



## Teacher's Knowledges in Teaching Speaking through Merdeka Mengajar Platform: Challenges

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### Abstract

Teacher's knowledge has an important role in succeeding the teaching and learning process in the classroom. In getting knowledge, teacher can use an online platform as Merdeka Mengajar platform. It is a can be used as a source in getting knowledge in teaching speaking. This study aims to examine English teachers' challenges in applying knowledge (in teaching speaking) obtained through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform. The research employed a qualitative method with a case study as a design. The participant was one English teacher at a public junior high school in Bombana Regency. The instrument used semi-structured interviews to collect data. The findings found three kinds of teacher challenges namely: (1) linguistic factors including students' lack of English vocabulary, difficulties in memorizing vocabulary and material, incorrect pronunciation of vocabulary, (2) physiological factors contain students' lack of confidence and motivation in speaking English), and (3) external factors such as the lack of learning support facilities in teaching speaking especially projectors and limited time in applying student-centered method. So, this research concluded that the teacher was still facing the challenges in applying knowledge obtained through MPP when teaching speaking in the clasroom This research has several positive impacts namely; introduction to the Merdeka Mengajar Platform, identify teacher challenges, and further understanding of the challenges of teaching speaking.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is the main foundation in forming the nation's character, and one of them is students. Education can make students become better citizens. Therefore, the discussion of education has become an endless hot topic today (Fullan 2007). The success of the education process, particularly in teaching, is very necessary for a teacher who has good knowledge and skills. In line with Segolsson & Hirsh, (2019) said that good knowledge and skill of teachers are the basic foundation of teaching in order to be successful. This is crucial because teachers take a central role in helping students learn and succeed in achieving their potential. As a person who is responsible for guiding students, teachers must have extensive knowledge of learning materials. According to König et al. (2016) stated that teachers' knowledge significantly contributes to effective teaching and student learning. Many schools and universities realize that improving teacher quality is a solution to improve education in Indonesia. In this case, teachers' quality has to be good instructors in teaching. The quality of teachers must cover five specific characteristics of teacher responsibilities and behavior namely: teachers have to get a good personality, teacher as a good classroom and organizer, teachers as a good instructor teachers monitor the progress and potential of their students, teachers have professionalism in teaching (Stronge 2018). Besides, a good teacher is one who explains lessons clearly and in detail, they have pedagogical knowledge and skills, can manage, organize, and communicate in teaching, they have social-affective skills, they have a good accent in speaking English, must be competent and qualified (Al-Maqtri & Ahmad, 2013). From this previous study, teachers must have good knowledge of the materials that they taught. However, efforts from all parties are needed in increasing teachers' knowledge, starting from the government, education institutions, and teachers' initiative. The government needs to provide better access to training and teachers' professional development. Meanwhile, educational institutions need to provide

appropriate programs to help teachers improve the quality of their teaching.

There are several efforts that can be conducted by teachers to increase their knowledge in teaching English such as joining the discussion group, reading books, and articles related to the subject being taught by the teacher, and attending the webinar and training. According to Hyseni Duraku et al. (2022) found that professional development training is a key component in increasing and ensuring the education quality of institutions, professional training is also enhancing the teachers' work performance in teaching because it can motivate the teachers in working and their self-efficacy, thus influencing their practice, pedagogical approaches, and classroom management skills. Professional development programs have greatly affected the quality of education for students, and schools because these programs can improve teacher pedagogic competence and increase teacher competence in the field of language which is also related to teacher knowledge (Prihidayanti & Florentinus, 2019). It is not only offline training that can be carried out by teachers, but also online training so that they can gain a lot of knowledge and they can develop it into the teaching process in their classrooms. It is training through the Merdeka Mengajar platform.

Merdeka Mengajar platform was launched in February 2022 by the Ministry of Education and Culture. This platform can improve the quality of teaching. It has been proven by several previous studies such as research about the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform to improve teacher competence in teaching speaking. The finding of this research said that Merdeka Mengajar platform is the right method for increasing the development of competence, innovation, and creativity of teachers because this platform has many features that can make it easier for a teacher to develop their teaching skills (Marisana et al. 2023). This feature contains subject learning materials as well as projects to the Pancasila profile (P5) for teachers so that they felt easy to apply and improve their performance in teaching (Ramadhani & Ys, 2017). In an effort to improve performance, teachers can access this

to find project modules, teaching modules, learning Whereas videos, and other materials for teachers to implement this Merdeka curriculum in teaching (Lisvian Sari et al. 2022). Even though the Merdeka Mengajar platform is a place for teacher training that can make teachers gain extensive knowledge and can be implemented in their teaching process so that their quality is better but there are still some obstacles when implementing it such as internet access, availability of devices to access.

The research about the Merdeka Mengajar platform has been carried out by researchers namely; Budiarti (2022) who found found that the use of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform is beneficial for teachers in developing their potential to inspire and teach better. This research was used a quantitative descriptive study with the subject of research as many as 30 respondents of mathematics teachers who have used the MMP. Another previous research from Ketaren et al. (2022) who found that the platform is useful in helping improve teacher competence in terms of transferring knowledge to students. The method used by researchers is quantitative descriptive research.

The two previous studies above focus more on the benefits of the Merdeka Mengajar platform in teaching. In addition, the research focused on elementary school teachers. Lastly, these two previous studies used the quantitative descriptive method while this research used the qualitative case study method in junior high schools.

The previous studies have explained that many teachers have used this platform. So, further research must be conducted on case studies for teachers who use this platform and explore teachers' challenges in applying their knowledge in the classroom obtained from using the Merdeka Mengajar platform. Therefore, the researchers would like to focus on the teacher's challenges in applying knowledge (in Teaching speaking) through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform at Junior High School in Bombana Regency.

### **Teachers' Challenges in teaching speaking**

The teachers' challenges in teaching speaking have different scopes namely; in the global perceptive, in the Indonesian perceptive, and in the cyberspace perceptive. From a global perspective, teachers' challenges in teaching English come from lack of training, lack of knowledge, and also lack of resources. in local reality, teachers have challenges in teaching English are class size, teachers' own skills and confidence in English, and time pressures (Copland et al. 2014). In another previous study, from the Indonesian perceptive, the teachers' challenges in teaching speaking namely different students' backgrounds, diverse students' abilities, pressure from institutions, students' anxiety about their abilities (Inayah & Miftakh, 2022). Additionally, Nety et al. (2020) found that the teachers' challenges in teaching speaking are an uncomfortable classroom atmosphere for pair and group work, low student motivation, and courage to speak English. While, in cyberspace perceptive, there are three challenges when it came to teaching speaking through online learning. These challenges include a lack of interaction, a lack of knowledge about software for online learning, and a lack of ways to apply various teaching methods (Anugrah 2021).

### **Teachers' Knowledge in Teaching**

Teacher knowledge has a central role in the success of learning. Several studies have examined the dimensions of teacher knowledge and their impact on effective teaching practice. A number of studies emphasize the importance of teacher pedagogical content knowledge, which includes an in-depth understanding of relevant subject matter, curriculum, and teaching strategies. According to Shulman (1986) stated the combination of teacher knowledge about the subject matter of the lesson and information about how to teach it is known as pedagogical content knowledge. Additionally, pedagogical content knowledge is known as the integration between teachers' content knowledge and teachers' pedagogical knowledge in presenting subject matter based on skill and learners' interest (Kultsum 2017). There are two major parts that

form pedagogical content knowledge namely; content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Shulman (1986) argued that content knowledge is the concept of knowledge, theories ideas, frameworks, and methods of proof and evidence while pedagogical knowledge is the teachers' pedagogic competence or teachers' ability to manage students' learning technology, learning outcomes evaluation, and development of students to actualize their various potentials (PP No 4 2008). Pedagogical knowledge is known as teachers' knowledge in the teaching and learning processes such as classroom management, planning, and evaluation in the class (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) Meanwhile, Pedagogical Knowledge (PK) according to Shulman (1986) described as "broad principles and strategies for classroom management and organization that seem to go beyond the subject matter". from the statement above, pedagogical content knowledge is in-depth knowledge about how teachers teach in the class or knowledge of teaching young learners to achieve learning goals so that learning management can be carried out properly. There are two kinds of pedagogical knowledge: general pedagogy, which can be applied to a variety of subjects or learning materials, and specific pedagogy, which can only be applied to the particular topic at hand (Cox & Graham, 2009).

### **The Using of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform**

In the current era of globalization, technology is very necessary in the education context, especially in implementing the Merdeka curriculum in Indonesia. Technology is an important tool that supports the accessibility, personalization, collaboration, evaluation, and professional development of teachers. By utilizing technology appropriately, the implementation of this curriculum can be more effective in providing learning experiences that are inclusive, relevant, and oriented to the individual needs of students. In the Merdeka curriculum, there is a platform that has many benefits in encouraging teacher competence in teaching. The platform is the Merdeka Mengajar Platform which can be used by teachers to find various knowledge. According to Triscova et al.

(2023) found that there are many things that can be obtained by using this platform that can support the learning process in the class such as suitable techniques for students' needs. In addition, teachers can attend free self-training, teachers can learn how to conduct assessments of students and obtain teaching tools that can be used as teaching materials and also inspiration. Besides, the platform is very beneficial to teachers when it comes to developing learning materials and module design, a teacher can evaluate students' literacy and numeracy skills depending on their developmental phases by using the students' assessment function (Rohimat et al, 2022). Next, Teachers' abilities to transfer knowledge to students can be greatly improved. They also receive significant support in their work so that learning objectives can be established and assessed. Finally, teachers receive support when assessing students' understanding in order to determine their learning progress (Saputra et al, 2019).

Merdeka Mengajar Platform gives the same chances to advance their knowledge and skill whenever and wherever they are. The feature of this platform offers independent training facilities so that the teacher can acquire high-quality training materials on their own. This is in line with the theory of Kemendikbud (2021) stated that another learning feature is inspirational videos. It can also be studied on this platform and it is very good for developing the quality of teachers' competencies, especially teachers in junior high school in carrying out English learning and also developing themselves with unlimited access.

### **METHOD**

The study research used qualitative research with a descriptive design. The researchers used this research design to analyze English teachers for young learner's experiences, elaborate on the challenges in applying her teaching knowledge to the speaking class that she got from the Merdeka Mengajar platform

The participant of this research was an English teacher at one of the public junior high

schools in Bombana Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. She always takes part in various online and offline training programs where the training can support her in teaching. One of them is the program of Guru Penggerak. Besides that, she is considered an experienced teacher since she has been teaching for years and it meets the specified criteria: 1. using an innovative learning model. 2. having effective disciplining skills. 3. Mastering the material or subject matter to be taught in teaching and learning interactions. Furthermore, according to Widoyoko cited in Triastuti & Jayadi (2018) experienced teachers can master their field and gain a lot of knowledge and skills. The research was focused on challenges in applying teaching knowledge (in teaching speaking) obtained through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform.

To get the data for this research, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview. The structured interview allowed for the reliable aggregation of the interviewee's responses and the confident comparison of results. Therefore, the researcher could have more detailed data, the researcher conducted interviews through video calls on WhatsApp. The interview was utilized as a further tool to discover the challenges faced by English teachers in applying teaching knowledge (in teaching speaking) obtained through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform. It took about 30 minutes.

In analyzing the qualitative data, there were several steps conducted by the researcher namely; the first step is the data gained from the interview was organized by using interview questions and the questions shared through Video Call on WhatsApp. the second step is the data from the interview was transcribed by using the color codes. The third step is the data was categorized to discover an emergent theme. The last step is making the conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results were presented in accordance with a problem statement. The problems were concerned with the teacher's

challenges in applying knowledge in teaching speaking obtained through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform at one of the Junior High Schools in Bombana Regency (Southeast Sulawesi)

### **The Teacher's Challenges in applying knowledge (in teaching speaking) Obtained through the Use of the Platform of Merdeka Mengajar**

This part displays the teacher's challenges in applying knowledge in teaching speaking obtained through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform at one of the public junior high schools in Bombana Regency, Southeast Sulawesi). Through an interview with the English teacher via Video Call on WhatsApp, it was found that there were three kinds of teacher challenges in applying her knowledge in teaching English for junior high school particularly speaking skills which the knowledge was gained by using the platform of Merdeka Mengajar. The challenges were (1) the factor of Linguistics. (2). Factor of Phycology (3) Factor of external (Purwati et al., 2023)

### **The Linguistics Factors**

Based on the interview with an English teacher at one of the junior high schools in Bombana Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. The interview was conducted via WhatsApp in the form of a video call on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2023. The results of the interview analysis showed several types of linguistics which revealed challenges in applying her knowledge (in teaching speaking) obtained through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform: lack of English vocabulary, difficulties in memorizing vocabulary and material, incorrect pronunciation of vocabulary, the English teacher said that students' lack of English vocabulary had become a main problem and this caused several problems in applying knowledge in teaching speaking which was obtained from using the Merdeka Mengajar platform such as the lack of use about varied vocabulary, the inability of students to answer the teacher's questions when asking them in English. the teacher also said that this factor could hinder

his ability to apply her knowledge through speaking English in the teaching and learning process in the speaking class. This finding is related with previous study from Purwati et al (2023) found that lack of English vocabulary, difficulties in memorizing vocabulary and material, incorrect pronunciation of vocabulary as teachers' challenges in teaching speaking mentioned by linguistics factor.

This is proven by the results of the English teacher's interview:

T: *"The challenge in applying my knowledge regarding the topic "my favorite snack" obtained through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform is my students' lack of English vocabulary, when I asked them to describe their favorite snack, they describe it with simple sentences or limited sentences. For example, my favorite snack is Taro, I like it"*

T: *"Another challenge, when I gave a question "Why do you like Taro?"*

S: *I like it mmm "good" enak mem*

In addition, the difficulty in memorizing vocabulary and material provided by the teacher which is obtained from using the Merdeka Mengajar platform teaching platform is a second problem in applying this knowledge in teaching speaking such as a lack of a strong basic understanding of the English structure and felt afraid related to English. the English teacher said that this happened when she taught speaking in the first semester by giving the topic of "introducing myself, greeting and saying goodbye" which was adapted from the Merdeka Mengajar platform.

This is proven by the results of the English teacher's interview:

T: *In the first meeting, I gave "introducing myself" material. Almost all of my students had difficulty memorizing the vocabulary in that material. I understand that because they had not learned English in elementary school, so there was no experience learning English and when I asked them to practice, they look afraid to introduce themselves in front of their friends"*

Furthermore, the Incorrect pronunciation of English vocabulary, this factor becomes the third problem for the English teacher when

transferring her knowledge in the speaking class. this happens when the teacher gave speaking material "your turn" the teacher first pronounced the vocabulary. then students were asked to follow what the teacher pronounced. In this situation, students found it difficult to pronounce the vocabulary even though the teacher always repeats it. this happens because students used incorrect stress on syllables, causing unnatural-sounding pronunciations.

This is proven by the results of the English teacher's interview:

T: *"More than half of my students had difficulty pronouncing the vocabulary correctly in the speaking material "Your Turn" which I got from self-study on the Merdeka Mengajar platform. Many students mentioned vocabulary like "good morning, good afternoon" without giving the correct stress. Almost all said "god morning" good afternoon"*

### **The Psychological Factors**

Based on the interview with an English teacher of XII grade at one of the junior high schools in Bombana Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. The interview was conducted via WhatsApp in the form of a video call on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2023, based on the interview, the English teacher faced other challenges related to psychological factors in applying her knowledge (in teaching speaking) obtained from using the Merdeka Mengajar platform. these factors are students' lack of self-confidence and lack of motivation to learn English. This findings is related with Burns (2016) found that lack of motivation and lack of self-confidance are the factor of phsycology. In this research found that caused by the lack of vocabulary and also the negative feedback given by their classmates. As mentioned in the linguistic factor, a lack of vocabulary is a condition in which students have limited English words to say, causing students to feel insecure when speaking English (Nety et al. 2020). The second factor is getting negative feedback from their classmates. This situation occurs when the English teacher asked her students to describe their favorite food where this material is obtained from the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform. In this situation, students

made mistakes such as wrong pronunciations and they were laughed at by their classmates. So, the teacher's knowledge of the material given to students is not fully used by their students in the class.

This condition is proven by the English teacher said during the interview.

T: the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform helps me to get *a lot of knowledge* and it supports me in teaching speaking in the class.

I: what kinds of *knowledge* that you got from the platform?

T: *lesson material that is used in the Merdeka Curriculum*

I: what is the topic of the material?

T: *my favorite food*

I: alright, do you have other challenges when you apply the knowledge in the class?

T: Mmmmm, yes. *The students lack confidence and motivation so, the knowledge was not used in full by students in learning speaking.*

### The External Factors

Based on the interview result that was conducted on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2023, another challenge was found involved in applying the teacher's knowledge in the process of teaching speaking in XII grade class at one of the state junior high schools in Bombana Regency which was caused by external factors. The first factor is the lack of learning support facilities in teaching speaking, especially projectors. The internet network was available and good but the number of projectors was still lacking so the teacher was quite challenged in applying the knowledge obtained from using the Merdeka Mengajar platform such as teaching materials on the topic "my house". In this situation, the teacher wants to display a picture of "my house" on the layer when explaining the material so that students understand the material better. But the teacher often doesn't get a projector because other classes use it first. This causes the teacher's knowledge not to be fully understood by some of her students. This finding is different with previous study from Saeed Al-Sobhi & Preece (2018) found that teacher's challenges in teaching

speaking are lack of audio facilities, teacher's books, posters.

This is proven based on what the teacher said during the interview:

T: Another challenge that I often encounter is during the second period where *the school projectors were not there because it was being used in another class*. The projectors helped me when I was going to explain material obtained from the Merdeka Mengajar platform such as "my house" material.

Another factor is the limited time in applying knowledge about the student-centered method. The student-centered method involves activities that focus on students such as group discussions on the topic of "describing people" In this situation, each group discusses and various descriptions of people that they know by using English, then students ask each other or give opinions about the descriptions made by other group members. Then, each group can present a description of the person they are discussing to the whole class. after this activity, students from other groups can provide feedback or suggestions. Finally, students reflect on their experiences in group discussion activities. In this learning activity, time is not enough so the process of learning activities is not finished until reflection.

Teacher said:

T : in using the platform, it is not only getting teaching materials but also, I can find inspirations, one of them is the students-centered method that was shared by other teachers.

I : Did you apply this method when you teaching speaking?

T : yes, I did. This is also in accordance with the expected by the Indonesian Government regarding the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum, namely, students must be active.

I : did you find out the challenges in applying the method?

T : yes, I did. time is very limited is one of my challenges because this method takes quite a lot of time because there

are many steps that I have to do, and the students are quite a lot. So, this is a difficulty for me in teaching speaking.

The research above was carried out because the Merdeka Mengajar platform is a platform that can be used by teachers to acquire knowledge and can be applied in the teaching process in the classroom. but there are still many problems faced by teachers in Indonesia such as the challenges in applying their knowledge in teaching. This section discusses the research finding. The discussion covers the teacher's challenges in applying knowledge (in teaching speaking) obtained through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform at Public Junior High School in Bombana Regency.

Referring to the first research question, the findings found that English teacher had challenges in applying her knowledge (in teaching speaking) obtained through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform. According to the data, it was found the English teacher had challenges that come from linguistic factors particularly students who had a lack of English vocabulary, difficulties in memorizing vocabulary and material, and incorrect pronunciation of vocabulary. The lack of students' vocabulary is the first challenge in applying knowledge in teaching speaking. lack of students' vocabulary can cause the class to become inactive due to a lack of interaction between students and teachers. So, adequate vocabulary is crucial to be obtained by students because they can understand what their teacher and classmates said in conversation. By understanding the vocabulary used, students can respond appropriately. This causes the formation of speaking activities in the classroom. So, it can be said that vocabulary knowledge has an important role in developing speaking skills. In line with previous research Khan et al (2018) found that the important role of vocabulary in speaking development is to increase students' ability to communicate. It means that adequate vocabulary knowledge helps students convey messages more precisely and clearly in using English.

Additionally, a Lack of basic knowledge of English and feeling afraid of dealing with English can cause students to have difficulty memorizing vocabulary and material provided by the teacher. In this case, it is very important for students to have basic knowledge of English because it can make it easier for them to memorize or understand new vocabulary and material. In line with the previous study Sabrina (2020) stated that basic knowledge allows students to clarify new information obtained on something previously obtained. It is not only basic knowledge, but afraid of English can also cause students to reduce their motivation to speak English. It means that negative comments for example; the students are laughed by their classmates when speaking English in front of the class. In line with previous findings Tanveer (2008) explained that presentations, discussions, and lecturing can cause anxiety (feeling afraid of speaking English).

Lastly, in teaching speaking, the teacher's ability to pronounce in speaking English must be considered carefully. So, teachers need to use many references to learn pronunciation, one of them is the Merdeka Mengajar platform where this knowledge can be transferred to students. In this case, students must also be able to accept the knowledge given by the teacher so that learning objectives can be achieved as expected, based on the results of this study, almost all students had problems with pronunciation causing the teacher's knowledge to not be channeled properly so this becomes a challenge faced by the teacher in applying her knowledge in teaching speaking. In line with previous research Yusuf & Zuraini. (2016) stated that one of the teacher's challenges in the process of teaching speaking is students' difficulties in pronouncing words in English.

The second finding is the psychological factor. It is one of the teacher's challenges in applying her knowledge (in teaching speaking) obtained from the Merdeka Mengajar platform. In this case, is the lack of students' confidence in speaking English and also the lack of students' motivation to learn English. In line with previous research by Tridinanti (2018) who found that lack of self-confidence and student motivation are aspects of psychology. these challenges can cause



the ineffectiveness of English learning (speaking) in the classroom. In this case, the class becomes inactive because the learning process is only the teacher who is more active in speaking English without any response from students. In increasing the effectiveness of learning to speak, teachers and students must be involved in communicating in English. The first challenge is a lack of confidence in speaking English. It means that the students were not confident in speaking English. This is a common challenge in learning English particularly that is caused by afraid of mistakes. In this situation, students are afraid of making mistakes in speaking English and embarrassed to be laughed by classmates. So, this can make them reluctant to speak and cause a decrease in their confidence in speaking English. In line with the opinion from Nety et al (2020) found that students' lack of self-confidence is caused by a sense of shame and fear of being mistakes. The second challenge is the lack of students' motivation in learning English, this can be another challenge for teachers in applying knowledge in the process of teaching speaking in the classroom. The teacher's knowledge that is obtained from using the Merdeka Mengajar platform, especially knowledge related to topics, is crucial to make successful learning in the classroom. This knowledge can be said as pedagogic knowledge. In line with the opinion of Shulman (1986) who said that pedagogic knowledge is known as the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter. A teacher who masters the subject matter in teaching speaking will be able to make the teaching and learning process effective. In line with previous research from König et al (2016) which had been discussed in the literature review above, and found that teacher knowledge about understanding subject matter has a significant contribution to effective teaching and student learning.

The last finding is external factors, there are two challenges faced by the teacher when she applied her knowledge obtained through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform namely; inadequate facilities to support teaching in the classroom and limited time. The first challenge, the teacher had inadequate facilities to support

teaching in the classroom. In applying knowledge in the teaching process in the 4.0 era, it is very important for teachers to master ICT, particularly projectors. In this situation, the teacher was able to use the projector as a medium in the process of teaching speaking. However, the teacher still faces challenges as they have a limited number of projectors, resulting in frequent unavailability of projectors when they need to teach. The second challenge, the teacher had limited time when she transferred her knowledge regarding the student-centered method in the process of teaching speaking in the class. Limited time is one of the challenges in teaching speaking. This argument was supported by Sriharto (2017) found the teacher's challenge in teaching speaking is managing time with limited time because teaching speaking, it takes more time than other learning skills because it takes time to practice rather than just theory. In student-centered methods, students are encouraged to be more active because it involves active interaction between students and teachers, as well as between students with each other. This argument is supported by previous research Pertiwi et al (2022) said that student-centered learning is learning where students must be active in the learning process. In this method, activities that can be conducted by students are group discussions, sharing opinions, or speaking simulations.

Based on the findings above, teachers must find ways to overcome the challenges faced by them. Teachers can use interactive and fun methods. Such as word games to increase their interest in vocabulary learning. In addition, teachers can use pictures, videos, and audio aids to help students understand and remember vocabulary. The second way, the teacher trains students to speak in a real and relevant context. In this situation, the teacher invites students to discuss topics they are interested in, as well as play roles or simulate communication situations that they may encounter in everyday life. The last way is the use of pre-recorded material. In this situation, the teacher makes a video recording explaining the basic material that students can

access before class starts. This will help save time in class for hands-on exercises and discussions.

This research can be an initial knowledge base for further researchers. They can understand the challenges that have been identified in this research and start from this point to conduct more detailed or in-depth research. In addition, the findings from this research can open the door for the identification of specific areas that require further exploration. Future researchers can dig deeper about one or several challenges identified in this research. Furthermore, this research can become the basis for developing a more specific model or framework related to teaching speaking through the "Merdeka Mengajar" platform. Future researchers can build a more detailed model or framework based on the findings of this research. Finally, future researchers can conduct further case studies in different environments to see to what extent the challenges identified in this research apply and how the solutions can be adapted.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to explore the teacher's challenges in applying her knowledge (in teaching speaking) through the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform in a public junior high school in Bombana Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. The Merdeka Mengajar platform is used by the teacher in implementing Merdeka Curriculum in the school. This platform can be used as an online platform to obtain beneficial knowledge such as teaching materials for speaking, teaching methods, a good lesson plan, etc., that fits with the Merdeka curriculum. However, based on the findings, there are still several challenges faced by the teacher in applying the knowledge of teaching speaking. Those challenges include linguistic factors (such as students' lack of English vocabulary, difficulties in memorizing vocabulary and material, and incorrect pronunciation of vocabulary), physiological factors (including students' lack of confidence and motivation in speaking English), and external factors (containing the lack of learning support facilities

in teaching speaking especially projectors and limited time in applying teaching method).

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