Teacher Challenges in Teaching Writing Skills through Merdeka Curriculum in SMAN 1 Pabedilan

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ABSTRACT

Merdeka curriculum is a curriculum approach intoduced in Indonesia to provide more flexibility to schools and teachers who design and implement the education curriculum. This research aims to find out the challenges faced by teachers in teaching writing skills through merdeka curriculum. This study explores the various challenges teachers face. This research article uses a qualitative descriptive method. The data in this study were obtained by conducting an interview with an English teacher at SMAN 1 Pabedilan. The findings show that the biggest challenge in implementing merdeka curriculum, especially in teaching writing is adjusting the diversity of students' ability levels and teacher lacks undertanding in using technology. Based on the findings, teachers need to take a more in-depth approach to determine students' abilities and schools are advised to organize training for teachers on effective strategies and methods of teaching writing. This training should include the use of technology, creative appproaches and assessment methods in accordance with merdeka curriculum.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Merdeka curriculum is an education initiative launched in 2020 by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and aims to offer a boarder and more inclusive approach to education by emphasizing critical thinking skills, creativity, and character a long side academic knowledge (Zidan, 2023). Merdeka curriculum is a continuation of efforts to improve the curriculum in 2013. The following are some features merdeka curriculum: 1) the development of soft skills and character through project-based learning to build students' pancasila profile; 2) special emphasis on important materials so that there is sufficient time to learn basic competencies such as literacy and numeracy; 3) the freedom of teachers to customize their learning to the needs of students (Tesalonika, Dwikurnaningsih, & Ismanto, 2022)

Writing skills are more complex that other kinds of language skills (Javed, Juan, & Nazli, 2013). Students need help in writing at various levels to overcome these problems. When they learn a new language, students often have difficulty putting their ideas into words, lack interest in writing, and find it difficult to express their emotions (Gebremariam & Hiluf, 2023). According to Rus, (2015) there are often several obstacles that stand in the way of the task of preparing students with the 3 theoretical and prctical skills that enable them to create accurate texts. Among these, the most common are: (1) Students' language skills are insufficient for taks; (2) Writing in general, especially technical writing, is a complex and laborious process that requires commitment and

specialized skills; (3) In some cases, students do not know enough about the topic they are approaching in writing; and (4) Functional writing may be a tedious activity.

Therefore, this study will find out what challenges teachers face in teaching writing skills under merdeka curriculum.

1.1 Merdeka Curriculum

Merdeka curriculum is an education curriculum in Indonesia that aims to facilitate the transition process of the national education system and optimize learning opportunities for students. There have been several studies and literature review discussing its implementation and impact on student learning achievement. This curriculum has been implemented in recent years and has received significant attention in educational community. Several studies and literature reviews have been conducted to analyze its effectiveness and challenge in implementation.Some key aspects of merdeka curriculum include:

a) Student-centered learning: The curriculum give students a freedom to explain how to kearn to their individual needs rather than just following the curriculum that the government has already approved in a passive manner (Ahmad, Ansori, Pratama, & Hairit, 2023).

b) Integration of technology: Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes technology-based learning, which involves using various technologies as learning media to provide high-quality instruction and access to challenging feedback through formative assessments (Suciptaningsih, Haryati, & Pradana, 2023).

c) Independent learning: In Merdeka Curriculum, students become active objects in their development. Teachers become facilitators to share knowledge and receive knowledge without coercion (Yunaini, Rukiyati, Prabowo, Hassan, & Hermansyah, 2022).

Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia encapsulates three key learning components: objectives, essential materials, and flexibility for differentiated learning based on students' abilities. It focuses on essential materials to allow for in-depth learning and provides flexibility for teachers to carry out differentiated learning. The curriculum is designed to be a more flexible framework, emphasizing listening-speaking, reading-viewing, writing-presenting, and other essential elements. It alsoallows learners to expand their perspective in terms of self, social, relationship, culture, and globally available job opportunities. The curriculum is implemented in various subject, such as English language teaching, assessment development, and pancasila education. It emphasizes the development of learning in an integrated system consisting of several elements that interact with each other, and it promotes project-based leaarning and changes in attitude and character. The specific elements of the merdeka curriculum can very depending on the subject and educational level. However, the common focus on essential materials, flexibility, and integrated learning is evident across different applications of the curriculum. in merdeka curriculum, teaching modules are tools used by teachers to organized the learning process. These modules usually consist of learning media, assessment, the goal steps. Merdeka curriculum gives students the freedom to study learning materials using local wisdom. This allows teachers to try different learning approaches and give students the opportunity to gain experience, understanding, and knowledge beyond the scope of conventional learning (Adiningtyas & Rahayu, 2023). Teachers are required to create teaching modules independently, and the preparation of teaching modules must be done before carrying out teaching and learning activities. Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes essential content and meaningful, ejoyable learning experiences. The teaching modules are costumized to fit the learning outcomes, and there is an emphasis on the ability of teachers to compile these modules and obstacles they face in doing so (Arum & Fathoni, 2023). Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules have been analyzed in various research studies, which have focused on describing the analysis results and the completeness of the teaching modules in different educational institutions (Lestari & Triayomi, 2023)

1.2 Writing Skills

Writing is a multifaceted and intricate cognitive and communicative process thoughts, ideas, and information using a structured system of symbols, such a letters, words, and sentences. According to Fatimah, (2019) the material should be created in stages, starting from the development of ideas from general to specific, thesis statements and their supporting details, parts of scientific writing, outlines, and writing several types of writing commonly used in scientific work presentations, such as descriptive, comparative, contrasing, and argumentative. The use of material props allow students to take part in a variety of activities, tasks and exercises that can improve understanding of meaning and language construction (Nurcahya & Sugesti, 2020). It is a fundamental mode of human expression, serving as a means of recording and communicating complex narratives, emotions, and knowledge and its core, writing involves the transformation of abstract thoughts and concepts into a tangible and shareable form. This process requires combination of linguistics skills, cognitive abilities, and motor coordination. As individuals develop language proficiency, they gradually acquire the ability to translate mental representations into written symbols, a pitoval step in the evolution of writing.

Students in writing refer to individuals engaged in the dynamic process of cultivating and refining their written communication skills. this multiface tedendeavor encompasses various dimensions, such as language

proficiency, comprehension of writing conventions, mastery of diverse writing genres, critical thinking aptitude, creative expression, and the nuanced ability to convey ideas effectively through written discourse. To achieve a conducive learning process and satisfactory student outcomes in writing, the provision of teaching materials that support the achievement of these goals is certainly important (Fatimah, 2019). It involves the intricate interplay of educational methodologies, the integration of envolving technologies, and an appreciation for individual learning styles, all contributing to the holistic development of students as adept and versatile writers across different academic level.

1.3 Teacher Challenges

Teaching is the process in which an individual delivers knowledge, skills, values, or information to others, with the aim of helping them learn or understand the material presented. According to Pane & Darwis Dasopang, (2017) teaching and learning is a system of various interdependent elements, such as: teachers, students, goals, materials, methods, and also evaluation. Learning will not get well if one of these elements is missing. It will definitely be a challenge for teachers to bring these elements together.

Teacher challenges refer to the various problems and obstacles faced by teachers in carrying out their duties. These challenge can be range from internal to external, and can affect teaching effectiveness and teacher well-being. According to Fitra & Tiarina, (2023) teacher challenge in merdeka curriculum are: 1) designing lessons plans with students ability 2) time constraints in implementing merdeka curriculum lesson plans 3) there are still many platforms that cannot be used by teachers 4) motivating students to participate in learning until completion 5) processing grades by recognisingstudents ability. In addition, in its implementation, the curriculum requires teachers to utilise or use technology in the teaching and learning process.

Technology, of course, will be very useful if it used properly, especially in teaching and learning activities. Use the internet to access various up-to-date information that can be used to develop materials (Suciptaningsih et al., 2023), this use of the internet helps teachers to develop materials that teachers will use in merdeka curriculum. Technology allows the use of online platforms, educational aplications, and collaboration tools to help students learn without being limited by physical location (Rachmi, Surachman A, Eka Putri D, Nugroho A, 2024), besides helping teachers to develop materials, technology also helps students to learn anywhere and anytime. However, besides the benefits that have been described earlier, the use of this technology is certainly a challenge for teachers. According to Saerang, Lembong, Sumual, & Tuerah, (2023) the challenges of the teachers in the digital era are that there are still many teachers who have not mastered technology because they are still using from the 80s and teachers must know technology and always be creative and innovative.

2. METHODOLOGY

To complete this research, the author used a descriptive qualitative method. According to Mackey (2005), belongs to descriptive data that does not use statistical procedures. It is concerned with developing an explanation of a social phenomenon to assist in understanding our social world in which we live. This research uses interviews as an instrument, and the type of interview used is semi-structured interviews to get in-depth data. The participant involved in this study was an English teacher at SMAN 1 Pabedilan on February 28, 2024. To analyze the data, this study followed the procedure outlined by Miles and Huberman (1990), which includes data reduction, display, and conclusion-drawing. First, researchers condensed the data collected from the informants. Second, the researcher presented the data in the form of description. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the analyzed data.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings in this study show that the challenges faced by English teachers in teaching writing skills under the merdeka curriculum at SMAN 1 Pabedilan include 2 things namely: 1) adjusting the material to students abilities and 2) teacher lacks understanding in using technology.

3.1 Teacher Challenges in Adjusting the Material to Students Abilities

Based on the results of the interviews that have been conducted, the authors obtained data that the challenges faced by teachers are adjusting the material and methods to be used with student abilities. In this case, the teacher must know the abilities and understanding of the students in each class, so that each student gets the treatment that suits their abilities and understanding. This can be seen from the statement of the teacher who were interviewed.

The teacher in the interview process explained "The challenges are various, but one of them is adjusting learning such as method and materials to the students' abilities because the students' abilities vary. Some have to be kicked first, some are already on their own. And there are also students who may have taken courses, there are some students who do not take courses. Yes, the challenge is to see the ability, especially when in group discussion learning, the children must be divided into several groups." However, based on the interview, teacher still have

difficulty adapting the material to the ability of students, this is because teacher teachs several classes with a very large number of students. In line with (Fitra & Tiarina, 2023) the challenges of teachers in merdeka curriculum is to adapt learning materials to students' abilities to design learning plans.

3.2 Teacher Challenges in Using Technology

This study also found that the challenge faced by teachers in teaching writing skills under the merdeka curriculum is the lack of understanding of the use of technology for teaching and learning activities. This can be seen from what the teacher said in the interview.

The teacher in the interview process said "There are a few obstacles besides because this curriculum requires teachers to use technology in learning, but because I am old, so sometimes I don't really understand the use of technology." Technology plays an important role in improving the quality of education and preparing students to face the challenges of the digital era. It also makes it more convenient for teachers to adapt and develop materials with various sources on internet. Technology in education is an important step to prepare students for a filled with digital opportunities and challenges. It allows us to create learning evironments that are more inclusive, effective, and relevant to the demands of the time. Social media if used correctly, can be amazing tool to enhance learning, connect students and teachers, and improve the overall learning experience. Similar as the research from (Sakkir, Dollah, Arsyad, & Ahmad, 2021) students prefer learning facilitated by electronic social media, Facebook, so they will more motivate in write. However, findings from interviews show that teachers lack understanding of the use of this technology, teachers are often confused and unfamiliar with the features on mobile phones and increasingly powerful internet. In line with (Saerang et al., 2023) teachers still do not understand technology and often still using product from the 80s.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Learning writing skills under the independent curriculum at SMAN 1 Pabedilan creates its own challenges for teachers. Based on the results of the research, the challenges faced by teachers in teaching writing skills under the independent curriculum are adjusting materials and methods to the abilities of students which is because teachers teach many classes with diverse student abilities. Another challenge faced by teachers is the lack of understanding of the use of technology for teaching and learning activities.

Findings from this study suggest that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology should provide more support and resources to teachers to help implement merdeka curriculum. This includes providing training and guidelines on how to teach using the new curriculum, as well as providing access to infrastructure and resources that support technology-based learning.

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