



# The Role of Technology in Supporting Merdeka Belajar in Teaching English

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Received: 20.04.2025 | Accepted: 23.04.2025 | Published: 10.05.2025

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.15379821](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15379821)

Abstract	Original Research Article
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The integration of technology into education has become a crucial factor in improving teaching effectiveness and student engagement. This study aims to investigate the role of technology in supporting the implementation of Merdeka Belajar at UPT SMP Negeri 7 Turatea of Jeneponto, focusing on its impact on instructional strategies and student learning outcomes. Utilizing a quantitative research method with a descriptive approach, data were collected using purposive sampling. The validity and reliability of research instruments were tested through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's Alpha to ensure accurate measurement and consistency. Findings reveal that technology significantly enhances the teaching-learning process by fostering student engagement, supporting interactive learning, and improving educational accessibility. Various digital tools, online learning platforms, and multimedia resources play a crucial role in promoting independent and student-centered learning. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, technical difficulties, and digital access disparities hinder seamless implementation. The study highlights the need for comprehensive teacher training and policy support to optimize the integration of technology in the Merdeka Curriculum.

**Keywords:** Merdeka Belajar, Merdeka Curriculum, Teaching English, Technology.

**Citation:** Sumarni, M., Ahmad, J., Hermansyah, S., Sadapotto, A., Rasyid, R. E., & Manda, I. (2025). The Role of Technology in Supporting Merdeka Belajar in Teaching English. *ISA Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 74-85.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Phenomena

In recent years, the interest in learning English among students at UPT SMP Negeri 7 Turatea of Jeneponto has shown a concerning decline, highlighting a broader challenge within the educational context of the region. Despite the growing importance of English as a global lingua franca and its significance in educational, professional, and socio-economic domains, students' motivation to engage with English learning remains notably low. This trend can be attributed to several interconnected factors that impact students' attitudes and receptiveness toward learning the language.

One primary factor is the perceived irrelevance of English in students' daily lives. As a rural area, Jeneponto offers limited

exposure to English in local communities, making it difficult for students to see immediate practical applications for the language. Without opportunities to use English in real-world settings or witness its value firsthand, students may struggle to recognize its importance, which in turn diminishes their motivation to learn.

Additionally, instructional methods and limited resources play a critical role in shaping students' interest in English. The teaching approach used in many schools still centers heavily on rote memorization and grammar-focused instruction, which often leads to disengagement. When language classes emphasize rules and repetition without integrating communicative, interactive, or culturally relevant activities, students are less likely to find the lessons meaningful or engaging. This method restricts students' ability to develop practical language skills, further contributing to their lack of enthusiasm.

Lastly, the socio-economic background of many students in this region also impacts their academic engagement, including interest in learning English. Students from low-income families may prioritize subjects with immediate, tangible benefits for their future employment over language acquisition, which they may view as a secondary skill. Furthermore, access to supplementary educational resources, such as English textbooks, multimedia tools, and tutoring, is limited in Jeneponto, reducing opportunities for enhanced learning experiences and academic support.

The cumulative impact of these factors highlights the need for strategic interventions to make English learning more accessible, relevant, and engaging. Addressing these challenges could enhance students' interest and investment in learning English, which is essential for broadening their educational and career horizons. In educational theory and practice, the curriculum plays a critical role, as it outlines the overall plan for a course and defines how the content will be structured to create a complete teaching and learning experience aimed at achieving key learning outcomes (Richards, 2013). Since gaining independence, Indonesia has gone through numerous curriculum changes, with at least ten major revisions, starting from the 1947 curriculum to the recent "Merdeka Belajar," which have influenced teaching approaches and student learning styles.

## 1.2 Merdeka Curriculum

The "Merdeka Curriculum" program, launched by Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia under the leadership of Mr. Nadiem Makarim, represents a significant update to Indonesia's educational direction, resulting in three curriculum adjustments within less than a decade (Sugiri & Priatmoko, 2020). These reforms are intended to address the country's social and economic changes, with a goal to align education strategies with current learning objectives and teaching models. Through these updates, Indonesia seeks to prepare students to excel academically and in other areas.

The transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum has introduced various updates to curriculum planning, implementation, and assessment. These include new concepts, such as "Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran" (Learning Objectives Sequence), "Modul Ajar" (Teaching Modules), "Capaian Pembelajaran" (Learning Outcomes), and reflective practices for teachers and students. All these elements aim to support the development of both students and teachers (Hardanie, 2022).

This transition also encourages teachers to continually learn and adapt to new methods to effectively implement the Merdeka Curriculum. Minister Mr. Nadiem Makarim highlighted several benefits of this curriculum, noting that it simplifies learning materials and emphasizes gradual skill development. Teachers are encouraged to teach according to students' individual levels rather than just their grade. A key feature of this approach, "Teaching at Appropriate Level" (TaRL), tailors instruction to students' skill levels rather than their grade level

(Kemendikbud, 2022).

A major component of the Merdeka Curriculum is the Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan (KOSP), a plan designed to guide learning within each school, allowing educators to tailor the curriculum to meet both the school's and students' needs. This flexibility is meant to make learning more meaningful and responsive to student needs (Kemendikbud, 2022a).

The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to respond to the rapid changes of the 21st century, as globalization brings new demands on education. This shift also addresses local needs, such as enhancing English language education, which is increasingly important for students. Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English education requires resources, time, and support, and aims to foster effective interactions between teachers and students.

In line with the Merdeka Curriculum, English language teaching now integrates the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which measures language proficiency across different levels. This helps to ensure students can effectively communicate in English. The Merdeka Education Program, part of this curriculum, promotes a flexible, student-centered approach that encourages learning through innovative teaching strategies. Fullan (2013) suggests that focusing on students' needs is essential for improving learning outcomes and keeping students engaged.

English curriculum design in particular needs creative approaches that emphasize real-world interaction, so students can build their language skills. Richards (2015) supports a communicative approach, stressing that meaningful communication should be central to language teaching. Technology can also enhance learning by allowing students to practice language skills in diverse ways that match their learning styles. Reinders and White (2010) point out that digital tools allow students to engage in structured language practice, supporting better language learning

In addition, Mayer (2009) emphasizes that technology supports "multimodal" learning, enabling students to learn through various media—such as text, audio, and video—which is especially useful for developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Programs like the Merdeka Educational Programs, which value creativity and independence, can benefit from technology that encourages exploration and self-directed learning, making learning more individualized and meaningful.

## 1.3 Merdeka Belajar

The landscape of education in Indonesia has experienced a paradigm shift with the introduction of Merdeka Belajar initiative, a key component of the Merdeka Curriculum. This reform, introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, seeks to redefine the learning process by granting autonomy to educational institutions, teachers, and students. It emphasizes student-centered learning,

competency-based assessments, and differentiated instruction to accommodate diverse learning needs. In English language teaching, this shift encourages a more flexible and personalized approach, allowing students to engage with the language in meaningful and interactive ways.

One of the driving forces behind the successful implementation of Merdeka Belajar is technology. Digital advancements have transformed how English is taught and learned, enabling educators to adopt innovative strategies that enhance language acquisition. Technology provides access to various educational resources, including interactive language applications, online learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools that offer real-time language feedback. These digital innovations support independent learning, allowing students to practice English beyond the limitations of traditional classroom settings.

Moreover, the integration of technology in Merdeka Belajar aligns with 21st-century learning skills, which emphasize communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Through online discussion forums, gamified learning platforms, and multimedia-rich materials, students can develop their English proficiency in an engaging and dynamic manner. Digital tools such as learning management systems (LMS), educational YouTube content, language learning apps like Duolingo, Grammarly, and BBC Learning English, and virtual exchange programs offer learners exposure to authentic English usage while fostering autonomy in their learning process.

While technology presents numerous opportunities for enhancing English language instruction under Merdeka Belajar, its implementation also comes with challenges. Digital literacy, both among educators and students, remains a crucial factor in ensuring effective use of technology for learning. Additionally, disparities in internet access and infrastructure in different regions of Indonesia create a digital divide, limiting equal learning opportunities. Teachers also face pedagogical challenges in integrating digital tools effectively into their teaching methodologies, requiring continuous professional development to keep up with evolving educational technologies. With this important fact in mind, the researcher conducts a study titled: "The Role of Technology in Supporting Merdeka Belajar in Teaching English".

## 2. REVIEW ON RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1 Previous Related Study

Throughout this research, the researcher found that there is a lack of specific theses or journal articles that focus on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching. While there are some studies available, most provide only a broad overview of the curriculum and do not offer in-depth analysis or a systematic exploration of its application. This gap in research makes it difficult to fully understand the extent of the Merdeka Curriculum's impact on English teaching. While prior studies on the Merdeka Curriculum have been conducted, much of the focus has been

on areas other than English language teaching. Recognizing this gap, the researcher decided to undertake this study to gain a more detailed and focused understanding of how the Merdeka Curriculum is being implemented in English classes. Specifically, the research is centered on seventh-grade students at SMPIT Insan Mulia Surakarta during the 2022/2023 academic year. To support this investigation, the researcher conducted a literature review, which uncovered several relevant studies on the topic.

One of the key studies relevant to this research was conducted by Fieka Nurul Arifa (2022) and titled "Implementation of Independent Curriculum and Its Challenges." The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the challenges it presents. The findings indicated that the Merdeka Curriculum was introduced as an additional option to help recover and improve the education system after the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study emphasized that successful implementation of the curriculum depends on collaboration among all stakeholders, particularly focusing on the readiness of educators in terms of their competencies, skills, and attitudes, as well as ensuring that sufficient facilities and infrastructure are in place.

The second study, conducted by Aini Qolbiyah et al. (2022), was titled "Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at the Driving School." This literature review aimed to explore the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in driving schools. Using a qualitative approach, the research examined primary and secondary sources, such as books, journals, and articles related to the curriculum. The findings highlighted the importance of infrastructure and facilities in ensuring the effective implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at driving schools.

The third relevant study, conducted by Kasman & Lubis (2022), was titled "Teachers' Performance Evaluation Instrument Designs in the Implementation of the New Learning Paradigm of the Merdeka Curriculum." This research focused on developing tools to assess teachers' performance in applying the new learning paradigm introduced by the Merdeka Curriculum. The study employed a qualitative methodology, combining literature review with data analysis based on the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which involved steps like data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The findings showed that the design of these evaluation tools took into account the planning, implementation, and evaluation of lessons, particularly focusing on the completeness of the components in teachers' Teaching Modules (Modul Ajar).

Lastly, the fourth study, by Susilowati (2022), titled "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam," explored how the Merdeka Curriculum was applied to develop students' character in Islamic Religious Education. This qualitative study used methods such as observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings

revealed that while the Merdeka Curriculum was being implemented in schools, teachers encountered several challenges in its execution.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

#### 3.1. Approaches and Types of Research

This research adopted a student-centered approach, emphasizing active engagement and participation of students in the learning process. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, allowing for an in-depth exploration and description of how technology supported the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* in *Merdeka Curriculum* in English language teaching. This method aimed to capture the experiences and perspectives of both teachers and students regarding the integration of technology, thereby providing insights into its role in enhancing English instruction under *Merdeka Belajar* in *Merdeka Curriculum*.

#### 3.2. Location and Time of Research

The research took place in a ninth-grade classroom at UPT SMP Negeri 7 Turatea of Jenepono involving 25 students, over the course of three classroom meetings. According to Sugiyono (2016), qualitative research does not have a fixed duration. Typically, such studies may last around a year, although the actual time frame depends on the resources available, the researcher's interest and objectives, the scale of the study, and the amount of time the researcher dedicates to the study on a daily or weekly basis.

#### 3.3. Focus of Research

The research focus was essential for narrowing down the research object, helping researchers avoid being overwhelmed by the volume of data gathered in the field. Defining the research focus was also aimed at identifying new insights to be obtained from the economic and social context, allowing qualitative studies to be limited by selecting relevant data and discarding irrelevant information. According to Sugiyono (2017, p. 207), limitations in qualitative research are primarily based on the importance, urgency, and reliability of the issues to be addressed. This research was focused on:

1. What technology is used to support the implementing of *Merdeka Belajar* in teaching English?
2. What is the effect of using technology to support the implementing of *Merdeka Belajar* in teaching English?
3. How is the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* supported by the use of technology in teaching English?

#### 3.4. Focus Description

This research focused on exploring the role of technology in supporting the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* in English language teaching at UPT SMP Negeri 7 Turatea of Jenepono. As educational institutions in Indonesia adopted *Merdeka Belajar* in *Merdeka Curriculum*, integrating technology became essential to enhance student learning

and engagement, especially in English, a subject that presented unique challenges in rural school settings. This study examined two primary areas to understand the effectiveness and implications of technological integration within this educational framework.

3.4.1. Types of Technology Utilized in English Instruction: This study sought to identify and analyze the specific technological tools, platforms, and resources employed by teachers in delivering English lessons under *Merdeka Belajar* in *Merdeka Curriculum*. It explored how these tools—such as digital media, language learning apps, and internet-based resources—were selected, accessed, and applied within classroom settings. Additionally, this aspect examined the ways in which teachers adapted their teaching practices to incorporate technology, focusing on both the facilitators and barriers they encountered in using these tools effectively.

3.4.2. Impact of Technology on Student Learning and Engagement: The study evaluated the effects of technology on students' interest, engagement, and academic achievement in English. By assessing changes in students' attitudes, participation levels, and learning outcomes, this research aimed to determine whether and how technological tools could support a student-centered, interactive approach that aligned with *Merdeka Belajar* in *Merdeka Curriculum*'s objectives. It also considered factors such as students' socio-economic background, access to digital resources, and prior familiarity with technology, as these influenced their responsiveness to digital learning tools. By concentrating on these aspects, the research aspired to provide insights into the practical benefits and challenges of integrating technology in English education within a rural school context. The findings contributed to a broader understanding of how technology could be leveraged to support *Merdeka Belajar* in *Merdeka Curriculum*, potentially guiding future curriculum development, teacher training, and policy adjustments to improve English language education across diverse educational settings.

#### 3.5. Data and Data Source

3.5.1 Technique of Collecting Data were the most strategic steps in research because the main purpose of research was to obtain data. Without knowing the data collection techniques, researchers would not have obtained data that met the established data standards. (Sugiyono, 2016; 224) when viewed in terms of data collection methods or techniques, data collection techniques can be carried out by means of observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. However, in this study, the study only used 3 data collection techniques, namely:

- a. Observation  
Observation as a data collection technique had specific characteristics when compared to other

techniques, such as interviews and questionnaires. While interviews and questionnaires always involved communication with people, observation was not limited to people but also included other natural objects.

The researcher used participant observation to observe the process at work in collecting data and drew conclusions based on those observations. The researcher observed what the students did and listened to what the students said during teaching activities; thus, the data collected was more objective, concise, and generally more accurate. Sugiyono (2016) declared “in participant observation the researcher observed what people do, listen to what they say and participates in their activities”. Otherwise, for this research the researcher is totally an observer, observes the activities do by the teacher in teaching and learning process.

b. Interview

An interview was a purposeful interaction in which one person tried to obtain information from another resource. Through the interview, the researcher acquired important information as supportive data that was not obtained during the observation. Gay et.al, (2006) said interview examines attitudes, interest, feelings, concern and values more easily than they can through observation.

Semi structure interview have been done by asking some questions to the teacher at the end of the class. While the interview conducted, the researcher used a tape recorder, notebook, and camera as tools to assist in the research. A semi- structured interview was used because the researcher wanted to obtain in-depth information. Its purpose was to gather information about a problem by asking for the opinions and ideas of the interviewee. (Sugiyono, 2014). In conducting the interview, the researcher listened, recorded, and noted carefully what the interviewer explained. The interview is held after observing the teaching and learning process which was conducted at the end of this research.

c. Documentation

Documentation was a record of past events. It could be in the form of writing, pictures, or monumental works created by a person. Documents in the form of writing included diaries, life histories, stories, biographies, regulations, and policies. Documents in the form of pictures included photos, motion pictures, sketches, and others. Documents in the form of works included artistic creations such as paintings, statues, films, and more. Documentation studies served as a complement to the use of interview and observation methods in qualitative research.

3.5.2. The researcher used several data analysis techniques based on the analytical model proposed by Miles and

Huberman. (2014:11) are often referred to as interactive data analysis method. They revealed that the activities carry out in the analysis of qualitative data in an interactive and take place continuously until complete. Data are analyzed by the following steps:

a. Data Collection

This phase involved collecting data from classroom observations and interviews, which included video and audio recordings. Then, the data in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that illustrated the role of technology in supporting Merdeka Belajar in teaching English during the three phases of the learning process—at the beginning, during the lesson, and at the end of the lesson—were transcribed into text.

b. Data Condensation

This phase referred to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the data from observation and interview transcripts to align with the research objectives.

c. Data Display

In this phase, the data was analyzed by transcribing it into text and converting the text into action. By displaying the data, it became easier for the researcher to understand and analyze what happened during the research.

d. Drawing and Verifying the Conclusion

In this phase, as the display of the data was constantly refined, the researcher drew the meaning of the data findings after employing several procedures and conducting data analysis

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1. Description of the Data

This section presents the insights from the questionnaire responses of 25 students in class IX / 9 at UPT SMP Negeri 7 Turatea of Jeneponto, who provided insights into their use of digital technology in learning English. The data collected revolves around five key areas: technology usage, effectiveness, motivation and engagement, technical challenges, and student preferences.

The analysis of the questionnaire responses reveals significant insights into the effects of using technology to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English among students in class IX / 9. This section categorizes the findings into themes based on the responses from 25 students. The findings suggest that the integration of technology into English learning is positively received by students, with notable benefits in understanding, engagement, and motivation. However, there are a few

students who report occasional technical difficulties, which should be addressed to ensure equitable access for all. The preference for digital over traditional learning materials further underscores the evolving landscape of education, where digital tools are becoming essential for effective language learning.

## 4.2. Findings

### 4.2.1 Student Perceptions on Technology Use in Teaching English

- a. Technology Usage Across all respondents, there is a clear consensus that students frequently use digital devices such as smartphones for learning English. Most students report using learning applications like Canva, Quizizz, Gamma, and Puzzle Words "Very Often" (Sangat Sering). This high frequency of usage reflects the increasing integration of technology into their English learning experiences.
- b. Effectiveness of Technology in Learning English, the majority of students perceive technology as highly effective in assisting their understanding of English material. Respondents consistently affirm that technology helps them comprehend the subject better, with most responses categorized as "Very Helpful" (Sangat Membantu). Additionally, students overwhelmingly agree that learning through technology is easier compared to traditional methods. This sentiment is strongly supported by nearly all students, reflecting the potential of digital tools to enhance language acquisition.
- c. Motivation and Engagement, the use of technology appears to significantly boost students' interest and motivation in learning English. While there is some variation, most students report that technology makes learning English more engaging ("Agree" and "Strongly Agree"). Furthermore, the majority feel more motivated to learn when technology is incorporated into their studies, with many selecting the "Strongly Agree" option. This suggests that technology not only facilitates learning but also increases student enthusiasm for the subject.
- d. Technical Challenges, despite the advantages of technology, technical challenges are acknowledged by some students. While the majority indicate infrequent issues with internet connectivity or slow devices, there are a few who report facing these obstacles more regularly. For instance, one student mentions experiencing technical difficulties "very often," which may suggest that inconsistent access to resources could impede the seamless integration of technology in learning.
- e. Learning Preferences, when it comes to preferences between digital media and printed books, most

students express a clear inclination toward digital resources. Responses like "Strongly Agree" indicate that many students prefer learning English using digital platforms over traditional textbooks. This preference aligns with the broader trend of digital learning's appeal to younger students who are more accustomed to technology. Furthermore, students unanimously agree on the importance of technology in English learning, emphasizing its pivotal role in enhancing educational experiences.

#### 4.2.1.1 Outline of Questionnaire Results

##### 4.2.1.1.1 Usage of Technology

- Frequent Use of Digital Devices: All students reported frequent use of digital devices such as smartphones in learning English.
- Regular Use of Educational Apps: Majority of students indicated that they often use educational applications like Canva, Quizizz, Gamma, and Puzzle Words.

##### 4.2.1.1.2 Effectiveness of Technology

- Assistance in Understanding English Material: The consensus among students is that technology greatly aids their understanding of English materials.
- Preference for Technological Methods over Traditional Methods: Most students strongly agreed that learning English is easier with technology compared to traditional methods.

##### 4.2.1.1.3 Motivation and Interest

- Increased Engagement: Technology makes learning English more interesting for the students.
- Higher Motivation: Many students feel more motivated to learn English when using technology.

##### 4.2.1.1.4 Technical Challenges

- Infrequent Technical Issues: Students rarely experience technical difficulties such as internet connectivity issues or slow devices.

##### 4.2.1.1.5 Learning Preferences

- Preference for Digital Media over Printed Books: Students generally prefer using digital media for learning English over traditional printed books.
- Importance of Technology in Learning: There is a strong consensus that technology plays an important role in English learning

### 4.2.2 Teacher Perceptions on Technology Use in Teaching English

- a. Teacher's Experience with Technology in the Classroom  
The teacher interviewed, Miss Anita, has been teaching English since 2016. She has expressed overall comfort with her teaching duties, including integrating technology into her lessons. The use of technology has

evolved to address various classroom needs, ensuring both engagement and pedagogical effectiveness.

**b. Types of Technology Used**

Miss Anita employs a variety of technological tools in her teaching:

- Quizizz: Used for pre-tests and post-tests to evaluate student comprehension.
- Puzzle Word: Helps enhance students' vocabulary through interactive learning.
- Audio Materials: Utilized for training listening skills using dialogues or monologues.
- Canva and Gamma: Used for creating visually appealing and effective PowerPoint slides, selected based on the specific requirements of the teaching material.

These tools contribute to a more interactive classroom atmosphere, making the learning experience more engaging compared to traditional textbook-based methods.

**c. Impact on Student Motivation and Engagement**

Miss Anita observed that integrating technology has significantly increased students' enthusiasm and active participation in learning English. Technology-based learning provides an interactive, challenging, and relevant environment, fostering students' curiosity and motivation. It also encourages skill development and enhances student-teacher interactions.

**d. Challenges in Technology Integration**

Despite the benefits, Miss Anita identified several challenges:

- Network Issues: Unstable internet connections remain a frequent obstacle, often requiring her to use personal hotspots.
- Student Preparedness: While all students own smartphones, some forget to bring them to class, necessitating the use of school-provided resources like Chromebooks.

**e. School Support**

The school supports technological integration by providing:

- Chromebooks: Used as alternatives when students forget their devices.
- Wi-Fi Networks: Although occasionally unstable, the availability of a school network aids in technology-based teaching.

**f. Students' Adaptability to Technology**

Miss Anita noted that students are generally familiar with the technological tools she uses, as these tools are also employed in other subjects. This familiarity minimizes learning disruptions and allows for seamless

integration of technology in the classroom.

**g. Teacher's Reflections on the Use of Technology**

Miss Anita acknowledged the positive impact of technology on her teaching methods and expressed interest in exploring additional tools beyond those she currently uses. She believes this will further enhance her teaching practices and the learning experiences of her students.

**h. Implications for the Merdeka Curriculum**

The use of technology aligns with the principles of Merdeka Belajar in Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Miss Anita's approach demonstrates how technology can be leveraged to support these goals effectively, despite challenges like network instability.

The insights from Miss Anita highlight the transformative role of technology in modern education. While challenges persist, the benefits—including enhanced engagement, motivation, and skill development—underscore the importance of integrating technology to support the implementation of Merdeka Belajar. Future research could explore strategies to overcome technological barriers and expand the repertoire of tools used by educators.

### 4.3. Discussions

The findings underscore the transformative role of technology in aligning with Merdeka Belajar in Merdeka Curriculum's objectives to foster active, student-centered learning. Below is an in-depth discussion of how technology affects the curriculum's implementation in teaching English:

#### 4.3.1 Usage of Technology

- **Frequent Use of Digital Devices:** All surveyed students indicated frequent use of digital devices, reflecting the ubiquitous presence of technology in modern education. For example, Syahrin, Muhammad Syukur, and Alfadi Musti all reported regular use of devices for learning English.
- **Regular Use of Educational Apps:** The students commonly use educational apps, showcasing the integration of digital tools in learning environments. Syahrin and Muhammad Syukur both noted the frequent use of Canva, Quizizz, Gamma, and Puzzle Words.

#### 4.3.2 Effectiveness of Technology

- **Assistance in Understanding English Material:** Most students find technology very helpful in understanding English lessons. This sentiment is echoed by students such as Syahrin, Muhammad Syukur, and Nur Ikram who rated technology as

"very helpful."

- Preference for Technological Methods over Traditional Methods: A significant number of students prefer using technology over traditional learning methods. For instance, students like Alfadi Musti and Rehan strongly agreed that technology makes learning easier.

#### 4.3.3 Motivation and Interest

- Increased Engagement: Many students believe that technology makes learning English more engaging. For example, Rehan and Wilda Astuti expressed that technology significantly increases their interest in learning English.
- Higher Motivation: Students such as Nur Haliza and Attaya S. Balqis reported feeling more motivated to learn English with the help of technology.

#### 4.3.4 Technical Challenges

- Infrequent Technical Issues: Most students do not frequently encounter technical issues, indicating a generally reliable technological infrastructure. However, a few students like Marshanda and Muh. Taswin did report occasional issues.

#### 4.3.5 Learning Preferences

- Preference for Digital Media over Printed Books: A majority of students prefer digital learning media, with students like Herfina Melani and Nanda expressing a strong preference for digital tools.
- Importance of Technology in Learning: Students overwhelmingly agree on the importance of technology in their education. This is evidenced by the responses from students like Rahmat Hidayat P. and Nurvina Suci Ramadhani who regard technology as very important in learning English.

### 4.4. The Effect of Using Technology to Support the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar in Teaching English

#### 4.4.1 Improved Comprehension and Learning Outcomes

- The majority of students agreed that technology significantly enhances their understanding of English. Multimedia tools such as videos, animations, and gamified apps simplify complex topics like grammar, sentence structure, and pronunciation.
- Students highlighted how digital platforms allow them to explore learning materials at their own pace, enabling deeper understanding

#### 4.4.2 Increased Motivation and Engagement

- Technology makes learning more interactive and enjoyable, with apps like Quizizz and Puzzle Word frequently cited for their engaging features. Several students noted that gamification and visual tools create an enjoyable learning environment, encouraging active participation.

- The flexibility of digital tools also allows students to explore English creatively, aligning with the Merdeka Belajar's goal of fostering intrinsic motivation.

#### 4.4.3 Support for Personalized and Independent Learning

- A central principle of Merdeka Belajar is differentiated learning. Technology enables this by offering personalized feedback and self-paced learning. Few students such emphasized the adaptability of apps to their individual learning speeds and needs.
- Independence is further reinforced as students can access resources anytime, conduct additional practice, and seek extra explanations beyond classroom instruction.

#### 4.4.4 Challenges in Implementation

- Despite its advantages, some students reported frequent technical issues, including slow internet connectivity and outdated devices, particularly in rural areas.
- These barriers occasionally hinder participation in online lessons, highlighting the need for infrastructure development and equitable access to technology.

#### 4.4.5 Overcoming Traditional Learning Barriers

- The use of technology minimizes reliance on printed textbooks, with students preferring digital resources for their accessibility and versatility.
5. Additionally, multimedia features, such as combining visuals, audio, and interactive quizzes, offer dynamic alternatives to traditional rote learning methods.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study explored the role of technology in supporting the implementation of Merdeka Belajar in teaching English at UPT SMP Negeri 7 Turatea of Jenepono. Based on the findings and discussions in the previous chapter, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding the integration and impact of technology in this educational context.

### 5.1 Technology Used to Support the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar in Teaching English

Based on the results of the study, the researcher found technologies used to support the implementation of Merdeka Belajar in teaching English. Then those technologies are classified into several main aspects including:

#### 5.1.1 Digital Learning Applications

Digital learning applications such as Canva, Gamma, and Power Point are used to increase student engagement in English learning. These applications allow students to learn independently and interactively in accordance with

Merdeka Belajar principles that emphasize flexibility and independence in learning.

5.1.1.1 Digital Media and Online Resources the teacher utilizes using Articles, Digital Journal, Audio Materials, and E-book from online sources to enrich teaching materials. These resources help students understand English in a more real and diverse context as well to provide wider and more diverse learning resources for students, in line with the concept of Merdeka Belajar, which emphasizes learning based on students' needs and interests.

5.1.1.2 The Use of Technological Devices in Learning The use of technological devices in learning such as smartphone, laptop and Chromebook allows teacher to manage classes, assign tasks, and conduct online discussions. This supports flexibility in the student-centered learning process and gives students the freedom of exploration in learning and using technology-based digital devices.

5.1.1.3 Gamification in Learning to increase student motivation, game-based technologies such as Quizizz and Puzzle Words are used in learning evaluation. This approach makes students more enthusiastic in learning and improves their understanding of the material.

## **5.2 The Effect of Using Technology to Support the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar in Teaching English**

The following are the academic development of the effect of using technology to support the implementation of Merdeka Belajar in Teaching English.

### **5.2.1 Increased Student Understanding and**

**Engagement** The use of technology in English language learning has positively contributed to students' understanding in absorbing teaching materials. Digital learning applications such as Quizizz and Word Puzzle have been proven to create a more interactive classroom atmosphere compared to conventional learning methods. With these technologies, students can learn through a game-based approach (gamification), which allows them to understand English concepts in a more fun and effective way. In addition, technology also enables personalization in learning, where students can repeat material that they find difficult without having to rely entirely on the teacher. This is in line with the principle of Merdeka Belajar, which provides flexibility for students to determine their own learning rhythm and style.

### **5.2.2 Student Learning Motivation**

Another significant impact of using technology is the increase in student learning motivation. Technology-based learning media offers a more engaging learning experience than traditional lecture-based methods. The interactivity

provided by various learning applications not only increases student engagement, but also encourages them to be more active in the learning process. For example, competitive features in Quizizz, such as leaderboards and live scores, incentivize students to participate more. This motivation is particularly important in English language learning, where students' success depends heavily on consistent practice and high engagement in various language activities, such as speaking, listening, reading and writing.

### **5.2.3 School Support for the Use of Technology**

In order to optimize the use of technology in teaching English, the school has tried to provide support in the form of providing digital devices and internet access for students and teachers. This step is a form of the school's commitment in supporting the implementation of Merdeka Belajar, which emphasizes flexibility in learning. In addition, the school also provides various trainings for educators so that they are better equipped to integrate technology into the teaching process. This training includes the use of Learning Management System (LMS), interactive applications, and effective digital-based teaching strategies.

Furthermore, some schools have developed internal policies related to the utilization of technology in teaching and learning activities, such as scheduling the use of computer labs and borrowing devices for students who need it. Therefore, support from the government and other policy makers is still needed to improve infrastructure and ensure that every student and teacher has adequate access to technology in the learning process. With continuous support from various parties, it is expected that the utilization of technology in English language learning can be optimized, thus creating a more inclusive and adaptive educational ecosystem.

## **5.3 The Implementation of Merdeka Belajar Supported by the Use of Technology in Teaching English**

The implementation of Merdeka Belajar in technology-based English learning is carried out through several strategies that adjust to the principles of flexibility, differentiation, and independence in learning. In this context, technology not only acts as a tool, but also as the main medium in delivering digital-based materials and assessments.

### **5.3.1 Implementation of the Digital Learning Platform in Merdeka Belajar**

The implementation of the digital learning platform in Merdeka Belajar in Merdeka Curriculum is carried out by utilizing various Learning Management Systems (LMS) to manage teaching materials, assignments, and assessments. In this study, digital platforms are used by teachers to provide flexibility for students to access materials at any time, in accordance with the principle of Merdeka Belajar.

In addition, this implementation is in line with the objectives of Merdeka Curriculum, which prioritizes learning based on students' needs and interests.

### 5.3.2 The Use of Interactive Applications in Teaching English

In the implementation of Merdeka Belajar as a part of Merdeka Curriculum, interactive applications such as Quizizz and Puzzle Words are used to increase student engagement in the learning process. Based on the research results in the thesis, the use of these applications has a positive impact on student learning motivation because it presents a more enjoyable learning experience through a gamification approach. In addition, Audio materials or other English practice-based applications are also utilized to support students' speaking and listening skills in a more practical and adaptive way.

### 5.3.3 School Support in the Use of Technology for Teaching English

School support for the implementation of technology in teaching English is realized through the provision of internet access, computer laboratories, and teacher training in the use of learning technology. In this research, it was found that although the school has provided these facilities, there are still limitations in the number of devices available and gaps in teachers' ability to operate learning technology optimally. Therefore, further training and mentoring are still needed so that technology integration in Merdeka Belajar of Merdeka Curriculum can run more effectively.

### 5.3.4 Challenges in the Implementation of Technology in Teaching English

although technology has supported the implementation of Merdeka Belajar, there are some key challenges identified in the thesis, including:

- Limited internet access, especially in certain areas that have inadequate digital infrastructure.
- Lack of digital literacy among teachers and students, which hinders optimal utilization of digital applications and platforms.
- Students' readiness to use technology, where some students experience difficulties in accessing materials or participating in online learning effectively.

Firstly, the incorporation of technology has significantly enhanced the English learning process. Most students reported frequent use of digital tools, such as Canva, Quizizz, Gamma, and Puzzle Words, which provided interactive and engaging platforms for learning. These tools facilitated better understanding of complex English concepts, improved language skills, and increased overall learning effectiveness. Students expressed a preference for digital learning materials over traditional printed resources, underscoring the shift towards modernized, technology-driven education. This reflects the adaptability of Merdeka Belajar in fostering innovative teaching practices.

Secondly, technology has positively influenced student motivation and engagement. The integration of gamified features

and multimedia elements in digital tools created an enjoyable learning environment, helping students stay interested in the subject. A majority of respondents highlighted that these tools made English learning more interactive and less monotonous, thereby addressing one of the primary challenges of traditional teaching methods.

Thirdly, while technology offers numerous benefits, it also presents challenges. Some students encountered technical difficulties, such as connectivity issues and outdated devices, which occasionally disrupted the learning process. These barriers highlight the importance of ensuring equitable access to digital resources for all students, particularly in rural settings.

Lastly, the study affirmed the critical role of technology in aligning with the goals of Merdeka Belajar. By emphasizing student-centered and flexible learning approaches, the use of technology not only supported language acquisition but also fostered critical thinking, creativity, and independence among students, thereby aligning with the broader objectives of Merdeka Belajar.

In conclusion, technology plays an indispensable role in enhancing the implementation of Merdeka Belajar in teaching English. By addressing the existing challenges and maximizing the potential of digital tools, stakeholders can create an inclusive and dynamic learning environment that empowers students and prepares them for the demands of the 21st century.

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