ENGLISH LANGUAGE DESIGN IN MERDEKA CURRICULUM AND ITS RELEVANCE TO PROMOTINGINDEPENDENCE TO WORK

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Abstract

This paper investigates how the English language design in the Merdeka curriculum promotes students' independence to work. Emphasizing self-reflection and competency development based on individual interests, the Merdeka curriculum offers an alternative approach to education. Employing library research and curriculum development as the theoretical framework, this study analyzes relevant journals published within the last decade to address current issues and incorporate the latest theories. The findings highlight seven key steps for designing English language learning in the Merdeka curriculum: analyzing learning outcomes, conducting diagnostic assessments, developing teaching modules, understanding student characteristics, determining achievement levels, and implementing effective assessment practices. These steps encourage learner autonomy, a crucial factor for workplace independence. By fostering autonomy in English language learning, the Merdeka curriculum enhances graduates' employment prospects. The study emphasizes the role of teachers in facilitating independent work, providing institutional support, and adapting the curriculum to individual needs. Learning English prepares students for academic and professional success, increasing their employability, salary potential, and opportunities for advancement.

Keywords: English, Merdeka curriculum, independence mental to work.

Abstrak

Makalah ini menyelidiki bagaimana desain bahasa Inggris dalam kurikulum Merdeka mendorong kemandirian belajar siswa. Dengan tekanan refleksi diri dan pengembangan kompetensi berdasarkan minat individu, kurikulum Merdeka menawarkan pendekatan alternatif terhadap pendidikan. Menggunakan penelitian perpustakaan dan pengembangan kurikulum sebagai kerangka teoritis, penelitian ini menganalisis jurnal-jurnal relevan yang diterbitkan dalam dekade terakhir untuk menjawab isu-isu terkini dan memadukan teori-teori terbaru. Temuan penelitian menggarisbawahi tujuh langkah kunci untuk merancang pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dalam kurikulum Merdeka:Menganalisis pencapaian pembelajaran, Melakukan penilaian diagnostik, Menjelaskan modul pembelajaran, Memahami karakteristik

siswa, Menentukan tingkat pencapaian, Penerapan praktik penilaian yang efektif, Langkah-langkah ini mendorong otonomi pembelajar, faktor penting untu kemandirian di tempat kerja. Dengan menumbuhkan otonomi dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, kurikulum Merdeka meningkatkan prospek kerja lulusan. Studi ini menekankan peran guru dalam memfasilitasi kerja mandiri, menyediakan dukungan institusional, dan menyesuaikan kurikulum dengan kebutuhan individu. Belajar bahasa Inggris mempersiapkan siswa untuk kesuksesan akademis dan profesional, meningkatkan kelayakan kerja, potensi gaji, dan peluang kemajuan.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Inggris, Kurikulum Merdeka, Kemandirian mental

A. INTRODUCTION

The history of education approves that the curriculum has changed 11 times since 1947 (Lestari & Qamariah, 2023). The previous curriculums are intended to answer the learners' needs relating to a new environment. The result expects learners to stand independently, enhance their creativity, and survive in a changing era. The Merdeka curriculum offers relevant courses or learning activities (Krishnapatria, 2021). This curriculum reduces the relevance of the materials to the student's progress. Merdeka means having the freedom to choose and learn without finishing all the material in a time because the Merdeka curriculum gives a year for completing everything. After that, this is a new curriculum, so the characteristics are also different. The educators hope that this curriculum can overcome the problems in the education field, such as overlapping some elements in the teaching-learning process.

Besides that, the Merdeka curriculum can promote the students' independence and creativity in learning activities (Lestari & Qamariah, 2023). The researchers are curious to explore the advantages of this curriculum via this study. How far is the impact of implementing the Merdeka curriculum in enhancing the students' independence to work in English language learning? From the researcher's point of view, the previous curriculum is a perfect package to implement. However, it seems unconnected practically. In-depth, the students learn good materials, but it does not relate to fulfilling the students' need to prepare for job vacancies. So, the researcher decided to analyze the English subject design in the Merdeka curriculum connecting with building independence to work. The students must develop this mentality to survive in new environments in real life, such as looking for a job or interacting with other people. The researcher discovers some research about the Merdeka curriculum, its advantages, disadvantages, challenges, and others. However, it is still limited in describing the Merdeka curriculum and its impact on the students constructing the independent mind to work.

The researchers provide specifications for the area studied, namely for students in high school. They tend to be context-based on their function. It focuses on their future career and how the material and learning design will stimulate the students' mental to have independence to work. Specifically, it brings out the students' thoughts on creating job opportunities for others and what English ability helped them as a power and main source to lead their future. Independence is mental to take risks and avoid being accepted in others' companies with restricted creativity. The researchers hope the result will help educators and practitioners, especially in education, overcome the problem relating to this context. Furthermore, this research can contribute to rich knowledge and insights.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Understanding of Merdeka Curriculum

The Merdeka curriculum is more adaptive and flexible. Hence, to promote the freedom of learning, it is essential to cultivate independence, flexibility, and improvisation in the teaching and learning process (Asri et al., 2022). Students should perceive learning as enjoyable and purposeful, ultimately fostering a sense of freedom to continue learning. In detail, the Merdeka curriculum highlights the priority materials, developing character, and students' competencies (Rohimajaya & Hamer, 2023). Putri reports some characteristics of implementing the Merdeka curriculum as follows: (1) utilizing project-based learning to develop the learners' soft skills relating to the profile of Pancasila's character, (2) tends to focus on the necessary material subject, and (3) facilitate to boost critical thinking skill.

Furthermore, she mentions that the Merdeka Curriculum has a framework following the national education system and its standards. Besides that, this curriculum differs from the 2013 curriculum, which has KI and KD as competence targets. Meanwhile, the Merdeka curriculum has a term of CP (learning outcome). Each school grade, whether primary or secondary, has a different learning outcome. For example, in senior high school, CP for class X is phase E, and classes XI and XII are phase F.

The structure of the Merdeka curriculum provides intracurricular, extracurricular, and the profile of Pancasila students. The Pancasila Student Profile constitutes a crucial element of the Merdeka curriculum. Pancasila students possess a comprehensive and profound set of personality competencies grounded in Pancasila values (Sari & Sinthiya; Zidan, 2023)). Some values in the profile of Pancasila's students can be seen in the figure.1 below.

Figure.1 The Profile of Pancasila's Students

In the Merdeka curriculum, class hours are accumulated hours per year. Therefore, in this curriculum, the subjects are integrated with students' organization in the school. It means that all the students' activities can reflect the value of learning activities inside and outside the class. In the learning process, the Merdeka curriculum carries out differentiated learning. The Merdeka curriculum, with its focus on student-centred learning, has been found to relate effectively to students' activities in the learning process (Nurmasyitah, 2023). It is particularly important in the era of the independent curriculum, where differentiated learning plays a crucial role in improving student learning outcomes (Insani, 2023). It means that the students get different materials that fit with their ability and comprehension. Thus, there is no restricted aspect in the learning process. It is expected that it can promote the students' comfort and self-expression. Noted for the Merdeka curriculum is that the students are encouraged to fulfil the project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students. So, formative and summative assessments have been included in the strengthened Profile of Pancasila curriculum, and there is no separation between students in attitude, skill, and cognition like in the 2013 curriculum. Merdeka's curriculum uses textbooks and non-textbooks in the learning process. However, this curriculum utilizes modules that the government has prepared. Technically, ATP is a set of earning procedures to achieve the material goal in the classroom.

2. The Term of Independence to Work

Independence is a skill that can be developed with time. It is not an inherent trait in students. They must acquire and refine it through learning and practice. However, the

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perception of independence can vary, with some viewing it as the ability to perform tasks without assistance while others emphasize the importance of autonomy and control (Northway, 2015). According to Palma (2022), Professional independence, particularly in the workplace, is a critical aspect of professional practice, as it allows individuals to make decisions without undue interference. Thus, developing independence in the workplace requires a combination of strategies that promote autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-motivation.

Fundamentally, the concept of independence encompasses the capacity for self-reliance, personal agency, and self-directed behavior (Steinberg & Morris, 2001);(Samsudin et al., 2020). This could refer to freedom from control or influence, self-reliance, the ability to make your own decisions or autonomy. After that, Indonesia's unemployment crisis in August 2020 was particularly acute for educated individuals, with over 6 million graduates struggling to find jobs, representing a staggering 64% of the total unemployed (Fizriyani, 2020) so by investing in both hard and soft skills, graduates unlock a treasure trove of benefits: increased job opportunities, enhanced career prospects, greater confidence, and improved communication and collaboration skills. These are the keys to unlocking their full potential and making a mark on the world (Sudaryanto, Widayati, & Amalia, 2020);(Krishnapatria, 2021). On the brink of Industry 4.0, the world stage is poised for a monumental transformation. To navigate this era of rapid evolution and forge success, individuals and students alike must cultivate a specific arsenal of skills. Here are seven crucial competencies that will empower them to thrive in the global landscape (Tony Wagner, 2008);(Pahrudin et al., 2021):1. Visionary Minds and Problem-Slayers: Hone your capacity for strategic thinking and problem-solving. Learn to anticipate future challenges, dissect intricate situations, and craft innovative solutions that resonate across borders and cultures. 2. Networked Synergists and Forceful Leaders: Embrace the power of collaboration. Develop proficiency in working effectively within diverse teams, leveraging the strength of networks, and leading with influence, not just force. Remember, success in this interconnected world hinges on collective brilliance. 3. Masters of Adaptability and Resilience: Cultivate unwavering resilience and the agility to adapt to shifting landscapes. Embrace change as a constant companion, develop the strength to bounce back from setbacks, and thrive in the face of the unknown. 4. Entrepreneurial Trailblazers: Spark your inner entrepreneur. Nurture initiative, cultivate creative problem-solving skills, and dare to challenge the status quo. The future belongs to those who dare to build and innovate. 5. The Wordsmiths and Communicators: Master the art of communication, both written and oral. Express your ideas clearly, persuasively, and with cultural sensitivity. Remember, your message must resonate across diverse backgrounds to forge successful collaborations. 6. Knowledge Navigators and Critical Thinkers: Develop the skill to access and analyze information effectively. Learn to discern credible sources, synthesize complex data, and draw insightful conclusions. In the data deluge of Industry 4.0, critical thinking is your compass. 7. Passionate Architects of Innovation: Finally, ignite your passion and unleash your creativity. Let curiosity be your guide, embrace experimentation, and dare to imagine uncharted possibilities. Ultimately, it is passion and creativity that will fuel the innovations that shape the future.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

Methodological of this study applies the qualitative method. The researchers try to explore and find information on some theories related to the topic. After that, the method of collecting the data, the researcher takes library research by picking up several journals. The researchers give limitations and use references published at least ten years ago and not more. This decision determines the validity and the suitability of information with recent issues.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

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1. The Main Steps to Design English Subject in Merdeka Curriculum

According to Lestari & Qamariah (2023), the major steps to design English language learning in the Merdeka curriculum. There are seven steps that must be conducted as follows:

a. Analyzing CP or Learning Outcome

Learning Outcomes (LO) are the specific skills and knowledge students are expected to acquire at each level of education, particularly in English language learning for early childhood, primary, and secondary education. These outcomes are structured, encompassing a range of competencies and covering a comprehensive scope of material. In line with learners' developmental stages, the mapping of learning outcomes is divided into age-specific phases. As stated by (Nouri et al., 2020), in the context of implementing the Merdeka curriculum in Indonesia, students are expected to demonstrate proficient digital abilities and creative thinking.

b. Conducting Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessments serve the dual purpose of identifying students' strengths, weaknesses, and competencies. (Fan et al., 2021) Educators utilize the assessment results to tailor learning activities that effectively address students' individual learning needs. In some cases, additional information about students' family backgrounds, learning readiness, motivation, interests, and other relevant factors may be considered when planning learning activities. Therefore, In the diagnostic context, there is a strong mission to facilitate future teaching and learning, which should be realized through careful score report design to communicate strengths and weaknesses effectively and the root causes of weaknesses to teachers and students (Lee, 2015). Otherwise, further action cannot be taken to address detected weaknesses and increase learning potential.

c. Developing the Module of English Subject

Developing English teaching modules is a crucial aspect of language education, focusing on adapting to the specific needs of programs and learners (Nurul et al., 2022). Hence, creating teaching modules is geared towards producing instructional materials that provide educators with a lesson roadmap. These teaching modules should be indispensable, captivating, impactful, and thought-provoking. They should also align with the context, be relevant to the subject matter, and form a cohesive sequence. In English language learning, incorporating YouTube videos is a prevalent practice nowadays, enhancing vocabulary, listening, speaking skills and even providing insights into grammatical concepts. Anisimova (2020) discovered that incorporating YouTube videos in English language instruction has proven effective in enhancing pronunciation skills. Additionally, learners enrolled in English Language Education programs express a highly favourable view of the utilization of YouTube videos, perceiving them as pertinent, engaging, and effective in both online and traditional learning settings (Jailani, 2022)

d. Understanding of Students' Characteristics and Determining the Achievement Level

The scope of learning materials encompasses the specific content that educators intend to impart in the classroom and the knowledge and skills that learners are expected to acquire. Educators dynamically adjust the learning process, adapt the learning outcomes, and foster a conducive learning environment to ensure effective and relevant learning experiences. Teachers must recognize each student has unique needs and developmental levels, carefully consider their characteristics, and integrate appropriate pedagogical approaches. Various factors influence students' achievement levels, including their skills in working with learning materials (Ruzikulova, 2021). Such differences include learning styles, approaches, levels of intellectual development, and the design features of curriculum materials. Ramírez-Montoya et al. (2021) found that, in the context of Education 4.0, the necessary teaching profile includes competencies in innovation, problem-solving, and the use of technology. These findings emphasize the significance of understanding and addressing students' diverse needs

and characteristics to enhance their learning outcomes.

e. Formative and Summative Design

Differentiating between formative and summative assessment is a crucial aspect of education, as both are indispensable components of a well-rounded approach (Vero, 2019). Moreover, effective assessment practices adhere to five key principles: Firstly, assessment should be seamlessly integrated into the learning process, serving as a catalyst for learning and providing comprehensive feedback. Secondly Assessment design and implementation should align with its intended purpose, allowing assessment techniques and timing flexibility. Thirdly, assessments should be fair, proportionate, valid, and reliable. Fourthly, Progress reports and student achievements should be presented clearly and informally. Finally, assessment results should be utilized by students, educators, educational staff, and parents.

f. Supervising the Learning Process

Implementing collaborative educational supervision can improve teacher competence in the learning process carried out in elementary schools (Aina, 2020). Effective reporting of learning outcomes entails the collaborative involvement of parents, students, and educators, upholds the school's values, is encompassing, truthful, equitable, and accountable, and is comprehensible to all stakeholders. The Merdeka Curriculum's approach to reporting learning progress fosters active student engagement in evaluating and monitoring their progress. It empowers students to take ownership of their learning, engage in self-reflection, and take necessary steps to achieve their objectives.

g. English Evaluating and Assessment

A thorough evaluation process occurs following the implementation of learning and assessment activities. Assessing and evaluating English language learning is crucial for effective literacy development (Meidasari, 2017). Educators meticulously examine the effectiveness of each teaching module, identifying both successful aspects and areas that require improvement. This critical analysis is the foundation for refining and enhancing the teaching modules. Additionally, the evaluation process monitors students' progress and ensures the attainment of learning objectives. Notably, the Merdeka Curriculum's evaluation and assessment approach prioritizes flexibility and adaptability, catering to each student's unique needs and interests.

2. English Language Design in Merdeka Curriculum

In the Merdeka curriculum, English outcomes or skills refer to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages. It means that the teaching process, learning activity, and assessment must be equivalent to B1. B1 focuses on interaction with good articulation and uses many different ways to deliver the message even though the speaking skills could be more fluent (Rohimajaya & Hamer, 2023). There are six skills: listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting inclusively in various text types. Based on Merdeka Mengajar (https://guru.kemdikbud.go.id) has described the division of achievement levels, such as;

a. CP – Phase E

CP (learning outcome) for senior high school is in phase E. In this phase, students can effectively communicate in English using spoken, written, and visual texts, considering the context, purpose, and audience. They engage with various text formats, including narratives, descriptions, procedures, expositions, recounts, reports, and authentic materials, which serve as the foundation for their English learning journey. Students utilize English to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions on topics relevant to their daily lives or current affairs, tailored to their age group. They actively read written texts to acquire knowledge and information. Their ability to draw implicit inferences from English texts begins to emerge. Students demonstrate proficiency in producing a wider range of written and visual texts,

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considering the intended purpose and target audience.

b. The Achievement Per Elements

In Merdeka curriculum, the skills are integrated with others. These rules help the learners achieve the abilities completely. In phase E, the students must be;

1) Listening – Speaking

The students demonstrate proficiency in communicating effectively in English with teachers, peers, and others across various settings and for diverse purposes. They engage in conversations and discussions by actively asking and responding to questions and employing effective communication strategies to enhance their interactions. They can comprehend and extract key ideas and relevant details from discussions or presentations on youth-related topics, demonstrating their ability to grasp essential information. Using English, they can express their opinions on youth-related issues, discuss their interests, and make comparisons, effectively conveying their thoughts and perspectives. Additionally, they can utilize nonverbal elements such as gestures, voice speed, and pitch to enhance their understanding in certain contexts, demonstrating their ability to adapt their communication style to suit different situations.

2) Reading – Viewing

Students demonstrate a growing ability to read and respond to various texts, including narratives, descriptions, procedures, expositions, recounts, and reports. They engage with these texts to acquire knowledge or extract specific information. They exhibit proficiency in locating and evaluating key details and central ideas within these texts, which may be presented in various formats, including print, digital, visual, multimodal, or interactive media. Their comprehension skills are maturing, allowing them to grasp the main themes, critical issues, or plot development presented in these texts. They can effectively identify the author's intent and develop foundational inferential skills to interpret implied information conveyed within the texts**.**

3) Writing – Presenting

Teacher guidance helps students navigate the writing process, creating both fictional and nonfictional texts that target specific audiences and fulfill distinct purposes They employ a structured approach to writing, encompassing planning, drafting, reviewing, and revising their work. Their writing reflects their capacity for self-correction, particularly in punctuation and capitalization. They utilize common vocabulary and verbs prevalent in everyday communication to effectively express their ideas. To effectively communicate with diverse audiences and achieve specific objectives, they demonstrate proficiency in presenting information through various formats, including print and digital media.

3. Contributing English Language Subject in Practice Promoting Independence to Work

Independence at work refers to an individual's ability to work independently without constant supervision or guidance. In education, independence at work is a crucial skill that students must develop to succeed academically and professionally (Akhmadovich et al., 2023). It entails managing one's time, establishing goals, and working towards achieving them without depending on external motivation or direction. Developing independence at work necessitates practice and guidance from teachers and parents and can be cultivated through various educational strategies, including integrative programs and textbooks. Therefore, a research study (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019) asserts that contributing to job independence through acquiring the English language can be accomplished by fostering learner autonomy. Learner autonomy refers to the ability to take responsibility for personal learning and is widely recognized as a desirable objective in second and foreign language acquisition.

The researchers found various strategies teachers can employ to promote learner

autonomy. First, encourage independent work. It involves giving students time to work independently without specifying the method or location. Students can perform these tasks individually, work with partners or groups, or engage in activities outside of class. Second, give students control. In this stage, implement strategies that encourage students to take initiative in the learning process, such as allowing them to choose topics for assignments, debates, or projects. Third, focus on learner characteristics. Assisting teachers in creating a more conducive environment to stimulate autonomy requires addressing factors contributing to the lack of autonomy, such as low motivation, lack of independence, and low proficiency in the English language. Fourth, adapt the curriculum. Ensuring that the curriculum includes activities that promote learner autonomy can help students develop the ability to learn independently. Fifth, provide institutional support. A more independent learning environment can be achieved by encouraging teachers to increase student autonomy and offering resources and training. To sum up, several strategies can be used to promote learner autonomy in English language learning. Applying these strategies can help students develop the skills and motivation needed to become more independent learners.

Furthermore, as Jonbekova et al. (2023) found, incorporating English as a subject plays a significant role in fostering workplace independence by enhancing graduates' employment prospects, salaries, and promotion outcomes, thereby promoting autonomy and initiative in professional settings. International education equips graduates with advanced field-specific knowledge and transferable skills and fosters intercultural competencies, often improving their English language skills. Graduates positively impact their workplace by introducing new working styles, implementing new systems and practices, and training younger employees. They also contribute to society by mentoring others, promoting socio-culturally beneficial projects, volunteering, and initiating initiatives around environmental protection. Graduates further contribute to the workplace by improving systems, processes, and services, training and mentoring colleagues, and even opening their businesses, indirectly contributing to socio-economic development. Independence in the workplace is an important skill that students must cultivate to succeed in their academic and professional lives. In conclusion, this skill can be developed through various educational strategies and by fostering learner autonomy in English language learning. These approaches enable students to become more independent learners, preparing them for success in both academic and professional life.

E. CONCLUSION

The Merdeka curriculum, introduced in 1947, is a significant educational change to promote independence, creativity, and survival. It offers relevant courses and learning activities, reducing materials and relevance to students' progress. The curriculum is adaptive and flexible, focusing on priority materials, developing character, and students' competencies. It follows the national education system and has different learning outcomes for each grade. The curriculum provides extracurricular, extracurricular, and Pancasila student profiles, with class hours accumulated per year and integrated with students' organizations. Differentiated learning is encouraged, and formative and summative assessments are included to strengthen Pancasila students' profiles.

The Merdeka curriculum outlines seven steps to design English language learning, including analyzing the Learning Outcome (LO), conducting diagnostic assessments, developing teaching modules, understanding students' characteristics, determining achievement levels, and implementing effective assessment practices. The curriculum focuses on interaction, well-articulation, and six skills: listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing,and presenting inclusively in various text types.

Learning English encourages independence at work, enhancing graduates' employment prospects. The Merdeka curriculum aims to develop these skills through various educational

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strategies and foster learner autonomy in English language learning, enabling students to become more independent learners and preparing them for success in both academic and professional life. Fostering learner autonomy in English language learning is a valuable approach to developing independence at work. It emphasizes the role of teachers in encouraging independent work, providing institutional support, and adapting the curriculum. Furthermore, learning English is a pathway to independence at work, leading to improved employment prospects, salary, and promotion outcomes. The conclusion asserts that fostering learner autonomy in English language learning helps students become more independent, preparing them for success in both academic and professional life.

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