



Implementing Kurikulum Merdeka: Teachers' Strategy in Teaching English in Elementary School

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026 - 06- 01 Revised: 2026 06-18 Accepted: 2026 06-27	<i>This study explores the strategies employed by elementary school English teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The research focuses on understanding how teachers adapt their instructional practices, utilize resources, and address challenges in fostering student-centered learning. Data were collected from five teachers in Jakarta using a qualitative descriptive approach, supported by questionnaires. The findings reveal that teachers use diverse teaching resources, active learning methods, and interdisciplinary integration to engage students and improve communication skills. However, challenges such as limited instructional time, inadequate facilities, and uneven training opportunities hinder the full implementation of the curriculum. This study underscores the importance of professional development and resource allocation to enhance curriculum delivery, offering insights into improving English language education at the elementary level.</i>
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1. Introduction

In Richards' (2013) perspective, a curriculum is a fundamental aspect of education as it draws out a design for an educational course, converting the educational content into teachable and learnable concepts to provide for certain set targets of education. A measurable change of development of curriculum and its content has been witnessed in Indonesia, and according to sources, there have

been at least ten changes from the time of independence until now, they include 1947 curriculum, to what some people would aptly name as the liberated learning curriculum.

This Merdeka Belajar program is the third and the most significant change ever made in the Indonesian education system in under the period of 10 years (Sugiri & Priatmoko, 2020). These changes are meant to keep up with the developments in the education sector and industries in Indonesia and foster the desired academic and non-academic growth in learners. The very essence of the shift reiterates to the fact that there is a robust and affirmative relationship between education and what Indonesia has to offer as solutions to global issues in this fast-changing world.

2. Literature Review

The shift from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum brought about many changes in structure and strategy for planning, implementing, and assessing. New frameworks—like Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP), Modul Ajar (MA), Capaian Pembelajaran (CP), and Kriteria Ketercapaian Tujuan Pembelajaran (KKTP)—push for a competency-based approach. They use tools such as diagnostic tests, students thinking about their work, and teachers giving feedback to boost both teacher and student abilities (Hardanie 2022). This curriculum aims to make learning simpler and deeper by zeroing in on key material and building skills. One main strategy called Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), matches teaching to each student's skill level instead of their grade (Kemendikbud 2022b).

The Merdeka Curriculum brings in the Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan (KOSP), a full plan to guide each school. This lets schools change the curriculum to fit their needs, which makes learning matter more to students (Kemendikbud 2022a). Schools can now create lessons that focus on what students care about, including key skills like English, which are more and more important in our connected world.

To use the Merdeka Curriculum for teaching English in elementary schools has its ups and downs. English is a valued skill for students and communities, so it needs well-thought-out plans and good teaching methods. The Merdeka Curriculum uses a system based on CEFR that aims to build main skills such as talking with others, speaking out, and understanding, which you need to learn a language.

To put the Merdeka Curriculum into action, teachers must know how to use ATP, MA, and Project Modules, and how to check student progress (Nurhidayat et al. 2022). Teachers are key to reaching national education goals, which include both teaching subjects and helping students grow and. Principals and school staff also help by creating an environment that supports both teachers and students in a learning approach that puts students at the center.

Researchers have looked at how schools are using the Merdeka Curriculum.

For instance, Aini Qolbiyah et al. (2022) point out that schools need good buildings and resources to use the new curriculum well. Susilowati's (2022) study looks at how the curriculum shapes student character in Islamic Religious Education classes. But these studies haven't explored how elementary schools use the Merdeka Curriculum to teach English. This study aims to fill that gap.

This research will explore the methods used by elementary school English teachers to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, with a specific focus on the unique needs and challenges of early language education. It examines the ways in which these educators modify their teaching methods, make use of available resources, and address issues related to the curriculum's emphasis on personalized learning plans and competency-based outcomes. The study seeks to gain a deeper comprehension of how the Merdeka Curriculum can impact English language instruction at the grassroots level, emphasizing teacher approaches and student engagement within this innovative model.

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to research, which emphasizes the use of simple and understandable terms to describe phenomena. According to Lambert and Lambert (2012), the method is not reductively complex but rather helps to understand everyday events or interactions in the real world. According to Nassaji (2015), qualitative descriptive studies are most effective in educational settings where practical strategies and outcomes are significant.

This investigation utilizes Google Forms as the platform for distributing questionnaire materials. A well-organized and efficient method of collecting data is employed when participants are dispersed throughout the country. Questionnaires are frequently utilized in qualitative research to gather data in a structured manner for researchers. Five English teachers, both male and female, from various elementary schools in Jakarta are part of the group that uses the Kurikulum Merdeka. From their diverse backgrounds, they can learn about teaching techniques in a variety of ways throughout this curriculum.

One of the most common methods used in qualitative research, which is data analysis, is utilized to uncover patterns or themes in this study. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this approach is not only versatile but also accessible, making it a useful way of deciphering the meanings encoded in textual data. Coded data is used to highlight common topics, and then a thorough analysis is conducted so that the themes are in line with research objectives. This approach guarantees a systematic and thorough examination of the teaching techniques utilized in the Kurikulum Merdeka.

The main emphasis of this study is on qualitative descriptive research, while also exploring thematic analysis and utilizing Google Forms for data collection. The aim of qualitative descriptive research is to offer a straightforward explanation of phenomena, making the results accessible to all (Nassaji, 2015; Lambert & Lambert,

2012). By examining and documenting patterns in qualitative data, thematic analysis provides valuable insights into the phenomena studied (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. Result and Discussion

The teachers' approach to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary school English instruction is explored through the profiles of the respondents, as evidenced by this study. This section focuses on two important aspects: the duration of my teaching experience and the education I received to apply the Merdeka Curriculum. Based on data, one of the five participants has been teaching English in elementary school for less than a year. For the past 1-3 years, one teacher has been teaching, while the other has taught for 4-6 years. There has been at least one tutor who worked in this field for more than six years. The distribution emphasizes the diversity of teaching backgrounds and offers varying viewpoints on how to implement learning outcomes under the Merdeka Curriculum. More experienced teachers may have come up with strategies and adaptations, whereas less experience-oriented teachers can offer a different perspective but are not as knowledgeable about curriculum requirements.

Of the total number of respondents, three reported receiving formal training on the Merdeka Curriculum, while two had no prior training. Even so, the variation emphasizes the varying level of readiness among teachers to accommodate for the principles and objectives articulated in the curriculum. People who have received education can feel more assured of successfully implementing the curriculum. On the other hand, untrained participants may find it challenging to fully grasp or implement the curriculum's principles and consequently raise concerns about teaching methods and student outcomes. Both aspects indicate that the respondents have varying levels of experience and familiarity with the Merdeka Curriculum, which influences their approach to teaching English in primary schools. This variation offers a comprehensive understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of effective curriculum implementation.'

Teaching was done using a range of learning resources, as reported by all five respondents (100%). These include textbooks, videos (such as Adobe Photoshop), digital applications, and additional materials such as flash cards or storybooks. The respondents expressed their desire for English lessons to incorporate more multimedia and interactive elements to make them more relatable and comprehensible to their students. Additionally, certain instructors reported that they were utilizing online platforms and applications that are consistent with the Merdeka Curriculum to provide personalized learning opportunities.

According to the survey, 60% of participants reported actively using role-playing activities, games, and group discussions as part of their English lessons as a part. The use of conversational English in teaching can boost students' confidence and memory retention. Active learning techniques are used only on a small

frequency, as at least two out of four participants (40%) admitted to using them but cannot do so with the resources and time available in class.

According to a survey, 40% of respondents expressed that they permit students the choice of any topic they want to focus on for learning activities, such as writing assignments or discussing them. The approach is consistent with the principles of student-centred education and promoting creativity and critical thinking through the Merdeka Curriculum. The survey revealed that 60% of respondents believed that they hardly give students the opportunity to choose their subjects due to time and curriculum constraints.

The majority of people (80%) reported incorporating English lessons with other subjects, such as science, art, and social studies. For instance, they could make use of English words and expressions during a scientific investigation or use art activities to teach descriptive vocabulary. Students can benefit from these cross-disciplinary approaches to comprehend and practice English. How? According to a survey, only 20% of individuals reported significant levels of integration, with most receiving individual English lessons due to the lack of interdisciplinary training or facilities.

The use of formative assessments as a means of measuring students' progress was acknowledged by 80% of the respondents. Among the activities that are included are quizzes, group discussions, and brief exercises to continuously evaluate students' comprehension of the material. Researchers noted that teachers can use formative assessments to identify learning gaps and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. 40% of those surveyed reported having no experience with formative assessments due to time constraints and the difficulty of managing assessments in large classes.

All five respondents reported that they provide constructive feedback to students in order to improve their English skills. Feedback can be given in various forms, such as written comments on assignments, verbal feedback during class activities, and personal discussions with students. The teachers stated that it is essential to identify strengths and areas where improvement is needed to encourage students' motivation and progress. The utilization of feedback sessions was noted by some participants to assist students in identifying their own learning goals and addressing specific language learning challenges.

Most respondents (80%) said they had good understanding of the main objectives that form part of Merdeka Curriculum. It is based on the principles of student-centered learning, creativity and flexibility. 20% of the participants reported having incomplete knowledge and that they would need additional resources or training to improve their comprehension of curriculum objectives.

60% of respondents expressed high levels of confidence in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum principles, with three out of six acknowledging the extent to which they have successfully applied the curriculum's concepts in their teaching. These educators stated that they could modify their lesson plans to suit the

curriculum's objectives and adapt the content to meet the needs of different students. Even so, two out of four expressed a bit of hope and mentioned that they comprehend the curriculum but struggle to reconcile it with classroom practices or student abilities. Additionally,

According to 80% of the respondents, lesson plans are always designed with students in mind. It was the same throughout the year. Teachers said they tailor lessons to suit students' abilities, interests and learning aims. The teachers develop plans that are tailored to the individual interests of their students, with the intention of encouraging engagement and making learning objectives achievable for all.

60% of those surveyed, specifically 33% who stated that the amount of time given for English lessons is inadequate to deliver the Merdeka Curriculum effectively. The teachers stated that the curriculum's emphasis on interactive and student-centered activities necessitates extensive instructional time to produce results. The remaining two respondents (40%) believed that the time allotted was adequate and that they could achieve the curriculum's objectives within the designated timeframe with sufficient planning and prioritization. However, only three of them agreed that this was not entirely satisfactory.

80% (40%) of those surveyed stated that they did not have access to adequate facilities for teaching English under the Merdeka Curriculum. Some of the difficulties mentioned involve insufficient access to multimedia tools, outdated teaching materials, and limited room for interactive learning. Teachers observed that these limitations impede the implementation of innovative and engaging teaching approaches, which are fundamental to the syllabus. One in five (20%) also said they had adequate facilities, thanks to the support from their school administration who helped them buy resources and tools needed for teaching. Why is this?

80% of the respondents stated that active learning methods, multimedia tools, and student-centered activities were effective in motivating students to learn English. Teachers noted that activities such as role-playing, games and project-based learning create an engaging and lively classroom environment that encourages participation.

All five respondents (100%) expressed their belief that their methods aid in enhancing students' English communication skills. The authors stated that involving students in group discussions, presentations, and storytelling fosters their confidence and fluency through these activities. It was also stressed by teachers that a classroom is characterized by enabling students to practice their English language with confidence and without any perceived risk of error.

Five elementary school English teachers who are implementing the Merdeka Curriculum provided responses for this study, which can be categorized into various main areas to gain insight in to their teaching techniques, obstacles, and attitudes towards learning. The results indicate a combination of teacher readiness

and familiarity with the Merdeka Curriculum.' Despite the fact that most teachers have a good grasp of the curriculum's objectives and demonstrate confidence in applying its principles, there are differences related to training and experience. Those who have received formal training are more confident and possess a clear understanding of the curriculum than those who did not. Training is crucial for teachers to be able to implement new curricula effectively, as highlighted in this theme.

The main focus of lesson preparation is on ensuring that students are engaged in their learning. A significant proportion of respondents emphasized tailoring lessons to suit students' unique interests, and using a range of learning materials, including multimedia content and online resources, to enhance the learning experience. This general adoption of different teaching methods demonstrates how teachers can adapt to the curriculum's needs. But time constraints and large class sizes were also noted as issues that sometimes make it difficult to implement a consistent approach with students in mind. A new approach to encourage students and foster engagement was crucial through active learning. Role-playing, games and discussions are common ways to create interactive and enjoyable learning environments. According to educators, these approaches boost students' engagement, self-assurance, and comprehension of English concepts. Limited instructional time and resources may hinder the implementation of active learning in terms of quality and frequency. Nevertheless, there are limitations to effective teaching.

The level of student autonomy and subject integration differs among respondents. Despite some teachers encouraging students to select topics for selected activities, most expressed being unable to fully implement this approach due to curriculum demands. On the flip side, English classes are often paired with other subjects like science and art. This approach is in line with the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives of promoting creativity and practical application, but some individuals still struggle due to the absence of an interdisciplinary training component.

The teaching methods of the respondents revolve around forming assessments and providing constructive feedback. To assess student progress and modify their teaching methods, most educators employ formative methods. Feedback is widely regarded as an essential element for motivating students and facilitating their growth.

A common theme is the insufficient amount of instructional time and inadequate facilities. Three out of five respondents found that the curriculum's reliance on interactive and student-centered strategies often takes longer to execute than is practical, according to their findings. They also noted that "insufficient access to multimedia tools and outdated resources" were major barriers to implementing engaging teaching strategies. These difficulties highlight the necessity for structural and administrative assistance to enhance curriculum

delivery.'

Teachers generally believe that their methods are efficient in motivating students and enhancing communication abilities.' The use of multimedia and active learning techniques is believed to foster engaging and stimulating learning environments, while interactive activities like discussions and presentations help students develop their English language skills and confidence. But external factors such as differences in student skills and lack of parent involvement identified barriers to achieving goals.

Both advantages and disadvantages of using the Merdeka Curriculum for English instruction are emphasized in this thematic analysis. Although the teachers' strategies emphasize student-centered learning, active participation, and inter-disciplinary approaches in the curriculum are well-received, they face difficulties in fully implementing them. Identifying and addressing these issues through targeted support, professional development, and improved resource availability will be crucial to improving the curriculum's effectiveness and supporting teachers in creating meaningful learning experiences.

Training is a vital component of this study, as it equips teachers to implement the Merdeka Curriculum effectively. Professional development programs are essential for teachers to shift towards student-centered methods, as argued by Asrianti in 2024 (Asrianticus, 2023), so they can create lessons that meet the curriculum's objectives. Teachers who were trained, as Sholichah observed, had a better understanding of the curriculum's objectives and were more confident in their ability to deliver it (Sholichah, 2024).

Amiruddin et al. (2023) observed that incorporation of multimedia tools along with other highly engaging interactive materials greatly enhanced the learning experience in Merdeka Curriculum classrooms, which is consistent with this finding. Teachers were able to use innovative methods, as suggested by Haan (2024), even when resources were scarce.

Active learning can be initiated by many teachers through the use of role-playing and group discussions. Ferdaus and Novita have observed that active learning can increase students' motivation and engagement by 2023. Moreover, Fitriani (1924) stated that the most effective approach to creating meaningful and interactive classroom experiences is through student-centered methods (Fitriani, 2024).

The difficulties encountered in implementing student autonomy were elucidated by Lestari (2023), who stated that training is necessary to balance the curriculum demands with students' choice (Lestari, 2023). Additionally, the integration of English with other subjects corresponds to Kharimah and Qamariah (2023), who recognized that interdisciplinary learning is essential for effective Merdeka Curriculum implementation (Kharimath & Qamirism, 2023).

Anisah and QamariaH (coming to the Middle East in 2023) advocated for formative assessments and constructive feedback, stating that regular student

feedback is beneficial for improving performance and engagement. Teroxel explains that adaptive assessments, as stated in Telaumbanua (2024), enable teachers to assess student needs effectively. Similar to previous studies, this study highlights the difficulties of time and facilities. However, According to Lestari (2023), comparable limitations were present in accomplishing the curriculum's objectives, necessitating administrative aid and infrastructure upgrades (Lestari, 2023).

5. Conclusion

The research indicates that the utilization of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary school English instruction presents both feasible plans and significant hurdles. Moreover, Teachers have welcomed the curriculum's emphasis on student-centered learning, a range of teaching materials and resources, active learning with an interdisciplinary integration. These methods have been shown to increase student motivation and improve communication skills, which align with the curriculum's objectives.

The study highlights important issues such as insufficient instructional time, inadequate training, and limited teaching resources. However, These barriers prevent the complete implementation of the curriculum and its related measures. The results indicate that despite these obstacles, teachers remain confident that their methods will effectively engage students and promote English language proficiency.

This study highlights the need for focused professional development, increased resource allocation and administrative support to maximize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. By addressing these topics, the curriculum's potential to transform English language education at the elementary level can be realized more effectively and produce a more meaningful and effective learning experience for students.

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Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Pembelajaran PJOK Di SMA Negeri 3 Sidoarjo.

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