

**AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN
IMPLEMENTING *MERDEKA* CURRICULUM AT SMAN 3 SOLOK
SELATAN**

Undergraduate Thesis

*Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Replacement to Obtain Bachelor
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ABSTRACT

Fitra, Septrida. (2023). An Analysis of English Teachers' challenges in Implementing *Merdeka* Curriculum at SMAN 3 Solok Selatan. Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

This research was done to investigate the challenges faced by English teachers in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum at SMAN 3 Solok Selatan. To find out the answers, researcher used descriptive qualitative method with in-depth interview instrument was employed in this study. The participants of the study were three English teachers at SMAN 3 Solok Selatan. The researcher started with a general guiding question based on formulation and allows the teacher to talk based on the topic and to avoid misunderstanding the teacher interviewed in Indonesia language. The result showed that there were five challenges faced by English teachers in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum. Those five challenges in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum were designing lesson plan (they have to design activities and learning materials that suit the abilities of these different students), lesson implementation (the existence of time constraints), using media (there are still many platforms that teachers cannot use), classroom management (to motivate students to want to take part in learning until it is finished.), and learning assessment (processing grades and also having to recognize each student's abilities with limited time for English subjects). Through this research, it is expected the result from this finding can help the English teachers to cover the challenges in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum.

Keywords: English teachers, challenges, *Merdeka* curriculum.

ABSTRAK

Fitra, Septrida. (2023). An Analysis of English Teachers' challenges in Implementing *Merdeka Curriculum* at SMAN 3 Solok Selatan. Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru bahasa Inggris dalam penerapan Merdeka kurikulum di SMAN 3 Solok Selatan. Untuk mendapatkan jawaban tentang tantangan apa yang ditemukan dalam pengimplementasian kurikulum merdeka peneliti menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan instrumen wawancara mendalam yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Narasumber yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah tiga orang guru bahasa Inggris di SMAN 3 Solok Selatan. Peneliti memulai dengan pertanyaan umum dan mempersilahkan guru berbicara sesuai dengan topik bahasan. Untuk menghindari kesalahpahaman, guru diwawancarai dalam bahasa Indonesia. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa ada lima indikator tantangan yang dihadapi guru bahasa Inggris dalam menerapkan kurikulum Merdeka. Lima tantangan dalam penerapannya kurikulum Merdeka adalah merancang RPP (mereka harus merancang kegiatan dan materi pembelajaran yang sesuai dengan kemampuan siswa yang berbeda-beda), penerapan modul ajar didalam kelas (adanya keterbatasan waktu), penggunaan media (masih banyak platform yang tidak dapat digunakan oleh guru), pengelolaan kelas (untuk memotivasi siswa agar mau mengikuti pembelajaran sampai selesai.), dan penilaian pembelajaran (mengolah nilai dan juga harus mengenali kemampuan setiap siswa dengan keterbatasan waktu untuk mata pelajaran bahasa Inggris). Melalui penelitian ini, diharapkan hasil temuan ini dapat membantu guru bahasa Inggris untuk mengatasi tantangan dalam penerapannya Merdeka kurikulum.

Keywords: Guru Bahasa Inggris, Tantangan, Kurikulum Merdeka

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Writer hopes that this thesis can be useful for readers and can be used as a reference for development in a better direction. May Allah SWT always give his grace and blessing on all of us.

Padang, 28 Agustus 2023

Seprida Fitra

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Jain (2008) mentions there are several qualities that must be possessed by an English teacher, including: should be lover of English, has good knowledge in English language and literature, gets to know various methods of teaching English, and has an ability and skill to teach methodically. To choose the right teaching techniques and methods, of course a teacher must be guided by the curriculum. As stated by Husni (2020), the teacher is a profession related to education in schools, educational institutions, and must know the appropriate teaching materials in the applied curriculum.

The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several changes, started in 1947, 1952, 1964, 1984, 1986, 1975, 2004, 2006, and 2013. The aim of these changes is to perfect the previous curriculum and adapt it to the demands and developments of the times and science and technology. Curriculum change is a common process in the world of education. The new curriculum helps update, develop and improve the existing curriculum. Curriculum changes are basically the government's efforts to improve education. The changed curriculum will definitely change the school education system, especially learning activities.

The newest curriculum today is the *Merdeka* curriculum or independent curriculum. The primary goal of developing this curriculum is to strengthen Indonesia's struggling educational system, which has been in crisis since COVID-19 (Marisa, 2021). Further studies conducted by Engzell (2021)

and Bonal (2021) confirm that the Covid-19 pandemic causes significant learning loss and learning gap. According to Ministry of Education and Culture (2021), learning loss prevents Indonesian citizens from reaching their full potential in terms of literacy and numeracy. Thus, the new curriculum, *Merdeka* Curriculum with its four main programs including: comprehensive USBN Assessment, national examination replaced with assessment, shortened lesson plan, and more flexible PPDB zoning was released by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology.

The *Merdeka* curriculum and *Merdeka* platform were officially implemented on February 11th, 2022. In this stage, the Ministry of Education and Culture provides three options for educational units to implement a curriculum based on National Education Standards in accordance with the learning needs and context of each educational unit. The three options are the 2013 curriculum, emergency curriculum, and *Merdeka* curriculum.

Merdeka curriculum is defined as a learning plan that provides opportunities for students to learn and show their natural talents in a calm, relaxed, enjoyable, and stress-free environment (Ainia, 2020). The *Merdeka* curriculum learning structure consists of two main activities: intracurricular learning, which refers to the level of learning that students must achieve in each subject, and the project to strengthen the Pancasila student profile, which refers to the competency standards that students must have after graduating. This curriculum is considered important to overcome the learning crisis in Indonesia, because a number of studies show that the majority of students do

not master basic literacy. It is hoped that this curriculum can help improve the literacy and numeracy skills of Indonesian children.

The benefits of this curriculum include project-based learning, which helps students develop their soft skills and personalities in line with the Pancasila Profil Pelajar (Pancasila profile students), more focus on essential subjects like literacy and numeracy, and flexibility for teachers to adapt their lesson plans based on the needs of individual students. The main purposes of Profil Pelajar Pancasila are to maintain noble values and morals of the nation, readiness to become a citizen of the world, the embodiment social justice, as well as the achievement of competence 21st century (Nugrohadhi, 2022).

This curriculum has not been fully and widely adopted yet. In accordance with Decree Number 56 of 2022 from the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, this curriculum will be completely implemented in all educational units by 2024. (Ministry of Education, 2021). In West Sumatra, there are 282 schools that have implemented the *Merdeka* curriculum through the mobilizing school (*sekolah penggerak*) program from the PAUD-SMA/SMK level. This was conveyed by Sri Yulianti as the head of the teacher training center, when interviewed by Jefli Bridge, a reporter from the Haluan newspaper on Wednesday, 21 December 2022 (Bridge, 2022)

Therefore, the implementation of the *Merdeka* curriculum can be applied as a preparatory curriculum. To implement this curriculum, schools must register and fill out a questionnaire about their readiness. The results of

the questionnaire will determine the best alternative that can be used by schools. Education units are given the freedom to implement several sections and principles, but do not change the previously implemented curriculum. In the *Merdeka* curriculum, teachers can provide subject matter according to the needs and abilities of students. It doesn't need to be given in an orderly manner. Teachers can plan lessons creatively based on their needs. The minimum passing score is also determined by the conditions of the student and the school. Other differences are Learning Outcomes, Learning Objective Flow, and twenty percent project-based learning process. Changing the curriculum from K13 is a challenge for teachers (Rizki, 2022).

The *Merdeka* curriculum, which will be implemented in stages starting in 2022 and is expected to be fully implemented at all levels of primary and secondary education in 2024, has several changes compared to the 2013 curriculum, such as replacing core competencies and basic competencies with learning outcomes, changing subject status, granting authority to educational units to develop operational curricula independently, a curriculum structure consisting of intracurricular activities and projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, replacing majors with groups of elective subjects, and prioritizing formative rather than summative assessments in the process of assessing learning outcomes. These changes must of course be of concern to all parties involved in the implementation of education, especially schools in terms of their readiness to implement the new curriculum, and teachers who must develop their pedagogical competence to suit the demands made by the curriculum.

The challenge of implementing the *Merdeka* curriculum is facing development technology in the era of industry 4.0 in high school, it is more about the implementation of learning among others are 1) demands for continuous improvement of teacher competence; 2) demands for the availability of adequate infrastructure; and 3) demands for the independence of educational institutions (Sinulingga, 2022). In addition, Arifa (2022) find several kinds of challenges in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum include; competency readiness, teacher's skill, mindset of educators as implementers of education, and readiness of infrastructure, facilities and infrastructure.

Based on preliminary studies, *Merdeka* curriculum has been used in the 2022-2023 academic year at SMA 3 Solok Selatan, but not at all levels. Class that uses the *Merdeka* curriculum is grade X and grade XI, XII still use the 2013 curriculum. There are several changes and differences from the previous curriculum because this curriculum is new, so that teachers who teach in class X are still awkward about implementing this curriculum. Therefore, researchers want to examine what are the challenges faced by English teachers in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum. The researcher entitled this research as "An Analysis of English Teachers' Challenges in Implementing *Merdeka* Curriculum at SMAN 3 Solok Selatan"

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background described above, the implementation of the senior high school, *Merdeka* curriculum structure is divided into 2 (two) activities, intracurricular learning and the project to strengthen the *Pancasila*

student profile. Intracurricular is teaching and learning activities from designing lesson plans to assessments which are carried out according to scheduled lesson hours, according to a predetermined time allocation. Meanwhile, the project to strengthen the *Pancasila* student profile is designed separately from intracurricular. Objectives, content, and project learning activities do not have to be related to intracurricular objectives and subject matter. Education units can involve the community and/or the world of work to design and organize projects to strengthen the profile of *Pancasila* students.

C. Limitation of the Problem

Based on the identification above, the researcher of this research focus on intracurricular activities, that relate to all of the activities teaching-learning English on the class. This research conducted at senior High School 3 Solok Selatan and the participants of this research are English teachers at tenth grade students of senior High School 3 Solok Selatan.

D. Formulation of the Problem

The researcher formulates the problem of this study into “what English teachers’ challenges in implementing *Merdeka* Curriculum at SMA 3 Solok Selatan?”

E. Research Questions

The researcher decided to focus on one relevant question to answer the research objectives formulated as follow:

1. What are the English teachers' challenges in designing the lesson plan of *Merdeka* curriculum?
2. What are the English teachers' challenges in lesson implementation of *Merdeka* curriculum?
3. What are the English teachers' challenges in using media?
4. What are the English teachers' challenges in classroom management?
5. What are the English teachers' challenges in learning assessment of *Merdeka* curriculum?

F. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to determine the English teachers' challenges in implementing *merdeka* curriculum at SMA 3 Solok Selatan.

G. Significance of the Research

1) Theoretical Significance

The results of this research are expected to give useful information related to the English teachers' challenges in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum at senior high school and can be used as additional references for other researchers who want to conduct a similar study.

2) Practical Significance

This research is expected to contribute to;

a) Teachers

The researcher hopes that this research can give suggestions to English teachers on how to anticipate the challenges in teaching English.

b) Principals

The researcher hopes this study will help principals to create programs to support teachers' abilities in implementing the new curriculum.

c) For others researcher

The author hopes that this research can help them to know about challenges in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum.

H. Definition of the Key Term

1) Teaching English

Teaching English means teacher give the language knowledge to the learners to make them able to speak English.

2) *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum

This curriculum is a change in the latest curriculum where the concept of learning is happy without being burdened, which initially learning was entirely in the classroom to be outside the classroom. The concept of *merdeka belajar* also supports students more so they can have more discussions with the teacher and build the character of students.

3) Challenges

Challenges are things or objects that inspire determination to improve problem-solving abilities in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum.