

Contrasting Curricula: Kurikulum 2013 vs Kurikulum Merdeka for English in Indonesian Senior High Schools

Alka Fajari^{1*}, Muhammad Aminuddin¹

¹ English Language Teaching Department, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung

*E-mail: alkafajaritruna@gmail.com

Abstract

Changes in curriculum often bring challenges and obstacles, yet it is essential for the curriculum to evolve in response to the times. As the guiding framework for education, the curriculum must adapt to continuous changes and innovations. Kurikulum Merdeka, recently implemented following several revisions of the previous curricula in Indonesia, is designed to meet contemporary educational needs. This research article aims to compare Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka in the context of English language learning at the senior high school level. The comparison focuses on the basic framework, targeted competencies, curriculum structure, learning activity, assessment, teaching tools and Curriculum Tools. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology through observation and interview, the study reveals that despite some similarities, there are significant differences between the two curricula in various aspects of English language learning.

Keywords: Kurikulum 2013, kurikulum Merdeka, Indonesian Senior High, English language learning

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 has transformed the landscape of education, particularly in the teaching and learning of English. English, being the most widely spoken language globally, has seen its teaching methodologies evolve in tandem with technological advancements. This digital fluency has paved the way for innovative educational approaches such as Education 4.0, which integrates technology to create more efficient and effective learning environments. Education 4.0 aims to align educational practices with students' interests and talents by leveraging technological advancements (Hariharasudan & Kot 2018).

In Indonesia, the shift towards digital education is evident with the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum. This initiative by the Indonesian government addresses the challenges of education in the digital age and responds to the country's low literacy and numeracy rates, as highlighted by the 2018 PISA results. Kurikulum Merdeka aims to enhance students' reading and mathematical skills, offering educational units the freedom to choose curricula that best suit their needs, especially after the learning disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Setiawan, Syahria, Andanty, & Nabhan, 2022).

The transition to new curricula, such as from Kurikulum 2013 to Kurikulum Merdeka, presents challenges, particularly in English language teaching. Teachers must adapt to new teaching methods, materials, and assessment strategies. Balancing theoretical and practical knowledge is crucial for educators to help students effectively use technology.

Comparative studies of curricula are essential to understand their effectiveness and relevance. Research shows that the aspects of the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum are different, and each curriculum has its advantages and disadvantages. This

opens up opportunities for researchers to continue looking for better curricula in the future (Herman & Aisiah 2022). Meanwhile, research by Pouw & Mulyanti (2023) identified several main similarities and differences between the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum in English language learning at the Senior High School (SMA) level. Each curriculum has advantages and disadvantages which open up opportunities for researchers to continue to develop better curricula in the future.

As Indonesia navigates these educational reforms, it is crucial to examine the strengths and weaknesses of Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka. Kurikulum Merdeka emerging as a response to the COVID-19 crisis, aims to address learning losses and adapt to the evolving educational landscape (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022; Nugroho & Narawaty, 2022; Qomariyah et al., 2022). This article seeks to contrast these curricula, focusing on their application in English language education for Indonesian senior high schools, providing insights for policymakers to choose the best framework for advancing the nation's education system.

METHOD

This research was carried out with a qualitative approach, through literature study. Data collection was carried out by tracing literary various sources in the form of Ministry of Education regulations, journals and other documents related to Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka. Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka documents were analyzed based on basic framework, targeted competencies, curriculum structure, learning activity, assessment, teaching tools and Curriculum Tools

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kurikulum 2013 is designed to provide students with a well-rounded education with a balance in the development of cognitive, emotional, and physical skills. Assessment in Kurikulum 2013 focuses on three areas, namely cognitive, emotional and physical, and is carried out through a coordinated teaching and learning process with learning evaluation to ensure its effectiveness. Kurikulum 2013 also emphasizes the use of the latest personalized teaching methods to explore students' potential in developing relevant attitudes, knowledge and skills to contribute to society and the country.

Meanwhile, the Kurikulum Merdeka is designed to be more adaptive and flexible, with a focus on developing students' character and essential skills. The main features of the Kurikulum Merdeka include project-based learning that develops students' soft skills and character. Teachers are also given the freedom to adjust learning approaches according to the needs of each student. The Pancasila Student Profile is the main focus in Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes the core values of Pancasila such as faith, devotion to God Almighty, mutual cooperation, and critical reasoning.

These two curricula reflect the government's efforts to improve the quality of education by adapting the curriculum according to the demands of the times and students' needs. Continuous evaluation is carried out to ensure that these two curricula are effective in achieving the educational goals that have been set. The following is an explanation of the results of the analysis of Kurikulum 2013 documents and Kurikulum Merdeka in learning English in high school

1. Basic Framework

Kurikulum Merdeka is designed based on the objectives of the National Education System and National Education Standards, with special emphasis on developing students' Pancasila student profiles. Meanwhile, Kurikulum 2013 also has the same main foundation, namely the objectives of the National Education System and National Education Standards. These two curricula strive to create a competent generation in accordance with national education needs.

2. Targeted Competencies

Kurikulum 2013 uses Basic Competencies (KD) which include scope and sequence grouped into four Core Competencies (KI): Spiritual Attitudes, Social Attitudes, Knowledge and Skills. KD is expressed in the form of points and ordered to reach KI which is organized per year. Meanwhile Kurikulum Merdeka organizes learning outcomes per phase, which are expressed in the form of paragraphs that integrate knowledge, attitudes and skills to achieve, strengthen and improve competence.

3. Curriculum Structure

Kurikulum 2013 lesson hours are set per week. The education unit allocates learning time regularly every week for one semester, so that students will receive learning outcomes for each subject in each semester. Education units are directed to use thematic and integrative based learning approaches. This is different from Kurikulum Merdeka where the curriculum structure consists of two main learning activities:

- a. Regular or routine learning which is an extracurricular activity.
- b. *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila*.

Lesson Hours are set annually, providing flexibility to educational units in allocating learning time to achieve the specified JP. Education units can use subject-based, thematic, or integrated learning organizing approaches.

4. Learning Activity

Kurikulum 2013 applies an evidence-based approach to all subjects, while Kurikulum Merdeka is more flexible with its approach adapted to meet the needs of diverse students. Kurikulum Merdeka also integrates projects to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, demonstrating a commitment to developing students' non-academic skills.

5. Assessment

Kurikulum 2013 uses formative and summative assessments to measure student learning progress in a structured manner. Meanwhile, Kurikulum Merdeka implements an assessment project which aims to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, without separating assessments based on attitudes, knowledge and skills as is done in Kurikulum 2013.

6. Teaching Tools

Both curricula use textbooks and non-textbooks as standard teaching tools. However, Kurikulum Merdeka adds teaching modules, a flow of learning objectives,

and projects to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile. This shows an effort to expand teaching methods that are more diverse and oriented towards more comprehensive results.

7. Curriculum Tools

Kurikulum 2013 provides specific guidelines for curriculum implementation, assessment and learning at all levels of education. Meanwhile, Kurikulum Merdeka establishes more structured and inclusive guidelines, with a focus on developing school operations, projects to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, and inclusive education.

Kurikulum 2013 is designed to develop a balance between spiritual and social attitudes, knowledge and skills, as well as their application in various situations in schools and society. Schools are positioned as part of society that provides learning experiences so that students can apply learning from school to real life and use society as a learning resource. This curriculum provides sufficient time to develop students' attitudes, knowledge and skills, with a focus on developing competencies expressed in the form of class core competencies and further detailed in basic subject competencies.

Meanwhile, Kurikulum Merdeka is designed with project-based learning characteristics for the development of soft skills and character in accordance with the Pancasila student profile. This curriculum focuses on essential material so that there is sufficient time for in-depth learning of basic competencies such as literacy and numeracy. In addition, this curriculum provides flexibility for teachers to carry out differentiated learning according to students' abilities and make adjustments to local context and content.

Kurikulum Merdeka provides freedom to all parties involved in the teaching and learning process. In Kurikulum Merdeka, students are free to choose subjects according to their talents and interests. Teachers also have the freedom to choose the teaching tools they will use.

CONCLUSION

A comparative study between Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka in English language learning in senior secondary schools in Indonesia reveals significant differences and similarities in the basic framework, targeted competencies, curriculum structure, teaching methods, assessment strategies, and teaching tools. These two curricula are designed to meet contemporary educational needs and respond to changes in the educational landscape in the digital era.

Kurikulum 2013 emphasizes the development of basic competencies structured in four Core Competencies: Spiritual Attitudes, Social Attitudes, Knowledge and Skills. Learning and assessments are carried out regularly with a fixed time allocation every week. On the other hand, Kurikulum Merdeka offers greater flexibility by focusing on the Pancasila student profile, character, and soft skills development through project-based learning. Kurikulum Merdeka allows adjustments to learning time and methods according to the needs of each student.

The main differences between these two curricula reflect the government's efforts to continue to improve the quality of education and adapt to the demands of the times and students' needs. By providing greater freedom to teachers and students, Kurikulum Merdeka is expected to create a more inclusive and adaptive learning environment,

enabling the development of competencies that are more comprehensive and relevant to local and global contexts.

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