

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

A nation's viability depends on its level of education. The level of education has a big impact on human resource quality. Human resources with good education can handle other resources without a doubt. On the other hand, inadequate human resources cannot possibly reach their full potential. An effective and well-directed education system is required to reach the highest degree of quality possible in nation development (Apriani, 2019). Two years ago, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, as the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, launched *Kurikulum Merdeka* as one of *Merdeka Belajar* programs to achieve quality human resources through quality education, especially related to learning. This transition from *Kurikulum 2013* is intended so that the education unit focuses on the essential material and character development of *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Kemdikbud, 2022).

In this era of rapid technological development, all aspects of life are required to be actively involved in the local and international scope. The ability to use English is the key to surviving and adapting (Haidar, 2018). In *Kurikulum Merdeka*, English is a compulsory subject in schools, especially in primary and secondary education. This is intended to prepare students to face global challenges by having communicative, intercultural

competence, self-confidence, and critical and creative thinking skills (Kurka, 2022).

In the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, the government instructs educational units that each learning process must stimulate *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Farwati, Metafisika, Herlina, & Afifah, 2022). There are six dimensions of *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*: (1) having faith, piety to God Almighty, and noble character, (2) independence, (3) mutual cooperation, (4) global diversity, (5) critical thinking, and (6) creative thinking. This stimulation is carried out so that students can prepare themselves to face a dynamic life with various challenges and problems (Gandamana, Feriyansyah, & Siregar, 2022). Good thinking and creative ideas are needed to respond to those things. This comes down to two dimensions, namely creativity and critical thinking (Hidayat, Rukmini, & Bharati, 2019).

Prakoso et al (2021) believe that creativity and critical thinking are factors that students really need to face life after graduation, namely the world of work (Prakoso, Ramdani, Tae, & Riandika, 2021), especially for vocational high school students who are prepared to face the world of work by the majors they take. Based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003, vocational education is secondary education that prepares students especially to work in certain fields (Kemdikbud, Buku Saku Kurikulum Merdeka: Tanya Jawab, 2022).

Creativity and critical thinking cannot be considered as two different things. Hidayati et al (2019) claim that the two developed together in

response to the environment (Hidayati, Zubaidah, Suarsini, & Praherdhiono, 2019). Thus, to facilitate the stimulation of these two dimensions in the learning process by looking at current technological developments, teachers need to utilize appropriate digital learning media.

In conveying materials and instructions, teachers must ensure that students are facilitated in using and applying information in relevant ways. In the world of work, workers are required to have work skills and the ability to develop self-competence. This is closely related to the importance of creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and the use of information and communication technology (Lestari, Haryani, & Sumarti, 2020). Therefore, English teachers in the 21st century must also be able to integrate digital technology into learning, especially in this context, learning media.

Most English teachers have not implemented it optimally. The results of the study conducted by Nugroho and Mutiaraningrum (2020) reveal that the skills in operating digital technology are the bottleneck. They explain that this happens because of the lack of awareness to adapt. Further, the teachers claim that it consumes more energy to prepare, and professional training on how to integrate technology in the classroom is hardly ever done (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020).

Another study conducted by Siswono (2016) found that generally learning also does not provide opportunities for students to construct opinions or understanding. Creativity and critical thinking are rarely emphasized in learning English. Learning strategies that are oriented

towards developing analytical thinking with relevant and up-to-date issues are rarely implemented. Furthermore, teachers argue that the density of material that must be delivered is not directly proportional to the time they have, so they only prioritize understanding concepts (Siswono, 2016).

Until now, there has been no study that examines the dimensions of creativity and critical thinking stimulated in digital English learning media in vocational high schools in the Indonesian context. Most of the studies, especially those related to learning media and vocational high schools, only discuss the effectiveness of using self-made learning media. They focus on analyzing the development and utilization. The results of the analysis are not devoted to discussing on how their learning media is used to stimulate students' creativity and critical thinking. They only focus on how the learning media they develop can make it easier for teachers to deliver material and motivate students' interest in learning (Surjono & Susila, 2013) (Sundari, 2014) (Suswanto, Nidhom, & Putra, 2017) (Irawan & Surjono, 2018) (Sari, Mirizon, & Inderawati, 2021) (Siregar, Ndruru, & Tamba, 2021).

The researcher assumes that the limited studies that focus on integrating the dimensions of *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, especially those related to creativity and critical thinking, into the learning process are due to *Kurikulum Merdeka* which has just been launched and socialized in the last two years. This is in line with the statement by the Head of Commission X DPR Syaiful Huda (2022) quoted by Kompas, that most schools are still trying to adapt to this policy – bearing in mind that implementing *Kurikulum*

Merdeka is only an option for every school. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the reason for not making *Kurikulum Merdeka* mandatory is because it needs to see how effective the implementation of the curriculum is. The results will only be seen in the next two to three years (Hardiantoro, 2022)

Seeing that *Kurikulum Merdeka* has been implemented along with *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* for the past two years (2021-2023), the researcher is motivated to conduct a study that aims to see how the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in vocational high schools is, especially in integrating the dimensions of *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* into the learning process. In this case, the study is devoted to revealing what indicators of creativity and critical thinking skills are stimulated in digital English learning media of vocational high schools.

1.2 Research Questions

Derived from the background of the study above, the statements of the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What indicators of creativity skills are stimulated in digital English learning media of vocational high school?
2. What indicators of critical thinking skills are stimulated in digital English learning media of vocational high school?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To reveal the indicators of creativity skills stimulated in digital English learning media of vocational high school.
2. To reveal the indicators of critical thinking skills stimulated in digital English learning media of vocational high school.

1.4 Research Scope

In this study, the researcher limits the research only to describing the indicators of creativity and critical thinking skills stimulated in digital English learning media of vocational high school. This study focuses on the use of digital English learning media on the materials for tenth grades. Three state vocational high schools in Jakarta become the sample of the study.

1.5 Research Significance

This study is expected to contribute to English language teaching and learning. Theoretically, this study is expected to give knowledge and insight regarding the indicators of creativity and critical thinking skills stimulated in digital English learning media of vocational high schools. Further, practically, the findings of this study are expected to give contributions for:

1. Vocational High School Principals

This research can be used by school principals to improve teacher supervision and development in utilizing digital English learning media which stimulates the students' creativity and critical thinking.

2. Vocational High School Teachers

This research can meet the needs of teachers in providing students with relevant, reliable, and varied digital English learning media which stimulates the students' creativity and critical thinking.

3. Vocational High School Students

This research can give information to the students about the types of digital English learning media to meet their needs in acquiring knowledge and skills that are necessary and sustainable for their life.

4. Researchers

This research can provide insights related to digital English learning media and the indicators of creativity and critical thinking skills stimulated in digital English learning media. Further, this research can inspire them to conduct further research with different dimensions or the preference for another effective digital English learning media that correlates to the students' outcome.