CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I presents the introduction of the study which consists of the Background of the Study, Reasons for Choosing the Topic, Objective of the study, The Significance of the Study, the Definition of Key Terms, the Limitation of the Study, and the Organization of the Research Report.

1.1   Background of the Study

The problem with today's education system is that it has already been standardized, rigid, and it has not been effectively in preparing individuals for the competencies of the future nor the current status quo. Big companies such as Cisco, Intel and Microsoft are concerned with the graduates that are entering the workforce with the skills that did not prepare them for employment in the digital age (Patrick Griffin & Care, 2015). Moreover, modern artificial intelligence has become extremely sophisticated that it has already automated the manufacturing industry and now it is slowly taking over the services industry (Autor & Salomons, 2018; Bartodziej, 2017; Frey & Osborne, 2013). It is a matter of time where labor work or even services could be replaced by algorithms. In addition to that, Andrew Wycoff (the director of OECD's directorate for science, technology and innovation) and Karine Perset (Economist in OECD's digital economy policy division) has stated in a report from the Pew Research Center (2018) that in less than twelve years from now, disruptions are happening in every sectors of all major industries due to automation. To be able to constantly develop and evolve the way we perform will help anticipate the problems and disruptions that will arise in the future. Therefore,

identifying the skills of the future is pertinent for people to sustain in the present and the future. Researchers defined the skills for the future as the 21st Century Skills. These skills comprises of the life and career skills; information, media and technology skills; and the learning and innovation skills. These skills are defined, identified and formulated from a collective result of surveys conducted by various organizations in companies and institutions to find out the demand of skills that are needed for the future (Dede, 2009; Patrick Griffin, Care, & McGaw, 2012; Larson & Miller, 2011; Rotherham & Willingham, 2010; Silva, 2009).

From the explanation above, the mismatch between the work and life condition with the education taught in schools are not relevant to this time and thus it is costing the efficiency of time and energy for companies or individuals to adapt to the current status quo. Therefore, there is an urgency to improve the quality of education to be able to cater the needs and demand of the current industry as well as the future. With the exponential pace of innovation in sciences and technology, and if what the students are learning is obsolete, it may not help them to develop and keep up with the current times quickly. And thus, there will be a generation that is left behind in the development of the industry. This could pose a major threat towards a nation's economic development that there will be many young generations who are unable to have a role nor the capabilities to cope with the current times and to realize their dream and passion for the future. This is related to Mitra's (2014) statement that it is the development of the needs in the industries that changes the way of schooling. Therefore new teaching strategies should be formulated to get the students to anticipate for the real-life experience in the present

time as well as the future. This study is based upon the concern of the education system that could jeopardize the future generations and create future economic and social problems in Indonesia. In order to tackle this problem, mitigation and anticipation is paramount to reduce the negative impacts and to deduce plans on tackling possible future problems. Therefore, Indonesia made a new initiative to tackle on the issue of the future and present employment as well as problems that might arise in the future by fixing the mindset of the teachers and the schools through the *Merdeka Belajar* concept in Indonesia's education system.

The practice of *Merdeka Belajar* by Najelaa Shihab and the Teachers Learning Community (*Komunitas Guru Belajar*) has claimed to increase students' motivation in learning (Shihab & *Komunitas Guru Belajar*, 2017). The implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* can be useful in the English Language Teaching (ELT) as a means of an approach to improve the students' motivation in learning the English Language. Therefore, the author wishes to highlight the *Merdeka Belajar* Concept advocated by Najelaa Shihab – as the conceiver of this idea in an educator's perspective – to be brought into a conceptual study on how this concept could be implemented into the SOLE teaching strategy in English Language Teaching (ELT) for high school students in Indonesia.

The problem with ELT in Indonesia is that it is not proliferating enough to keep up with the speed of globalization and the development of economy, sciences and technology worldwide. English as a *lingua franca* has enforced many nations to adopt English as their second or foreign language to gain ease of access to international relations. The foreign language policy in Indonesia decided to make

English as a Foreign Language and therefore it is rarely seen in the spectrum of the society. Government officials therefore operate in *Bahasa Indonesia* for national official meetings or operations and their regional vernaculars for regional operations. Meanwhile, English is used as a medium for international communication. Unlike the countries that adopt the English as their second language, where English is applied for official and institutional capacity (Lauder, 2008). As this application of English as a foreign language in Indonesia is the preferred language approach of communication, it is natural to perceive that it is not being used on a regular daily basis. There are also cultural construct that hampers the learning of the English Language within the society which have engraved into the learners mind. The Indonesian society glorifies *Bahasa Indonesia* more than other languages which slowly diminishes their motivation in learning the English Language. There are also notions where learning the English Language would slowly erase their cultural identity (Lauder, 2008).

Here, the author suggests an alternative solution in tackling the problem of English language education in Indonesia to prepare the students for the present and the future. Specifically in suggesting a different approach to English Language Teaching (ELT) through the Self-Organized Learning Environment (SOLE) Teaching Strategy for Indonesian students. The concept of SOLE has successfully been experimented in India for years by the developer of this idea, Sugata Mitra, and has ensued in positive results in academic achievements, English Pronunciation, Education objectives and self-organizing behavior (Mitra, Kulkarni, & Stanfield,

2016). This then led Sugata Mitra to be entitled as the Innovator of Education and the TED Prize Winner (TED, 2013).

1.2 Reasons for Choosing the Topic

The reasons underlying the researcher to conduct the research of this topic are as follows:

1. The researcher is intrigued with the idea of the SOLE Teaching Strategy and the opportunities that this SOLE Teaching Strategy could offer in improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

2. The problems of ELT in Indonesia still need more work and experimentations as well as ideas and concepts to improve the quality of teaching and learning of the English Language.

3. The perceptions and popularity of *Merdeka Belajar* has moved the researcher to further understand this concept and to erase misconceptions in the society.

4. The researcher is very keen in knowing on how education would represent in the future.

1.3 Research Question

The purpose of the study is to find out the answers of the following questions:

1. What is SOLE teaching strategy in accordance with the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*?

2. How is SOLE teaching strategy applied in the English Language Teaching and Learning for high school students?

1.4   Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to find out the idea and innovation behind *Merdeka Belajar* and its relevance with the SOLE Teaching Strategy for English Language Teaching and Learning in the "*Merdeka Belajar*" Concept for High School Students. The objective of the study are as follow:

1. To explain the definition of the SOLE Teaching Strategy in accordance with the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*.

2. To explain how the SOLE Teaching Strategy can be applied in the English Language Teaching and Learning context for high school students.

1.5   Significance of the Study

Discussions about new concepts and ideas on education and pedagogy could help bring teachers or educators the opportunity to improve their approach on education and how they could experiment different ideas or teaching approaches to suit the education needs in the dynamic society. The result of the study will hopefully be beneficial to:

1. Researchers

    The result of the study could serve as an information to benefit future research on *Merdeka Belajar* and SOLE Teaching Strategy, especially in Indonesia, as a reflection towards the education system to improve its education ecosystem and research.

2. Teachers

    The result of this study could serve as an information for the teachers about *Merdeka Belajar* and SOLE by understanding its concept and background as a reflection towards alternative teaching approaches that are available and feasible to be implemented in their ELT.

3. Students

    The result of this study could serve as an information for the students to better understand *Merdeka Belajar* and SOLE for their academic purposes.

4. Readers

    The result of this study could serve as an information which the readers need to educate themselves and understand the perspectives of SOLE and *Merdeka Belajar* as well as the problems of ELT in Indonesia.

1.6   Definition of Key Terms

There are several key terms to be defined in this study such as:

1. SOLE (Self-Organized Learning Environment)

    Self-Organized Learning Environment is a program conceptualized by Sugata Mitra to support self-directed education. SOLE was first conceptualized following the success of Sugata Mitra's Hole-in-the-Wall (HITW) experiments. His experiments demonstrated that groups of children are able to learn to navigate computers and the internet by themselves. Upon Sugata Mitra's startling conclusion that groups of children, with access to the internet, can learn almost anything by

themselves, research since then has continued to support this idea (Mitra, 2012).

2. *Merdeka Belajar*

Merdeka Belajar or Freedom in Learning or Freedom to Learn is a concept where an individual is free to learn without any external entities inhibiting their willingness to learn. The main idea of *Merdeka Belajar* is to allow teachers and students to learn together without any interventions of outside entities where the learners are free to learn and the teachers have the freedom to teach to accommodate the different personalities and abilities of the children (Rogers, 1969; Shihab & *Komunitas Guru Belajar*, 2017).

3. ELT (English Language Teaching)

English Language Teaching is an activity or an industry of teaching English Language to those whose English is of a foreign/second /additional language, whereas the professional organization that supports and advocates for ELT calls itself *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages* (TESOL) (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Cummins & Davison, 2007; Khansir, 2013).

1.7 Limitation of the Study

Following the popularity of the discussion on *Merdeka Belajar* in Indonesia as well as its controversial issues surrounding it, there has been negative perceptions regarding this concept in the society and its way of penetration into the current education system. People often generalize *Merdeka Belajar* as an educational

policy enforced by the newly appointed Minister of Education and Culture (MOEC), Nadiem Makarim, on 2019. However, the figure who coined the term *Merdeka Belajar* was Najeela Shihab since 2014 and has written a book on *Merdeka Belajar* entitled '*Merdeka Belajar di Ruang Kelas*' on 2017. This final project will be discussing the latter *Merdeka Belajar* as a concept that could facilitate the SOLE Teaching Strategy in ELT (English Language Teaching).

1.8   Organization of the Study

This final project is systematically organized into five different chapters, with each chapters explaining different points as follows:

1. Chapter I provides the introduction that consists of these matters; the Background of the Study, the Reasons for Choosing the Topic, the Research Question, the Objective of the Study, the Significance of the Study, the Definition of Key Terms, the Limitation of the Study, and the Organization of the Study.

2. Chapter II discusses about the Reviews of the Related Literature that deals with several points which contain foundational theories underlying the study, mainly on *Merdeka Belajar*, SOLE and ELT in Indonesia.

3. Chapter III contains the Research Method that is needed in conducting the research, which deals with the Types of Data, Data Organizing, and Analyzing the Data.

4. Chapter IV contains the Research Findings. It consists of the Findings and the Discussion.

5. Chapter V is the last chapter. It consists of the Conclusion and the Suggestion.