

The Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in English Language Teaching in High School

Farihatun Ni'mah^{1*}, Zaenul Wafa¹, Eka Fanti Sulistiyarningsih¹

¹*An Nuur University, Purwodadi, Indonesia*

farihatunnimah6@gmail.com*

| Received: 20/12/2023 | Revised: 24/02/2024 | Accepted: 01/03/2024 |

Copyright©2024 by authors, all rights reserved. Authors agree that this article remains permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License

Abstract

The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several changes, one of curriculum changes is the 2013 curriculum to Merdeka curriculum. Merdeka curriculum is a new educational approach that aimed to give more freedom to students in choosing how to learn. The aimed of this research is to clarify the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English at high school and to find the problems encountered by teachers in the implementation of Merdeka curriculum at high school. The method used in this research was a qualitative descriptive method. The data collection process used observation, interview, and documentation techniques. The subjects of this research were three English teachers who had taken part in the Merdeka Curriculum training. The findings of this research indicate that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented at high school with direction from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The teacher creates learning outcomes, the flow of learning objectives, and teaching modules. Teachers also transfer the Pancasila student profile in implementing Merdeka curriculum. The problems faced by teachers in implementing Merdeka Curriculum are that teachers do not understand how to implement Merdeka curriculum, then the curriculum changes rapidly, and teachers also experience obstacles in using digital technology.

Keywords: Implementation, Merdeka Curriculum, English Language Teaching.

1. Introduction

Education in Indonesia is a mirror of diversity and cultural richness. Through the education system, Indonesia's young generation is equipped with local values and global knowledge. English language skill is crucial in today's globalized world. English is a universal language that enables us to communicate with people from different cultures in the current era of globalization, it is impossible to deny that it has a significant impact on our lives. Having professional English proficiency can offer many job opportunities. This is because many multinational firms and global organizations seek employees who speak proficient English. Therefore, having a working knowledge of English can help our careers. English is a common language of instruction in colleges all around the world. English has become more important in education as universities around the world often use English as the language of communication and learning (Khamidovna, 2022). This capability is especially important for those of us who

want to access international educational resources or pursue a degree abroad. Many high-quality resources and research are written in English. We can access a lot of useful information as a result of being able to read and understand English. English helps us understand and appreciate popular culture from around the world. Books, music, films, and other entertainment are often released in English, which allows us to engage in global culture and explore works of art that have had an impact on the world. Overall, English provides us with many wonderful opportunities, knowledge, and experiences.

However, because most non-native speakers view English as a challenging language, they find it challenging to communicate in English. Many of them only learn the syntax of the language, not how to use it in normal conversation. Additionally, mistakes are made in a lot of Indonesian educational institutions, which commonly use conventional methods of instruction and content presentation for students studying English. When teaching English, the teacher focuses more on providing teacher-centered and less on student-centered grammar resources. Many people study English since it is a language that is used frequently. However, there are still a lot of issues with learning English in Indonesia, both in terms of instructional strategies and approaches. Consequently, learning needs to adapt.

Teaching is described as a collaborative learning process between teachers and students (Helda, 2022). Understanding the knowledge, skills, and values of students is another aspect of teaching. Teachers are in charge of establishing and encouraging learning environments that let students succeed academically. One of the most crucial components of a lesson is a teacher who is knowledgeable and creative because they enable students to interact and bring the class to life (Octavia et al., 2023). Lessons and instructional materials should be planned and created by teachers according to the curriculum and the needs of their pupils. This includes defining learning objectives, lesson plans, proper teaching methods, and acquiring the required resources. This is consistent with the perspective of Rohiyatussakinah (2020) that teachers should have the ability to import their syllabus and assessment to the circumstances of their school and region. The management of the classroom, which includes fostering a supportive and secure learning environment, creating norms and standards, and dealing with disruptive conduct as necessary, is under the purview of the teacher.

The method by which teachers present material to pupils must encourage learning and engagement. This can incorporate a range of diverse instructional techniques, including lectures, seminars, group projects, and practical exercises. To be deemed effective, a teacher must be able to successfully manage his class. Classroom management is the ability of a teacher to create and maintain a conducive and acceptable classroom environment for students to achieve effective and efficient educational goals (Nahampun et al., 2023). Teachers are responsible for assessing student learning and evaluating their progress. Applying questions and consistently motivating students to think creatively about the questions are the most efficient and innovative teaching methods (Furkatovna, 2022). This can entail giving students comments on their work, grading assignments, giving them examinations and quizzes, and making choices regarding their progress. Through continued professional development, including attendance at workshops, conferences, and training sessions, teachers must continuously advance their knowledge and abilities. Technical knowledge, practical skills, and character traits like empathy, patience, and adaptability are all necessary for effective teaching. The effectiveness of education depends heavily on teachers who

can promote safe and interesting learning environments, develop close bonds with their students, and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

The curriculum, which is an essential part of the educational process, contains a strategy for accomplishing successful learning objectives. Article 1 of Law No. 20 of 2003 states that "Curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, and learning materials as well as ways used as guidelines for the implementation of learning activities to achieve specific educational goals." Manalu et al., (2022) state that the curriculum is a lesson design, teaching materials, and learning experiences that have been programmed in advance. The curriculum is related to the preparation and implementation of education in the classroom, school, region, and nation (Hayati et al., 2022). The current curriculum places a strong emphasis on fundamental ideas, student character development, and competency, necessitating the development of textbooks and educational resources to cater to the various needs of teachers. Government reforms in the area of education continue to be made over time, particularly about curriculum-related concerns. Teachers must modify their instructional strategies to comply with this curriculum revision. If the national curriculum design is to improve, educators must use efficient tools, strategies, and procedures in the classroom. To effectively teach English content, English use must be articulated and assessed about the context in which it is used. This aligns with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, which mandates that teachers draft their lesson plans before adopting them.

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the Merdeka Curriculum as a new educational system in 2021. The Merdeka Curriculum is a shift in events and the implementation of crisis education programs created in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (Pratikno et al., 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum is an approach to curriculum development that has been transformed into a more adaptable curriculum that emphasizes more importance on fundamental subjects and the improvement of students' character and competencies (Damayanti & Muhroji, 2022). To produce people who are competent, innovative, and adaptive to developments in the 21st century, Merdeka curriculum encourages independent and active learning among students. Students are given the chance to discover their interests and select the educational path that best suits their skills and interests. The curriculum also places a strong emphasis on project-based learning, which involves students working in the real world, going on field trips, and conducting in-depth research. As a result, they not only gain theoretical information but also useful abilities that will aid them in overcoming obstacles in the future. As part of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are encouraged to embrace new teaching strategies that emphasize student-centered and inquiry-based learning. Therefore, educators need to be more flexible, adaptable, and creative in their. Indarta et al., (2022) state that, teachers should also play a role in building the character of students who are innovative, critical, collaborative, and skilled in communicating. Therefore, teachers in the Merdeka Curriculum serve as companions who support students' independence and overall growth in learning and life, as well as help them acquire skills appropriate to the era of the 21st century.

The aimed of research on the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in English language learning are to find out more about the use of Merdeka Curriculum at high school in English learning. This research also tries to identify what problems teachers face in implementing of Merdela curriculum at high school. The aimed of this research can be used to support the continued implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. This research can help teachers learn how to

engage students in active, independent learning and how to provide them with the tools and resources needed to succeed in their education by identifying the problems teachers face.

2. Method

This study used qualitative descriptive research. The research is carried out from May to June 2023, starting from pre-research, and data collection to displaying conclusions. The subjects of the study were three English teachers in high school. Data collection techniques were carried out using observations, interviews, and documents

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 The Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in English Language Teaching at High School.

3.1.1 Critical Thinking Skill in Teaching and Learning.

Based on data collected at high school, the teacher's approach to teaching encourages creativity in the students by assigning current topics related to tourism sports material for analysis and allowing them to select the videos that will be shared with the class. Teachers give students relevant hot topics to inspire their creativity. Giving students the most recent difficulties to assist them in critically analyzing and comprehending the content of the problems in the topic being studied is one way this encourages students to contribute positive and insightful thoughts. This is as according to Nadiyah & Tirtoni, (2023) that learning methods that prioritize solving general problems that commonly occur in everyday life, can encourage students to be more active in expressing their opinion so that the results from this learning can improve patterns of critical thinking to encourage students to argue in solving something the problems he faced.

3.1.2 Learning Source and Activities

An innovative move in the education system that aims to maximize the potential of each student is the Merdeka curriculum with a learning differentiation method. The controlling of learning materials and the application of learning activities in this curriculum must give particular focus on the level of student competency. Because the material being studied in class matches the requirements of each student's unique learning style, adopting differentiation strategies to implement learning can maximize student stimulation (Sabilla et al., 2023). The Merdeka curriculum's primary component is its learning resources. There should be a variety of materials and resources provided in many media, including books, films, instructional games, and internet platforms. As a result, students with different levels of competency can select the materials that best identify their requirements and learning preferences. Teachers can use differentiated learning as a way to accommodate the requirements of their different students (Ningrum et al., 2023). The implementation of learning activities must also be adapted to the student's level of competency. However, students who are still at the basic understanding level can benefit from further support from teachers or intense tutoring, students who achieve a high level of competence may be given more challenging tasks and free research projects. Based on observation and interview findings at the high school. The Independent Curriculum responds to differentiated learning according to student needs. Learning materials and activities are modified based on student skills. To help individuals who have difficulty understanding the material taught by the teacher, students must work together in groups. Additionally, consideration is given to the student's current

circumstances, school environment, and history when selecting resources. Because learning is flexible, it cannot be forced.

3.1.3 Teaching Modul as a Lesson Plan.

The Merdeka curriculum era resulted in significant improvements in learning techniques. Teaching modules are one resource that is crucial in facilitating learners to adapt and competency-based learning approaches. Learning outcomes and Mid-Term Assessment (ATP) are just two topics that are covered in an education module. Developing a concept of education that is more independent, creative, and adaptable to student needs requires a solid basis in the form of teaching modules. The learning objectives, learning steps, learning assessments, documents as attachments, and characteristics of the Pancasila student profile to be achieved are all included teaching module (Abd. Rahim Ruspa et al., 2022). Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented at high school by the direction of the Ministry of Culture, where teachers utilize learning modules to determine goals, learning methods, and learning outcomes for their students.

3.1.4 Project-Based Learning as Teaching and Learning Approach.

Project-based learning is one of the concepts underlying the Independent Curriculum's implementation (Nursalam et al., 2023). Merdeka Curriculum's current Project Based Learning (PBL) strategy promotes active, focused on the student, and educational experiences. Students can gain a thorough comprehension of the topic matter through PBL in a more relevant way. PBL involves presenting students with problems to solve in the real world or project requirements that emphasize problem-solving. They collaborate, practice critical thinking, and improve their communication skills as they work in teams. This method has succeeded in fostering a very dynamic and participatory learning environment, as shown by the observation of the Project Learning (PBL) class at high school. Students actively participate in their educational endeavors, choose subjects of study, and work together in groups.

3.1.5 Assessment in Merdeka Curriculum.

The researchers' findings show that to monitor the growth and development of students at high school more flexibly according to their success in the independent curriculum, diagnostic, formative, and summative exams are needed. Researchers also looked at documents of student assignment results in the form of formative test sheets. The findings of this researcher are supported Susilawati et al (2023) state that Formative and summative tests can help educators assess, provide feedback, and identify student focus.

3.2 Problems faced by Teachers in Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum.

3.2.1 Lack of Teacher understanding in Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum.

The lack of teacher understanding in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is a crucial educational issue. These curricula, designed to give teachers more freedom in teaching, often face obstacles due to confusion and uncertainty in their implementation. The basic objectives and concepts of the Independent Curriculum are often not fully understood by teachers. They may not be familiar with this independent curriculum method, which requires more creativity and independence in the creation of learning materials. Teachers need supervision and teaching when creating, implementing, and understanding Merdeka curriculum because they are different from previous curriculum (Astri Fifani et al., 2023). Research results from observations indicate that some teachers at high school have received training on independent curriculum

implementation, but some have not. This can be due to the lack of teacher comprehension in this area. Therefore important for educators, regardless of their level of competency, to gain further understanding of the Independent Curriculum. Additionally, there are challenges and issues to consider because English is a foreign language, particularly when implementing it in the classroom with an autonomous curriculum. Students speak Indonesian more often to make up for this Teachers practice their trade by using MGMP, workshops, and other technology aids to try to solve this.

3.2.2 The Curriculum changes rapidly

The concerns that developed between teachers and students were noticed as a result of observations collected at high school into curriculum modifications which happened too rapidly. Students are confused and nervous about the enhanced goals, and teachers feel to are trying to keep up with the changes. The primary obstacles are limited mastery and immature learning resources.

3.2.3 Teachers need to upgrade Digital Competence

The findings of the observation reveal that the teachers at high school have used media like TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Google Classroom as a tool to help students learn. Using YouTube as a media platform, the teacher employs technology to locate references for the sports tourism material being covered in class.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English teaching at high school, we can following conclusions: Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented in English language learning at high school. Teachers have created learning outcomes, learning objectives, and teaching modules that are adjusted to the provisions of the Ministry of Education and Culture as an initial stage in implementing Merdeka curriculum. Then the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in the teaching and learning process consists of opening activities, core activities, and closing activities. Teachers have implemented a differentiated learning process based on students' knowledge and learning readiness. Apart from that, teachers also implement Pancasila student profile values in learning. In delivering the material, the teacher has utilized digital technology such as YouTube, Classroom, Goggle From, Instagram, TikTok, and others. Teachers also apply the project-based learning (PBL) method in learning. In the assessment process, teachers carry out assessments using diagnostic tests, formative tests, and summative tests. In the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum, there are several problems faced by teachers. First, the teacher's lack of understanding in implementing Merdeka Curriculum is because teachers are not yet familiar with Merdeka curriculum method which requires more creativity and independence in creating learning materials. Second, curriculum changes are too rapidly so teachers have to adapt to these curriculum changes. Lastly, teachers must continue to improve digital technology competencies to keep up with increasingly advanced developments.

References

Abd. Rahim Ruspa, Nirwana, Jusrianto, Busra Bumbungan, Haspidawati Nur, & Daniel Parubang. (2022). *Bimbingan Teknis Pemahaman CP, Penyusunan TP/ATP, dan Modul*

Ajar di SD Negeri 7 Ponjalae Palopo. *Abdimas Langkanae Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 2(2), 140–149. <https://doi.org/10.53769/abdimas.2.2.2022.78>

- Astri Fifani, N., Safrizal, & Fadriati. (2023). Analisis Kesulitan Guru dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Di SD Kota Batusangkar. *Jurnal Pendas Mahakam*, 8(1), 19–27.
- Damayanti, G. A., & Muhroji. (2022). The Difficulties of Elementary School Teacher in Developing Thematic Learning Tools for the Merdeka Curriculum. *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Dan Kajian Kepustakaan Di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran*, 8(3).
- Furkatovna, A. N. (2022). Effective Method of Teaching. *International Conference on Studies in Humanity, Education and Sciences*, 53–55.
- Hayati, I., Khofifah, N., & Amin, A. (2022). Efektivitas Tahapan Proses Pengambilan Keputusan dalam Program Inovasi Pembelajaran Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar di SMA N 10 Kota Bengkulu. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Konseling*, 4, 1349–1358.
- Helda, S. (2022). National Standards of Education in Contents Standards and Education Process Standards in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Education (INJOE)*, 2(3), 257–269.
- Indarta, Y., Jalinus, N., Waskito, W., Samala, A. D., Riyanda, A. R., & Adi, N. H. (2022). Relevansi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dengan Model Pembelajaran Abad 21 dalam Perkembangan Era Society 5.0. *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 4(2), 3011–3024. <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v4i2.2589>
- Khamidovna, P. O. (2022). The Role of Interactive Methods Importance of English Communication for Engineering Students. *Spectrum Journal of Innovation, Reforms and Development*, 3, 20–24.
- Manalu, J. B., Sitohang, P., & Turnip, N. H. H. (2022). Pengembangan Perangkat Pembelajaran Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. *Mahesa Centre Research*, 1(1), 80–86. <https://doi.org/10.34007/ppd.v1i1.174>
- Nadiyah, F., & Tirtoni, F. (2023). Pengaruh Project Based Learning Terhadap Kemampuan Berpikir Kritis Siswa dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. *VOX EDUKASI: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 14(1), 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.31932/ve.v14i1.2010>
- Nahampun, C., Sihite, E. A., & Naibaho, D. (2023). Fungsi dan Tanggung Jawab Guru PAK terhadap Anak Didik. *Pediaqu: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 2(2), 11240–11253.
- Ningrum, M., Maghfiroh, & Andriani, R. (2023). Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Berbasis Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. *EL Bidayah: Journal of Islamic Elementary Education*, 5(1), 85–100. <https://doi.org/10.33367/jiee.v5i1.3513>
- Nursalam, N., Sulaeman, S., & Latuapo, R. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Melalui Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek pada Sekolah Penggerak Kelompok Bermain Terpadu Nurul Falah dan Ar-Rasyid Banda. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan*, 8(1), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.24832/jpnk.v8i1.3769>
- Octavia, N., Astutik, Y., & Rahayu, E. M. (2023). Teachers' Teaching Strategies for Teaching Speaking Skills at Junior High School. *Borneo Educational Journal (Borju)*, 5(1).

- Pratikno, Y., Hermawan, E., & Arifin, A. L. (2022). Human Resource 'Kurikulum Merdeka' from Design to Implementation in the School: What Worked and What not in Indonesian Education. *Jurnal Iqra' Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan*, 7(1), 326–343.
- Rohiyatussakinah, I. (2020). Perception of Indonesian Efl Teacher on the Implementation of 2013 English Curriculum. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature (JELTL)*, 3(1), 23–32. <https://doi.org/10.47080/jeltl.v3i1.789>
- Sabilla, A. D. S., Eurika, N., & Aulya Nanda Prafitasari. (2023). Pembelajaran Diferensiasi untuk Mewujudkan Merdeka Belajar dalam Reformasi Pendidikan di SMAN Umbulsari. *Madani : Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, 1(7), 34–41.
- Susilawati, W. O., Apreasta, L., & Septiani, H. (2023). Pengembangan Tes Formatif dan Sumatif Pendidikan Pancasila dalam Kurikulum Merdeka di Kelas IV Di Tingkat Sekolah Dasar. *INNOVATIVE: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 3(2), 8402–8415.