

IMPLEMENTATION OF DIGITAL ENGLISH LEARNING TOWARD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS BASED ON *MERDEKA* CURRICULUM

Rossa Anjalina Soraya¹, Octa Pratama Putra^{2,*}, Fitriyah^{3,*}

¹Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika

²Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika

³Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika

*E-mail: octa.opp@bsi.ac.id, & fitriyah.fit@bsi.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to peer out the results of the final perspective of Hidayatul Athfal's junior high schools' students in implementing digital English learning which refers to Merdeka curriculum. Beforehand, the Ministry of Education issued one of the latest efforts to change the education system, which is popularly known as the Merdeka curriculum. Based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, and teaching materials, as well as methods used as guidelines for implementing up-to-date learning to achieve effective and optimal learning objectives. Apart from that, junior high school students in this research used learning media, it is barcode scanners as one of the learning media to make the digital system of the learning process at their meetings. The author uses a qualitative descriptive research method, which is conducted by direct observation and in-depth interviews with the parties involved, and the data collected is then analyzed descriptively by presenting the results of the research in the form of a research report. The conclusion of the research that the author draws that, it shows the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum is very helpful in assisting the junior high school students by adapting digital English learning process. It is proved that, 66.7% of students agreed with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Keywords: *Merdeka Curriculum, Digital Learning and Media of Learning*

ABSTRAK

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui hasil perspektif akhir siswa SMP Hidayatul Athfal dalam implementasi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris digital yang mengacu pada sebuah kurikulum Merdeka. Sebelumnya, Kementerian Pendidikan mengeluarkan salah satu upaya terkini terhadap perubahan sistem Pendidikan, yakni populer dengan penyebutan kurikulum Merdeka. Berdasarkan Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, kurikulum adalah seperangkat rencana dan pengaturan mengenai tujuan, isi, dan bahan ajar, serta cara yang dijadikan pedoman penyelenggaraan

pembelajaran yang mutakhir untuk mencapai tujuan pembelajaran yang efektif dan optimal. Selain itu juga, siswa SMP dalam riset ini menggunakan media pembelajaran yaitu pemindai-barcode sebagai salah satu media pembelajaran untuk kelancaran proses pembelajaran pada pertemuannya. Penulis menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif, yaitu dilakukan dengan cara observasi dan wawancara mendalam secara langsung kepada pihak-pihak yang terlibat, dan data yang terkumpul kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif dengan memaparkan hasil penelitian dalam bentuk laporan penelitian. Kesimpulan penelitian yang penulis laksanakan menunjukkan bahwa, implementasi kurikulum Merdeka sangat membantu membersamai dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris digital siswa SMP dan dengan ditunjukkannya sebanyak 66,7% siswa setuju dengan penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Merdeka, Pembelajaran Digital dan Media Pembelajaran

A. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia for the past days; it had only two school categories; government and non-government (or private) school (Hamka, 2019). However, on this day it is getting more both variant and variety of the school categorization. Beside the government and non-governmental school, it has the other types; for instances: Global School, Boarding School, *Islam Terpadu*, National Plus, *Pesantren* (Islamic) and many more. Although they have different name for the school, instead they have the same purpose academically.

About school diverse and in order to create educational goals, curriculum has its important role (Nasution, 2022). Curriculum is based on national culture and national education based on *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution. By adapting and being with the curriculum in school area, it will be able to adapt to the school's situation, pay attention to the needs and stages of students' development, national development needs, and so on.

Regarding to (Rahayu et al., 2022), he explained that, the use of the curriculum will be said to be effective if it is staying in line with several aspects; such as: needs, relevance, flexibility, continuity, practice, and effectiveness. Therefore, the use of curriculum should have a strong foundation, and principled to support achieving the educational goals

What the writer wants to focus, it is about the use as the implementation in using the current or latest curriculum. Schools absolutely have a curriculum; although sometimes it has different curriculum between each school region. The differentiates all the various schools in Indonesia is the use of a curriculum that refers to the learning methods in each school (Simanjuntak & Muchlas Suseno, 2019). Schools committee chooses how they wish to use the existing curriculum. The curriculum contains a set of plans, objectives, and learning materials. Including teaching methods that will be a guide for each teacher to achieve learning targets and goals well (Apostolou, 2022).

As the statement from (Xia & Cui, 2021), curriculum is defined as a structured arrangement of intended activities that follow specific standards to enable students to develop and master both content and practical skills. On the other hand, curriculum is a standards-based sequence of planned experiences where students practice and achieve proficiency in content and applied learning skills.

Nowadays, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, B.A., M.B.A as the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has already launched the *Merdeka Curriculum* to offer new learning system towards the schools entirely (Manalu et al., 2021). There are several crucial things that make curriculum improvement toward students' activity; they are: holistic assessment, character education, appropriate competence, and a good evaluation system from the previous one, that was 2013-Curriculum (Firdaus et al., 2022).

The statement from (Ansari & Alpisah, 2020), say that, within the *Merdeka Curriculum*, it emphasizes the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*. It encourages students to explore their interests and talents and teachers to focus on the material that matters and adapt their teaching pace to student's abilities. The curriculum framework is flexible, allowing teachers to develop a contextualized curriculum that suits the needs of the students (Marisa, 2022).

Thence, preceding above is one of the phenomena of factual information about the pedagogical activity in the area of Junior High School students. It underlies the writer to conduct research and to observe the implementation in adapting *Merdeka* curriculum in facilitating the digital English learning. In this case, the researcher (as the teacher) will be elaborating the English teaching's implementation by providing the *Merdeka* curriculum at SMP *Hidayatul Athfal*.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Digital English Learning as the Representative of *Merdeka Curriculum*

The advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the ease of access to the internet both have declared to be familiar and well-known for the students nowadays. This is as the evidence that, the rapidly growing access to the Internet has come and led to a considerable expectation toward the students as the representative of *Merdeka* curriculum's implementation (Vhalery et al., 2022).

By having the internet, it has provided learners with opportunities to learn English from authentic materials and to experience the authentic use of English when conversing with other learners or native speakers by looking at the screen of monitor. Furthermore, the synchronous and asynchronous communication technologies of the Internet allow language learners to use English for online social collaboration, discussion, and intercultural give-and-take (Wulandari et al., 2021). These are very favourable in language education because of the mix of the direct interaction and practicing or learning English. The crux tells that, the internet development for today's learning era is synchronised with the *Merdeka* curriculum as well.

Referring to the internet and its vicinity, it states out the effect of *Merdeka* curriculum that allows students to be aware in using the digital learning. Furthermore, humans mostly have turned into activating their technology, especially information technology and communication media, to help them navigating the latest digital educational system (Sainz & Bough, 2022).

About the digital English learning and seeing the low-end smartphones and laptops prices, they are now affordable by many people from low- and middle-income households opening their access to the digital world. According to (Suharyanto, 2021), many people in Indonesia own more than one digital device resulting in more than 300 million mobile connections as of January 2021 exceeding the country's total population of 274.9 million.

For example, to adapt or use digital English learning materials, students are able to look, pay attention, or even download and print that out. It is seen that as the effect of implementing *Merdeka* curriculum; digital English learning is accessible and it allows the ubiquitous language learning. Indeed, according to a meta-analysis review of peer-reviewed journal articles and dissertations by (Berg et al., 2022), learning languages with by involving mobile devices tends to be effective. Nowadays, their portability makes mobile devices suitable for learning both in and beyond the language classroom.

As the drawn conclusion, an appropriate curriculum of *Merdeka*, is needed in dealing with this digital era. The curriculum should be able to adapt in welcoming the digital developments. So, this curriculum will be able to the mediator in delivering students to be understating the digital era by having critical, intelligent, and creative.

2. *Merdeka* Curriculum

The curriculum determines the material that is taught in the classroom. It also influences the pace and methods of teaching methods that teachers use to meet the needs of learners' needs. A *Merdeka* curriculum gives freedom to educators or teachers and students in carrying out the learning process (Zidan & Qamariah, 2023). For this reason, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology or *KemendikbudRistek* developed the *Merdeka* Curriculum as an important part of the effort to recover learning from the crisis in long experience. The *Merdeka* Curriculum is defined as the curriculum with diverse extracurricular learning where content is optimized (Asrifan et al., 2022). So that, learners have enough time to deepen concepts and strengthen competencies. so that learners have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies.

On the other hand, teachers have the flexibility to choose a variety of teaching tools so that learning can be tailored to learners' learning needs and interests. Projects to strengthen the achievement of the *Pancasila* learner profile are developed based on a specific theme set by the government. The project is not directed to achieve specific learning outcome targets, so they are not tied to subject content, subject content (Setiyaningsih, 2022).

By providing and being with the *Merdeka* as the curriculum, it encourages students to explore their interests and talents and teachers to focus on important material and adjust their teaching pace to students' abilities. The platform provides self-study training and various teaching aids, such as learning objectives, and teaching modules (Rohimajaya & Hamer, 2022). The *Merdeka* curriculum framework is flexible, allowing teachers to develop a contextualized curriculum that suits the needs of their students. In addition, it also emphasizes character building, which is crucial for students to become responsible citizens.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method chosen by the researcher is the descriptive qualitative method, which is a research method that is reality or fact in accordance with what is obtained (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022). The aim is to find out the learning outcomes of learning activities and student activities during the learning process. The technique used in this research is the test technique. Meanwhile, the object of research is a questionnaire sheet completed by students and interviews conducted by teachers directly.

Qualitative studies are research that investigates the niceness of relationships, activities, situations, or materials (Njie & Asimiran, 2021). The researcher concluded that qualitative research is a research method used to examine the social situation of a research subject. Five characteristics of qualitative methods, First, the natural setting is a direct source of data, and the researcher is the key instrument in qualitative research. Second, as being opposed to using statistics, qualitative data is gathered using words (contextual) or images. Third, qualitative researcher is concerned with the process as well as the data. Fourth, qualitative research tends to analyse data inductively. Fifth, how people understand their lives is a major concern for qualitative researcher

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This sub-chapter, the researcher (as the writer) will describe both the result and discussion. It consists of three parts; they are: the teaching preparation, teaching process, and teaching problem. Each of the sub-explanation will be in explained in detail and specific.

1. Teaching Preparation

This research was conducted at SMP *Hidayatul Athfal*, Cinere. The research focuses on students in the seventh-grade students for the academic year 2022-2023. It was located at *Persahabatan Street 9*, Kota Depok. The researcher chose this school because it implements *Merdeka Curriculum* and the researcher had an internship program for 3 (three) months, starting on August 10, 2022, and ending on October 10, 2022. The researcher conducted 1 (one) meeting for this research, previously the researcher had researched first while undergoing an internship program. Then, the researcher has already got an overview and experience because of the 3 (three) months internship program and teaching grade seventh-grade students by implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum*.



Figure III.1. The School Building of SMP *Hidayatul Athfal*

SMP *Hidayatul Athfal* was established in 2000, with the intention of educating the nation's children and the spirit to provide improvements to the quality of school education and help students from the lower middle class. SMP *Hidayatul Athfal* believes that schools should be able to compete with other schools in educating the nation's children.

2. Teaching Process

The first step is the researcher met with Nasir, S. Pd as the English teacher of seventh-grade class of SMP *Hidayatul Athfal* to ask permission to teach for several days and ask for guidance during the observation. Then, researcher started coming to the class in delivering the introduction and conducts observations the next day, May 25–26, 2023.



Figure III.2. The English Teacher with Nasir, S. Pd

Afterwards, the researcher had a discussion or preparation before carrying out the English teaching process in seventh-grade. At 10:00, researcher entered the study room with an English handbook given by Nasir S.Pd for continuing the material that Nasir S.Pd instructed. When the researcher arrived in the class, the researcher said greetings and re-introductions and continued by *saying hi*, greeted, and welcomed the students. It is about to build the students' good mood as well as teach preparation.



Figure III.3. The researcher delivers the material

The implementation of *Merdeka* curriculum also provides space for the use of technology and media to provide flexibility for educational units in creating contextual operational curriculum that are appropriate for the learning needs of students. One of them is by using barcodes in handbooks, from what researcher can get during observation, in students' handbooks there are lots of barcodes and different functions. Barcode learning materials contain conversations or text that is conveyed in a simple way so that it is easy for

students to understand.

From that point above, it points out that *Merdeka* curriculum provides flexibility for educators to develop quality learning that is appropriate for the needs and learning environment of students. Thence, the implementation of *Merdeka* curriculum is supported by various technological platforms, such as providing independent training and various teaching aids, such as learning objectives, teaching modules, and more.



Figure III.4. The Barcode Topic Material for English Lessons

While or after listening to the English researcher’s instruction, students use their own gadget to scan the topic material. Then, students will get directed into new tab or link of learning topic about the next instruction. Thus, the learning English can be said as the latest combination between pedagogical dan technology by holding students’ own cell-phones.



Figure III.5. The Display of Topic Material for English Lessons

As it is seen on figure above, it shows about the display and things-to-do after scanning the barcode in learning. By also pay attention to the researcher's instruction, students are allowed to click and see what happened next. Next, the appearance screen of barcode-scanning shows about the example of conversation or dialogue. Students are able to understand, listen, get the main ideas, translate, practice and many more. Absolutely, the researcher is still monitoring the students.

After delivering the topic material, the students are given the questioners as the requirement to deepen the research. So, by giving the teaching opportunity and filling out the questionnaires are going to strengthen this researcher. The type of questioner is essay-form. It has ten basic questions of short essay (simple question to explore students' perspective) about English pedagogy and the *Merdeka Curriculum* used.



Figure III.6. Students fill out the Questionnaires

Thus, from 15 (fifteen) questionnaire sheets filled out by 15 (fifteen) students, the researcher found that 10 (ten) students liked learning using the *Merdeka* curriculum, 5 (five) students did not like learning using it. For more details, the researcher presents the data in a frequency diagram for students who agree the *Merdeka* curriculum as a learning system and for students who disagree it as follows:

STUDENTS FREQUENCY DIAGRAM OF MERDEKA CURRICULUM

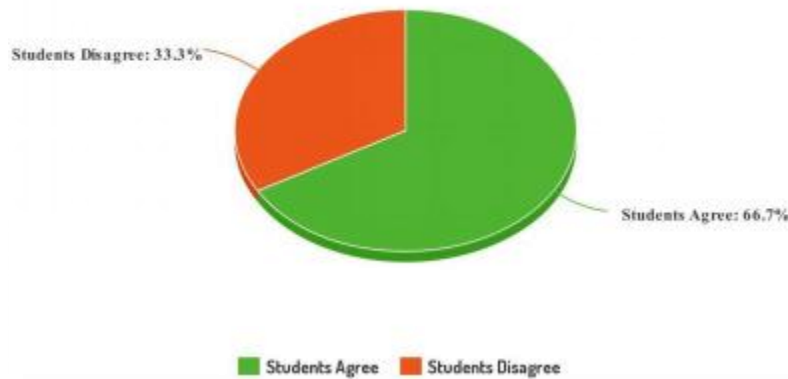


Figure III.7. Frequency Diagram of Seventh-Grade Students

3. Teaching's Problem

Junior high school age children are generally those aged 13-to-15 years, which is the age of being in the adolescent age development group in the early phase. Middle-phase adolescence is those aged 15 to 18 years old and late-phase adolescence is 18 to 21 years old. The growth period of students at junior high school age is transition from children to adults.

Then, as for students, the use of electronic device might create a number of challenges, including distraction from adapting, using, and operating in participating in class activities. Moreover, a few of students have their gadget that has a low-quality sound and lack of access to the digital topic discussion. This problem would distract both students and teachers. Therefore, digital-based facilities which bring both students' and teachers should be provided by technical support (IT expert/supervisor) authorities and providers in creating optimal and effective the digital English learning.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the data that has been analysed based on the answers on the questionnaire sheet filled out by grade seventh-grade students at SMP *Hidayatul Athfal*, the researcher draws a conclusion that, there are many positive things obtained by students in using the *Merdeka* curriculum as the main system in learning English for the students.

Researcher also found several obstacles in the form of student dissatisfaction in learning to use the *Merdeka* curriculum as a learning system that has been classified respectively. From 15 (fifteen) questionnaire sheets filled out by 15 students, the researcher found that 10 (ten) students liked learning using the *Merdeka* curriculum, 5 (five) students did not like learning using the *Merdeka* curriculum.

REFERENCES

- Ansari, A. H., & Alpisah, A. (2020). Konsep dan Rancangan Manajemen Kurikulum Merdeka di Tingkat Sekolah Menengah Pertama. *Jurnal Pendidikan untuk Sekolah Menengah Pertama*, 2(1), 13. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.23887/jpbi>
- Apostolou, Z. (2022). Teachers' perceptions of integrating kindergarten and first-grade primary school language curricula. *JCES; Journal of Child, Education, and School*, 9(6), 10. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37291/2717638X.20201234>
- Asrifan, A., Cardoso, L., & Ganguli, S. (2022). Cybersocialization Through Smart Digital Classroom Management (SDCM) as a Pedagogical Innovation of “Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)” Curriculum. *Digital Learning based Education*, 5(1), 39. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2007.0020>
- Berg, E. van den, Jansen, L., & Blijleven, P. (2022). Digital Learning Materials: Classification and Implications for the Curriculum. *Digital Curriculum Landscapes and Trends of Journal*, 9(6), 3. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-1205-7_14
- Firdaus, H., Laensadi, A. M., Matvayodha, G., Siagian, F. N., & Hasanah, I. A. (2022). Analisis Evaluasi Program Kurikulum 2013 Dan Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Konseling*, 4(4), 9. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/jpdk.v4i4.5302>
- Hamka, H. (2019). Sekolah Negeri dan Sekolah Swasta: Karakteristik di Dalam Pendidikan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Raden Fatah*, 9(7), 13. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19109/elidare.v1i2.678>
- Manalu, J. B., Sitohang, F., & Henrika, N. H. (2021). Pengembangan Perangkat Pembelajaran Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sekolah*, 1(2), 13. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.34007/ppd.v1i1.174>
- Marisa, M. (2022). Inovasi Kurikulum “Merdeka Belajar” di Era Society 5.0. *Jurnal Sejarah, Pendidikan, dan Humaniora*, 2(3), 1. <https://doi.org/DOI: https://doi.org/10.32503/proficiency.v5i2>
- Mohajan, D., & Mohajan, H. K. (2022). Development of Grounded Theory in Social Sciences: A Qualitative Approach. *Studies in Social Science & Humanities*, 1(5), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.56397/sssh.2022.12.02>
- Nasution, S. W. (2022). Asesment Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Di Sekolah Menengah Pertama. *Jurnal Prosiding Pendidikan*, 4(3), 19. <https://doi.org/doi:https://doi.org/10.34007/jonas.v2i2.125>
- Njie, B., & Asimiran, S. (2021). Case Study as a Choice in Qualitative Methodology. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 4(3), 1. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29408/edumatic.v5i1.2544>
- Rahayu, R., Rosita, R., & Rahayuningsih, Y. S. (2022). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka

Belajar di Sekolah Penggerak. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 3(1), 16.
<https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i4.3237>

- Rohimajaya, N. A., & Hamer, W. (2022). Merdeka Curriculum For Junor School English Learning In The Digital Era. *Jurnal Kajian Linguistik, Bahasa dan Sastra*, 7(1), 11. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33479/klausa.v7i1.673>
- Sainz, G. M., & Bough, A. (2022). Digital learning experiences and spaces: Learning from the past to design better pedagogical and curricular futures. *The Curriculum Journal*, 4(19), 3. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/curj.184>
- Setiyaningsih, S. (2022). Peran Guru Sebagai Aplikator Profil Pelajar Pancasila Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education*, 7(3), 29. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.05.011>
- Simanjuntak, M. B., & Muchlas Suseno. (2019). Integration of Curricula (Curriculum 2013 and Cambridge Curriculum for Junior High School Level in Three Subjects). *Jurnal Ideas; Pendidikan, Seni, dan Budaya*, 8(1), 11. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.26618/exposure.v12i1>.
- Suharyanto, R. (2021). Learning and Motivational Processes When Students Design Curriculum-Based Digital Learning Games. *Proceedings of The 9th European Conference on Games Based Learning*, 3(1), 312. <https://doi.org/DOI.prefix10.33394>
- Vhalery, R., Setyastanto, A. M., & Leksono, A. W. (2022). Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka: Sebuah Kajian Literatur. *Research and Development Journal of Education*, 8(1), 10. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.34150/jpak.v20i2.282>
- Wulandari, Y., Mahmuda, A. A., Astuti, M. D., & Ariyanto, W. T. (2021). Orientasi Pengembangan dan Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. *JRPP; Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran*, 4(2), 1. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/jrpp.v4i2.3155>
- Xia, X., & Cui, Y. (2021). Developing School-Based Curriculum as a Concept in China. *Springer Link Journal2*, 12(1), 7. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-8630-4_2
- Zidan, M. R., & Qamariah, Z. (2023). A Literature Study On The Implementation Of Merdeka Curriculum. *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Ilmu Bahasa*, 2(2), 14. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55606/jurribah.v2i2.1576>

Appendix

Questioners Sheet

Name:

Class:

QUESTIONS:

1. What do you know about English?
2. Do you like English?
3. Why do you like/dislike English? *cross out one
4. Is English an easy language for you to learn?
5. Do you like learning using Kurikulum Merdeka?
6. Does the Merdeka Curriculum help you learn English better? Or does it make it harder for you?
7. Do the barcodes on English books help you in your English lessons?
8. If yes or no, why?
9. What makes you excited to learn English?
10. Do you think it's important to play games during class with your teacher?

Figure III.8. The Form of Questionnaire