

English Language Teaching In Indonesia; The Implementation Of Merdeka Curriculum In Senior High Schools

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Abstract

With the implementation of the Merdeka (Freedom) curriculum simultaneously at all levels of schools in Indonesia in 2022, it requires teachers to be able to adapt to the new paradigm contained in the Merdeka curriculum which emphasizes not on the core competencies that must be achieved by students but on learning objectives which are the reference for student learning success. In fact, the implementation of this new curriculum has not been fully understood by teachers in which it has an impact on the implementation of learning in the classroom, including in English Language Teaching (ELT). This study aims to determine the implementation of ELT in the Merdeka curriculum. The subjects of this study were teachers and students spread across eight schools in four cities in the province of Central Java, Indonesia. Research data were collected through student questionnaires, teaching and learning observations, and interviews with teachers which were then analyzed qualitatively. The results of the study show that teaching and learning process of English starting from planning, implementation, and assessment refers to the Merdeka Curriculum although weaknesses are still found

such as the teaching modules and learning strategies used. This research is expected to be a basis for further research that measures the extent to which Merdeka curriculum is applied in ELT.

Keywords: English language teaching, curriculum, Merdeka curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

English language teaching (ELT) carried out in schools refers to the regulations of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia which regulate the guidelines for curriculum implementation in the context of learning recovery (Mendikbudristek, 2022b) where English is the main subject that students must learn. This is because English is one of the dominant languages used globally (Crystal, 2016) both in the aspects of education, business, economics, and so on and is lingua franca (Harmer, 2017). The Indonesian government has made efforts to meet global demands by improving the quality of education at all levels of education by incorporating 21st century skills into the latest curriculum (Sukirman, 2022).

ELT has become an intrinsic part of the Indonesian educational system (Jon et al., 2021). By learning English, students can have great opportunities to communicate and interact using various types of texts, both spoken and written. From this communication and interaction, students will gain knowledge, learn various language skills, and have behaviors that reflect the target culture. This is in line with what the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology conveys that it is expected to improve the quality of Indonesia's human resources through a fun and non-stressful learning environment (Pertiwi & Pusparini, 2021).

The challenges that teachers often face in implementing the curriculum are at the level of preparation, implementation, and assessment (Sofiana & Mubarak, 2019). In addition, there is no detailed explanation regarding the implementation for each activity (Krishnapatria, 2021) which asks teachers to find appropriate learning activities to achieve learning objectives. This shows that teachers have a very important role in creating

a good teaching and learning environment (Pertiwi & Pusparini, 2021). In addition, teachers are often required to carry out curriculum changes and innovations developed by the government (Mathura, 2019) and must be able to adapt to curriculum changes so that teachers who are trained, confident, and have pedagogical abilities are needed to convey material effectively to students (Thompson et al., 2013). This is in line with Sahu et al. (2023) who state that the future curriculum introduces students to fundamental information and communication technology that changes the world to equip them to be able to thrive in the current and future digital era.

There are many concepts that elaborate curriculum implementation. It is a stage of implementation that is not only at the syllabus level but also at each subject and material achievement in each chapter (Carl in Mathura, 2019) and it is considered as the most important part of the education system (Papa-Gusho, 2014). The curriculum can be interpreted as teaching and learning activities that are planned and guided by schools, both carried out individually and in groups, as well as inside or outside the school environment (Adewumi, 2023). In the curriculum, there are learning outcomes as achievements obtained through the internalization of knowledge, attitudes, skills, competencies, and accumulated work experience (Solikhah & Budiharso, 2019). Therefore, the Merdeka curriculum gives students the freedom to explore, discuss freely, and carry out activities outside the classroom without neglecting activities in the classroom. In order to achieve this, learning outcomes for English subjects have been prepared, where tenth grade senior high school students are in phase E.

In learning English objectives released by Mendikbudristek, (2022a), it is stated that learning English is focused on strengthening the ability to use English in six language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting in an integrated manner, in various types of texts. The minimum learning outcomes for these six English language skills refer to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) and equivalent to level B1. Level B1 (CEFR) reflects specifications that can be seen from the ability of students to a) maintain interaction and convey something

desired, in various contexts with clear articulation, b) express the main points to be conveyed comprehensively, c) maintain communication even though sometimes there are still lags.

Many studies discuss the curriculum. One of them is research conducted by Sukirman (2022) with the results of curriculum adjustments that are always needed in addressing every social phenomenon that occurs. Husain (2023) states that updating the curriculum through changing the curriculum, the latest learning approaches, facilities, and equipment has an impact on the quality of learning English. Jon et al. (2021) elaborate that the applied national curriculum is considered good because it uses a communicative, learner-centered, and competency-based language teaching approach. Li et al., (2023) conduct research which show that in order to form an innovative curriculum several dimensions are needed, namely teaching, organization, knowledge, innovation, and social with the knowledge and innovation domains appearing as the strongest influences.

OBJECTIVE

This study aims to determine the application of the Merdeka curriculum to learning English in schools both from the perspective of students, teachers and direct observation during the learning process.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach used was qualitative descriptive research and used analysis to explain phenomena in the deepest way. It belonged to descriptive research because the data were taken and analyzed not using numbers but a description of a phenomenon; in this case is the English language learning process in the classroom. The subjects in this study were English teachers and senior high school level students spread across eight schools in four cities in Central Java province, Indonesia. The school location for the research was determined by taking into account the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in tenth and eleventh grades where one English teacher and one class of students were taken as a sample. Data were collected through instruments of 1) observation of learning with the aim of obtaining an overview of the implementation of learning English in class using the

Merdeka curriculum, 2) questionnaires to students with the aim of obtaining information about learning English based on students' perspectives, and 3) interviews with teachers to obtain information about the media and teaching materials used in the process of learning English. The data analysis technique was carried out qualitatively by using the Miles and Hubberman formulas with the stages of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The following are the aspects used in each instrument:

Table 1. The Research Indicators

No	Instruments	Subjects	Aspects
1	Questionnaires	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English Language Teaching ▪ English Language Teaching Strategies ▪ English Language Teaching Media ▪ Learning Resources ▪ Teaching Materials ▪ Literation Skill
2	Observation	Teacher and Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaching Planning ▪ Teaching and Learning Process ▪ Assessment
3	Interview	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning Media ▪ Teaching Materials

FINDING

The questionnaire instrument was distributed to tenth grade students at the senior high school level with a total of 208 respondents spread across eight schools in the four cities. Here are the findings.

Table 2. The Result of Questionnaires

No	Aspects	Percentage (%)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
English Language Teaching					
1	Learning English is delivered in an easy-to-understand way.	29	65	6	-
2	The teacher uses language that is easy to understand when explaining English subject matter.	32	60	8	-

3	English learning materials cover all the skills contained in the independent curriculum.	11	65	24	-
4	English subject matter provides an opportunity for me to be able to communicate according to everyday contexts.	13	61	23	3
5	The process of learning English carried out by the teacher follows the following stages: a. Building knowledge of the field b. Modelling of the text c. Joint construction of the text d. Independent construction of the text	7	78	12	3
English Language Teaching Strategies					
6	The teacher applies learning strategies during English language teaching.	17	72	11	-
7	The learning strategy applied by the teacher contains assignments or projects that must be done by students.	13	70	15	2
8	Individual assignment or project is given.	14	59	22	5
9	Assignments or projects given are based on computer/android/digital applications.	20	41	24	15
English Language Teaching Media					
10	The teacher uses learning media during English language teaching.	14	69	14	3
11	Media used by teachers were:	Video = 6%, Pictures = 13%, Audio = 81%			
12	Teachers use digital or android applications in English language teaching.	22	42	24	12
Learning Resources					
13	What teaching resources have never been used by the teacher in the learning process.	Digital application = 80%, Books = 16%, Students worksheet = 4%			
14	The learning resource that students need is in the form of a digital / android application.	33	48	17	2
Teaching Materials					
15	The English teaching materials that students want are in the form of listening-speaking, reading-viewing, and writing-presenting.	18	63	16	3
16	The teaching materials that students need are in the form of digital or android applications.	32	47	17	4
Literacy					
17	To improve my English, students read books from various sources.	15	66	13	6
18	The books students read is	Textbook = 91%			

		Novel = 6% Comic = 3%			
19	Students like to read books when outside class time.	10	46	39	5
20	The books students expected are in the form of	Printed = 19%, Digital = 81%			

Based on the table 2, it is known that English language teaching which has been carried out in schools has been delivered in a way that is easily understood by students where there are 94% of students who answered strongly agree and agree. This is also supported by the language used by the teachers. When explaining English subject matter, the language used by the teachers is easily understood by the students in which it is shown by 92% of students answering strongly agree and agree. The English learning material applied in schools includes all the skills contained in the Merdeka curriculum, namely listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing and presenting as evidenced by more than 76% of students answering strongly agree and agree. In addition, English subject matter provides opportunities for students to be able to communicate in accordance with everyday contexts with a percentage of 74% of students answering strongly agree and agree. The English learning process carried out by the teachers follows the stages of a) building knowledge of the field (BKOF), b) modeling of the text (MOT), c) joint construction of the text (JCOT), and d) independent construction of the text (ICOT) with a percentage of 85% of students who answered totally agree and agree. However, in the indicators of learning English there are still responses from students who answer disagree and disagree, in aspects: 1) the material must cover all language skills, 2) the material provides broad opportunities for students to be able to communicate every day, and 3) learning stages are expected to run coherently.

In the English language teaching strategy indicator, the teacher applies the learning strategy during the teaching and learning process of English lessons as evidenced by 89% of students answering strongly agree and agree. The learning strategy applied by the teacher contains assignments or projects that students had to work on as proven by 83% of students answering strongly agreed and agreed. Assignments

or projects given are in the form of assignments or individual projects as proven by 74% of students answering strongly agree and agree. The assignments or projects given were based on computer or android or digital applications which were only answered by 61% of students with answers that strongly agree and agree. However, in this aspect there are still many students who answer strongly disagree and disagree, especially in aspects 1) project-based learning strategies, 2) individual assignments, and 3) not all assignments are based on computer or android or digital applications.

In the indicators of English language teaching media, it is known that teachers use learning media when teaching and learning English lessons as proven by 74% of students answering strongly agree and agree. The media used by the teacher varies, namely video, images, and audio. Teachers have also used digital or android applications in learning English with a percentage of 64% of students answering strongly agree and agree. However, in the indicators of learning media, there were still students who answered strongly disagree and disagree, especially in aspects 1) learning media and 2) digital media.

In the learning resources indicator, it is known that the learning resources that have been used by students are based on Android, books, and student worksheets. The teaching resources needed by students are in the form of digital or android applications as proven by the student responses of 81% of students answering strongly agree and agree.

On the teaching materials indicator, the English teaching materials that students want are in the form of listening-speaking, reading-viewing, and writing-presenting as evidenced by 81% of students answering strongly agree and agree. Teaching materials needed by e-students are in the form of digital or Android applications as evidenced by 79% of students answering strongly agree and agree. However, based on the indicators of teaching materials, it was found that students who answered disagreed and disagreed on aspects 1) teaching material expertise and 2) teaching material basis.

In the literacy ability indicator, it is known that to improve students' English, they read books from various sources such as textbooks, novels and comics as evidenced by 81% of students answering strongly agree and agree. Students

also like to read books outside of learning with a percentage of 56% of students who answered strongly agree and agree. The books that students want are in the form of digital books as proven by 81% of students answering it.

Observations on learning English were carried out in eight schools. The following is the result.

Teaching Plan

English teachers in schools and madrasas have made teaching modules that were formerly known as lesson plans before the teaching and learning process was carried out. The preparation of this teaching module is made by the teacher at the beginning of the year which is intended for all face-to-face meetings that year. In making these teaching modules, it was found that teachers made teaching modules using the old lesson plan format and did not refer to the Merdeka learning teaching module format. In fact, for grades ten and eleven, the curriculum used is the Merdeka curriculum. In planning, the teacher has included complete items such as learning media, learning methods, and learning assessment, even though those used in each school are different.

In the teaching modules made by the teacher, the learning media used by the teacher are audio media such as using conversation/dialogue for listening material, audio visual media such as using films or videos, and visual media such as using pictures. In addition, in the learning methods section, there are teachers who write down problem-based learning methods, contextual learning methods, and project-based learning methods, but have not explained in detail the stages of these learning methods in the learning stages. In the assessment section, the assessment made by the teacher varies depending on the material that must be mastered by students, such as assessments in the form of individual assignments such as writing essays, group assignments such as making dialogues, and projects such as making reports about something.

Teaching and Learning Process

At the opening phase, the teacher greets students. After greeting, the teacher checks the presence of students by calling them one by one and then writing them down on the

attendance sheet and learning agenda brought by the teacher. After that, the teacher builds students' motivation in various ways by reminding them the importance of learning English and to keep their enthusiasm for learning. After that, the teacher conveys the learning objectives face-to-face where at the time of observation is carried out, the learning objectives are different because the observations are not carried out at the same time and week. Learning objectives are conveyed by relating them to last week's material. There are also teachers who associate the material with the context of students' everyday lives. At the opening stage the students are very enthusiastic by giving adequate responses using English such as when checking the presence of students. When responding to students' greetings, they also respond by using English.

At the core phase, the teacher delivers learning material as planned in the previous teaching module. The material delivered by the teacher also varied between schools, some of which cover great athletes and sport events.

When delivering material, the teacher uses stages 1) building knowledge of the field by associating the material to be studied with previous material and the context of students' daily lives. It is intended that students build their initial knowledge about the material. 2) Modeling of the text is applied by first giving examples of material to students, such as by playing audio if the material is in the form of listening material, if the material is in the form of reading then the teacher provides the reading text first. 3) Joint construction of the text is applied by building knowledge together between the teacher and students and students and students about the material such as analyzing what is in the picture, reading vocabulary in books, and analyzing generic structures and linguistic features in reading texts. 4) Independent construction of the text is applied by asking students to write down what they know about something such as sports figures, artists, and so on.

The media used by the teacher is in the form of audio media to play listening material, audio visual media when playing films or videos related to the material, and visual media when the teacher explains descriptive characters or something in the picture. The learning resources used by teachers also

vary, namely student worksheets which are widely used in private schools and English books which are mostly used in public schools. There are still books used by teachers that do not refer to the independent curriculum of English subjects.

In the aspect of learning strategies, almost all teachers have implemented learning strategies even though they do not specifically refer to certain strategies. The teacher uses the discussion method in small groups more if the material presented is in the form of reading and writing and the paired discussion method if the material presented is in the form of speaking and listening. There are also teachers who apply problem-based learning strategies that begin with problems. During the learning process, both teachers and students use English although sometimes the teacher translates it into Indonesian for material or explanations that students still find difficult.

Student participation in teaching and learning process can be said to be good as proven by the number of students who follow instructions from the teacher for each learning activity, for example if the material is in the form of listening, then students listen enthusiastically. If the material is in the form of speaking then students practice well. although there are still students who ignore the material explanation from the teacher and do not bring books or worksheets as instructed by the teacher.

The activeness of students in the learning process is included in the good category in the learning process. This is evidenced by the interaction between teachers and students (one-way communication) and students with other students (two-way communication). In one-way communication interactions, the teacher asks students and students respond by giving answers. Apart from that, there are also other interactions such as affirmation, appreciation, and explanations from the teacher accompanied by feedback from students. In two-way communication, good communication emerges between students in the form of dialogue interaction and negotiation of meaning using English. In the aspect of student activity in the learning process, it finally led to the conclusion that the actual learning process carried out by the teacher had implemented students-centered learning in various ways.

At closing phase, the teacher summarizes the material that has been presented and gives a glimpse related to the material that will be presented at the next meeting. After that, the teacher gave assignments related to the material and closed the lesson by greeting.

Assessment

The assessment given by the teacher is in the form of assignments that must be done by students at home. This is because there is not enough time if the exercises have to be done immediately at school. At the next meeting, students must collect them and the teacher corrects and briefly discusses the assignments that were given the previous week. The types of assignments given by the teacher vary depending on what material has been taught to students. There are teachers who give assignments to make dialogue or conversation spoken texts because the material is in the form of speaking. There are also teachers who ask students to make written paragraphs because the material is in the form of writing.

Interviews with teachers were carried out after carrying out learning observations in class. The following is an analysis of the results of interviews with English teachers who are the subject of the research:

a. Instructional Media

Most English teachers have used learning media, but the learning media used by teachers in the classroom is still in the form of visual learning media such as pictures, audio such as listening, and audio visual such as video. The application of the media was not carried out at every meeting. The teacher only uses the media if certain materials require the use of the media. Besides that, the teacher has never used digital-based learning media for both in-class learning and outside-class learning.

b. Teaching materials

The teaching materials used so far by teachers when learning English are English textbooks which are the main handbook for students. In some schools, the main teaching material used by students is in the form of student worksheets. This difference is due to the different policies of each school regarding the use of

teaching materials in English language teaching. Besides that, the teacher has never used digital teaching materials during the learning process.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings above, information can be obtained that English learning is implemented in high schools in accordance with the independent curriculum as recommended by the government of the Republic of Indonesia through the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. The learning material delivered by the teacher includes all English language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing and presenting and is in accordance with the context of students' daily lives. Besides that, the stages of learning English are building knowledge of the field, modeling the text, joint construction of the text, and independent construction of the text. The learning stages are implemented through 1) project-based learning strategy which is alternative learning strategy suggested in the Merdeka curriculum, although not all teachers apply these strategies in learning, 2) various learning media that bridge students to obtain subject matter well, 3) complementary sources, namely the use of textbooks which are the main learning resource and supported by student worksheets to measure student understanding related to the material, and 4) varied teaching materials although most students need digital teaching materials which can be accessed via their gadgets. The results of this study are in accordance with research conducted by Sofiana & Mubarok (2019) where English teachers in Indonesia have been able to apply English learning referring to the K-13 national curriculum, and Adewumi (2023) where there have been post-pandemic curriculum adjustments.

The supporting factors found at the time of observation which became the superior values were 1) the teacher had prepared the learning process well in the form of teaching modules, 2) the teaching modules that were made were almost entirely in accordance with the latest teaching module format, namely referring to the independent curriculum teaching module, 3) the learning process that has been carried out by the teacher is also good as evidenced by the learning steps that refer to the four stages of learning English (BKOF, MOT, JCOT, ICOT), 4) the teacher has used existing learning resources such

as books and sheets student work, and 5) the teacher has implemented a variety of good learning strategies that are adapted to the material presented. The inhibiting factors that are lacking in the learning process are 1) the teacher has not fully referred to the independent curriculum teaching module template, 2) the teacher has not properly implemented project-based learning strategies, 3) the learning resources used by the teacher are still paper-based and have not digital, 4) assignments given by teachers do not refer to project-based learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

Learning English at the senior high school level carried out by teachers is in accordance with the independent curriculum both in planning, implementing and evaluating learning. In the planning aspect, the teacher has created a teaching module as a development of the lesson plan. Most of the teaching modules that have been made by teachers are in accordance with the independent curriculum template. In the implementation aspect, the material taught by the teacher is in accordance with the six English language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing and presenting and is in accordance with the real-life context of students, and the learning stages have followed BKOF, MOT, JCOT, ICOT by using project-based learning strategies, various learning media, various learning resources, and good teaching materials. For further research, it would be nice to be able to measure quantitatively the extent to which learning English is in accordance with the independent curriculum at the level of using strategies, media, learning resources, or teaching materials.

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