



Analysis of Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English Learning Process at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang

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Article History

Published: 2023-11-10

Abstract

This research analyzed the implementation of *Kurikulum* in the learning process of English subjects at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang. This research is focused on the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the differentiated learning process in English subjects at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang. The design of this research is descriptive research. Indicators of this research were divided into three categories based on Tomlinson (2001), three important aspects of student learning needs in differentiated learning are readiness to learn, interest in learning and student learning profile. The data were collected by using interview. The participants of this research were English teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang. The result of this research showed that the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the first year at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang was quite good. Teachers use a variety of media, guidance that suits students' learning styles and different assignments according to students' abilities. This method is applied to meet student needs in three categories, namely readiness to learn, interest in learning and student learning profile. From the results of this research, it can be concluded that the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the differentiated learning process in English subjects at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang is quite good in meeting students' needs for readiness to learn, interest in learning and student learning profile.

Keywords:

Kurikulum Merdeka,
differentiated learning

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How to Cite: Sukma, M. A., & Trisno, E. (2023). Analysis of Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English Learning Process at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 12(4): pp. 1200-1207, DOI: [10.24036/jelt.v12i4.125624](https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v12i4.125624)

INTRODUCTION

Providing a guide for what students should learn and how they should learn in an educational context, curriculum is essential to the learning process (Thompson et al., 2013). The curriculum is an objective, context and strategy of education. Therefore curriculum is designed as the foundation of the flow of education. Each curriculum design has its own goals and is an improvement from the previous curriculum. Indonesian education has undergone curriculum changes eleven times

since 1947. The Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Nadiem Makarim has issued a new policy namely *Merdeka Belajar* which aims to create freedom of thought and freedom of autonomy given to educational elements that aim to provide space for students to develop their potential. *Kurikulum Merdeka* is the philosophy of *Merdeka Belajar* which too underlies educational policies, as stated in Strategic Plan of the Ministry of education and Culture Year 2020-2024 (Permendikbud Number 22 of 2020). According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2021), the use of differentiated learning will be a flexible and non-rigid application of the curriculum to achieve educational goals at school. Tomlinson (2001) argues that in differentiated learning, teachers teach the material by taking into account the learners' readiness level, interests and learning styles. Through the application of this learning process teachers can serve learners according to their individual circumstances. It is learning that accommodates the needs of each individual to gain learning experience and mastery of the concepts being studied (Marlina, 2019).

According to Tomlinson (2001), there are three important aspects as student learning needs in differentiated learning including:

- a. Readiness (the capacity to learn new material). The purpose of searching for student learning needs based on the level of learning readiness is to modify the level of difficulty in learning materials, so that students are ensured that their learning needs are met (Fitra, 2022). There are 6 perspectives that we can use to determine the level of student readiness: information is basic - it is transformative, concrete – abstract, simple – complex, structured – open, dependent - independent, slow – fast.
- b. Interest of learning, Tomlinson (2001: 53), says that the purpose of doing interest-based learning is as follows: Helping students to realize the connection between school and their own love for learning; demonstrating the connectedness between all learning; use skills or ideas that are known to students as a bridge to learn new ideas or skills, and; increasing student motivation to learn.
- c. Student Learning profile. According to Marlina (2019), student learning profile refers to ways of how to identify/map student learning needs based on learning profiles. The student learning profile is related to many factors, for instance: learning environment (related to room temperature, noise level, amount of light, etc.), cultural influences (relaxed – structured, reserved – expressive, personal – impersonal), learning style preferences (visual, auditory, kinesthetic)
- d. Preferences based on multiple intelligences: visual-spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, verbal-linguistic, naturalist, logic-mathematical.

Differentiated learning can meet students' learning needs and help achieve optimal learning outcomes. In order for differentiated learning to meet students' learning needs and help achieve optimal learning outcomes, the teacher must implement 3 differentiated learning strategies as follow (Tomlinson, 2001):

1) Content differentiation

Content is what we teach students. Content can be differentiated in response to different levels of student readiness, interest, learning profile or combinations of readiness level, interest and learning profile. In differentiated learning there are two ways to create different lesson content, namely:

- a. Adjust what will be taught by the teacher or what will be learned by students based on the level of readiness and interest of students.
- b. Adjust how the content to be taught or learned will be conveyed by the teacher or obtained by students based on the learning profile (style) owned by each student.

Strategies that can be carried out by the teacher to be able to differentiate the content that will be studied by students are:

- a. present a variety of materials;
- b. using learning contracts;
- c. provide mini-learning;
- d. present material with various learning modes;
- e. provide various supporting systems.

2) Process differentiation

The process is how students will understand or interpret what information/material is being taught. The process prepared is in the form of group or individual activities and how much assistance is given to students such as tiered activities where students build understanding with complexities; guide questions and challenges, individual agenda for students (the list of tasks differs between general and individual tasks, variations of time/length of time, build a variety of learning strategies, use flexible grouping. Activities carried out must meet the criteria as activities that:

- a. Good, namely activities that use the information skills possessed by students.
- b. Differ in terms of difficulty level and how to achieve it.
- c.

Meaningful activities carried out by students in the classroom must also be differentiated based on readiness, interests, and also the learning profile (style) of students.

3) Product differentiation

Product differentiation is the result of work and performance that is expected from students or that students must show to the teacher. Products must reflect student understanding and relate to the expected learning objectives. Before determining learning products, it is necessary to consider student learning needs including student expectations, quality, content and nature of the final product.

The teacher designs what products students will work on in accordance with the knowledge, understanding, and skills they must demonstrate. The teacher also needs to determine the assessment criteria in the rubric so that students know what will be assessed and what quality is expected from each aspect that they must fulfill. Teachers also need to explain how students can present their products so that other

students can also see the products made. Products that will be worked on by students, of course, must be differentiated according to the readiness, interests, and learning profiles of students.

Kurikulum Merdeka is applied throughout the schools Indonesia, including SMA Negeri 1 Palembang which is one of the *Sekolah Penggerak* in Agam Regency. This school used the *Kurikulum Merdeka* for the first time in the 2022/2023 school year and is only used in class X. Class X consists of 3 study classrooms with approximately 64 students. English subjects are included in subjects that use differentiated learning. The English teacher must be able to meet the needs of 64 students and be able to serve students with individual characteristics and differences in terms of readiness, interest and learning profile in the process of differentiated learning.

There were several previous studies about *Kurikulum Merdeka* and Differentiated Learning, such as Zidan (2023) who studied the comparison between *2013 curriculum* and *Kurikulum Merdeka*; Halim (2023) who researched about teaching english with differentiated instructions at a junior high school in Taiwan; Djatmika & Astutik (2023) who studied the mapping done by teachers in elementary schools regarding students' backgrounds before they apply differentiated instruction; and Merliza (2023) which in her study she described the mentoring activities carried out with the aim that the participants of the batch 2 driving school program can fully understand the concept of learning that is embedded in students, understand the school ecosystem that is the place for students to practice examples of learning that strengthen students so that they are committed to implementing learning and ecosystems that contain students.

All the topics discussed by the researchers above have in common with the topics discussed by the researcher. However, the above researchers focus on discussing the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at the school level. The discussion only focuses on the achievements made by the education unit level. Meanwhile, in this discussion, the researcher analyzes and discusses the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at the *Sekolah Penggerak* (SMA Negeri 1 Palembang), which focuses on the differentiated learning process in English subjects. On the basis of these problems the researcher wanted to examine "Analysis of Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English Learning Process at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang".

METHOD

The researcher conducted descriptive research in order to describe the phenomena and fact. The researcher focused on the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the differentiated learning process in English subjects at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang. The participants of this study were English teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang. Because of the number of the students, this school only has one English teacher. In this research, the research collected the data by using interviews.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

1. Implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the differentiated learning process in English subjects at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang.

a. Readiness to learn

Based on the results of interviews with Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd., there are several methods that can be used to determine students' readiness in the learning process. But how to determine which method should be applied to students who have different levels of understanding. As stated by Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd.: *“Setelah dilakukan pengolahan hasil asesmen diagnostic kognitif dengan kategori paham utuh, paham sebagian, dan tidak paham, maka siswa dibagi menjadi 3 kelompok yaitu siswa dengan nilai rata-rata akan mengikuti pembelajaran dengan alur tujuan pembelajaran sesuai fasenya. Kedua, siswa dengan nilai dibawah rata-rata mengikuti pembelajaran dengan melakukan pendampingan pada kompetensi yang belum dipenuhi. Sementara yang ketiga, siswa dengan nilai diatas rata-rata mengikuti pembelajaran dengan pengayaan”*. Implementing these methods certainly has challenges that can become obstacles in their implementation. The challenge is how the assessment used can meet the needs and characteristics of students in learning.

b. Interest of learning

Each student has different interests, as stated by Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd., the strategies used to differentiate processes according to students' interests. In developing students' interests, there are challenges for examples Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd face challenges of the low student motivation and student backgrounds that do not have trained motivation to obtain comparisons. The way to overcome this challenge is for them to have other school friends who have trained motivation and motivation that can be a trigger for them to develop.

c. Student learning profile

Based on the results of an interview with Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd., how to apply student learning style preferences to meet the student's learning profile. As Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd., said: *“Tentunya dengan gaya belajar yang berbeda, ada siswa yang audio, visual dan ada yang kinestetik. Maka akan mempengaruhi strategi yang berbeda juga, media yang tentu berbeda serta tagihan tugas juga yang berbeda”*. Mrs. Kurniati also added: *“Sebenarnya kecerdasan tidak mempengaruhi gaya belajar. Karena kecerdasan sudah ada sejak lahir. Akan tetapi strategi dan media yang berbeda serta tagihan tugas yang berbeda itu yang diterapkan sesuai gaya belajar”*.

2. Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) in the differentiated learning process in English subjects at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang.

Based on the results of an interview with Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd., the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is related to or not far from the platform, namely *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)*. *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* is an application that provides content or menus that can be used by teachers in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in educational units, learning to become better teachers, helping teachers innovate to create learning according to the demands of the times to improve their competence and also develop widely. Then how to use this platform is by opening or

selecting menus that are tailored to the teacher's learning needs, for example accessing the menu for teaching tools and student assessments and so on.

This platform has a big impact on students' needs related to differentiated learning, namely in terms of students' readiness, interests and learning profiles. As Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd., said: “*Dengan memanfaatkan Platform Merdeka Mengajar diharapkan kompetensi guru akan meningkat sehingga dapat melaksanakan pembelajaran yang berdiferensiasi dalam hal proses pembelajaran. Jadi PMM ini sangat bagus sekali karena dapat menjadi pedoman bagi guru meningkatkan kompetensinya dalam mengajar. Dari contoh- contoh yang sudah ada dalam PMM guru dapat melaksanakan praktik bahkan dapat melakukan inovasi-inovasi dalam pembelajaran*”.

Based on the results of the interview with Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd., this is the first year that SMA Negeri 1 Palembang has implemented the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in grade 10 and of course using this platform will have challenges. As stated by Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd.,: “*Tantangan yang dihadapi menggunakan Platform Merdeka Mengajar ini adalah bagaimana guru dapat memanfaatkan PMM dengan keterbatasan waktu yang ada, tetapi mampu menciptakan proses pembelajaran yang berdiferensiasi sesuai kebutuhan siswa yang beragam*”.

DISCUSSION

1. Implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the differentiated learning process in English subjects at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang.

After conducting research at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang with an English teacher, Mrs Kurniati, S.Pd., the researcher knows that the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the 2022/2023 academic year is quite good even though there are several challenges that teachers must face in implementing differentiated learning.

a. Readiness to learn

Readiness to learn (readiness) is the capacity to learn new material (Tomlinson, 2001). Students' readiness in the learning process in class according to the results of information from the English teacher is by carrying out diagnostic assessments on students, both non-cognitive diagnostics and cognitive diagnostics. The method used can be through observation, distributing questionnaires or through written tests, non-cognitive diagnostics, methods such as observation, questionnaires or interviews. Meanwhile, cognitive diagnostic methods include written tests. After processing the results of the cognitive diagnostic assessment into categories of complete understanding, partial understanding and non-understanding, students are divided into 3 groups, namely students with average scores will take part in learning with a flow of learning objectives according to the phase. Second, students with grades below the average take part in learning by providing assistance on competencies that have not been met. Meanwhile, thirdly, students with grades above the average take part in enrichment learning. In this readiness indicator, teachers face challenges, namely how the assessments used can meet the needs and characteristics of students in learning. The purpose of searching for student learning needs based on the level of learning readiness is to modify the level of difficulty in learning materials, so that students are ensured that their learning needs are met (Fitra, 2022).

b. Interest of learning

Interest is a mental state that produces a directed response to a certain situation or object that is fun and gives self-satisfaction (Tomlinson, 2001). Every student has different interests. Therefore, this is also a challenge for teachers to be able to develop students' interests optimally. The strategy used by English teachers is to group students according to their interests. Therefore, each student will contribute to the learning process according to their interests. Teachers also play an important role in motivating students to realize their interests. However, the challenge is that students' low motivation, especially in learning English, means that teachers have to work harder to modify learning strategies so that students feel comfortable and happy in learning English. Apart from that, the absence of comparisons for students also makes students continue to maintain low motivation and makes them believe that English is a science that is difficult to understand.

c. Student learning profile

The third indicator is the student learning profile. According to Marlina (2019), student learning profile refers to ways of how to identify or map student learning needs based on learning profiles in order to provide opportunities for students to learn naturally and efficiently. According to information from the English teacher, in terms of learning profiles which include student learning styles, namely audio, visual and kinesthetic, English teachers get results of student learning styles from guidance and counseling teachers. Each student has been tested and received the results of their learning style from the test conducted by the guidance and counseling teacher. Therefore, English teachers are helped by this to determine strategies in the learning process. The strategy used by English teachers is to use a variety of media, and assignments are also different for each student. Students are also grouped by combining each student with a different learning style to foster a high sense of solidarity.

Based on interviews conducted, the main challenge faced by English teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang is insufficient time in the learning process. The time available is very minimal considering the low motivation of students. Students must be guided intensively to understand each topic being studied. So teachers always try to narrow down each topic in order to be able to achieve learning objectives in an inappropriate amount of time.

2. Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) in the differentiated learning process in English subjects at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang.

Kurikulum Merdeka cannot be separated from the *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)*. *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)* was created to support the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* so that teachers can get references, inspiration and understanding in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Merdeka Mengajar, 2022). Based on one year's experience that has been passed by the English teacher, *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* is used as a guide in the learning process. *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* provides a menu of teaching tools and student assessments. *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* is also a tool to improve teacher competency to be better. Products of independent teaching activities include: a). Student assessments, which help teachers take literacy and numeracy tests quickly so teachers can implement them learning based on student performance and level of

development. b). Teaching tools, which contain various learning materials to support teaching and learning activities, such as teaching materials, learning modules, project modules, or textbooks (Merdeka Mengajar, 2022).

The challenge is how teachers can utilize *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* with limited time, but are able to create a differentiated learning process according to the diverse needs of students. However, basically, *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* is a very good and useful platform even though it has not been used optimally in the first year of implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

CONCLUSION

After conducting research at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang with an English teacher, Mrs. Kurniati, S.Pd., the researcher can conclude that the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the 2022/2023 academic year is quite good even though there are several challenges that teachers must face in implementing differentiated learning. Apart from that, teachers are also not optimal in using the *Platform Merdeka Mengajar*. So far, English teachers have only used the platform as a guide in carrying out teaching and learning activities in the classroom and have not involved students in using this platform.

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