

A Review of English for Vocational High School in Curriculum Merdeka

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Abstract. *This research aims to determine the effect of the curriculum Merdeka on Vocation High School students. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with library research methods. The data collection technique is by collecting several references, such as books, articles, and other related sources. Then the data analysis technique used in this research is content analysis, with the stages of presenting data, data reduction, data verification, and concluding. In this study uses descriptive qualitative research. The results of the study show that there is an influence of the curriculum Merdeka on Vocation High School students and the impact is that students can work well in their respective fields. Meanwhile, the teacher participates in the process because the way the teacher teaches by implementing the independent curriculum affects students in learning.*

Keywords: *English language , curriculum merdeka, Vocational High School.*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh kurikulum Merdeka terhadap siswa SMK. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode penelitian kepustakaan. Teknik pengumpulan datanya adalah dengan mengumpulkan beberapa referensi, seperti buku, artikel, dan sumber terkait lainnya. Kemudian teknik analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis isi, dengan tahapan penyajian data, reduksi data, verifikasi data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Dalam penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya pengaruh kurikulum Merdeka terhadap siswa SMK dan dampaknya siswa dapat bekerja dengan baik di bidangnya masing-masing. Sedangkan guru ikut serta dalam proses karena cara guru mengajar dengan menerapkan kurikulum mandiri mempengaruhi siswa dalam belajar.

Kata kunci: Bahasa Inggris, Kurikulum Merdeka, Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan.

INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka curriculum has been implemented in vocational high schools in Indonesia, including in the English subject. Several studies have been conducted to explore the perspectives of vocational high school English teachers on this curriculum. The studies aim to identify the teachers' perspectives on the Merdeka curriculum in terms of its concept and lesson plan, as well as to explore their understanding, obstacles, and expectations. The ADDIE step (Analysis, Design, Develop, Implementation, Evaluation) has been used to evaluate the curriculum's implementation. The curriculum is seen as a plan to achieve the expected results from a lesson and to provide guidance and instruction to teachers. However, there is still a need to improve the implementation of the curriculum to ensure its effectiveness. The Merdeka Curriculum is a further translation of the spirit of "Freedom of Learning". It is based on the idea of reducing and simplifying learning materials so that they can be more focused, not uniformized, and can liberate students according to their interests, talents, and passions. With the Merdeka Curriculum, in principle, in the first year, all learning materials are still taught to all students, but with reduced and/or compressed portions, as well as with the target achievement of learners who do not have to become experts in all fields.

In the process of teaching and learning at all levels of education, the curriculum is a must because the curriculum serves as a blueprint for achieving institutional and national education goals. Curriculum literally comes from the Latin verb, *currere*, which means "to run" (Bandi & Wales, 2005). Curriculum, in the definition of old terminology, as described by Dewey (1902) as a continuous reconstruction, starting from the previous unit has been mastered by the learner. Therefore, basically the curriculum can be interpreted as a set of approaches, goals, and materials in the teaching and learning process that will be learned and/or achieved.

The study found that vocational high school English teachers have a positive perspective on the Merdeka Curriculum. They believe that the curriculum is relevant and suitable for vocational high school students. The teachers also appreciate the flexibility of the curriculum, which allows them to tailor their lessons to the interests, talents, and passions of their students. However, the teachers also face challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in their English classes. These challenges include a lack of resources, a lack of training, and a lack of support from school administrators.

Education in Indonesia has undergone several changes to the curriculum system with the aim of improving it. The efforts made by the government in improving it are changing and innovating the curriculum. Among them, the KTSP/2006 curriculum became the 2013 curriculum to become the Free Learning Curriculum. Freedom to learn is a policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. The Independent Curriculum is implemented with the aim of training students' independence in thinking. The most important core of freedom of thought is addressed to the teacher. If the teacher in teaching is not yet independent in teaching, of course students are also not independent in thinking.

The Merdeka Curriculum is a new educational system that aims to produce competent, innovative, and characterful graduates. The English curriculum for vocational high schools in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum is an important aspect of the curriculum. The study found that vocational high school English teachers have a positive perspective on the Merdeka Curriculum. However, the teachers also face challenges in implementing the curriculum in their English classes. The study recommends that the government provide more resources, training, and support to vocational high school English teachers to help them implement the Merdeka Curriculum effectively.

THEORETICAL STUDY

Theoretical concept is the help of theories that are used as a basis for thinking to carry out a research or in other words to describe the frame of reference or theory used to study the problem.

This theoretical study deals with the influence of the Merdeka curriculum in English on SMK students. For more details, the author will describe it as follows:

1. Independent Curriculum

a. Definition of Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum or often referred to as the Independent Learning Curriculum is a curriculum with various intra-curricular learning, where the content presented to students will be more optimal with the aim that students can have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competence. In the Independent Curriculum, teachers have the flexibility to choose various teaching tools, so that learning can be adapted to the learning needs and interests of students. The Merdeka Curriculum uses a project basis to strengthen the achievement of the Pancasila student profile. This project

was developed based on a certain theme set by the government. The project is not directed to achieve certain learning achievement targets, so it is not tied to subject content.

b. Background of the Independent Curriculum

The Freedom to Learn curriculum is motivated by the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) which shows that 70% of students aged 15 years are below the minimum competence in understanding simple reading or applying basic mathematical concepts. This PISA score has not experienced a significant increase in the last 10-15 years. In addition, there are large disparities between regions and between socio-economic groups in terms of the quality of learning which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To overcome this, the Ministry of Education and Culture and Research and Technology simplified the curriculum in special conditions which was then referred to as the Emergency Curriculum. This curriculum was implemented to mitigate learning loss during the pandemic. As a result, 31.5% of schools using the Emergency Curriculum indicated that using this curriculum could reduce the impact of the pandemic by 73% for literacy and 86% for numeracy. The effectiveness of this Emergency Curriculum increasingly shows that curriculum changes are important to be carried out in a more comprehensive manner. Therefore, the Independent Curriculum was drafted as a new curriculum that is more comprehensive than the previous curriculum.

2. The influence of English on SMK students

Vocational High School (SMK) students should have good English skills in order to support their skills so they are more ready to work and compete. In addition, English also functions as the language of instruction for various knowledge, especially in the field of Computer Science and Technology. The Ministry of National Education (2004) stipulates that the ability that must be possessed by Indonesian students is to understand and express information, thoughts, feelings, and develop science, technology, and culture using English.

In addition, English is one of the subjects tested in the National Examination. Therefore, students must obtain grades according to the established standard of English scores in order to graduate from school. Thus, it is hoped that SMK students can be serious and enthusiastic about learning English so that they are able to master English lessons well and have an impact on good English grades as well.

METHODOLOGY INTRODUCTIONS

The research method is library research. The use of this method was chosen to collect several articles and studies that are similar to the subject discussed. Several articles serve as references for discussion. Each article discussed is then analyzed and concluded to attract public opinion according to the topic of study. Mendes, Wohlin, Felizardo, & Kalinowski, (2020) states the process of library research done by reviewing the literature and analyzing combined relevant topics. Library search sources such as journals, books, dictionaries, documents, magazines, and other sources without conducting field research. Apriyanti, Sharif, Ramadhan, Zaim, & Agustina (2019) state that provision of new theory with technical support proper data collection constitutes a form there is a literature review.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Merdeka Curriculum is a new education system that aims to produce graduates who are competent, innovative and have strong character. This curriculum is based on the spirit of "Learning Independence" and is designed to reduce and simplify learning materials so that they are more focused and adapted to students' interests, talents and hobbies. The Merdeka Curriculum is one of the answers to the challenges faced by Vocational High Schools (SMK) and Vocational High Schools (PTV) in Indonesia which are closely related to the industrial world. This study aims to review the English language curriculum for vocational high schools in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. This study will identify teachers' views on the Merdeka Learning curriculum in terms of concepts and lesson plans.

English for Vocational High School (EVHS) plays a crucial role in equipping students with the necessary language skills for success in their vocational careers. The curriculum known as "Curriculum Merdeka" has been implemented in recent years, aiming to provide a holistic and practical education to students.

In English so far, students have a positive attitude towards English lessons, learning is still teacher-centered, the learning process takes place conventionally and does not use learning media which increases complete learning. Based on the assessment of students, teachers and experts stated that the multimedia model that was developed received a positive response as a medium to improve students' learning abilities in learning English so that it became an alternative solution to improve the quality of learning that has been going on so far. Based on the search results of the articles, it can be proven that the use of interactive multimedia in learning English will really help students, especially in disadvantaged groups. Good learning outcomes are basically inseparable from all the learning processes that have been described, one thing that cannot be taken for granted is that making students enjoy learning is far more important than having to demand that they want to learn in order to become champions or achieve certain results or achievements, students achievement but obtained by force certainly will not last long. Students who can feel that learning is something fun have a greater curiosity will greatly affect the success of their studies in the future. One alternative solution so that students can learn in a fun way is to provide interactive learning media. Computer-based interactive media is expected to activate the potential of teachers and students in teaching-learning interactions.

Based on the background of thought above, it appears that instructional media is very important in learning English so that students can master both oral and written language skills in certain literacy. The availability of media is important because the teacher is not the only source of learning as well as the medium for delivering it. To overcome these problems, research is needed regarding the development of instructional media. One adequate effort for this is to develop interactive learning media in learning English. By using interactive learning media, it is hoped that learning objectives can be increased.

a. Impact of English on secondary Vocational High School

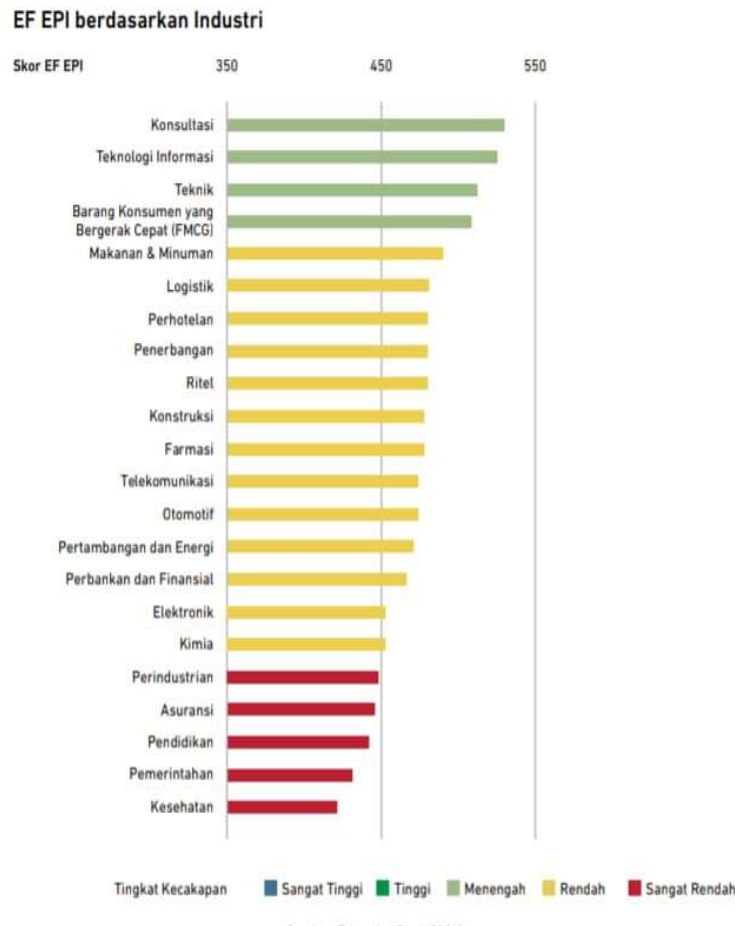
One of the types and levels of secondary education in Indonesia is the Vocational High School (SMK), namely a high school that prepares its graduates to be able to go directly into the world of work. SMK apart from having productive or vocational subjects also has general subjects known as adaptive and normative names. English is one of the subjects included in adaptive subjects. English subject is one of the subjects taught to improve students' language skills. The basic core of language mastery is as a tool for communicating. English as a

tool for communicating orally and in writing can be used to convey information, thoughts and feelings. Mastery of English at the middle class level, especially for vocational students, is emphasized so that vocational graduates become individuals who are ready to play an active role in global competition. For this reason, learning English in Vocational Schools is oriented towards mastering aspects of language and communication skills which are used as capital to enter the world of work. In other words, learning English in vocational high schools is aimed at shaping SMK graduates into graduates who are ready to use to fill various job opportunities in the global market.

English skills are also important for getting internship and job training opportunities. According to Labor Law No. 13/2003, students are allowed to work as long as the work is part of the education and training curriculum. In the context of SMK, students can participate in a program called Industrial Work Practices or Field Work Training, where they receive on-the-job training from companies as practical experience. Regulation of the Minister of Finance no. 128/2019 also imposes a reduction in gross income to private sectors and industries that provide apprenticeship and capacity building programs for SMK students to increase their competitiveness. However, to be accepted into these programs, students must also meet the competency fields required by each company. In other words, employers may require a certain level of English proficiency.

The four basic English skills (speaking, writing, reading and listening) which are considered the most important skills can be used in a variety of ways depending on the industry. Findings from a study by Cambridge English (2016) on 5,373 employees in 38 countries (including Indonesia) show that, although English skills are required differently in each industry, 11 industries generally state that reading skills are most important, followed by skills listening across nine industries. The ability to read English is useful when employees are working on matters related to contracts or other administrative tasks, while listening skills are essential for interacting with colleagues or clients. A study conducted by Prima (2022) on the perception of English skills among Indonesian hotel employees shows that speaking and listening skills are considered the two most important skills.

It is also important to note that the minimum English proficiency requirements provided by employers may vary depending on the type of job and the sector. The business sector, such as banking and finance, requires advanced English skills, while lower English skills may still be acceptable in the service sector where interactions with consumers and guests can be carried out on a relatively more casual basis, such as in tourism or hospitality. The English Proficiency Index published by English First (2021) shows that there are variations in the level of English language skills of employees in various industrial sectors (picture 1).



Source: English First (2021)

Picture 1. English proficiency index by industry

The English Proficiency Index provides an overview of employees' English skills in various sectors, broadly reflecting the degree to which English is used in their jobs. This index provides an overview regarding the minimum English proficiency expected based on their specific industry. For example, a SMK graduate wishing to work in the information technology and engineering sector will need to have at least a moderate level of English proficiency (able to participate in meetings and write professional emails) to suit the skill level of employees in the sector.

English is also a tool for developing science, technology and culture. The ability to communicate in a complete sense is the ability to discourse, namely the ability to understand and/or produce spoken and/or written texts that are realized in the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are used to respond to or create discourse in people's lives. Therefore, English subjects are directed at developing these skills so that students are able to communicate in English at a certain level of literacy. The expected literacy in learning English at Vocational High Schools is that students can reach communication and informational levels because they are prepared to be able to go directly into the world of work and continue their education to tertiary institutions. The following are some reasons for the importance of English in education:

1. Can Continue Education Abroad

Continuing education to a higher level, especially foreign tertiary institutions, is the dream of many students. However, please note that if you want to continue your education abroad or work abroad, you must master English well. Where being proficient in English is the main requirement to be accepted at your dream campus or workplace.

2. Add Insights and Experience

There are many insights and experiences that will be gained if you master English. As you know, English is an international language that is widely used in writing articles, journals, books, and even movies, although a lot of English is also used. If you want to master English, it will be easier to understand the contents of the journals, books, articles or magazines you

read. In addition, when watching a film it becomes easy to understand what the film is telling and what its content or message is like.

3. Increase Intelligence

It should be noted that mastering more than one language can actually increase intelligence. This is because mastering more than one language will have a positive impact on brain development. Besides that, it can also prevent you from senile disease.

4. It's easier to understand technology

Easy to understand technology. So far, people who think that technology is clueless have minimal English skills. Even though the majority of today's newest technology, such as laptops, smartphones, televisions, software to machines are operated in English.

In order to educate quality graduates, learning English in Vocational High Schools should impart two knowledges, namely linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic knowledge. This linguistic knowledge includes knowledge of linguistic aspects starting from the sound system, word order, sentence structure, and the meaning of English used in work contexts. In addition, students are also equipped with non-linguistic knowledge, one of which is socio-cultural knowledge that is integrated in learning English (Margana, 2009). With this non-linguistic knowledge, SMK graduates are able to use language according to the context so that mis-conceptions and miscommunication can be minimized. In addition, students also need to be equipped with local cultures that are integrated into learning English so that the noble local culture is not eroded by the target culture. Therefore, learning English should integrate two cultures, namely the target culture and local culture which are integrated into various English learning process activities such as learning listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. The integration of the two cultures in learning English offers various advantages including (1) fostering intercultural awareness, (2) developing a sense of sensitivity to cultural differences, (3) fostering a sense of pride in local culture, (4) developing local wisdom, (5) developing an understanding of low context culture, and (6) developing real experience-based learning English (Margana, 2009; Sukarno, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The Merdeka Curriculum is a new educational system that aims to produce graduates who are competent, innovative, and have a strong character. The Merdeka Curriculum is one of the answers to the challenges faced by vocational high schools (SMK) and vocational colleges (PTV) in Indonesia, which are closely connected to the industrial world. English for Vocational High School (EVHS) plays a crucial role in equipping students with the necessary language skills for success in their vocational careers. This review aims to examine the effectiveness of the English for Vocational High School program within the Curriculum Merdeka framework. English is one of the subjects included in adaptive subjects. English subject is one of the subjects taught to improve students' language skills. English is also a tool for developing science, technology and culture. The ability to communicate in a complete sense is the ability to discourse, namely the ability to understand and/or produce spoken and/or written texts that are realized in the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Continuing education to a higher level, especially foreign tertiary institutions, is the dream of many students. Where being proficient in English is the main requirement to be accepted at your dream campus or workplace. There are many insights and experiences that will be gained if you master English.

It should be noted that mastering more than one language can actually increase intelligence. This is because mastering more than one language will have a positive impact on brain development. Easy to understand technology. In order to educate quality graduates, learning English in Vocational High Schools should impart two knowledges, namely linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic knowledge. In addition, students also need to be equipped with local cultures that are integrated into learning English so that the noble local culture is not eroded by the target culture.

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