



An Analysis of English Teachers' Difficulties and Strategies in Implementing Merdeka Curriculum on the Seventh Grade at SMPN 1 Panyabungan Selatan

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Abstract

This research aimed to find out the difficulties faced by English teachers in Implementing *Merdeka* curriculum on the seventh grade at SMPN 1 Panyabungan Selatan. The researcher also analyzed the strategies used by the teachers to overcome those difficulties. To obtain the results, researcher used interview as the instrument, while the method used on this research was descriptive qualitative. As the informants, researcher chosen three first grade English teachers at SMPN 1 Panyabungan Selatan. The results of this research indicated that there were five difficulties faced by English teachers in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum. Those five difficulties were understanding new terms found in *Merdeka* curriculum (learning outcomes (CP), learning objectives (TP), the flow of learning objectives (ATP)), giving assessment (the different focus of assessing made teacher difficult to do an assessment), choosing learning styles (because the learning centre was different from the previous curriculum), unsupported library (there were no books that teachers needed related *Merdeka* curriculum implementation in the library), unsupported IT network (teachers were not able to access *Merdeka* teaching platform because of unsupported network). To overcome those difficulties, teachers used four strategies. The four strategies meant were joining webinar, looking for E-books, utilizing application on gadget (youtube and tiktok), and left the school to find supported network (if the teachers wanted to access *Merdeka* teaching platform). The findings of this research expected to give benefits for English teachers, especially to overcome the difficulties faced in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum.

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum changes not only from the name but also from the structure of the educational plan which includes many important things, including things to be coordinated, goals to be achieved in training, cycles of educating, learning and

assessment, finally how to prepare students in the future based on educational programs (Thura and Khaing, 2020). In the Merdeka curriculum, one of the reforms that needs to be paid attention to is related to the Lesson plan. At present the government has prepared Lesson Plan in the Merdeka curriculum where teachers are given the flexibility to use, provide novelty or develop their own modules based on the characteristics and needs of students referring to the elements of the Pancasila Student Profile. In addition, the lesson plan in the previous curriculum contained too many components where the teacher was required to produce an additional 5 pages each in the lesson plan. In the Merdeka curriculum, teachers have the freedom to make a modification in *Lesson Plan* which focus only on 3 main components; teaching and learning objectives, process and assessment that can be shortened into a page of Lesson Plan, while complementary are as the other components (Aulia, 2021).

According to Patriantini et al. (2022) The Merdeka Curriculum has many advantages. First is simple and prioritizes depth. The teaching and learning process in this curriculum is focused on developing students' abilities according to their level. In addition, prioritizing deepening meant that the learning process is carried out in a relaxed and enjoyable manner without being rushed by time. Second, this curriculum is more interactive. That is, students are given the opportunity to be active in exploring, and also discussing problems that are actually happening in the environment, besides that the student also learn and doing project work. Then, the Merdeka curriculum forms an independent soul. This curriculum is not having a specialization program like the one in the 2013 curriculum. Students are given the freedom to choose subjects according to their interests. In addition, teachers are also given the freedom to choose and design sources or media to support the learning process.

Teachers are the main actors in the world of education, teachers are also a determinant of success in the field of education (Hazmi,2019). In implementing Merdeka curriculum, teachers are required to be able to understand more about the procedures of the implementation. Besides that, teachers also need to change their perspective on the many novelties in this new curriculum. If the teacher does not want to make changes and also unable to carry out all the principles contained in this curriculum, so the expected optimal educational goals will not be achieved.

There are several previous study that have been researched about implementing Merdeka curriculum. First, Susiani (2022) entitled “The Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Darur Rohmah Gandu Mlarak Ponorogo Junior High School”. Second, Rizki and friends (2022) entitled “Evaluation of Implementation of Independent (Kurikulum Merdeka). Third, Pratikno and friends (2022) entitled Human Resource ‘Kurikulum Merdeka’ from Design to Implementation in The School: What Worked and What Not in Indonesian Education is aimed to gain an in-depth knowledge of the human resource of “Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar”. These study focused on the implementation of Merdeka curriculum.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was descriptive qualitative research. In this study, the researcher used interview as the instrument. The interview contained three indicators with the total questions were 17 questions. Through the interview the researcher were able to know the difficulties faced by the English teacher during the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum and also how the English teachers strategies to overcome the difficulties at SMPN 1 Panyabungan Selatan.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

The interview gave to 3 English teachers of the first grade at SMPN 1 Panyabungan Selatan. The explanations are as follows :

1. English Teachers' Difficulties

The data of teachers' difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum on the seventh grade at SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan Selatan found from analyzing interview.

1.1 Data description collected from the teacher's interview

1.1.1 Designing Material

Based on interviews with English teacher about the difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum, teachers reported that they had difficulties in designing materials. The three teachers who were interviewed had almost the same answers. T1 stated that the difficulty that she felt was in assessing, because there was difference in the focus of the assessment. The previous curriculum was focused on the academics, while in Merdeka curriculum was focused on non-academic or on the development of student's characters and morals.

While, teacher 2 (T2) said that she did not understand in differentiating core competencies (KI) and basic competencies (KD). The similar answer was also came from T3 which stated that she did not able to position between the learning objectives (TP) and the flow of learning objectives (ATP). These difficulties faced by T2 and T3 was caused by the lack of teachers' understanding related to the new terms in Merdeka curriculum.

In summary, the majority of teachers had difficulties in understanding the new terms in the Merdeka curriculum, because teacher's answer said that they had difficulties in differentiating assessment, and core competencies (KI) and basic competencies (KD). Besides that, T3 said that she had difficult in differentiating learning objectives (TP) and the flow of learning objectives (ATP).

1.1.2 Practising in the Classroom

Based on interviews with English teacher about the difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum, teachers reported that they had difficulties in practising in the classroom. The three teachers who were interviewed had almost the same answers. T1 said that she felt confused in choosing the learning style that should used in the classroom. This statement was also stated by T2 and T3.

From the three answers can be concluded that the majority of teachers had difficulties in choosing learning styles when practiced in the classroom, because they still confused and did not familiar with the learning style that should be used in Merdeka curriculum.

1.1.3 Lack of Facilities and Infrastructures

Based on interviews with English teacher about the difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum, teachers reported that they had difficulties in lack facilities and infrastructures. The three teachers who were interviewed had almost the same answers. T1 said that the facilities and infrastructures in the school was inadequate, especially in the school library, then about unsupported signal to access Merdeka teaching platform.

Not really different from T1, T2 and T3 were also stated about their difficulties because of lack of facilities. They also said that the books availability in the library was not complete. Beside that, they also difficult to find supported IT network, so that they were difficult to log in to Merdeka teaching platform.

In conclusion, on the indicator of difficulties in lack of facilities and infrastructures, most teachers said that library as facilities in the school was not adequate, because books needed in implementing Merdeka curriculum were not available there. Not only on the library, teachers also difficult to access Merdeka teaching platform. Unsupported network became the main difficulties for teachers to access it.

2. English Teachers' Strategies

The data of teachers' strategies in overcoming the difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum on the seventh grade at SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan Selatan found from analyzing interview.

2.1 Data description collected from the teacher's interview

2.1.1 Designing Material

Based on the interviews did with English teachers about the strategies in overcoming the difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum. The three teachers who were interviewed had almost the same answers. T1 stated that the strategies used in overcoming each difficulty were by reading E-book related to the Merdeka curriculum implementation. Beside that, T1 also used the applications on her gadget, like youtube and Tiktok, because watching was enjoyable for her.

Not only T1, but T2 also participated on the interview. T2 stated that she usually usually took a part in the webinar series. In addition, she also looked for the explanation regarded the implementation of Merdeka curriculum on Youtube. In line with that, T3 stated that the strategies used by her in overcoming the difficulties were taking part in webinar and using youtube and tiktok.

From the answer of three teachers can be concluded that there are three strategies that usually used by teachers to overcome the difficulties faced in designing material. The strategies meant by the teachers are joining webinar series, finding E-books related to Merdeka curriculum implementation, and using application on their gadget, like youtube and tiktok to find out some new informations needed.

1.1.2 Practising in the Classroom

Based on interviews did with English teachers about the strategies in overcoming the difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum. The three teachers who were interviewed had almost the same answers. T1 stated that she usually

looked for teaching inspiration from youtube and also tiktok, because it supported her in practising the learning style in Merdeka curriculum.

In line with that, T2 and T3 also stated about strategies that they used in overcoming the difficulties in choosing learning style when practiced in the classroom. The interview result indicated that they also used youtube and tiktok to watch educational content that helped and supported them in practising the teaching style needed in the Merdeka curriculum implementation.

From three statements about strategies above can be concluded that majority of teachers were using application in their gadget to gather any information needed in choosing learning styles when practiced in the classroom. Many creative contents related learning styles in youtube and tiktok help teachers in overcoming the difficulties faced.

1.1.3 Lack of Facilities and Infrastructures

Based on interviews did with English teachers about the strategies in overcoming the difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum. The three teachers who were interviewed had almost the same answers. T1 stated that in overcoming the incomplete book on the library, she usually used her gadget to look for E-book needed during the Merdeka curriculum implementation. In order to anticipate unsupported network, she usually went out from the school to get a good network.

Not really different from the strategies used by T1, T2 and T3 also stated that they strategies that they usually looked for E-book by using gadget to anticipate incomplete book on the school library, while to anticipate unsupported network they moved to the place that had supported signal, or utilized wifi network on the nearest cafe to log in to Merdeka teaching platform.

From the statements above can be concluded that most of teachers used E-book as the strategies to anticipate incomplete book in the school library, while the strategies used to anticipate inadequate IT signal, the teachers go or move out the school to find adequate network and then utilize Wi-fi network at a cafe or in any other places.

Discussion

Based on the findings as described above, it could be seen that teachers, especially English teachers, had difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum. However, the English teachers on the seventh grade of SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan Selatan had strategies to overcome the difficulties faced during the implementation. The following are the difficulties faced by English teachers during Merdeka curriculum implementation and the strategies used by the English teachers in overcoming the difficulties faced during implementing Merdeka curriculum on the seventh grade at SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan Selatan.

1. Teachers' Difficulties in Implementing Merdeka Curriculum

Based on the data obtained from interviews with the first grade English teachers of SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan Selatan, there were several difficulties faced by English teachers during implementing Merdeka curriculum. The following are the difficulties means:

1.1 Designing Material

Implementing Merdeka curriculum especially on the seventh grade at SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan Selatan caused the teachers to face several difficulties on the implementation. One of the difficulties is on the aspect of designing material. Based on the data obtained from interviews, it was indicated that English teachers, especially on the seventh grade at SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan Selatan faced several difficulties in implementing Merdeka curriculum. The main difficulties faced by teachers is on differentiating the new terms, such as core competencies (KI) and basic competencies (KD), and learning objectives (TP) and the flow of learning objectives (ATP). Besides that, the way of giving assessment is also became the difficulties. According to Sukmadinata (2002), the limited of teacher's knowledge became the main difficulty in implementing curriculum. In the Merdeka curriculum, teachers are required to be creative especially in designing material. Therefore, teachers should have sufficient knowledge about the implementation of Merdeka curriculum.

1.2 Practising in the Classroom

Based on the findings, the teachers had difficulties in practising in the classroom aspect. The majority of teachers said that they had difficulties in choosing learning styles. According Xavier Bonal (2021) to one solution to the problem of overcoming the various existing difficulties is to update the learning system or curriculum. The curriculum will determine material or study guides while in class. Besides that, Mandukwini (2016), in Karakus (2021) stated that teacher's interest is the main cause of teacher's difficulties in implementing the curriculum. In this case the teacher prefers the old one and does not want to know about the new innovation.

1.3 Lack of Facilities and Infrastructures

Based on the findings, there were some difficulties faced by teachers because of lack facilities and infrastructures. First, teachers said that they were difficult to get books that they need in the library, because the books regarding Merdeka curriculum implementation are not available in the library. This case made the teachers difficult to gather new information needed during Merdeka curriculum implementation. As the second difficulties faced by teachers is on accessing Merdeka curriculum platform. Unsupported IT signal in the school became the difficulties for teachers to access the platform. According to Sojanah et al. (2021), facilities and infrastructure are the best supporter in making the learning process be good, varied, memorable, and interesting. In line with regulation of the national ministry of education number 24 of 2007, there are several types of facilities and infrastructure that every school must have, such as library, science laboratory, leadership room, teacher's room, prayer room, student health unit, and toilets.

2. Teachers' Strategies in Overcoming the Difficulties

Based on the data obtained from interviews with the first grade English teachers of SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan Selatan, there were several strategies that are usually used by English teachers to overcome the difficulties faced during implementing Merdeka curriculum. The following are the strategies used in the three aspects:

1.1 Designing Material

Based on the findings, teachers had some strategies in overcoming difficulties faced in designing material aspect. From teacher's answers on the interviews, it can be concluded that there are three strategies used by the teacher when they faced the difficulties, the three strategies meant are using E-book to get some new information about Merdeka curriculum implementation, especially in designing material. Besides that, the teachers also used some applications in their gadget, like youtube and tiktok, in order to get additional information. The last, teachers joined webinar to get new knowledge from the mentor. As stated on the article in [ditpsd.kemendikbud](https://ditpsd.kemendikbud.go.id) website (2022), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has made six strategies that should be used by the teachers during the implementation of Merdeka curriculum. To be avoided from the difficulties and doubts, Teachers and headmaster are suggested to learn by using Merdeka Mengajar platform, join webinar, follow the Merdeka curriculum learning community, learn and practice from provided mentor, use helpdesk to get more information, and make a cooperation with development partner related to the implementation Merdeka curriculum.

1.2 Practising in the Classroom

Based on the findings, teachers had some strategies in overcoming difficulties faced in the aspect of practising in the classroom. From teacher's answers on the interviews can be concluded that majority of teachers utilized some applications in their gadget, such as youtube and tiktok to watch many creative contents. It was very important to get inspirations in the learning styles that should be used by the teacher during practiced in the classroom. According to Rianingsih (2015) strategy is the same as the plan used to get something. In the process of teaching and learning strategy is an activity that involves teachers and students in order to create an effective and efficient learning process. The teacher holds the first obligation in making a strategy, while students will follow the learning according to the strategy made by the teacher.

1.3 Lack of Facilities and Infrastructures

Based on the findings, teachers had some strategies in overcoming difficulties faced because of lack of facilities and infrastructures aspect. From teacher's answers on the interviews can be concluded that majority of teachers usually used E-book to anticipate incomplete book in the school library, while to anticipate the difficulties in accessing Merdeka teaching platform because of unsupported IT network, the teachers utilized Wi-fi network in many places or go out from the school to get better signal. According to Ambarwati et.al (2015) in website (2020), the facilities and infrastructure are not only for the realization of an independent way of thinking, but supporting facilities and infrastructure are also very necessary for the creation of a conducive atmosphere when carrying out the teaching and learning process. Students, educators and educational staff as active users of facilities and infrastructure have the right to become users or developers of available facilities and infrastructure and are used in the teaching and learning process in schools.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this research, it was indicated that there were five difficulties faced by English teachers in implementing *Merdeka* curriculum. Those

five difficulties were understanding new terms found in Merdeka curriculum (learning outcomes (CP), learning objectives (TP), the flow of learning objectives (ATP)), giving assessment (the different focus of assessing made teacher difficult to do an assessment), choosing learning styles (because the learning centre was different from the previous curriculum), unsupported library (there were no books that teachers needed related Merdeka curriculum implementation in the library), unsupported IT network (teachers were not able to access Merdeka teaching platform because of unsupported network). To overcome those difficulties, teachers used four strategies. The four strategies meant were joining webinar, looking for E-books, utilizing application on gadget (youtube and tiktok), and left the school to get supported network (if the teachers wanted to access Merdeka teaching platform).

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