

MERDEKA CURRICULUM FOR ELEMENTARY ENGLISH LEARNING IN MLATI SLEMAN

Rismalla Ma'im Olam

Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa Yogyakarta

rismallaolam@google.com

Abstract (English)

The Merdeka Curriculum commenced implementation in elementary schools (SD) in the 2021/2022 academic year. The Merdeka Curriculum should reintroduce English language instruction as an option in primary education. This study seeks to understand the execution of the English language learning component of the Merdeka Curriculum in primary schools in Mlati and to identify the issues faced by teachers in teaching English under this curriculum. Mlati has 38 primary schools, and the samples collected reflect all of these institutions. There were two public elementary schools and two private elementary schools. For the study, four instructors and eight students from four primary schools provided data. This study employed a descriptive-qualitative methodology. The Merdeka Curriculum promotes autonomous learning in primary schools, as indicated by the statistics collected. The Merdeka Curriculum had a highly positive influence on both educators and learners. Educators exhibit increased creativity and innovation, while students experience a conducive learning environment due to the engaging nature of the class. Numerous challenges arose, including the pupils' disparate motivation and writing proficiency, insufficient training and knowledge of the Merdeka Curriculum for English educators, and the instructor's excessive reliance on many texts, which hindered instructional focus.

Article History

Submitted: 6 November 2024

Accepted: 15 November 2024

Published: 16 November 2024

Key Words

Merdeka Curriculum, English Language Learning, Elementary School

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, teaching English as a foreign language has garnered increasing interest, particularly in the realm of basic education. In modern primary schools, teaching English to young learners has gained significant popularity. Primary schools should promptly incorporate the English language as a compulsory subject in their curriculum for three key reasons. Initially, acquiring a foreign language at an early age provides greater prospects for achievement (CITO, 2012; De Bot, 2014). Secondly, English remains the predominant language in science, technology, and international relations. Third, despite the absence of English in the official curriculum, several schools already teach and use English as a medium of instruction or communication within the educational environment.

The government issued a policy through the Department of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Depdikbud RI) No. 0487/1992, Chapter VIII which states that elementary schools can add subjects to their curriculum (Kulsum, 2016). Since the school year 2021/2022, the Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented in almost 2500 schools. This curriculum is implemented starting from Kindergarten-B, SD and SDLB class I and IV, SMP and SMPLB class VII, SMA and SMALB also Vocational School class X. 2022/2023 school year, the government offers chances for all educational institutions, beginning with Kindergarten-B, grade I, IV, VII, and X, to execute the curriculum in accordance with their own readiness (Merdeka Mengajar, 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum permits schools to design their own English instruction and learning initiatives. According to Angga (2022), the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum necessitates that educators exhibit creativity and innovation in their methods, media, and learning strategies, as well as a profound transformation in their mindsets to

facilitate effective learning. Textbooks and resources are crucial elements that influence the efficacy of the English learning process. Tomlinson (2008) suggests designing child-friendly English resources for young learners. It must also be appropriate for the children's age. Additionally, incorporating interactive and engaging activities into the resources can enhance student motivation and participation in the learning process. By catering to different learning styles and preferences, educators can create a more inclusive and effective English learning environment for young learners.

The implementation of English language instruction within the Merdeka Curriculum has encountered many challenges (Syarif, 2020). One of these challenges is the lack of adequately trained educators due to insufficient information (Prihatini & Sugiarti, 2022). Certain educators lack comprehension of the Merdeka curriculum and require the development and assessment of relevant training modules (Purani & Putra, 2022). The teachers'. Nyoman et al. (2020) categorize the teachers' comprehension of the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation as adequate improvement. However, further efforts are needed to ensure all educators have a deep understanding of the curriculum's objectives and methodologies. Continuous professional development and support should be provided to enhance teachers' capacity in delivering effective English language instruction within the Merdeka Curriculum.

Mlati is the designation of a Kapanewon in Sleman Regency. Kapanewon Mlati is situated adjacent to Kapanewon Sleman and Kapanewon Turi. Mlati has 38 primary schools that have adopted the Merdeka Curriculum as an educational framework. This research seeks to examine the implementation of English language learning within the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools in Mlati and to delineate the challenges faced by teachers in Mlati in teaching English according to the Merdeka Curriculum.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative technique. The methodologies encompass observation, interviews, and documentation. Qualitative descriptive research seeks to elucidate existent phenomena by focusing on their qualities and interrelations among activities. The procedures for qualitative data analysis encompass data reduction, presentation, and conclusion (Yuliani, 2018). Qualitative descriptive research is particularly useful in exploring complex phenomena in real-life settings. By using this approach, researchers can provide rich and detailed descriptions of the subject under study.

Participants, specifically English instructors and primary school pupils in Mlati, provided the data. We gather data from a sample to represent the entire population. We conducted observations and interviews to gather accurate information on the current implementation of English subjects. We acquired secondary data through documentation to evaluate the comprehensive teaching methods for English topics used in Mlati's primary schools.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The description of the results is based on the findings obtained when collecting data in the field through interviews, observation, and documentation. As mentioned above, in this study there were four teacher respondents from four elementary schools and eight student respondents from four elementary schools. The samples used to represent the entire population were taken from four elementary schools in Mlati.

Four elementary schools were two private elementary schools and two public elementary schools. The two private elementary schools were SD KD and SD BU, while the

two public elementary schools are SDN C and SDN G. SD BU represents private elementary schools with good quality in English language and SD KD represents private elementary schools with ordinary quality of English language. Meanwhile, SDN G represents state elementary schools with good quality of english language and SDN C represents state elementary schools with ordinary quality of english language.

Table 1. Result of observations and interviews

Elemantar y School	Teaching Methods	English Handbook	Teaching's obtacles	Students's response
SDN G	Ordinary explanation, group discussion, question and answer, games, and assignment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Next Word for grade 1 and grade 4 • LKS for grade 2, 3, 5, and 6. 	The difficulty of teaching grade 1.	The teacher so friendly, and kind, so that students feel comfortable with the teacher.
SDN C	Ordinary explanation, group discussion, question and answer, and assignment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Next Word for grade 1 and grade 4 • LKS for grade 2, 3, 5, and 6. • Worksheet made by the teacher. 	Lack of information about english in Merdeka Curriculum.	The teacher so firm and kind, so that students feel comfortable with the teacher.
SD BU	Ordinary explanation, group discussion, question and answer, games, and assignment. The teacher like to give a reward to the students if they get good mark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Next Word for grade 1 and grade 4 • Handbook made by the englishteacher • LKS for grade 2, 3, 5, and 6. 	The teacher use many books.	The teacher so friendly, and kind, so that students feel comfortable with the teacher.
SD KD	Ordinary explanation, group discussion, question and answer, games, and assignment. The teacher like to give a reward to the students if	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Next Word for grade 1 and grade 4 • Star Kids for grade 2, 3, 5, and 6 	Lack of information about english in Merdeka Curriculum.	The teacher so friendly, and kind, so that students feel comfortable with the teacher.

	they get good mark			
--	--------------------	--	--	--

SDN G

SDN G has a friendly and kind English teacher. She taught the students with ordinary explanations, held group discussions, gave questions and answers, played games, and gave the assignment. The teacher used the book named My Next Words for grades 1 and 4. My next word is the English handbook for primary that is based on the Merdeka Curriculum. The teacher has many obstacles during the English in lower class, specifically grade 1. Sometimes the teacher has to teach students in the lower class to write because they still have difficulty learning to write. All of the students felt comfortable and enjoyed the English lesson in their school. The teacher also utilized visual aids, such as flashcards and pictures, to help the students better understand the lesson. Despite the challenges faced, the teacher's dedication and innovative teaching methods contributed to a positive learning environment for all students.

SDN C

SDN C has a firm and kind English teacher. She taught the students with ordinary explanations, held group discussions, gave questions and answers, and gave the assignment. The teacher used My Next Word for grades 1 and 4, and LKS for grades 2, 3, 5, and 6. Worksheet made by the teacher. The teachers have many obstacles during the English in lower class, specifically grade 1. The teacher has several obstacles, but a certain problem is the lack of information about English in the Merdeka Curriculum. The English teacher didn't know correctly what and how the Merdeka Curriculum was. All of the students felt comfortable and enjoyed the English lesson in their school. The teacher decided to seek additional training and resources to better understand the Merdeka Curriculum and improve English instruction for grade 1 students. As a result, the students' English language skills improved significantly, leading to a more positive and engaging learning environment in the classroom.

SD BU

SD BU has a friendly and kind English teacher. She taught the students with ordinary explanation, always held group discussion, gave the students questions and answers, played games, and gave the assignment. The teacher used My Next Word for grades 1 and 4. There is a handbook also made by the teacher. The teacher also made some worksheets for the students. The teacher had obstacles during the English on Merdeka Curriculum; the teacher used many books so he didn't focus on one handbook. All of the students felt comfortable and enjoyed the English lesson in their school. The teacher's approach to teaching English was well-rounded and engaging, incorporating various activities to keep the students interested and motivated. Despite facing challenges with the curriculum, the teacher's dedication and creativity ultimately led to a positive learning experience for all students involved.

SD KD

SD KD has a friendly and firm English teacher. The teacher taught the students with ordinary explanation, always held group discussion, gave the students questions and answers, played games, and gave the assignment. The teacher used My Next Word for grades 1 and 4. There is a handbook also made by the teacher. The teacher also made some worksheets for the students. The teacher has obstacles during the English on Merdeka Curriculum; the certain obstacle is the lack of information about English in Merdeka Curriculum. All of the students felt comfortable and enjoyed the English lesson in their school. Overall, the English teacher was dedicated to providing engaging and interactive lessons to ensure the students' success in

learning the language. The use of various teaching methods and resources helped create a positive and enjoyable learning environment for all students involved.

Independence of Learning was applied to the Merdeka curriculum. Independence to learn means independent thinking, independence, innovation, and always being creative so that learning is meaningful and fun. Independence to think is related to the condition of mind. To develop independent teachers and students, we need to apply humanism, study, and constructivism in learning. The teachers play as a friend in learning for students. Teachers, as friends in learning, designed the lesson to be more pleasant for students so that students are aware of themselves and that they must be brave to determine their choices (Mahendra, 2020). By fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment, students are encouraged to explore their own ideas and opinions, leading to a deeper understanding of the material. This approach not only promotes critical thinking skills but also helps students develop a sense of ownership over their education.

Freedom to innovate can be developed through the application of innovative learning models. To create independent innovation, teachers must design learning with innovation. Innovative learning is designed by teachers with new ideas to facilitate students in reaching maximum results in learning (Purwadhi, 2019). Freedom to learn is designed with a climate of fun learning that is good for students or teachers. Students and teachers can study without the feeling of being shackled (Sherly et al., 2021). Innovative learning environments also encourage collaboration and critical thinking, fostering a sense of ownership over the learning process. By promoting creativity and autonomy, students are more likely to explore new ideas and solutions.

Since the changes in the curriculum, we must learn the English language contextually. Hamruni (2012) says that learning English emphasizes the engagement process. Students can discover and be active in the engagement process. Students can find a connection between the material that they studied and the situation in real life. Students are involved in the learning process. Students aren't only studied by listening and taking notes, but they study every experience directly in a real-life situation. For the implementation method of learning successful contextual, the teacher must have an appropriate strategy in the class. One of them invites participants to educate themselves in a close by place with understanding material, for example environment around schools, libraries, and so on. Teachers can bring more happiness to learning by grouping the students and letting them go outside. Teachers can utilize learning materials and concrete media in or outside of the classroom. That activity can help them learn new vocabulary too. English learning will be done with fun.

The impacts of the Merdeka Curriculum are good for teachers and students. Several matters are essential to the English language learning of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary school: 1) English language lessons are taught to the students as an option subject; 2) the English teacher must be creative and innovative; 3) a learning-based project is carried out at least twice a year. The purpose is to strengthen Profile Pancasila students (Kemendikbud, 2022). These components aim to enhance students' English language proficiency and critical thinking skills. By incorporating these elements into the curriculum, students are better equipped to succeed in an increasingly globalized world.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the teaching methods of four elementary schools in Mlati, Sleman. The schools were divided into two private schools and two public schools, with SD KD and SD BU representing private schools with good English language quality and SD KD

and SD BU representing state schools with good English language quality. The teachers used various teaching methods, including ordinary explanations, group discussions, question and answer, games, and assignments.

Students reported that the teachers were friendly and kind, making them feel comfortable with the teaching methods. They also used various teaching materials, such as My Next Words for grades 1 and 4, and LKS for grades 2, 3, 5, and 6. The teachers also used visual aids to help students understand the lessons. Despite facing challenges, the teachers' dedication and innovative teaching methods contributed to a positive learning environment for all students. They used various teaching methods, such as oral explanations, group discussions, question and answer, games, and assignments, and the English handbook for primary. The teachers also sought additional training and resources to better understand the Merdeka Curriculum, leading to a significant improvement in students' English language skills. In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of a well-rounded and engaging approach to teaching English in Mlati, despite facing challenges such as lack of information about the Merdeka Curriculum and the use of various teaching methods. SD KD has a friendly and firm English teacher who uses various teaching methods and resources to create an engaging and interactive learning environment for students.

The Merdeka curriculum emphasizes independence of learning, which involves independent thinking, innovation, and creativity. Teachers play a role in creating a supportive and collaborative learning environment, encouraging students to explore their own ideas and opinions, leading to a deeper understanding of the material. This approach promotes critical thinking skills and helps students develop a sense of ownership over their education. Freedom to innovate can be developed through the application of innovative learning models.

REFERENCES

- Angga, A., Suryana, C., Nurwahidah, I., Hernawan, A. H., & Prihantini, P. (2022). Komparasi Implementasi Kurikulum 2013 dan Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Dasar Kabupaten Garut. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 6(4), 5877–5889. <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i4.3149>
- Anonymous, 1998. *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge University
- Borg, W.R. and Gall, M.D. 1983. *Educational Research: An Introduction*. London: Pearson Education.
- Kemendikbud. (2023). Kurikulum Merdeka. retrieved from <https://ditpsd.kemdikbud.go.id/hal/kurikulum-merdeka> (June, 2023).
- Kulsum, H. 2016. Bahasa Inggris dalam Kurikulum 2013 di Sekolah Dasar. The 3rd University Research Colloquium 2016. ISSN 2407-9189
- Mahendra, A. O. Y. (2020). Musik Keroncong Sebagai Implementasi Konsep Merdeka Belajar. *Seminar Nasional Seni dan Desain 2020*, 33–41. <https://www.neliti.com/id/publications/333142/>
- Marzali, A. (2016). Menulis Kajian Literatur | *ETNOSIA: Jurnal Etnografi Indonesia*. *Jurnal Etnosia*, 01(02), 27–36.
- Merdeka Mengajar. (2023). Kebijakan Pemerintah terkait Kurikulum Merdeka. MM. 2023 [Cited in 29 Maret 2023]. <https://pusatinformasi.guru.kemdikbud.go.id/hc/enus/articles/6824815789465-Kebijakan-PemerintahTerkaitKurikulum-Merdeka>.
- Nyoman, I., Iba, J., Ngurah, G., & Agustika, S. (2020). Pemahaman Guru Sekolah Dasar Terhadap Kebijakan Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Merdeka Belajar. *Seminar Nasional Riset Inovatif 7*: 403–7.

- Prihatini, A., & Sugiarti. (2022). Citra Kurikulum Baru: Kesiapan Guru dalam Menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka. *GHANCARAN: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 58–70.
- Purwadhi, P. (2019). Pembelajaran Inovatif dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa. *MIMBAR PENDIDIKAN*, 4(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.2121/mp.v4i1.1117>
- Suharto, G. 2005. *Penilaian Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris*. Yogyakarta: P2B UNY.
- Syarif, M. I. (2020). Disrupsi Pendidikan IPA Sekolah Dasar dalam Menyikapi Merdeka Belajar dan Kampus Merdeka Menuju New Normal Pasca COVID-19. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 4(4), Article 4. https://doi.org/10.31004/basic_educ.v4i4.487
- Tomlinson, B. 2008. *English Language Learning Materials: A Critical Review*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Yuliani, W. (2018). Metode Penelitian Deskriptif Kualitatif Dalam Perspektif Bimbingan dan Konseling. *QUANTA*, 2(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.22460/q.v2i2p83-91.1641>