain an analyzing skill, critical thinking, and creativity by obtaining it from the special training. The purpose of the special training is to develop the teacher's knowledge about the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum and to develop their analyzing and critical thinking skills in observing the teacher's class situation which is able to create a good teaching strategy to maintain the differentiation of students' competency levels and able to guide all students with different levels of competence to the same learning objective.

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