

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a narrative inquiry approach to explore an English teacher's perspective on the challenges encountered in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English. Narrative inquiry focuses on understanding individuals' lived experiences through the stories they share, allowing researchers to examine how participants interpret and make meaning of their experiences within a particular context.

According to John W. Creswell (2014), narrative inquiry is appropriate for exploring personal experiences and understanding how individuals construct meaning from those experiences over time. Therefore, this approach was considered suitable for this study because it enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of an English teacher's experiences in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and the challenges encountered throughout the teaching process. Through narrative inquiry, the researcher explored the participant's experiences related to curriculum adaptation, instructional planning, classroom practices, assessment, learning resources, and student engagement. The approach also provided insights into how the teacher responded to these challenges and reflected on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in everyday classroom practice. Rather than focusing only on observable events,

narrative inquiry emphasizes the meanings participants attach to their experiences, providing a deeper understanding of educational phenomena.

This study was conducted at SMAN 2 Banjarmasin and involved one English teacher who had direct experience implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and supported by relevant documents, such as lesson plans and teaching materials. The collected data were analyzed to understand the participant's experiences, perspectives, and strategies in addressing the challenges of curriculum implementation.

By employing a narrative inquiry approach, this study provides rich and contextualized descriptions of the participant's experiences while maintaining the authenticity of the teacher's voice. This approach is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by English teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and contribute to the existing literature on curriculum implementation in English language teaching..

B. Research Setting

This research was conducted at SMAN 2 Banjarmasin, a public senior high school located in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. The school was selected as the research setting because it has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching, making it a relevant context for examining teachers' experiences in curriculum implementation. As this study aims to explore an

English teacher's perspective on the challenges in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English, SMAN 2 Banjarmasin provides an authentic educational environment in which these experiences can be investigated.

This study focuses on one English teacher who is directly involved in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in classroom practices. The participant was purposively selected because of her experience in teaching English under the Merdeka Curriculum and her active involvement in adapting instructional practices to curriculum changes. In narrative inquiry research, participants are chosen based on their lived experiences related to the phenomenon being investigated. Therefore, selecting an English teacher who has firsthand experience with curriculum implementation enables the researcher to explore detailed narratives concerning teaching practices, professional reflections, and challenges encountered in daily classroom activities.

SMAN 2 Banjarmasin was considered an appropriate setting because curriculum implementation occurs naturally within the school context, allowing the researcher to understand how educational policies are experienced and interpreted by teachers in practice. Through the participant's narratives, this study seeks to examine experiences related to instructional planning, classroom management, assessment practices, student engagement, learning resources, and other challenges encountered during the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching. By situating the study within an authentic school environment, the researcher is able to obtain contextualized

insights into how an English teacher perceives, responds to, and negotiates the demands associated with curriculum implementation.

C. Participants

This study involved one English teacher from SMAN 2 Banjarmasin who has direct experience in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching. The participant was selected through purposive sampling because she met the criteria relevant to the objectives of this study and possessed firsthand experience related to the phenomenon under investigation. Purposive sampling is widely employed in qualitative research as it allows researchers to intentionally select participants who have specific knowledge, experiences, and insights that are considered essential for addressing the research questions.

In narrative inquiry research, participants are selected not based on the number of individuals involved but on their capacity to provide rich, detailed, and meaningful accounts of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the selected English teacher was considered an appropriate participant because she has been actively involved in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and has experienced the realities, demands, and challenges associated with its implementation in English language teaching.

The participant has experience teaching English under the Merdeka Curriculum and is directly engaged in various instructional activities, including lesson planning, classroom instruction, assessment practices, and the adaptation of teaching strategies to students' diverse learning needs. Such experiences

enable the participant to share personal stories, reflections, and interpretations regarding the implementation process. Through these narratives, the study seeks to explore how the participant perceives curriculum changes, responds to classroom challenges, and adapts instructional practices within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The decision to involve a single participant aligns with the principles of narrative inquiry, which emphasizes depth rather than breadth in understanding human experiences. Focusing on one English teacher allows the researcher to investigate the participant's experiences comprehensively and to obtain a nuanced understanding of the meanings she constructs from her professional practice. By examining the participant's narratives, this study aims to provide an in-depth portrayal of the challenges encountered in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching and the ways in which the teacher negotiates these challenges within her everyday classroom context.

D. Data

The data of this study are qualitative in nature, consisting of descriptive, verbal, and documentary information that reflects the participant's lived experiences and personal interpretations related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English. In narrative inquiry research, data are primarily presented in the form of stories, reflections, and accounts of experiences that enable the researcher to understand how individuals construct meaning from their professional practices. Therefore, the data collected in this study emphasize the participant's subjective experiences, perceptions, beliefs,

and responses toward the challenges encountered during the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The primary data source of this study is an English teacher at SMAN 2 Banjarmasin who has direct experience in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching. The participant serves as the main informant because they possess firsthand knowledge and practical experience related to curriculum implementation within an authentic educational context. The primary data were obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews and consisted of the teacher's narratives, experiences, opinions, reflections, and perspectives regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching. The interview data were collected to explore the teacher's experiences, identify the challenges encountered during curriculum implementation, and understand the strategies employed to address those challenges. These narratives provided rich and contextualized information that enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's lived experiences and professional perspectives.

E. Technique of Data Collection

This study employed two data collection techniques, namely in-depth semi-structured interviews and documentation, to obtain rich, detailed, and meaningful data concerning an English teacher's perspective on the challenges in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English. Since this study adopts a narrative inquiry approach, the data collection process was

designed to elicit personal stories, professional experiences, reflections, and interpretations related to curriculum implementation within authentic classroom settings. The combination of interviews and documentation enabled the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participant's lived experiences while also providing supporting evidence to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

The primary data collection technique used in this study was the in-depth semi-structured interview. This type of interview was selected because it provides flexibility for the researcher to explore participants' experiences in depth while maintaining a clear focus on the objectives and research questions of the study. Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews allow participants to narrate their experiences freely and elaborate on issues they consider important, thereby generating richer and more nuanced data. In the context of narrative inquiry, this interview format is particularly appropriate because it encourages participants to recount personal stories, describe significant events, express emotions, and reflect on the meanings they attach to their professional experiences.

1. Interviews

The interviews were conducted with one English teacher at SMAN 2 Banjarmasin who has direct experience in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching. The participant teaches English at the senior high school level and has been actively involved in applying the curriculum in classroom practices. To obtain comprehensive and in-depth

information, the interviews were conducted in two separate sessions. The first interview was conducted on March 15, 2026, while the second interview was conducted on April 27, 2026. Conducting multiple interview sessions allowed the researcher to establish rapport with the participant, revisit previously discussed topics, clarify ambiguous information, and explore emerging issues in greater depth.

During the interviews, the participant was encouraged to share experiences related to various aspects of curriculum implementation, including instructional planning, the preparation of teaching modules, learning activities, classroom management, assessment practices, student participation, learning resources, and the application of learner-centered teaching approaches promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum. Furthermore, the participant was invited to discuss challenges encountered during the teaching and learning process, strategies employed to address those challenges, and reflections regarding the impact of curriculum implementation on professional practices as an English teacher. This process enabled the researcher to capture detailed narratives concerning the realities of English language teaching, teachers' adaptive efforts, and the complexities associated with implementing educational reforms in actual classroom contexts.

The interviews were conducted in a natural and comfortable setting to foster openness, trust, and meaningful interaction between the researcher and the participant. With the participant's consent, all interview sessions were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data collected.

Recording the interviews also facilitated the transcription process and minimized the possibility of information loss during data analysis.

2. Documentation

In addition to interviews, documentation was employed as a supporting data collection technique to complement and strengthen the interview findings. The documentary data included teaching modules, lesson plans, instructional materials, assessment instruments, students' learning activities, and other relevant documents associated with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. These documents provided contextual information regarding classroom practices and served as tangible evidence of how curriculum policies were translated into instructional activities. Documentation also allowed the researcher to compare information obtained from interviews with existing teaching artifacts, thereby contributing to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study through data triangulation.

The data collection procedure was carried out through several stages. First, the researcher developed an interview guideline based on the research objectives, research questions, and relevant theoretical frameworks. Second, the researcher conducted two semi-structured interview sessions with the participant and recorded the conversations to ensure data accuracy. The second interview session was specifically intended to clarify, expand, and confirm information gathered during the initial interview, as well as to explore additional themes that emerged during the preliminary analysis. Third, the researcher transcribed the interview recordings verbatim to preserve the

authenticity of the participant's narratives and ensure that all information was documented comprehensively. Finally, the researcher organized and classified both interview and documentary data systematically to facilitate data management, analysis, and interpretation, thereby ensuring the completeness and consistency of the information obtained throughout the research process.

F. Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data obtained from interviews and documentation. Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method is appropriate for narrative inquiry because it allows the researcher to explore the participant's lived experiences in depth and to organize them into meaningful themes.

The data analysis in this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, as outlined below:

1. Familiarization with the Data

The researcher began by transcribing the interview data verbatim and reviewing the collected documentation. The data were read repeatedly to gain a deep understanding of the participant's experiences. During this process, the researcher also noted initial ideas and important points related to the research focus, particularly regarding the challenges and strategies in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English teaching.

2. Generating Initial Codes

The researcher identified and coded important statements from the data. Coding was conducted manually by highlighting relevant parts of the interview transcript, especially those related to challenges, classroom experiences, and strategies used by the teacher in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

3. Searching for Themes

After coding, the data were grouped into potential themes by identifying patterns across the dataset. Similar codes were categorized into broader themes, such as classroom challenges, student engagement issues, and teaching strategies used by the teacher.

4. Reviewing Themes

The researcher reviewed the themes to ensure that they accurately represented the data. At this stage, some themes were refined, merged, or separated to improve clarity, consistency, and relevance to the research questions.

5. Defining and Naming Themes

Each theme was clearly defined and named based on its main idea and content. The themes were then aligned with the research questions to ensure that they directly contributed to answering the objectives of the study.

6. Producing the Report

Finally, the researcher presented the findings in a narrative form supported by direct quotations from the participant to maintain authenticity. The results were interpreted to answer the research questions and provide meaningful insights into the teacher's experiences in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching.

7. Interpretation of Finding

After identifying and defining the themes, the researcher interpreted the findings by examining the relationships between the themes and the research questions. The interpretation process focused on understanding the participant's experiences regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching. To enhance the accuracy of the findings, the researcher compared the interview data with the supporting documentation and continuously reviewed the themes throughout the analysis process. The final interpretations were used to explain the challenges and strategies experienced by the participant in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

8. Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study applied the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1982), which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria were used to ensure that the findings accurately represent the participant's lived

experiences and that the research process is systematic, transparent, and consistent with the narrative inquiry approach.

9. Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings accurately represent the participant's experiences and perspectives regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English.

Several strategies were used to ensure credibility in this study:

a. Data Triangulation

Data triangulation was conducted by using multiple sources of data, namely semi-structured interviews and documentation. The interviews were carried out in two sessions on March 15, 2026 and April 27, 2026. The first interview focused on exploring the teacher's general experiences, while the second interview was used to clarify and deepen the information obtained from the first session. In addition, documentation such as lesson plans and teaching materials was used to support and cross-check the interview data.

b. Member checking

Member checking was conducted by confirming the interview results with the participant to ensure that the researcher's interpretation accurately reflected the participant's intended meaning. The participant was given the opportunity to review and clarify the information provided during the interviews to avoid misinterpretation.

c. Prolonged engagement through repeated interviews

Prolonged engagement was achieved through two interview sessions with the participant. This repeated interaction allowed the researcher to build a better understanding of the participant's experiences and to obtain more detailed and consistent data regarding classroom challenges and teaching strategies.

10. Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of this study can be applied to other similar contexts.

To support transferability, this study provides a detailed description of the research context, including SMAN 2 Banjarmasin as the research setting and one English teacher as the participant. The participant is an English teacher who has direct experience in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching.

These contextual descriptions allow readers to determine whether the findings of this study may be relevant to other similar educational settings, particularly in the context of English language teaching under the Merdeka Curriculum.

11. Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and transparency of the research process so that the study can be understood and traced clearly.

In this study, dependability was ensured through a systematic research process aligned with qualitative research procedures. The

researcher documented all stages of the research process, including data collection through interviews, transcription of interview data, coding, and thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework.

In addition, the use of a structured data analysis procedure helped ensure consistency in identifying themes related to the teacher's challenges and strategies. The analysis process was conducted carefully and repeatedly to maintain accuracy and consistency of interpretation.

12. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are shaped by the data rather than the researcher's personal bias or assumptions. To ensure confirmability, several strategies were applied:

a. Audit trail

The researcher maintained complete documentation of all research activities, including raw interview recordings, verbatim transcripts, coding results, and thematic analysis notes. This allows the research process to be traced and verified.

b. Documentation as supporting evidence

Supporting documents such as lesson plans and teaching materials were used to strengthen and confirm the interview findings. This helped ensure that the conclusions were based on real classroom practices.

c. Reflective notes

The researcher kept reflective notes during the research process to identify potential biases and to maintain objectivity during data interpretation. This helped ensure that the findings were derived from the data rather than personal interpretation.