

## Implementation of “*Merdeka Belajar*”: Evolving Learner Autonomy and Speaking Skill through Cultural Discovery Learning Model

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### Abstract

**Background:**

The current implemented curriculum is *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)*. It highlights the independence and freedom of the students in learning. MBKM is expected to overcome the learning loss after the pandemic covid 19. This study intends to investigate the students' learner autonomy and speaking skill after implementing the cultural discovery learning model.

**Methodology:**

The study attempted Classroom Action Research (CAR). This research was conducted at Universitas Sulawesi Barat for one semester in the Speaking for Professional. The number of research subjects was 20 students of the English Education Department for the 2021 academic year.

**Findings:**

Based on the learning independence table in cycle 2, it shows that the average student confidence in learning, whether it is expressing opinions, expressing ideas, asking questions or giving answers, is good. The data shows that students are quite disciplined in learning, and also good at taking the initiative in the learning process.

**Conclusion:**

It can be concluded that the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* through cultural discovery learning can increase learning independence in the Speaking for Professional course for 4th-semester students of the University of West Sulawesi. Moreover, the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* through cultural discovery learning can improve the English speaking skills of 4th-semester students of the University of West Sulawesi.

**Originality:**

This study focused on the Cultural Discovery Learning Model as one way to implement the MBKM curriculum. The further researcher is expected to identify the students' perception of it and attempt another method to implement the current curriculum.

<b>Keywords</b>	: Merdeka belajar; learner autonomy; speaking skill; cultural discovery learning
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) is the latest breakthrough in the context of curriculum development issued by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Ainia, 2020; Baharuddin, 2021; Fuadi & Aswita, 2021; Marisa, 2021; Pangestu & Rochmat, 2021; Sherly et al., 2020). Independent and freedom in the learning context at educational institutions are the basis for *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) (Fuadi & Aswita, 2021; Sulistyono et al., 2022). This statement related to the concept of education by Ki Hajar Dewantara, which states that education is based on the principle of independence, it means that the God Almighty gives humans the freedom to organize their lives according to the rules in society (Ainia, 2020; Istiq'faroh, 2020). Moreover, Ki Hajar Dewantara views education as a driving force for students' development, and education teaches them to achieve change and benefit the surrounding environment (Ainia, 2020).

The *Merdeka Belajar* program aims to bring a revolutionary change in every facet of the conventional educational system. When the teachers are allowed to be flexible in educating, it will provide opportunities for the students to expand and evolve in ways tailored to their individuality. Hence, each person has skills and capabilities distinct from those of their peers (Sihombing et al., 2021). Additionally, the *Merdeka Belajar* emphasizes that the learning process is not only limited to the classroom but can be carried out anywhere that can support the learning process. In addition, the emphasis on the learning process is student character building, which is implemented by educators and students able to communicate well and interact with their learning environment (Marisa, 2021).

Furthermore, the policy of *Merdeka Belajar* is a step to transform education to realize Indonesia's Superior Human Resources and mitigate learning loss after the Covid-19 pandemic that has hit Indonesia for approximately two years. Independent learning is a form of implementation of national character-building values, starting from revamping the education system and learning methods (Ainia, 2020; Sherly et al., 2020). Independent and flexible learning is one of the reasons for the success of implementing the MBKM curriculum in higher education so that an innovative, realistic, varied, and autonomous learning environment can be created for students (Baharuddin, 2021; Masitoh et al., 2019; Suwanti et al., 2022).

The concept of implementing *Merdeka Belajar* above, then one of the learning models following the principle of independent learning is discovery learning. Brunner was the father founding of the Discovery learning theory, it was proposed since 1961 and other researchers have developed it. This model allows students to construct their learning and exposes pupils to a structured experience first so they can deduce defining characteristics, ideas, or principles

on their own (Syarif et al., 2020). Additionally, discovery learning an instructional method where pupils are initially introduced to a particular type of structured experience before being given the topic of study in its completed state. This allows them to find defining characteristics, concepts, principles, or processes inductively. This model emphasizes student activeness and direct involvement and does not emphasize the results or grades to be obtained but rather the effective learning process (Alfieri et al., 2011; Singaravelu, 2012). This model also requires students to be more creative, imaginative, critical thinking, analytical, and able to solve their own problems (Cahyani & Yulindaria, 2018; Gholamian, 2013; Indah, 2020; Martaida et al., 2018).

Based on the results of a preliminary study conducted by researchers in this speaking class, various problems faced by students in the learning process were found, such as lack of motivation to learn, low learning independence, such as taking the initiative to learn on their own outside the learning process, low English speaking skills and lack of confidence in speaking English. However, English education students require to master the speaking skill. Consequently, they need to elevate their skill to communicate and express their opinion and thoughts to achieve their goals (Rao, 2019). Students must have good competence in speaking for their future workplaces, personal lives, and social interaction (Rahman, 2010).

Moreover, Cultural Discovery Learning (CDL) is a new learning model initiated by researchers after conducting dissertation research. CDL is a discovery learning model based on local culture, especially Mandar culture. It is based on the learning content discussed in Mandar culture so that students have direct involvement in the learning process and have experiences related to learning content. This model is expected can make students more independent in learning, especially in Speaking for Professionals Purposes.

It is related to the curriculum changes that require students to be more active, creative, and experienced. Thus, initiating a learning model that suits the new curriculum and is innovative is necessary. The lecturers applied Cultural Discovery Learning in the speaking subject, and this model is expected to overcome the problems encountered by students in learning, especially the problem of learning independence and improving English speaking skills. The description above is the basis for researchers to conduct classroom action research based on cultural preservation entitled Implementation of Merdeka Belajar through cultural discovery learning in speaking for professional purposes courses for 4th-semester students at West Sulawesi University to Increase students' learner autonomy and speaking skill.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This research applied the method of Classroom Action Research (CAR). Activities are carried out through 4 stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Susilowati, 2018). The targets of classroom action research are related to learning activities both in the classroom and carried out directly or indirectly outside the classroom (Slameto, 2015). This research was conducted at Universitas Sulawesi Barat for one semester in the Speaking for Professional class D. The number of research subjects was 20 students of the English Education Department for the 2021 academic year. The research model used is the model developed by Kurt Lewin (Altrichter et al., 2002). Four stages were implemented in this research: Planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

The first stage was planning. This stage was carried out as; a) drawing up a schedule of activities; b) arranging a Semester Learning Plan (RPS); c) drawing up teaching materials; d) drawing up evaluation tools; e) creating an Educator and learner activity rubric; f) compile student observation sheets. The second stage was implementation, which applied the learning steps of the model that had been prepared. This stage consisted of three stages, namely; a) the preparatory activity; b) core activities; c) the evaluation activity. This activity was held four times. The third stage was observed. At this stage, student activity observations were carried out by using observation sheets. The fourth stage was reflection. This stage was a review of what had been achieved based on the data gathering and then evaluated to get improvement in the next action.

The instruments were observation sheets and a speaking test. Observation sheets were used to collect learner autonomy data and the test was to collect speaking skills data using speaking skills rubrics. The following were indicators of learner autonomy:

Table 1. Indicators of Learner autonomy

Numb.	Indicators	Category	Score
1		Very Good	5
2	Confidence, Discipline,	Good	4
3	Initiative, Responsibility,	Good Enough	3
4	Motivation	Not Good	2
5		Poor	1

If the score of students got the success indicators, the study is declared successful. Indicators of improvement in speaking skills are as follows:

Table 2. Speaking Score

Alphabet Score	Conversion score	Range of score	Success Rate
A	4.00	85-100	Successful (S)
A-	3.75	80-<85	Successful (S)
B+	3.50	75-<80	Successful (S)
B	3.00	70-<75	Unsuccessful (US)
B-	2.75	65-<70	Unsuccessful (US)
C	2.00	50-<65	Unsuccessful (US)
D	1.00	40-<50	Unsuccessful (US)
E	0	≤ 40	Unsuccessful (US)

### 3. FINDINGS

In the planning stage, lecturers prepared learning materials based on Mandar culture. The materials prepared were mallatigi/kaweng, sayyang pattu'du, sandeq race, and panette'. In addition, the learner autonomy observation sheet was also prepared, speaking test and speaking rubric.

#### 3.1. Cycle 1

In the implementation stage, the activities carried out in applying the Cultural Discovery Learning model are implementing six learning steps for three meetings, namely: The first meeting is 1) Stimulation (providing stimuli), 2) Problem Statement (statement/problem identification), the second meeting is 3) Data Collection (data collection), 4) Data Processing, 5) Verification (proof/understanding), and the third meeting is 6) Generalization (concluding). The learning actions were carried out in the following stages:

##### a. First meeting

Stimulation was done by showing some videos of Mandar culture. Lecturers also asked questions related to Mandar culture to see the students' initial knowledge as a prerequisite before entering the next stage and the lecturers did not forget to motivate students to be actively involved in learning. In the next step, the lecturer introduced how to learn with the Cultural Discovery Learning model and explained what students must do. Furthermore, the lecturers divided the students into four groups. Every group consisted of 5 students, group 1 got the theme mallattigi / kaweng, group 2 with the theme sayyang pattu'du', group 3 with the theme sandeq race, and group 4 got the theme panette'.

**b. Second Meeting**

The second meeting was conducted outside the classroom. The first, students collected data through interviews with one informant who knew a lot about the history of Mandar culture. In addition, students also document the Mandar cultural activities related to their themes. The data was analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. Furthermore, students made a documentary video of Mandar culture and explained each of the cultural stages in the video using English.

**c. Third Meeting**

After data collection and analysis, students presented a documentary video of their data results in the classroom. After the video playback, students explained Mandar culture deeply in front of the lecturers and students using a combination of Indonesian and English.

The next stage was observation. The observation was carried out from the beginning to the end of the cycle I of the learning process to analyze the students' learner autonomy. It contained: confidence, discipline, initiative, responsibility, and motivation. The last stage was reflection. The reflection results showed that the lecturer did not provide clear instructions regarding the technical and process of data collection and analysis. Hence, students only conducted interviews with one informant and did not verify other informants, and when students presented the findings by combining two languages, Indonesian and English. Based on the above cycle, data related to learner autonomy is obtained as follows:

Table 3. Table Learner Autonomy

<b>Numb.</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Category</b>
1	Confidence	3	Good enough
2	Discipline	2.85	Not Good
3	Initiative	2.4	Not Good
4	Responsibility	2.5	Not Good
5	Motivation	3.05	Good enough

Table 4. Students' Speaking Score

<b>Numb.</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Success Rate</b>
1	76	Successful (S)
2	66	Unsuccessful (US)
3	70	Unsuccessful (US)
4	77	Successful (S)
5	65	Unsuccessful (US)

<b>Numb.</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Success Rate</b>
6	71	Unsuccessful (US)
7	78	Successful (S)
8	74	Unsuccessful (US)
9	65	Unsuccessful (US)
10	79	Successful (S)
11	73	Unsuccessful (US)
12	70	Unsuccessful (US)
13	74	Unsuccessful (US)
14	75	Successful (S)
15	62	Unsuccessful (US)
16	76	Successful (S)
17	68	Unsuccessful (US)
18	66	Unsuccessful (US)
19	71	Unsuccessful (US)
20	73	Unsuccessful (US)
Total	1429	-
Mean	71.45	Unsuccessful (US)

Based on the table above showed that the average students' confidence in learning, whether it is expressing opinions, expressing ideas, asking questions or giving answers, is quite good. The data showed that students lacked discipline in learning and were not good at taking the initiative in the learning process. In addition, students have less responsibility in learning but have quite good motivation. Furthermore, the student's English speaking skills test results in cycle 1 showed an average score of 71.45. The score has not reached the learning achievement standard of 75, so the learning achievement in cycle one was categorized as Unsuccessful (TB).

### **3.2. Cycle II**

Cycle II was the same implementation stage as cycle I. The activities carried out in applying the Cultural Discovery Learning model are implementing six learning steps for three meetings, namely: The first meeting is 1) Stimulation (providing stimuli), 2) Problem Statement (statement/problem identification), the second meeting is 3) Data Collection (data collection), 4) Data Processing, 5) Verification (proof/understanding), and the third meeting is 6) Generalization (concluding). The learning actions were carried out in the following stages:

#### **a. First Meeting**

Stimulation is done by showing some Mandar culture videos. The lecturer asked questions related to Mandar culture to see students' initial knowledge as a prerequisite before entering the next stage. The lecturer motivated students to be

actively involved in learning. The lecturer introduced the Cultural Discovery Learning model implementation in the next step and explained what students must do. Furthermore, the lecturer divided students into 4 groups where each group consisted of 5 students, group 1 got the mallattigi/kaweng theme, group 2 with the sayyang pattu'du', group 3 with the sandeq race, and group 4 got the panette'. In the first meeting, the lecturer explained to the students about data collection techniques, data analysis, and data verification.

**b. Second Meeting**

The second meeting was conducted outside the classroom. First, students collected data through interviews with more than one informants who knew a lot about the history of Mandar culture and searched for supporting data from the internet. In addition to interviews, students document the implementation of Mandar cultural activities related to their themes. The data they got was analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. The data was verified by several people who know the history of Mandar culture. Furthermore, students made a documentary video of Mandar culture and explained each of the cultural stages in the video using English.

**c. Third Meeting**

After data collection and analysis, students will present a documentary video of data collection and analysis results. After the video screening, students explained Mandar culture in front of the lecturer and students using English.

The next stage was observation. The observation was conducted from the beginning to the end of the Cycle II learning process to record students' learner autonomy, including confidence, discipline, initiative, responsibility, and motivation. The last stage was reflection. The results of the reflection showed that the lecturer provided detailed instructions on the technical process of data collection and analysis, so that students conducted interviews with several informants and verified with other informants. The students revealed the explanation in English.

Moreover, from cycle II in this study gained data on learner autonomy and speaking scores below:

Table 5. Learner Autonomy Score

<b>Numb.</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Category</b>
1	Confidence	4.45	Good
2	Discipline	3.65	Good enough



<b>Numb.</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Category</b>
3	Initiative	4.75	Good
4	Responsibility	3.95	Good enough
5	Motivation	4.45	Good

Table 6. Speaking Sore

<b>Numb.</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Success Rate</b>
1	85	Successful (S)
2	91	Successful (S)
3	89	Successful (S)
4	83	Successful (S)
5	74	Unsuccessful (US)
6	89	Successful (S)
7	85	Successful (S)
8	89	Successful (S)
9	72	Unsuccessful (US)
10	85	Successful (S)
11	88	Successful (S)
12	81	Successful (S)
13	85	Successful (S)
14	84	Successful (S)
15	74	Unsuccessful (US)
16	85	Successful (S)
17	75	Successful (S)
18	72	Unsuccessful (US)
19	79	Successful (S)
20	78	Successful (S)
	1643	
	82.15	Successful (S)

The learning independence table in cycle 2 shows that the average student confidence in learning, whether it is expressing opinions, expressing ideas, asking questions or giving answers, is good. The data shows that students are quite disciplined in learning, and also good at taking the initiative in the learning process. In addition, students also have a fairly good responsibility but have good motivation in learning. Data on the student's English speaking skills test results in cycle 2 showed an average score of 82.15. The score has passed the learning achievement standard of 75, so the learning outcomes in cycle two are categorized as Successful (B).

### **3.2. Cycle III**

Cycle III was needed to confirm the result of cycles before. It was the same implementation stage as cycle I and II. The activities carried out in applying the Cultural Discovery Learning model are implementing six learning steps for three meetings, namely: The first meeting is 1) Stimulation (providing stimuli), 2) Problem Statement (statement/problem identification), the second meeting is 3) Data Collection (data collection), 4) Data Processing, 5) Verification (proof/understanding), and the third meeting is 6) Generalization (concluding). The learning actions were carried out in the following stages:

#### **a. First Meeting**

Stimulation is done by showing some Mandar culture videos. The lecturer asked questions related to Mandar culture to see students' initial knowledge as a prerequisite before entering the next stage. The lecturer motivated students to be actively involved in learning. The lecturer introduced the Cultural Discovery Learning model implementation in the next step and explained what students must do. Furthermore, the lecturer divided students into 4 groups where each group consisted of 5 students, group 1 got the mallattigi/kaweng theme, group 2 with the sayyang patttu'du', group 3 with the sandeq race, and group 4 got the panette'. In the first meeting, the lecturer explained to the students about data collection techniques, data analysis, and data verification.

#### **b. Second Meeting**

The second meeting was conducted outside the classroom. First, students collected data through interviews with more than one informants who knew a lot about the history of Mandar culture and searched for supporting data from the internet. In addition to interviews, students document the implementation of Mandar cultural activities related to their themes. The data they got was analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. The data was verified by several people who know the history of Mandar culture. Furthermore, students made a documentary video of Mandar culture and explained each of the cultural stages in the video using English.

#### **c. Third Meeting**

After data collection and analysis, students will present a documentary video of data collection and analysis results. After the video screening, students explained Mandar culture in front of the lecturer and students using English. The next stage was observation. The observation was conducted from the beginning to the end of the Cycle III learning process to record students' learner autonomy, including

confidence, discipline, initiative, responsibility, and motivation. The last stage was reflection. The results of the reflection showed that the lecturer provided detailed instructions on the technical process of data collection and analysis, so that students conducted interviews with several informants and verified with other informants.

The students revealed the explanation in English.

Moreover, from cycle III in this study gained data on learner autonomy below:

**Table 7. Learner Autonomy Score**

<b>Numb.</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Category</b>
1	Confidence	4.5	Good
2	Discipline	3.95	Good enough
3	Initiative	4.8	Good
4	Responsibility	4.15	Good enough
5	Motivation	4.5	Good

The students' learner autonomy on the table above shows that students' confidence, initiative, and motivation in learning were good. The data shows that students are quite disciplined in learning, and also good enough responsible in learning. Furthermore, below is table of speaking score of cycle III:

**Table 8. Speaking Sore**

<b>Numb.</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Success Rate</b>
1	85	Berhasil (B)
2	91	Berhasil (B)
3	90	Berhasil (B)
4	83	Berhasil (B)
5	76	Berhasil (B)
6	89	Berhasil (B)
7	88	Berhasil (B)
8	89	Berhasil (B)
9	76	Berhasil (B)
10	85	Berhasil (B)
11	88	Berhasil (B)
12	85	Berhasil (B)
13	85	Berhasil (B)
14	84	Berhasil (B)
15	78	Berhasil (B)
16	88	Berhasil (B)
17	79	Berhasil (B)

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18	77	Berhasil (B)
19	85	Berhasil (B)
20	88	Berhasil (B)
	1688	
	84.45	Successful (S)

Data on the student's English speaking skills test results in the last cycle showed an average score of 84.45. The score has passed the learning achievement standard of 75, so the learning outcomes in cycle III are categorized as Successful (B). This result implied that students' speaking scores elevated after implementing Cultural Discovery Learning Model. It was evidenced that all students got successful categories. Moreover, figure below illustrates the students' learner autonomy from cycle I to cycle III:

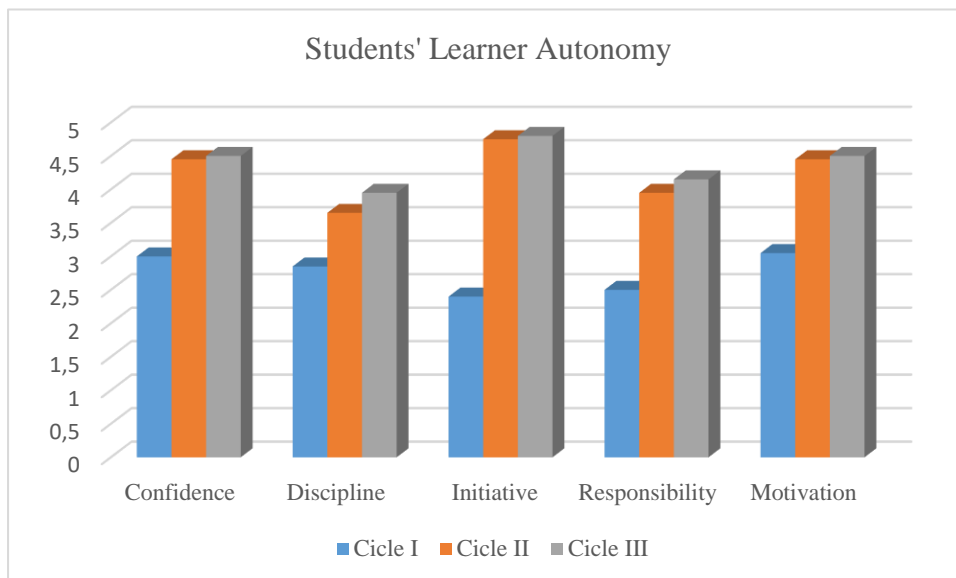


Figure 1. Students' Learner Autonomy

All indicators of learner autonomy have various results in each cycle. The comparison result of cycle I and cycle II can be seen by all indicators. All indicators of the first cycle on 2-3 categories, and the second and the third cycle on 3.5 to 4.5 categories. Based on the distinction of the result above, it can imply that there is an improvement in students' learner autonomy from cycle I to the cycle III.

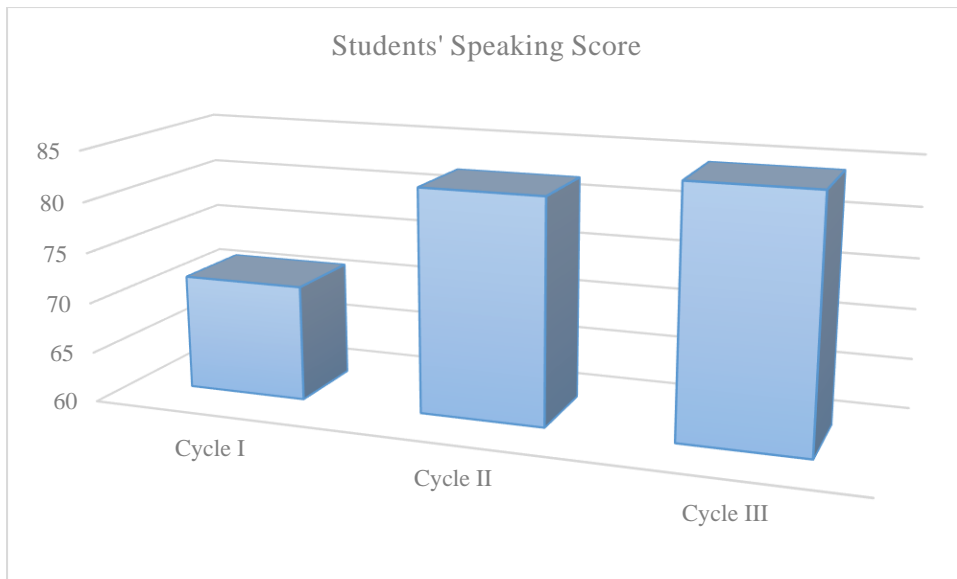


Figure 2. Students' Speaking Score

Similar to figure 1, the above figure demonstrates that students' speaking scores from the first to the last cycle have been increasing. The mean score of first cycle was 71.45, it was not a success since less than 75 students' achievement standard. The mean score of the second and third cycles were 82.15 and 84.45, and it was above 75, indicating that both results were successful.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of classroom action research based on cultural preservation show differences in the learning process, which certainly affects the learners' autonomy and speaking achievement. Failure to achieve competency standards in cycle 1 is something that often happens in class action research, for this reason, cycle 1 is always an evaluation point before continuing learning in cycle 2 (Slameto, 2015). Learner autonomy from five categories in cycle 1 is not good, but cycle 2 and 3 are good. In line with this study, learner autonomy requires great responsibility on the part of the teaching participants to try to carry out various activities to achieve learning goals (Fitriatun, 2020). Besides responsibility, high motivation and discipline from students are needed in independent learning. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation plays a very important role because students are required to learn independently (Swatevacharkul & Boonma, 2021; Yu, 2020). Students with high learning motivation and discipline will try to manage their time and study schedule optimally to master the course material they study. In addition, students' self-confidence will certainly trigger initiative in learning independently.

The previous study supported this finding. This study reveals that implementing the Cultural Discovery Learning model succeeded in increasing students' learners autonomy.

Regarding all aspects of learner autonomy, namely: confidence, discipline, initiative, responsibility, and motivation are essential in the learning process. In that case, the researchers attempted many ways to evolve the students' learner autonomy (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019; Rafiq et al., 2019; Shi & Han, 2019; Swatevacharkul & Boonma, 2021), and the present study releases the improvement of learner autonomy through cultural discovery learning implementation.

Furthermore, learner autonomy is responsible for selecting the purpose, material, pattern, and technique of their own learning, monitoring its progress, and assessing its results (Ramadhiyah & Lengkanawati, 2019). Learner autonomy refers to the capability of the learner to take responsibility for his or her own learning by identifying learning goals, determining the materials and his progress, selecting methods and strategies, monitoring the acquisition procedures, and assessing what has been acquired (EGEL, 2009; Ramadhiyah & Lengkanawati, 2019). Furthermore, self-discipline, self-direction, and self-control are the implication of learner autonomy (Syafryadin et al., 2022).

This reality does not only apply to offline classes but also happens in online classes. For instance, the results showed that most students see online learning as independent learning in which they must be aware of and motivated to learn on their own, responsible for their learning, and self-directed and governed in their learning. They also thought that autonomous online learning could help them learn how to solve problems, think critically, and take the initiative to learn (Dalilan, 2021). Basically, several ways can evolve students' independent learning, namely Self-Directed Learning (SDL). SDL is a learning strategy that emphasizes the value of freedom in learning since it allows students to make options that best suit their individual learning interests and needs (Nasri et al., 2020).

Autonomous Learner Process (APL) may be grouped into five emerging themes, and the results showed a considerable increase in learner autonomy in the post-questionnaire. The topics are as follows: (1) employing the strategies and making plans to improve their use; (2) assessing the effectiveness of learning and assessment strategies; (3) developing the ability to give and receive constructive feedback; (4) experiencing more positive emotions; and (5) gaining a deeper sense of self-awareness and insight. We suggest several avenues for future research (Boonma & Swatevacharkul, 2020).

Moreover, learners' autonomy can be attributed to a number of different causes, the most prominent ones being highlighted here. Some of these elements were student participation in class and allowing them to have input on matters such as course material, class activities,

the lesson plan, the method of assessment, and so on. It was determined that students need opportunities for cooperative learning and learning from one another (Rafiqa & Yasim, 2019). Additionally, there was an uptick in learner autonomy across the board, including but not limited to the following areas: approach use, attitude, material interaction, social resource utilization, and learner management (Tsai, 2021).

The second finding reveals the improvement of students' speaking skills through Cultural Discovery Learning implementation. It aligns with the result that the students responded positively to all aspects of Discovery Learning and showed considerable improvement in their knowledge of course material, particularly their ability to express themselves verbally. This indicates pupils have become more engaged in their English lessons since implementing Discovery Learning (Mufida et al., 2015). Teaching English by using Discovery Learning also elevates students' self-efficacy and reflective thinking. It was evidenced by the previous study that discovery learning approaches successfully aim to foster students' capacity for reflective thought and confidence in their abilities. Science and technology promote better education in the classroom. It's essential to strike a balance between the students' readiness to learn via discovery and the teacher's capacity to facilitate that process (Listyotami et al., 2018).

The implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* supports the evolvement of students' speaking skills, because the students' capacity to talk improved when they were taught using the independent learning approach, it is recommended that teachers use independent learning as one of the strategies to improve students' speaking ability (Naibaho, 2019).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study pointed to investigate the Cultural Discovery Learning model in improving learner autonomy and speaking skill of the students in implementing MKM. Based on the results of classroom action research, it can be concluded that implementing *Merdeka Belajar* through cultural discovery learning can increase learning independence in the Speaking for Professional course for 4th-semester students of the University of West Sulawesi. Another essential point is the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* through cultural discovery learning can improve the English speaking skills of 4<sup>th</sup> semester students of the University of West Sulawesi. The next researchers can conduct study related to developing the learning package or model of Cultural Discovery Learning or implement this model in teaching other English skills.

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