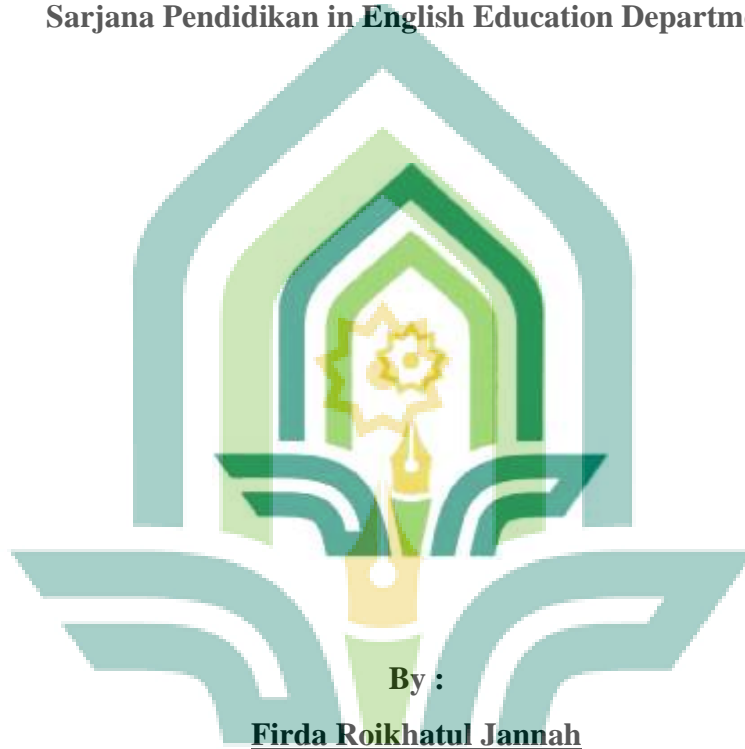


**EFL TEACHERS' CHALLENGES AND COPING
STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING MERDEKA CURRICULUM
LESSON PLANS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

A THESIS

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education Department**



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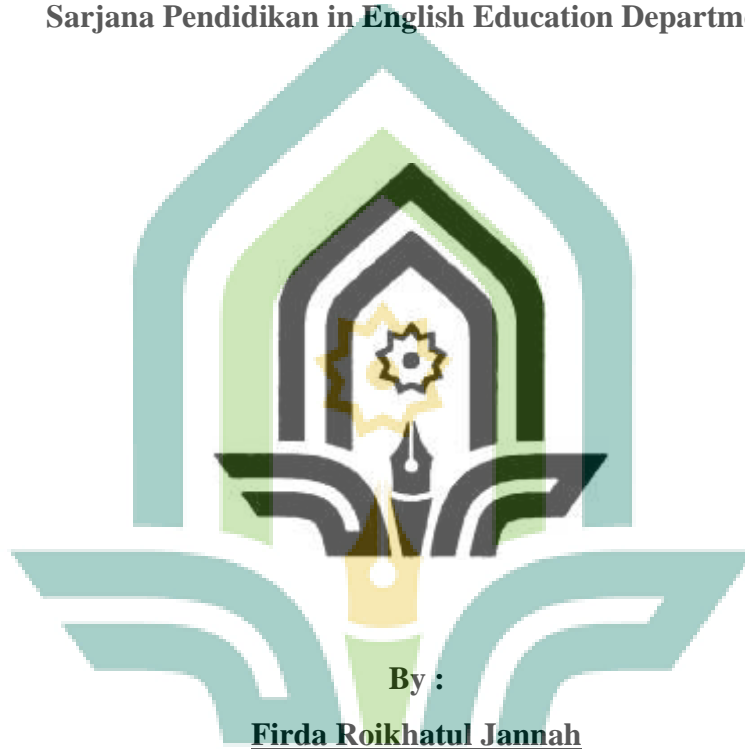
**ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
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2025

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Pekalongan, 28 Februari 2025



Firda Roikhatul Jannah
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c/q. Ketua Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris
di
PEKALONGAN

Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb

Setelah diadakan penelitian dan perbaikan seperlunya, maka bersama ini saya kirimkan naskah skripsi saudara:

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Prodi : Tadris Bahasa Inggris

Judul : **EFL TEACHERS CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES
IN DEVELOPING MERDEKA CURRICULUM LESSON PLANS
IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

Saya menilai bahwa naskah skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan kepada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan UIN. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan untuk diajukan dalam sidang munaqosah

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatiannya , disampaikan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.

Pekalongan, 25 Februari 2025
Pembimbing,



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APPROVAL SHEET

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim...

Alhamdulillah....

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to Allah SWT for His extraordinary grace and guidance, which allowed me to complete this thesis smoothly and without obstacles. I also want to thank the great Prophet Muhammad SAW, who serves as an inspiration to me. I am especially grateful to Mrs. Hafizah Ghany Hayudinna, my supervisor, for her unwavering patience and willingness to guide me toward earning my S.Pd. degree. Additionally, I would like to extend my thanks to all the lecturers in the English Language Education Study Program at UIN KH. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan for providing invaluable knowledge that will benefit me both now and in the future.

The journey toward learning my S.Pd. has been a challenging yet rewarding experience, one that I owe largely to the incredible support of my extended family, especially my parents. Mr. Rochman Setyarsono, and Mrs. Siti Fadhilah has been my pillar of strength throughout this endeavor. Thank you for being my guiding light and always creating a space where I could return, regardless of the circumstances I faced. Your love and dedication have made this journey possible, and I will forever cherish the sacrifices you have made for my future. I would like to express my gratitude to my younger brother, M. Faydhur Rochman, for being there to accompany and entertain me when I felt overwhelmed. I also want to thank my other family members and friends who have supported me throughout this journey and created beautiful memories together.

MOTTO

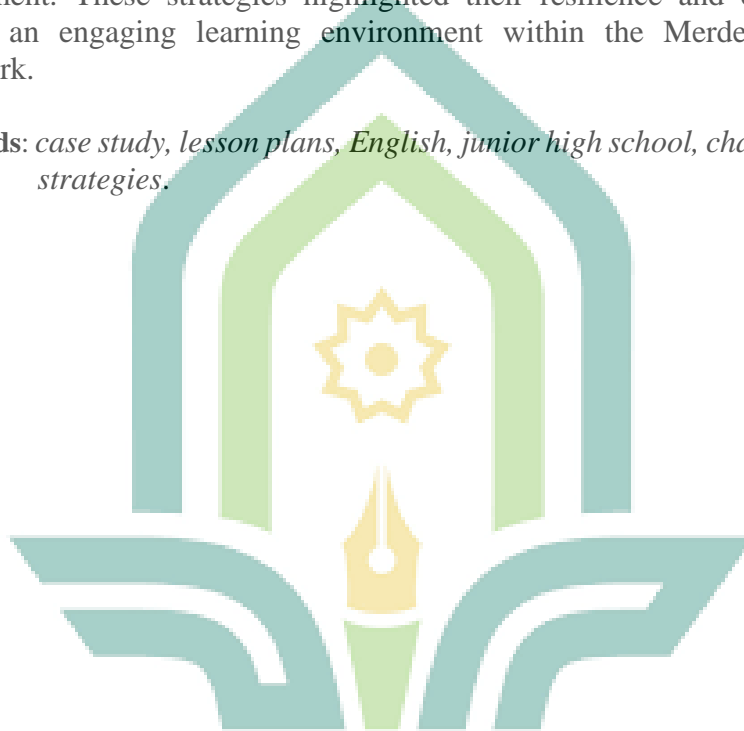
“Intelligence is sexy, Don’t play stupid”



ABSTRACT

This study investigated the challenges and strategies of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers developing lesson plans under the Merdeka Curriculum at a junior high school in Pekalongan, Central Java. Through semi-structured interviews and documentation analysis, four key challenges emerged: understanding the Merdeka Curriculum's core concepts, implementing differentiated learning strategies, selecting appropriate teaching materials, and managing time effectively. To address these challenges, teachers engaged in collaborative discussions, used differentiated instructional methods, carefully selected materials aligned with student interests, and prioritized effective time management. These strategies highlighted their resilience and commitment to creating an engaging learning environment within the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

Keywords: *case study, lesson plans, English, junior high school, challenges, coping strategies.*



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menyelidiki tantangan dan strategi guru Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) dalam mengembangkan rencana pelajaran di bawah Kurikulum Merdeka di sebuah sekolah menengah pertama di Pekalongan, Jawa Tengah. Melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan analisis dokumentasi, empat tantangan utama muncul: memahami konsep inti Kurikulum Merdeka, menerapkan strategi pembelajaran diferensiasi, memilih materi pengajaran yang tepat, dan mengatur waktu secara efektif. Untuk mengatasi tantangan ini, guru terlibat dalam diskusi kolaboratif, menggunakan metode pengajaran dieferensiasi, memilih materi yang selaras dengan minat siswa, dan memprioritaskan manajemen waktu yang efektif. Strategi ini menyoroti ketahanan dan komitmen mereka untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang menarik dalam kerangka Kurikulum Merdeka.

Kata kunci: *studi kasus, rencana pelajaran, Bahasa Inggris, sekolah menengah pertama, tantangan, strategi penanggulangan.*



PREFACE

Praise and gratitude be to God Almighty, who has granted me the strength, patience, and perseverance to complete this undergraduate thesis titled "**EFL TEACHERS CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING MERDEKA CURRICULUM LESSON PLANS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**". The writing of this thesis has been a journey filled with challenges, learning experiences, and invaluable insights. Throughout this process, I have gained a deeper understanding of EFL Teachers' Challenges and Coping Strategies in developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson plans, which I hope will contribute meaningfully to the field of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Despite the difficulties encountered, the research process has been a rewarding opportunity for academic growth and personal development.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to:

1. The Chairperson of the English Education Department and Teachers Training of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Mr. Ahmad Burhanuddin, M.A
2. Mrs. Hafizah Ghany Hayudinna M.Pd, as my thesis supervisor, for their unwavering guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous support throughout this research.
3. All lectures of the English Department for their valuable insights and encouragement.
4. My family, Mr. Rochman Setyarsono and Mrs. Siti Fadlilah whose endless support, prayers, and motivation have been my greatest source of strength.

5. My little Brother, M. Faydhur Rochman thanks for being there to accompany and entertain me when I felt overwhelmed.
6. To my friends, Potopota, Bismillah, Nyai, Martuah, and Badprik, who have provided moral support and assistance in various ways throughout this journey.
7. All participants whose cooperation and participation have been crucial in completing this research.
8. Last, I am grateful to myself for enduring, fighting, and trying to get to this point.

Pekalongan, Maret 2025

The writer



TABLE OF CONTENT

COVER	i
LEMBAR PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN SKRIPSI	ii
NOTA PEMBIMBING	iii
APPROVAL SHEET	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
MOTTO	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
PREFACE	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS	xi
LIST OF APPENDICIES	xiii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 Formulation of Problems	4
1.3 Aims of Study	5
1.4 Operational Definition	5
1.5 Significance of Study	6
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Literature Review	7
2.1.1 Definition of a Lesson Plan	7
2.1.2 Step Designing of a Lesson Plan	8
2.1.3 Component of the lesson plan in the Merdeka curriculum	11
2.1.4 Challenges in Developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson Plan	17
2.1.5 Coping Strategies In Developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson Plan	21
2.2 Previous Study	25
2.3 Conceptual Framework	28

CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	29
3.1 Research Design	29
3.2 Research Context	29
3.3 Setting and Participant	30
3.4 Data Collection	30
3.5 Data Analysis	31
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	34
4.1 Findings	34
4.1.1 EFL Teacher's Challenges in Developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson Plans	34
4.1.2 EFL Teachers Coping Strategies in Developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson Plans	39
4.2 Discussion	42
4.2.1 EFL Teacher's Challenges in Developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson Plans	43
4.2.2 EFL Teachers Coping Strategies in Developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson Plans	48
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION	53
5.1 Conclusion	53
5.2 Recommendation	54
REFERENCES	
ENCLOSURE	

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Lesson planning is the first stage before the learning process begins. Farrell (2002) states that a lesson plan is a written description of how students will move toward achieving specific goals. Emiliasari and Jubaedah (2019) add that lesson plans help teachers keep the course organized and avoid stagnation, which boosts their confidence in the classroom. Teaching without a plan often leads to failure or inadequate outcomes in the learning process (Alanazi, 2019). Therefore, to ensure that the teaching process is organized from start to finish, every prospective teacher needs a well-structured plan and clear actions to take during the learning process per the applicable curriculum.

Merdeka curriculum is the embodiment of shaping the values and character of our nation. Based on this curriculum, lesson plan components are divided into 3, namely fundamental components (school identity, a profile of a Pancasila student, target student, etc.), essential components (learning goals, preparing for learning, learning activities, assessment, remedial, reflection, etc.), and attachments (Worksheet, reading book, glossary, and references) (Fatah, 2023). Since the other components are complementary, teachers can add more as needed.

Lesson plans are created using the following principles: effectiveness, efficiency, and student orientation (Brown, 2001). This demonstrates that teachers need to be proficient and efficient in creating lesson plans to meet

learning objectives. Effectiveness means the lesson plan should help students understand key concepts and skills. Teachers must know their subjects well and use various teaching strategies. This includes encouraging active learning, promoting group work, and adapting lessons to meet different learning needs (Farhang, 2023).

Efficiency involves using time and resources wisely. Teachers should organize the materials and activities to create smooth lessons (Sahib, 2021). Using technology to make teaching more effective or design assignments that reinforce learning without overwhelming students. Student orientation means placing students at the center of learning. Teachers should consider learning styles, preferences, and interests when planning lessons (Sumarningsih, 2025). This might mean giving students choices in assignments or using their feedback to improve lessons.

Even though these principles are important, teachers often face many challenges when making lesson plans. These challenges include time limits, different student abilities, and a lack of resources. Managing classroom dynamics while meeting diverse needs can complicate planning. To overcome these issues, teachers need to be creative, and adaptable, and continue developing their skills in lesson planning (Arviansyah & Shagena, 2022).

According to Putri (2023), some challenges faced by teachers when preparing lesson plans for the independent curriculum are as follows: (1) The format is different from previous research, (2) teachers do not yet understand the stages of lesson plan preparation, (3) difficulties with materials and school

facilities. Rumiati's (2024) study also identified additional difficulties teachers have, such as their low initial understanding and proficiency of the subject matter and context, which makes it challenging for them to create triggering questions. The content offered still refers to the prior curriculum rather than vital content since teachers are still learning how to integrate learning outcomes into learning objectives. Teachers' references to learning models that support differentiated instruction are also limited.

The challenge requires teachers to find strategies to achieve effective learning by the provisions of the independent curriculum. One of the strategies that can be applied is collaborating with colleagues to share experiences and resources so that teachers can support each other in designing innovative and relevant lesson plans (Abad, 2024). In addition, teachers also need to participate in regular training and professional development to gain a deeper understanding of the principles of the Independent Curriculum and how to implement it in the classroom. The use of technology in lesson planning and implementation can also help teachers create engaging and interactive learning experiences for students (Putra & Aryani, 2019). By implementing these strategies, it is hoped that teachers can overcome existing challenges and develop lesson plans that not only meet curriculum standards but also enhance student engagement and academic achievement.

Teachers utilize a range of strategies to develop engaging lesson plans that significantly enhance students' learning outcomes (Brown, 2001). These strategies may include incorporating interactive activities, utilizing multimedia

resources, and integrating real-world applications to make the material relevant and interesting. When creating a lesson plan, teachers meticulously organize their teaching approach to ensure a logical flow of information from the introduction to the conclusion. This organization allows them to effectively manage classroom time, ensuring that all necessary content is covered while also allowing for student engagement and participation (Harmer 2007). By thoughtfully considering the timing and structure of each lesson, teachers can create a dynamic learning environment that maximizes student understanding and retention of the material.

Conducting research is essential to understanding the challenges teachers face, such as limited resources, diverse student learning styles, and pressures from educational standards. It is also important to explore the strategies teachers use to overcome these obstacles and improve their practices. By focusing on these areas, we can ensure that lesson plans meet students' diverse needs and align with the Merdeka curriculum, fostering an engaging learning environment that promotes student growth and achievement.

1.2 Formulation of Problems

Based on the background of studies, this research has several questions, as follows:

1. What challenges did EFL teachers face in developing Merdeka curriculum lesson plans?
2. What strategies did EFL teachers use to cope with the challenges in developing Merdeka curriculum lesson plans?

1.3 Aims of Study

The aims of this research are as follows:

1. To explore the challenges of EFL teachers in developing Merdeka curriculum lesson plans.
2. To explain the strategies teachers use to address these challenges effectively.

1.4 Operational Definition

1.4.1 Lesson plan

Brown (2001) defines a lesson plan as a collection of activities that represent steps along a curriculum in which you have a pause (a day or more) to assess and get ready for the next lesson.

1.4.2 Challenge

Peter Senge (2003) said that a challenge is a complex and often unexpected problem that requires systemic thinking and collaboration to solve.

1.4.3 Coping Strategies

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that strategic coping is a cognitive and behavioral process used by individuals to deal with stress and challenges.

1.5 Significance of Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on lesson planning, differentiated instruction, and teacher adaptation in curriculum changes.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

The findings from this study can be used to design more suitable training programs for teachers and assist them in creating more effective lesson plans, thereby enhancing students' learning experiences.



CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Definition of a Lesson Plan

A lesson plan is an educational strategy that outlines activities linked to the teaching and learning process (Rohmawati, 2019). It serves as the foundation for classroom activities. Before starting any learning activities, a teacher creates a lesson plan to ensure effective instruction. Brown (2001) defines a lesson plan as "a collection of activities that represent steps along a curriculum in which you have a pause (a day or more) to assess and get ready for the next lesson".

A lesson plan organizes and manages learning activities to achieve a minimum level of proficiency, guided by established competencies and detailed in the syllabus. It is reasonable to infer that instructors develop various groups and activities within their lesson plans to meet the required competencies of the curriculum. According to Harmer (2007), lesson plans are constructed as part of teaching preparation, reflecting teachers' insights into the most effective approaches for their students and the educational objectives. These plans are tailored to address the needs and goals of both students and the curriculum. If lesson plans disregard students' needs, interests, abilities, learning styles, and curricular objectives, they may not prove effective (Saputri, 2023).

Another definition of a lesson plan, as stated by Wiranata, is that a "lesson plan is a document that outlines the procedures and learning management necessary to achieve one or more core competencies specified in the syllabus." This lesson plan serves as a comprehensive framework for teachers to guide their instruction to students. Each lesson should include detailed instructions that cover objectives, content scope, teaching activities, materials, and evaluation methods (Farhi, 2021).

2.1.2 Step Designing of a Lesson Plan.

Brown (2000) outlines the following guidelines for effective lesson planning:

a. Getting Started with Planning.

teachers should create lesson plans that are closely aligned with the student's textbooks and the established curriculum. This process involves thoroughly reviewing the instructional materials to identify key concepts and learning objectives. The teacher should then outline the main points to be covered in each lesson, ensuring that they are relevant and engaging for the students. Additionally, a detailed draft of the lesson plan should be prepared, which includes specific activities, assessments, and resources that will facilitate student learning and comprehension. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness of the lessons but also supports diverse learning needs within the classroom.

b. Timing, Pacing, Variety, and Sequencing.

Teachers should familiarize themselves with various teaching approaches to enhance student engagement. Understanding methods such as cooperative learning and differentiated instruction enables teachers to address diverse learning styles.

Additionally, planning a coherent sequence of exercises is crucial. Each activity should be timed appropriately not too short or too long to ensure students can fully grasp the material while maintaining their interest. By structuring lessons effectively, teachers can create a dynamic classroom that supports optimal student learning.

c. Evaluating Difficulty.

Evaluating difficulty involves systematically assessing how challenging various activities are for learners. Teachers should carefully analyze and determine the level of ease or complexity associated with the techniques and methodologies they employ in their instruction. This process not only helps in identifying suitable activities for different skill levels but also ensures that the learning experience is both engaging and effective for all students. By understanding the specific challenges that learners may face, teachers can make informed decisions to tailor their teaching strategies and support student success.

d. Considering Personal Differences.

Teachers should develop instructional plans that address the diverse ability levels of students, with the objective of engaging all individuals through interactive activities and the implementation of effective pedagogical strategies.

e. Facilitating Communication Between Students and Teachers.

Lesson plans should incorporate specific periods for teachers and students to engage in deep, meaningful conversations. These interactions are vital, as they create a collaborative learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, asking insightful questions, and seeking clarification on the material being presented. By fostering this open dialogue, teachers can better support their students' understanding and encourage critical thinking.

f. Adapting to an Existing Curriculum.

Lesson plans must be carefully aligned with the approved curriculum to ensure that they meet the educational standards and objectives set forth by the institution. In addition to this alignment, it is essential to adapt the lesson plans to address the diverse needs and goals of individual students. This might involve incorporating various teaching strategies, resources, and assessment methods that cater to different learning styles, abilities, and interests. By doing so, teachers

can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that promotes student engagement and success.

g. Important Notes for the Classroom

Selecting the appropriate type of notes for teachers to utilize in the classroom is an essential, yet often overlooked, aspect of lesson planning. Whether they opt for detailed pages filled with information, a well-structured script to guide their instruction, or concise key points to highlight crucial concepts, this decision can significantly impact the effectiveness of their teaching. This final step ensures that teachers are well-prepared to engage their students and facilitate meaningful learning experiences (Sokhira et al., 2016).

2.1.3 Component of the lesson plan in the Merdeka curriculum.

According to the Minister of Education and Culture (2022), the lesson plan consists of three parts, among others:

a. Fundamental component.

The general information component is divided into six (6) components:

1) School identity.

School data is essential in defining the character of an institution. Each component, including the teacher, is listed alongside the school's name. Following this, the year the teaching module (Modul Ajar) was completed is specified, along with the corresponding educational level, which may be SD (Elementary

School), SMP (Junior High School), SMA (Senior High School), or SMK (Vocational School).

2) Initial proficiency level.

The initial competency encompasses the knowledge or skills that students need to have before engaging in a particular subject. In this context, it serves as a gauge for the thoroughness of the teaching module's development. Furthermore, progressing in the teaching module also requires a foundational ability level.

3) Profile of a Pancasila student.

The Pancasila learning profile serves as the ultimate objective of educational activities, closely aligned with developing students' personalities. The six dimensions of the Pancasila student profile should be interconnected and integrated across all subjects in various manners. For example, this can be achieved through lesson content, project-based learning assignments, or assessments.

4) Infrastructure and facilities.

These resources and structures encompass the equipment and facilities essential for supporting learning activities. The tools and materials utilized in these activities are known as facilities, whereas the infrastructure includes resources that are made available to teachers to help them meet their requirements.

5) Target student demographics.

There are several factors to consider. Regular students and those with typical characteristics can easily absorb and understand the material. On the other hand, students with learning difficulties often rely on a single learning style. Students who can quickly understand and process information are more likely to develop higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and leadership abilities.

6) Learning model.

A structured learning model describes how learning can be delivered, including blended learning, remote learning, or in-person methods.

b. Essential Components.

The following are essential components of the lesson plan:

1) Goals for Learning.

The learning principles must be reflected in the learning objectives, which must also be tested through various assessment methods to show comprehension. The components of the learning objectives determine the resources, learning activities, diversity of students, and evaluation methods.

2) Meaningful comprehension.

Understanding the benefits that students gain from participating in the learning process is referred to as meaningful knowledge. These benefits can be applied later in life.

3) Thematic question.

The teacher creates thematic questions to stimulate students' critical thinking and curiosity. In this context, thematic questions can assist learners in gaining a meaningful understanding aligned with learning objectives.

4) Preparing for learning.

Concrete learning activity steps help organize the main learning activities. Various learning phases and approaches are provided to meet your unique needs.

5) Learning Activities.

The steps of the learning activities are arranged progressively by the allotted time. The three phases of this learning activity introduction, core, and conclusion utilize active learning strategies.

6) Assessment.

Assessment is a method used to evaluate learning outcomes at the end of an activity. It is essential to clearly state the achievement criteria in relation to the learning objectives. There are three types of assessments: diagnostic assessments, which are conducted before learning takes place; formative assessments, which occur during the learning process; and summative assessments, which are performed after the learning process.

7) Remedial and enrichment.

For high-achieving students, enrichment and remediation are designed to help them reach their full potential through targeted learning activities. Students who struggle to understand the material or need to revisit lessons receive remedial instruction.

8) Reflection.

Teachers and students can evaluate the significance of learning activities through reflection.

c. Attachments.

The attachment component consists of at least 4 elements:

1) Worksheets for students.

The worksheets provided are specifically designed as educational tools to enhance students' learning experiences and support their academic development. These resources are intended for use in classrooms, tutoring sessions, or independent study. To ensure maximum accessibility and benefit, the worksheets may be freely copied, shared, or distributed among students, teachers, and parents as needed. This flexibility allows for widespread use in various educational settings, promoting collaborative learning and ensuring that all students, regardless of their circumstances, have access to quality learning materials.

2) Reading materials for teachers and students.

Reading materials designed for teachers and students can be effectively utilized as a warm-up activity before engaging in exercise. This approach not only prepares learners mentally but also helps them to focus on the upcoming physical activity. Furthermore, these materials can be employed at the beginning or conclusion of a learning session to deepen comprehension of the subject matter being explored. By integrating reading into physical activities, teachers can enhance students' understanding and retention of key concepts, making the learning experience more holistic and engaging.

3) A glossary

A glossary is a comprehensive alphabetical list of terms related to a specific subject or field of study. Each entry includes a clear definition and explanation of the term, helping readers understand its meaning and context. Glossaries are often found in textbooks, academic papers, and technical documents to aid comprehension and provide a quick reference for specialized vocabulary. They serve as valuable resources for students, researchers, and professionals looking to deepen their understanding of the subject matter.

4) References.

The referenced learning resources include student books, reference books, magazines, newspapers, internet sites, the surrounding environment, resource people, and more.

2.1.4 Challenges in Developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson Plan

According to Peter Senge (2003), challenges are complex and often unexpected problems that require systemic thinking and collaboration. In developing lesson plans based on the Merdeka Curriculum, the challenges encompass various aspects, ranging from technical to conceptual. The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to provide flexibility to teachers and focuses on student-centered learning, thus requiring teachers to adapt to a new, more dynamic, and creative paradigm. However, for many teachers, this concept of flexibility becomes a challenge in itself, as it requires deep understanding, strong analytical skills, and creativity in designing relevant and meaningful learning processes (Tanio, et.al.2024).

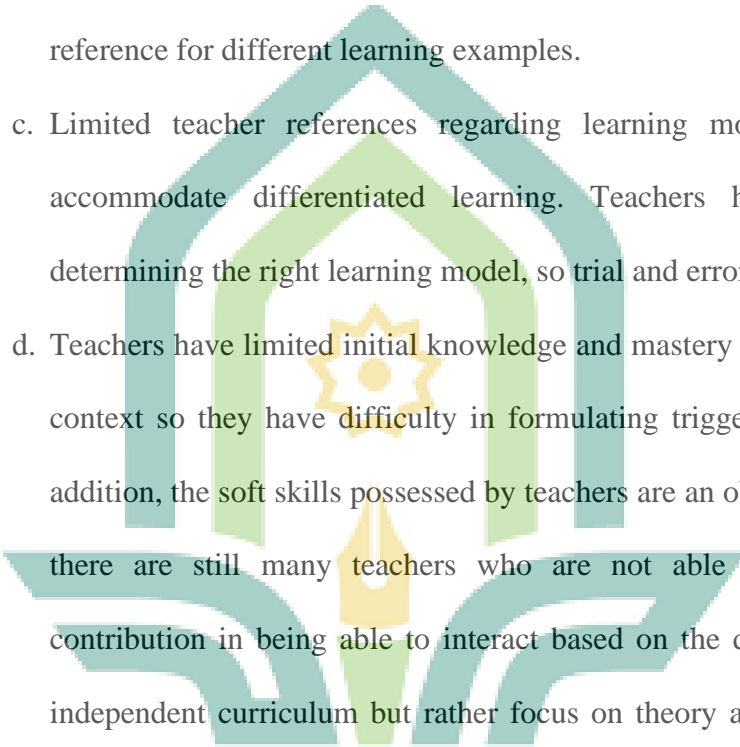
In the book "Differentiated Instructional Strategies: One Size Doesn't Fit All" by Gayle H. Gregory and Carolyn Chapman, it is explained that teachers face a number of challenges in developing lesson plans, especially when it comes to meeting the diverse needs of students. Students have different learning styles, abilities, interests, and needs, so teachers need to create lesson plans that are relevant to all students. This

is made more complicated by time and resource constraints that often limit teachers' ability to design multiple versions of lesson plans.

In addition, integrating various strategies into lessons is also a challenge, because each activity must be relevant without sacrificing the quality of learning. Teachers must also be able to manage diverse classes by creating an inclusive and organized learning environment. Other challenges that arise are integrating technology into lesson plans, especially for teachers who are not familiar with digital tools, and keeping students motivated to stay engaged in the learning process. Teachers also face difficulties in evaluating students fairly, especially because the diversity of student abilities requires flexible assessment approaches.

Furthermore, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum also brings complexities, especially in integrating key elements such as learning outcomes, the Pancasila student profile, and differentiation principles (Wahyudin et al., 2024). Teachers are required to be able to adjust lesson plans to the diverse needs, interests, and potentials of students, while also ensuring that the learning remains aligned with the curriculum goals.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that teachers encounter challenges in formulating lesson plans aligned with the independent curriculum. In his research, Rumiati (2024) identifies and elaborates on the specific challenges faced by teachers in this context:

- 
- a. The level of student understanding, student thinking ability, student skills, learning styles, self-confidence levels, and student concentration levels vary, so that teachers have difficulty in the learning and assessment models that will be used in learning.
- b. Limited facilities and infrastructure owned by the school. This limitation makes it difficult for teachers to find various sources of reference for different learning examples.
- c. Limited teacher references regarding learning models that can accommodate differentiated learning. Teachers have difficulty determining the right learning model, so trial and error
- d. Teachers have limited initial knowledge and mastery of material and context so they have difficulty in formulating trigger questions. In addition, the soft skills possessed by teachers are an obstacle because there are still many teachers who are not able to show their contribution in being able to interact based on the demands of the independent curriculum but rather focus on theory alone, there has been no clear acceleration in building an approach to utilizing technology.
- e. Teachers do not yet understand how to derive/translate Learning Achievements into learning objectives, so the material provided does not refer to essential material, but rather still refers to the previous curriculum.

In line with the research above, Efrida (2024) also discussed the challenges faced by teachers in making lesson plans in the independent curriculum, including:

a. Teachers Do Not Yet Understand the Independent Curriculum Planning Comprehensively.

According to the findings of this study, one of the main challenges faced by teachers is integrating the principles of child development into various learning outcomes. While the Independent Curriculum emphasizes flexibility and student-centered learning, many teachers struggle to align these principles with the curriculum's goals and objectives. One issue arises from the complexity of combining different aspects of child development—cognitive, emotional, social, and physical—into coherent and measurable learning outcomes. Teachers are required to consider how each learning activity supports the holistic development of the child, yet many lack adequate training or resources to guide this integration effectively.

b. Lack of training

One significant barrier teachers face is the lack of comprehensive training related to Independent Curriculum. This gap in professional development poses challenges for teachers as they strive to adapt to the demands of the curriculum and provide meaningful learning experiences for their students. The lack of

adequate training often leaves teachers struggling to understand the nuances of Independent Curriculum, including its focus on flexibility, differentiation, and student-centered learning. Many teachers are unsure how to translate theoretical concepts of the curriculum into practical strategies for the classroom.

As a conclusion, the challenges faced by teachers in developing lesson plans based on the Merdeka Curriculum are diverse and complex. Teachers often struggle to integrate various aspects of child development into measurable learning outcomes, as well as to understand and implement the principles of the curriculum that emphasize flexibility and student-centered learning. Additionally, the lack of adequate training leaves many teachers uncertain about how to translate the theoretical concepts of the curriculum into effective teaching practices. Various factors, such as differences in student understanding, limited facilities, and a lack of references regarding appropriate teaching models, further add to the burden on teachers in planning and implementing learning. These challenges create significant barriers to achieving the educational goals envisioned by the Merdeka Curriculum.

2.1.5 Coping Strategies In Developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson Plan

Coping strategies are essential for teachers as they face the complexities of developing lesson plans aligned with the Independent Curriculum. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define strategic coping as the cognitive and behavioral processes used by individuals to deal with stress

and challenges. The independent curriculum focuses on flexibility, student-centered learning, and differentiation, teachers are required to adopt innovative and adaptive approaches to address related challenges.

The book "Differentiated Instructional Strategies: One Size Doesn't Fit All" by Gayle H. Gregory and Carolyn Chapman outlines strategies to help teachers address challenges in creating and implementing lesson plans. One key strategy is differentiation, which involves adapting teaching methods to suit the diverse needs, interests, and learning styles of students. Flexible grouping is another effective approach, where students are organized into groups that change based on their learning requirements, promoting collaboration and more tailored instruction.

The book emphasizes the importance of using student data to guide lesson planning. By analyzing assessment results, teachers can design activities that provide remedial support or advanced challenges as needed. Incorporating technology is another recommendation, as it enhances engagement and makes learning more interactive. To streamline the planning process, teachers are encouraged to use flexible templates and prioritize activities with the greatest impact on learning outcomes.

To boost student motivation, the authors suggest methods such as project-based learning, interactive discussions, and activities that connect lessons to real-world experiences. Teachers are also encouraged to reflect on their lesson plans regularly by seeking feedback from students and

documenting their observations in a teaching journal. Collaborative efforts with peers, such as joining professional learning communities, are highlighted as a way to share resources, ideas, and best practices.

Managing workload effectively is another focus of the book. Teachers can leverage existing resources like textbooks or digital tools and customize them to meet the needs of their classroom. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is equally important to avoid feeling overwhelmed. By applying these strategies, teachers can enhance their lesson plans progressively, creating more inclusive and impactful learning environments for their students.

Another coping strategy according to Arifianti's research (2023), is to address differentiated learning, before teachers make lesson plans, they must conduct an initial assessment or class observation including pre-tests, quizzes, simple questions, questions, and answers. Then brief answers to questions at the beginning of the semester or learning contract. So, teachers understand and discover the differences in their students' diversity, learning styles, skills, cognitive skills, and English comprehension.

In addition, to overcome the challenge of lack of learning time, namely by managing the time allocation efficiently and using the learning media that are easy for teachers and students. The steps taken by the third English teacher in designing Learning Activities are understanding the learning objectives, learning assessment, topics, learning media, and

strategy, and then determining the time allocation. After that, design the trigger question based on the content to provoke students' understanding. Last, recheck the learning activities.

Another strategy put forward by Ita (2024) in her research is that in overcoming the challenges of compiling an independent curriculum lesson plan, comprehensive training is needed for teachers on how to design an independent curriculum, as well as encouraging teachers to develop student-centered learning innovations. Training should include an understanding of the concept of an independent curriculum, planning techniques, and implementation strategies in the classroom. Furthermore, school principals and the government also have an important role in supporting and facilitating the development of teacher professionalism, for example through regular mentoring and supervision (Fakhrudin et al., 2023). With these efforts, it is hoped that teachers can design and manage student-centered learning, and facilitate the development of innovation, creativity, and learning independence for their students.

These coping strategies collectively highlight the resilience, adaptability, and dedication of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Despite the inherent challenges, these approaches enable teachers to design lesson plans that promote meaningful, inclusive, and student-centered learning experiences, ultimately contributing to the success of the curriculum's goals.

2.2 Previous Study

Azizah (2024) conducted a study entitled "Readiness of English Teachers in Preparing Lesson Plans Based on the Independent Curriculum at SMK Negeri 1 Jambi". The purpose of this study was to identify the preparation and challenges faced by teachers in supporting their readiness for the 10th-grade lesson plan with this new curriculum framework. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study. The research findings revealed several main aspects of readiness and challenges for English teachers. Readiness includes cognitive aspects such as the importance of lesson plan design, understanding of independent curriculum, use of media sources to support lesson plan creation, and the ability to compile and evaluate lesson plans effectively.

In line with the above research, Fitriyanti (2019) also discussed "Problems faced by English Teachers in Preparing Lesson Plans". This study focuses on the problems faced and solutions to problems when preparing lesson plans. The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach with the results that can be concluded that 6 problems were found that teachers faced when preparing lesson plans, namely student conditions, how to deliver material, learning activities, media and assessment instructions, and learning methods. Then the researcher found a solution to the problem, namely by changing the learning method and determining the general abilities of students.

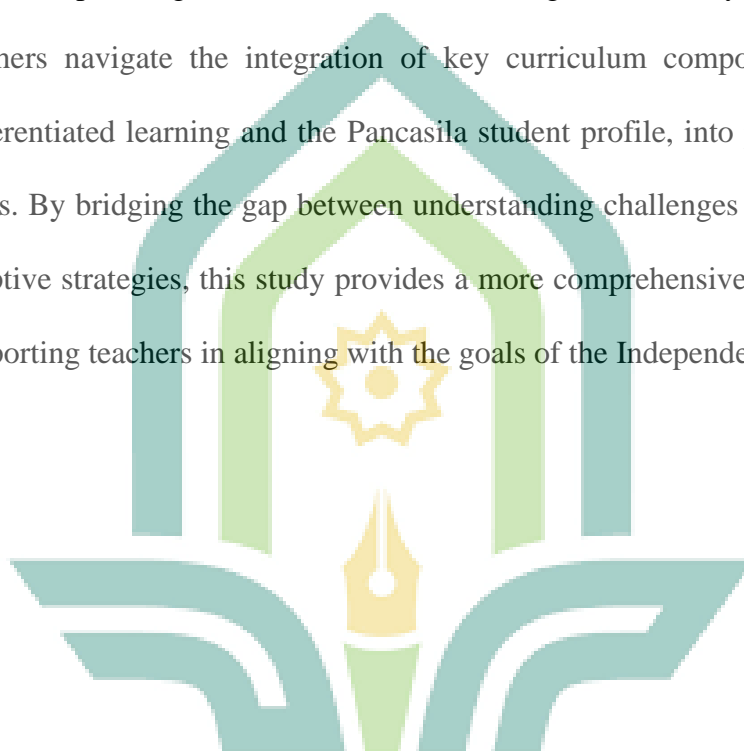
Research by Silmi (2023) entitled "Strategies of prospective English teachers in designing teaching modules for the Merdeka Belajar curriculum" has the same relevance. This study aims to determine the strategies used by

prospective English teachers of SMAN 1 Rejang Lebong and MAN Rejang Lebong in designing teaching modules for the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. The researcher used a descriptive qualitative method with interviews and document analysis for data collection. The findings of the study were that prospective teachers of MAN Rejang Lebong and SMAN 1 Rejang Lebong had developed an approach to constructing teaching modules using the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. To design lessons, use the following strategies: identify learning objectives, create an introduction, arrange specific learning activities, check understanding, make conclusions and previews, and set a realistic schedule. To compile teaching modules, teachers must first study ATP, because this is the basis for all modules.

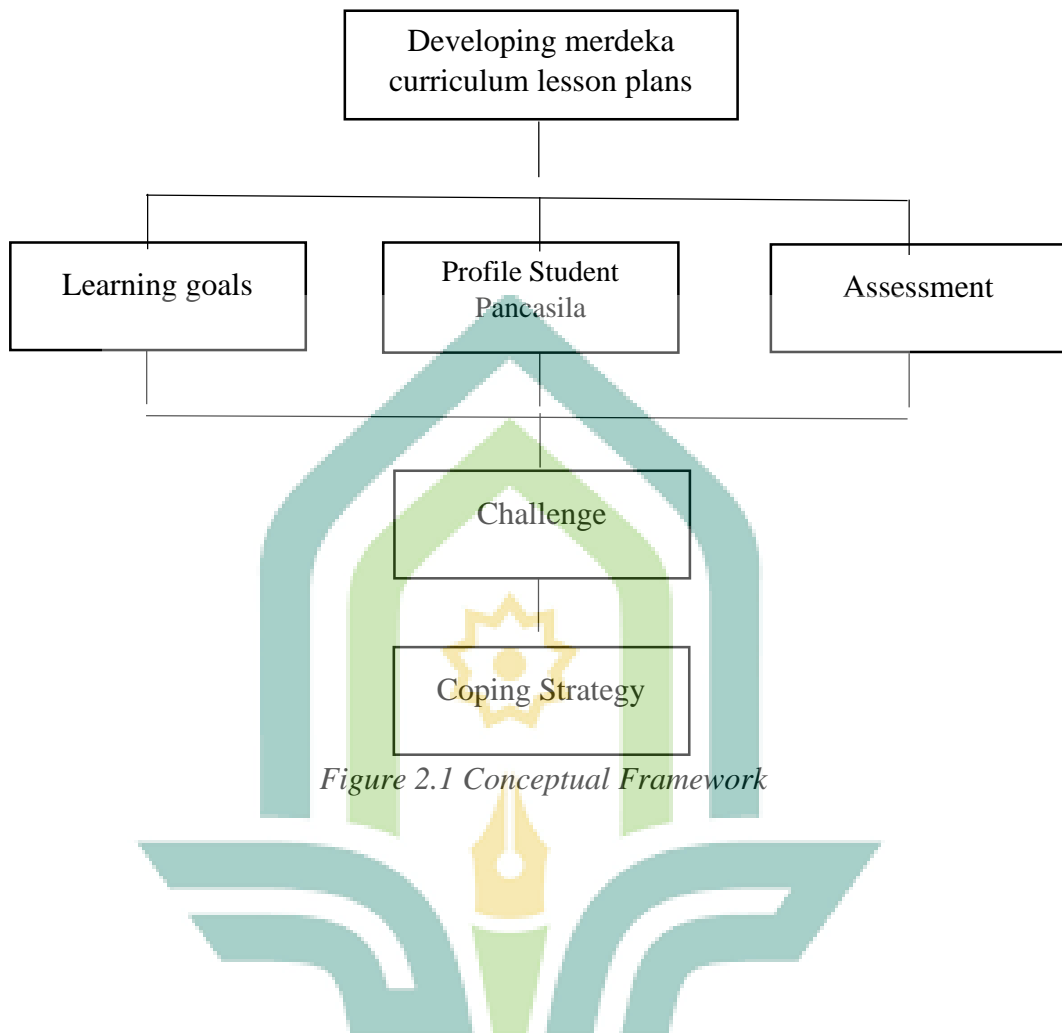
In addition to the above research, the same research was conducted by Tanio (2024) entitled Analysis of social studies Teacher problems in developing lesson plans of Merdeka curriculum. The purpose of this study is to analyze the problems experienced by social studies teachers and analyze the causal factors experienced by social studies teachers in developing lesson plans. Using the qualitative descriptive research method, this research concludes that the problems experienced by teachers are due to a lack of actively seeking information in developing lesson plans. In addition, some factors cause the problems experienced by social studies teachers in junior high schools throughout Batu City in developing lesson plans in the Merdeka curriculum, namely, teachers do not understand the changes in the Merdeka curriculum, the components of the lesson plan are different from the previous

learning design, the teacher's competence in preparing lesson plans is still not following the guidelines, and their mastery of IT is not yet skilled.

However, this study expands the scope of previous research by focusing specifically on the challenges faced by junior high school English teachers and teacher coping strategies in overcoming these challenges. While previous studies explored general readiness or challenges, this study examines how teachers navigate the integration of key curriculum components, such as differentiated learning and the Pancasila student profile, into practical lesson plans. By bridging the gap between understanding challenges and identifying adaptive strategies, this study provides a more comprehensive perspective on supporting teachers in aligning with the goals of the Independent Curriculum.



2.3 Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

3.1 Research Design

This research used a qualitative case study method. According to Creswell (2007), a case study is useful when the researcher has identifiable examples with distinct borders and seeks to thoroughly comprehend the cases or compare several cases. This technique aids researchers in obtaining more in-depth data based on actual events to extract specific opinions from the participants and general questions are posed (Gerring, 2007). These opinions are then explained in terms of themes and key phenomena. This method allows the study to explore the experiences of EFL teachers, focusing on their challenges and coping strategies in designing lesson plans for the Merdeka Curriculum.

3.2 Research Context

This study explores the challenges EFL teachers face in designing lesson plans that align with the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives while addressing the diverse needs of their students. It also investigates the strategies they use to overcome these obstacles, such as adapting existing resources, integrating technology, and seeking guidance from peers or mentors. Additionally, the research examines how teachers balance curriculum demands with the realities of limited time and resources, manage varying levels of student proficiency, and incorporate innovative methods like project-based learning and authentic assessments. The research will be conducted at a junior high school in

Pekalongan, with teachers serving as the primary participants. By understanding these experiences, the study aims to highlight practical solutions and identify areas where additional support or training might be needed.

3.3 Setting and Participant

This study was conducted in a junior high school in Pekalongan, involving English teachers who currently teach at the school as participants. This school was chosen because it has a unique context, where there is a prominent phenomenon related to the difficulties experienced by teachers in developing effective lesson plans following the Merdeka Curriculum.

The criteria for a participant are two teachers who have extensive experience in education and faced various curriculum changes over the years. By examining their insights and experiences, this study aims to explore the specific challenges they face in developing lesson plans within the Merdeka Curriculum framework and the strategies used in dealing with these challenges.

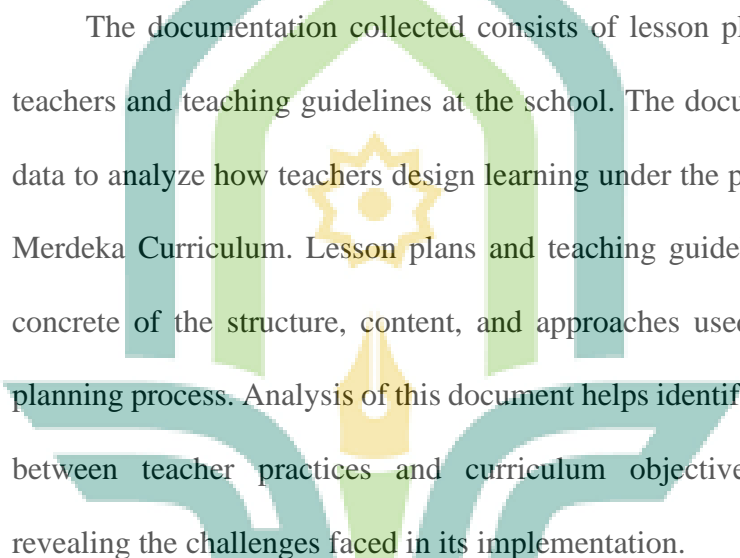
3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Interview

Researchers used interviews to collect data about the challenges faced by teachers when developing lesson plans and how teachers address those challenges. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner where the researchers posed questions that were not only focused on the text but could also be adjusted based on the teachers' responses (Mashuri et al., 2022). So that the researcher can find more in-depth information and align it with the actual situation.

The interviews will be conducted on two separate occasions, each with a different teacher. During these sessions, the same set of questions will be utilized to ensure consistency in the responses. These interviews will take place in person at the school, allowing for a direct and engaging interaction between the interviewer and the teachers. This approach will help gather diverse insights while maintaining a uniform framework for comparing the answers.

3.4.2 Documentation



The documentation collected consists of lesson plans created by teachers and teaching guidelines at the school. The document serves as data to analyze how teachers design learning under the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Lesson plans and teaching guidelines provide a concrete of the structure, content, and approaches used in the lesson planning process. Analysis of this document helps identify the alignment between teacher practices and curriculum objectives, while also revealing the challenges faced in its implementation.

3.5 Data Analysis

This study uses thematic analysis because it offers a flexible yet methodical way to find, examine, and analyze patterns or themes in data. According to Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006), there are 6 steps in thematic analysis, as follows:

3.5.1 Familiarization of data

The first step taken during data analysis is to understand the data that has been collected from interviews and documentation by reading it repeatedly. This is very important to obtain valid data in the coding process.

3.5.2 Generating Initial Codes

After understanding the data, researchers code or group important and interesting data. For example, in this study, challenges were found in compiling the independent curriculum lesson plan, namely the lack of time to plan learning, coded as time constraints.

3.5.3 Combining codes into themes

This process involves grouping codes into potential themes and organizing relevant data according to the themes that have been determined. The researcher begins to analyze the relationships between codes and considers how the codes can be combined to form major themes.

3.5.4 Reviewing Themes

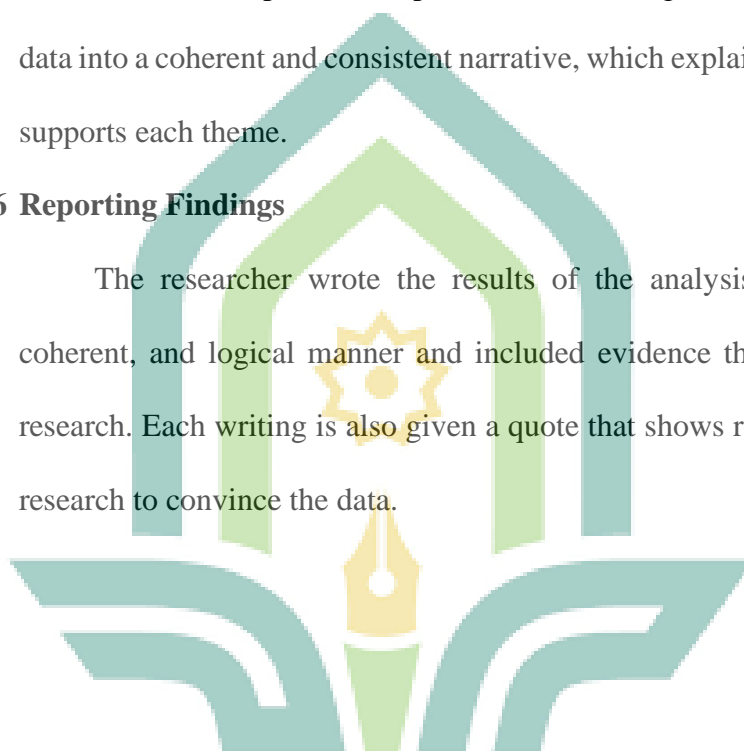
This step ensures that the resulting themes truly represent the data in a meaningful and organized way. If there is invalid data or too little data, it can be refined by reviewing the coded data for each theme. Then the candidate themes are considered to reflect the data well, the researcher compiles a "thematic map" to ensure the final theme structure.

3.5.5 Determine The Significance Of Themes

The researcher defines and refines the themes to be presented in the analysis, and analyzes the data in them. By defining themes, the researcher can identify the essence of each theme, such as the challenges faced by teachers and the strategies used in developing the Independent Curriculum lesson plans. This process involves organizing the collected data into a coherent and consistent narrative, which explains how the data supports each theme.

3.5.6 Reporting Findings

The researcher wrote the results of the analysis in a concise, coherent, and logical manner and included evidence that supports the research. Each writing is also given a quote that shows relevance to this research to convince the data.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

The results of semi-structured interviews with two EFL teachers about the challenges and coping strategies when creating lesson plans for junior high school classes using the Merdeka Curriculum are presented in this chapter. The results are grouped according to major themes that emerged from the interviews.

4.1.1 EFL Teachers' Challenges in Developing Merdeka Curriculum

Lesson Plans

a. Teachers' difficulties in understanding new terms in the Merdeka Curriculum

The teachers indicated difficulties in understanding and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Teacher 1 expressed,

"Yes, when I first read the curriculum documents, I felt confused by new terms such as Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), Learning Goals (TP), and Student Profile Pancasila. It took me some time to truly understand how they differed from the previous curriculum".

also mentioned that the lack of templates or concrete examples required her to create lesson plans from scratch, which posed a significant challenge. Meanwhile, Teacher 2 added,

"Similar to teacher 1, I agree that the autonomy of the Independent Curriculum is indeed beneficial, but many teachers feel unprepared because there is no thorough preparation. Like myself in compiling a lesson plan, I have not been able to adjust the components due to the lack of training provided by the school about the independent curriculum".

Both teachers recognized that the Merdeka Curriculum provides enhanced flexibility, allowing them to better tailor their teaching approaches to meet diverse student needs and learning styles. However, it became evident that some educators remain unfamiliar with certain aspects of the curriculum, particularly when it comes to developing comprehensive lesson plans. An analysis of the lesson plans created by the two teachers (see Appendix 3 & 4) reveals notable differences in their implementation. Teacher 1 has successfully integrated key components of the independent curriculum, demonstrating a clear understanding of its principles and application in the classroom. In contrast, Teacher 2 has yet to fully embrace these elements, resulting in a lesson plan that does not align as closely with the intended aims of the independent curriculum.

b. Diverse learning styles and skill levels

One of the primary challenges mentioned by both teachers was addressing the diverse learning abilities and learning styles of students. Teacher 1 explained,

"In one class, I might have students who are already fluent in English, while others struggle to understand simple sentences. This requires me to prepare additional materials for those who are falling behind, which naturally adds to my workload".

Teacher 2 experienced similar challenges and attempted to implement student grouping based on ability. However, teacher 2 admitted,

"Dividing students into groups based on their abilities does help, but the challenge is ensuring that each group receives the necessary attention and materials without compromising the effectiveness of the lesson".

The lack of well-defined differentiation strategies within the curriculum guidelines presents a significant obstacle for teachers seeking to meet the diverse needs of their students. In this complex educational environment, teachers often have to lean on their own experiences, creativity, and resourcefulness to adapt their instruction effectively. This reliance on personal judgment not only consumes valuable time but also results in inconsistencies in teaching approaches, which can lead to varying levels of student engagement and comprehension across different classrooms.

c. Time Management

Time management emerged as a critical issue for both teachers.

Teacher 1 admitted that she often brought work home due to limited time at school,

"I have to work late into the night to complete lesson plans. If I relied solely on school hours, it wouldn't be enough. The time allocated for planning at school is often taken up by meetings and other responsibilities, leaving me no choice but to continue my work at home".

Teacher 1 further emphasized that balancing teaching, administrative tasks, and personal life became increasingly difficult under these circumstances.

Similarly, Teacher 2 recognized the need for better time allocation strategies, stating,

"Sometimes, I feel like there is too much to do within a limited timeframe. Without effective time management, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. There are days when I barely have enough time to review my lesson plans before entering the classroom, which affects my teaching quality".

Teacher 2 also mentioned that unexpected school duties, such as substitute teaching or additional paperwork, further constrained his ability to manage time effectively. Both teachers acknowledged that effective time management presents a significant challenge in their profession. They grapple with balancing their responsibilities, including meticulously planning engaging lessons, providing timely feedback on assignments, and addressing the unique learning needs of a diverse student population while adhering to strict schedules and deadlines. This complex juggling act requires constant prioritization and adaptability, making it essential for them to develop strategies that enhance their efficiency and effectiveness in the classroom.

d. Difficulty in Selecting Teaching Materials

The teachers recognized that selecting suitable materials for lesson planning within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum was a significant challenge. The teachers found the process demanding, as it required careful consideration of diverse resources that would effectively engage their students and meet the curriculum's unique objectives. Teacher 1 stated,

"Unlike the previous curriculum, where textbooks and materials were mostly standardized, I now have to decide which resources best fit my students' needs. Sometimes, I struggle to determine

whether the materials are too easy or too difficult for my students".

Teacher 1 also emphasized that adapting materials from various sources required additional time and effort. Teacher 2 shared a similar experience, reflecting,

"While the notion of flexibility in selecting educational materials sounds appealing, the reality is quite different. It requires me to engage in a continuous process of evaluating and modifying my resources to ensure they align with the required learning objectives. Some students often find certain subjects unengaging or difficult to relate to, leading to a lack of enthusiasm in the classroom. As a result, I am constantly looking for diverse and stimulating resources such as videos, interactive activities, or real-world case studies that can reignite their interest and foster a deeper understanding of the material".

Both teachers acknowledged the importance of having more explicit guidelines and a curated list of recommended resources to enhance the selection process for their lesson planning. They believed that clearer parameters would not only simplify their decision-making but also instill a greater sense of confidence in the materials they chose to utilize. With a well-defined framework in place, they envisioned a more efficient approach to lesson preparation, allowing them to focus on crafting engaging and effective learning experiences for their students. This clarity would ultimately reduce the anxiety often associated with planning, enabling them to dedicate more time to fostering meaningful interactions in the classroom.

4.1.2 EFL Teachers Coping Strategies in Developing Merdeka Curriculum

Lesson Plans.

a. Collaboration with other teachers

To address the complexity of the Merdeka Curriculum, both teachers proactively seek additional resources and guidance. They explored professional development workshops, sought guidance from experienced teachers, and engaged with online forums dedicated to curriculum discussions. Their commitment to deepening their understanding reflects their dedication to improving teaching methods and ensuring their students benefit from a comprehensive educational experience. Teacher 1 explained,

"I am part of a community called MGMP (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris) in Pekalongan Regency, where we often discuss challenges related to teaching and pre-teaching".

Discussing with experienced teachers who share their lesson plans provides valuable insights into preparing my materials.

Teacher 2 also discusses with fellow teachers, stating,

"Whenever I have difficulty in designing a lesson plan, I reach out to my colleagues for clarification and discussion. By exchanging perspectives and sharing our understanding, we can collaboratively find the best approach to create an effective lesson plan that meets both students' needs and curriculum requirements".

The teachers often exchange interpretations and share lesson planning strategies, which helps clarify confusing concepts and makes adaptations smoother. Teacher 2 also noted that the informal teacher

study group at his school has become a reliable space for collectively solving problems and gaining new perspectives on effectively implementing the curriculum.

b. Differentiation learning strategies

To address the challenges of diverse learning abilities, teachers have implemented differentiation strategies to meet the different needs of their students. Teacher 1 said,

“I apply diagnostic tests before entering the material, and then in the learning process I usually divide the students to discuss according to their proficiency level”.

By doing so, teacher 1 ensures that each student can engage in the lesson in a way that is appropriate to their proficiency level. Similarly, Teacher 2 emphasized the importance of flexible grouping, stating,

“I regularly rotate students based on their skill level for various activities. For example, I form small groups where struggling students get extra tutoring while more advanced students work on extension tasks. This method allows me to provide targeted support without making students feel left behind”.

By employing various differentiation techniques, teachers can skillfully address the wide range of proficiency levels present in their classrooms. This tailored approach allows teachers to create individualized learning experiences, ensuring that each student receives the specific support and resources necessary to thrive and achieve academic success. As a result, all learners are empowered to engage with the material in a way that aligns with their unique

strengths and challenges, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

c. Implementing a Systematic Approach to Material Selection

To tackle the challenges of selecting appropriate teaching materials, teacher 1 adopted a trial-and-feedback system that encourages responsiveness to her students' needs. Teacher 1 shared her approach, saying,

"I experiment with various materials and carefully observe how my students engage with them. If I notice they are struggling too much with the content, I simplify it to ensure better understanding. Conversely, if the material proves too easy, I enrich their experience by providing supplementary exercises that challenge them further".

In contrast, teacher 2 developed a more structured and systematic selection process. Teacher 2 elaborated on his methodology, stating,

"I categorize teaching materials according to their difficulty levels and meticulously align them with specific learning objectives. This organized strategy enables me to swiftly identify the most suitable resources for different student groups without the need for constant trial and error".

Additionally, both teachers acknowledged the role of technology in material selection and differentiation. Teacher 1 frequently integrates digital learning platforms, interactive exercises, and multimedia content to enhance student engagement, while Teacher 2 utilizes educational databases and curated resource banks to efficiently source high-quality teaching materials. By leveraging technology, they can diversify instructional content, accommodate different learning

preferences, and ensure that each student receives appropriately challenging material. These strategies collectively highlight the significance of adaptability, organization, and collaboration in overcoming the challenges associated with selecting effective teaching materials.

d. Implementing Time Management Strategies

Teacher 1 established systematic planning practices to address time management issues, stating,

"I set aside specific hours each week just for lesson planning. Creating a fixed schedule helps me stay organized and ensures I allocate enough time to develop quality materials".

To further manage his workload efficiently, teacher 2 also incorporated small planning sessions throughout the week, stating,

"Instead of trying to do everything at once, I break my lesson planning into smaller, manageable tasks, which makes the process less overwhelming. I designate certain days for brainstorming lesson ideas, others for gathering materials, and a separate time for structuring the final plan. This division of labor keeps the process steady and prevents last-minute stress".

Additionally, teacher 2 emphasized the importance of setting clear deadlines for each lesson planning stage, ensuring a structured workflow that balances teaching, administrative duties, and personal well-being.

4.2 Discussion

The findings above show some of the challenges teachers faced and strategies to cope with them in compiling lesson plans based on the independent curriculum. The challenges they face include those that align with

research conducted by Efrida, Wahyudin and other previous researchers and identified according to the theory of lesson plan components by the Ministry of Education (2019) and Culture and Brown (2000).

One of the primary difficulties is gaining a comprehensive understanding of the free curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility and student-centered learning. Additionally, teachers must navigate the complexities of differentiated learning, ensuring that the teachers meet the diverse needs of the students, each with varying learning styles and abilities. Time management poses another critical challenge, as teachers often juggle multiple responsibilities, including lesson planning, grading, and student support. Selecting appropriate instructional materials that resonate with students and align with the curriculum goals adds another layer of complexity to the process.

To overcome these challenges, teachers implement various strategies. The teachers often participated in professional development training sessions related to the Merdeka curriculum. Collaborating with colleagues, the teachers engage in discussions to share best practices and garner insights from each other's experiences. Moreover, establishing effective time management systems helps teachers prioritize tasks and allocate time efficiently.

4.2.1 EFL Teachers' Challenges in Developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson Plans

Teachers face several challenges when preparing lesson plans that are aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, with one of the most significant being a lack of understanding of the new terminology

introduced in its framework. The current curriculum incorporates a variety of new terms and regulations that can be confusing, including concepts such as learning outcomes, learning objectives, learning objective pathways, and the Pancasila student profile. These components are crucial as they guide the structure and delivery of educational content.

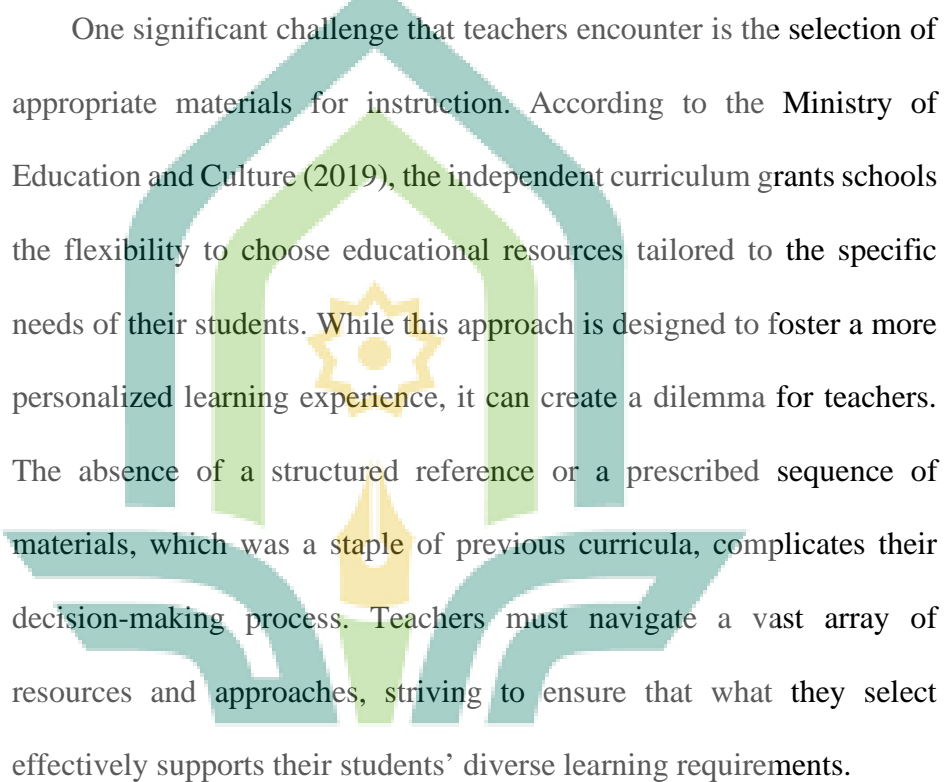
The Ministry of Education and Culture (2019) argues that these elements are essential to developing effective lesson plans that not only meet educational standards but also foster deeper understanding among students. Learning outcomes refer to the specific skills and knowledge that students are expected to acquire while learning objectives outline the expected outcomes of the lesson. Understanding the learning objective pathways is crucial, as it helps teachers design coherent and progressive lessons that build on each other.

The Pancasila student profile is designed to instill foundational values that align with the nation's philosophical principles, promoting a well-rounded development in students. This approach not only emphasizes academic excellence but also fosters character-building, critical thinking, and social responsibility. In a related context, Efrida (2024) highlights the challenges teachers face when developing lesson plans within the independent curriculum framework. Specifically, educators often struggle to articulate clear learning outcomes and systematically outline the flow of learning objectives, which can hinder the overall effectiveness of instruction and student engagement.

In addition, participants also find it difficult to implement differentiated learning. The diversity of abilities and interests among students adds another layer of complexity, as teachers struggle to balance their teaching approaches (Gregory, et.al 2012). The teachers find it very difficult to engage all students when some students grasp concepts quickly while others need more time and support. This struggle was supported by Fitriyanti's (2019) research, which highlighted that teachers frequently found it challenging to design lesson plans that were appropriately tailored to the diverse conditions and needs of their students. Such findings underscore the need for ongoing professional development and resources aimed at equipping teachers with the tools necessary to effectively implement differentiated instructional strategies in their classrooms.

Teachers often face significant challenges when it comes to managing their time to prepare effective lesson plans, as highlighted by Rumiati (2024). Their responsibilities extend far beyond mere lesson preparation; includes grading assessments, conducting student evaluations, and organizing extracurricular activities. This multitude of tasks can make it particularly cumbersome to dedicate sufficient time to crafting thoughtful lesson plans. The demands of independent curricula, which often encompass new and intricate components, add a layer of complexity to this process.

Aligning these diverse elements with specific teaching objectives can feel overwhelming, especially as teachers strive to create engaging, student-centered learning experiences that also adhere to established curriculum standards. This juggling act of maintaining interest and relevance in lessons while satisfying educational requirements can weigh heavily on teachers, compounding their workload and stress.



One significant challenge that teachers encounter is the selection of appropriate materials for instruction. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2019), the independent curriculum grants schools the flexibility to choose educational resources tailored to the specific needs of their students. While this approach is designed to foster a more personalized learning experience, it can create a dilemma for teachers. The absence of a structured reference or a prescribed sequence of materials, which was a staple of previous curricula, complicates their decision-making process. Teachers must navigate a vast array of resources and approaches, striving to ensure that what they select effectively supports their students' diverse learning requirements.

The criteria for selecting materials must also be adjusted to the needs of students. This is in line with Brown's theory (2001), which emphasizes that lesson planning should consider student needs to create effective and meaningful learning experiences. Materials should be carefully selected to match students' language proficiency, learning styles, interests, and cognitive abilities to ensure that they remain engaged and motivated throughout the learning process.

Additionally, teachers should carefully evaluate the relevance and authenticity of the materials included in the lesson plans. Authentic materials, such as real-life texts, audio recordings, and multimedia content, can enhance students' comprehension and application of language skills in real-world contexts. Moreover, incorporating culturally appropriate materials that resonate with students' diverse backgrounds can significantly enhance their understanding of the subject matter. By reflecting the students' identities, values, and experiences, these materials not only foster a deeper connection to the content but also promote active participation in the learning process.

Furthermore, the selection of materials should align with curriculum objectives and learning outcomes to maintain coherence in lesson delivery (Rumiati, 2024). Teachers often modify or adapt existing materials to better suit the diverse needs of their students. This may include simplifying complex texts, incorporating interactive elements, or integrating technology-based resources to cater to different learning preferences. By carefully curating and adapting instructional materials, teachers can foster a more inclusive and student-centered learning environment, ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities, can benefit from the lesson.

4.2.2 EFL Teachers' Coping Strategies in Developing Merdeka Curriculum Lesson Plans.

To tackle the challenge of teachers' understanding of lesson plans within the independent curriculum, fostering informal learning through collaboration among teachers is essential. Many teachers struggle to interpret the guidelines and expectations set by the curriculum, particularly because the independent curriculum emphasizes flexibility and student-centered learning, requiring teachers to design lesson plans without relying on rigid structures. This transition can be overwhelming, especially for teachers accustomed to previous curricula that provided clear frameworks and standardized lesson structures. To overcome this, creating an environment where teachers can freely share their ideas, discuss challenges, and brainstorm solutions is crucial in helping them navigate these changes more effectively.

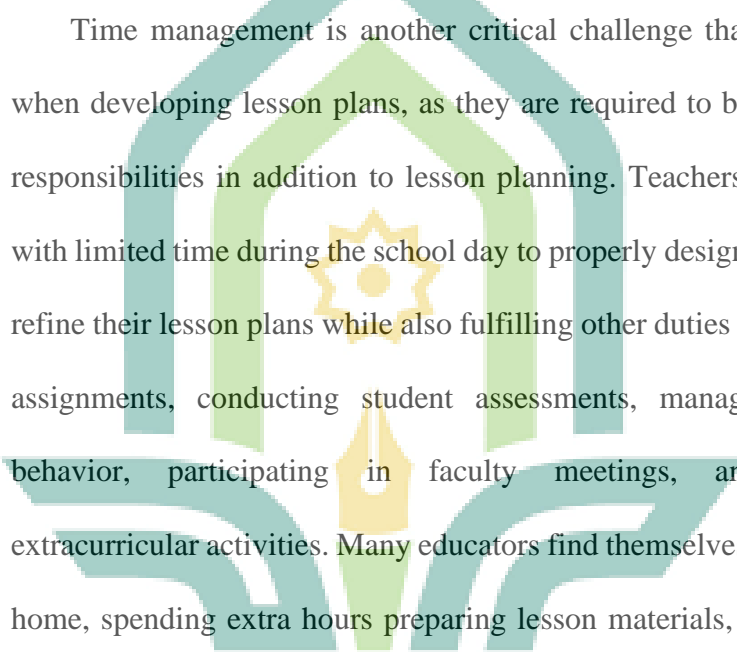
According to Gregory and Chapman in *Differentiated Instructional Strategies: One Size Doesn't Fit All*, professional learning communities play a critical role in supporting teachers by providing a platform for open discussion, resource-sharing, and adopting best teaching practices. Through such communities, teachers can refine their understanding of the curriculum, enhance lesson planning, and ensure that their teaching methods align with student needs while maintaining curriculum integrity. Engaging in peer discussions also allows teachers to learn from one another's experiences, exchange classroom strategies, and seek guidance

from more experienced colleagues, which ultimately helps in building confidence and competence in implementing the independent curriculum effectively.

One of the major challenges in implementing differentiated instruction is addressing students' diverse learning styles, cognitive abilities, and proficiency levels. Unlike traditional curricula that often rely on uniform teaching methods, the independent curriculum encourages differentiation, which requires teachers to customize their lesson plans to meet the varying needs of their students (Rumiati, 2024). In a single classroom, students may have vastly different comprehension levels, learning speeds, and educational backgrounds, making it difficult for teachers to create a single lesson plan that accommodates everyone. To ensure that all students receive appropriate support, teachers engage in collaborative discussions with colleagues and implement pre-tests to evaluate students' proficiency levels. By conducting initial assessments, educators can categorize students based on their needs and design lesson plans that provide appropriate levels of challenge and support.

Arifianti (2023) highlights the importance of conducting thorough initial assessments such as quizzes, formative assessments, interactive Q&A sessions, and diagnostic tests to gain a better understanding of students' academic backgrounds and learning preferences. This step is crucial because it enables teachers to tailor their instructional approaches, modify lesson content, and create adaptive learning experiences that cater

to students at different levels. Additionally, by grouping students based on their needs and providing scaffolded learning activities, teachers can ensure that all learners whether struggling, average, or advanced remain engaged and motivated throughout the lesson. This approach not only fosters a more inclusive learning environment but also helps prevent students from feeling overwhelmed or disengaged due to lesson materials that are either too easy or too difficult for them.



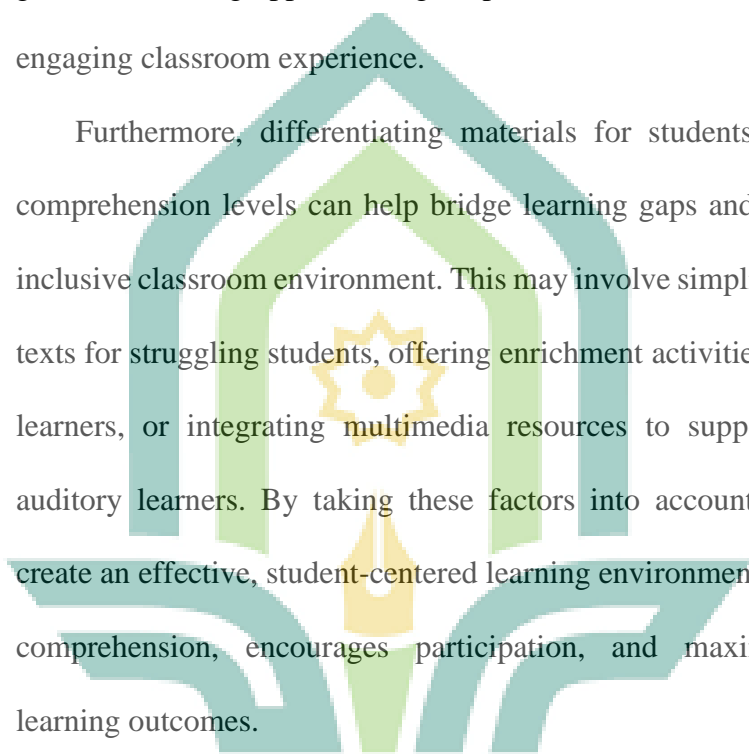
Time management is another critical challenge that teachers face when developing lesson plans, as they are required to balance multiple responsibilities in addition to lesson planning. Teachers often struggle with limited time during the school day to properly design, structure, and refine their lesson plans while also fulfilling other duties such as grading assignments, conducting student assessments, managing classroom behavior, participating in faculty meetings, and overseeing extracurricular activities. Many educators find themselves bringing work home, spending extra hours preparing lesson materials, and sacrificing their time to meet the demands of the curriculum. This prolonged workload can lead to increased stress, fatigue, and burnout, ultimately affecting teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction. To address this issue, structured planning techniques are essential. Teachers can allocate dedicated time slots each week specifically for lesson planning, ensuring that they have sufficient time to organize their instructional materials and objectives without last-minute pressure.

Additionally, breaking down complex tasks into smaller, manageable steps helps teachers stay organized and prevents them from feeling overwhelmed. Utilizing pre-designed lesson templates, checklists, and digital planning tools can further streamline the process and enhance efficiency. Arifianti (2023) emphasizes that weekly lesson planning allows educators to create a structured roadmap for their curriculum while maintaining the flexibility to adapt to unexpected schedule changes, student needs, or school events. When lesson plans are well-organized in advance, teachers experience reduced stress levels, improved classroom preparedness, and a greater ability to focus on engaging students in meaningful learning experiences. Furthermore, prioritizing self-care and work-life balance is essential for educators, as maintaining a healthy professional routine leads to increased motivation, productivity, and overall teaching effectiveness.

Another pressing issue that teachers must navigate is the selection of instructional materials that align with the curriculum's learning objectives while remaining relevant and engaging for students. Since the independent curriculum does not prescribe a fixed set of textbooks or teaching resources, educators must carefully curate and evaluate materials that best suit their students' needs. This process can be time-consuming and challenging, as it involves identifying, assessing, and modifying resources to ensure that they are appropriate for different proficiency levels and learning styles. Teachers must consider factors

such as language complexity, cultural relevance, student interest, and accessibility when choosing instructional materials to ensure that all students can effectively engage with the content. One effective approach is incorporating a mix of traditional resources (textbooks, worksheets, academic articles) and modern educational tools (interactive videos, gamified learning apps, and digital platforms) to create a dynamic and engaging classroom experience.

Furthermore, differentiating materials for students with varying comprehension levels can help bridge learning gaps and foster a more inclusive classroom environment. This may involve simplifying complex texts for struggling students, offering enrichment activities for advanced learners, or integrating multimedia resources to support visual and auditory learners. By taking these factors into account, teachers can create an effective, student-centered learning environment that enhances comprehension, encourages participation, and maximizes student learning outcomes.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of The Findings

This study explored the challenges faced by EFL teachers in developing lesson plans under the Merdeka Curriculum and the strategies they use to overcome these difficulties. Findings from semi-structured interviews with two junior high school teachers revealed several key challenges and coping strategies that shaped their teaching practices.

One of the key challenges identified was understanding the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers expressed difficulty in understanding the framework and terminology, as well as in implementing the curriculum without a structured guide. In addition, selecting appropriate teaching materials proved to be another significant challenge. With greater autonomy in selecting materials, teachers often struggled to find resources that were engaging and suited to the proficiency levels of their students.

Differentiating instruction to meet the needs of diverse students was another major hurdle. Teachers needed to balance the different abilities of students in the same class, which required additional preparation and effort. Furthermore, managing time efficiently remained a pressing concern, as teachers were often overwhelmed with multiple responsibilities, forcing them to extend their work beyond school hours.

Despite these challenges, teachers adopted various coping strategies to cope with the demands of lesson planning. Engaging in professional

development and peer collaboration are important approaches, allowing educators to exchange ideas, share resources, and seek guidance from colleagues. Adapting instructional materials by modifying content, simplifying complex text, and incorporating multimedia tools helps ensure that lesson plans align with student needs and learning objectives. Differentiation strategies, such as grouping students by ability level and providing structured learning experiences, play a critical role in meeting varying learning needs.

To address time management challenges, teachers adopt structured planning techniques. Allocating dedicated time for lesson planning, prioritizing tasks effectively, and breaking large tasks into smaller, more manageable steps help reduce workload stress and ensure more efficient lesson development. These coping strategies enable teachers to navigate the complexities of the Independent Curriculum while improving the overall effectiveness of their teaching practices.

5.2 Recommendation

This study still has many shortcomings in various aspects. The researcher hopes that further researchers can study more deeply about the preparation of lesson plans in the Independent Curriculum. Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to support teachers in preparing lesson plans in the Independent Curriculum. Schools and educational institutions should provide comprehensive training programs to equip teachers with the skills needed to prepare lesson plans effectively. Detailed curriculum guidelines, including lesson plan examples and sample materials, should be provided to

help educators adapt to curriculum expectations. Teachers should be actively involved in peer learning communities to exchange best practices and seek mentoring opportunities. Utilizing digital resources and open educational materials can further assist in the selection and adaptation of materials. Implementing effective time management strategies, such as scheduling specific planning periods and prioritizing teaching tasks, will help teachers balance their workload more efficiently.



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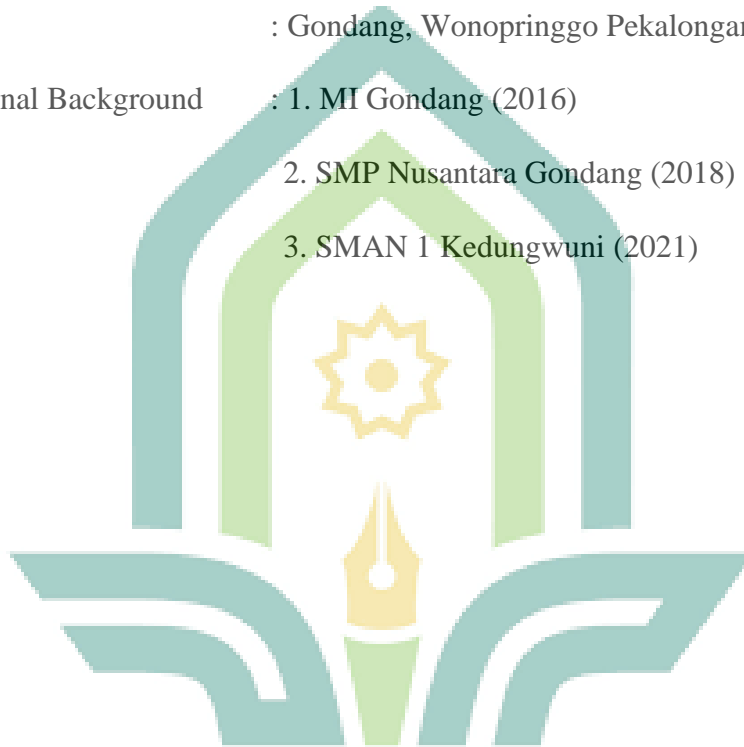
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