

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents: (1) research backgrounds, (2) research focus and scope, (3) research questions, (4) research objectives, (5) research significance, (6) definition of key terms, and (7) the organization of thesis.

A. Research Background

Indonesia's education system is currently undergoing significant changes. These changes are related to the curriculum used. Curriculum is one of the important components of achieving educational goals. Curriculum is a set of experiences containing learning objectives, learning content, learning alignment, learning scale, learning activities, and learning assessment, as well as interrelated learning environments and collaboration as a conceptual framework.¹ Curriculum is also defined as a planned and integrated learning experience to achieve desired learning outcomes through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience with an educational institution's support, for the continuous growth of learners and the formation of students' competencies.² Therefore, creating and implementing an appropriate curriculum according to the needs and conditions of the times was very important.

In the Indonesian educational context, one of the government's efforts to meet educational goals is to make a change to the curriculum. This change is one of the stages of the development between the current curriculum and the previous curriculum. Curriculum change is one of the systemic changes that can improve and restore the learning process because curriculum determines the subjects.³ In

¹ Camille Kandiko Howson & Martyn Kingsbury, "Curriculum change as transformational learning," *Teaching in Higher Education* (2021): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1940923>.

² Innocent Mutale Mulenga, "Conceptualization and Definition of a Curriculum," *Journal of Lexicography and Terminology* 2, no. 2 (2018): 16.

³ Kemdikbud, "Kurikulum Merdeka Sebagai Upaya Pemulihan Pembelajaran," accessed on May 18, 2023, <https://ditsmp.kemdikbud.go.id/kurikulum-merdeka-sebagai-upaya-pemulihan-pembelajaran/>

addition, curriculum also influences the speed and method of teaching, which affects the needs of students in learning recovery efforts.

Curriculum changes in Indonesia are carried out systematically in accordance with the times. As many people know, Covid-19 pandemic in the year of 2020 brought many changes in various sectors, one of them is education sector.⁴ In February 2022, Nadiem Makarim as Minister of Education and Culture in Indonesia, created a new curriculum as an effort to restore education in Indonesia after the Covid-19 pandemic, it called Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. The concept of Merdeka Belajar aims to liberate education through freedom of free thinking and innovation.⁵ Merdeka curriculum has a focus on essential material to allow sufficient time for in-depth learning, and form essential skills such as literacy and numeracy,⁶ where this was not in the previous curriculum. With the change of curriculum, it could have an impact on the Indonesian education system.

Project-based learning is applied in this curriculum, as an effort to develop students character and skills based on Pancasila student profile.⁷ The project is expected to train students to take real action on current issues in the learning process and related to their self-development.⁸ Currently, not all schools in Indonesia have applied this curriculum. Only a few schools that ready to implement this curriculum. These

⁴ Faiz, A., & Kurniawaty, I., “Konsep Merdeka Belajar Pendidikan Indonesia Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Progressivisme,” *Konstruktivisme: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 12, no. 2 (2020): 155–164, <https://doi.org/10.35457/konstruk.v12i2.973>

⁵ Syatria Adymas Pranajaya, et al., “The Distinction of Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah through Differentiated Instruction and P5-PPRA,” *Jurnal Sustainable* 6, no. 1 (2023): 464, DOI:<https://doi.org/10.32923/kjmp.v5i2.3447>.

⁶ Rusdiono Muryanto, “Heutagogy Approach in Merdeka Curriculum,” *Pedagogia Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 20, no. 2 (2022):71, <https://doi.org/10.17509/pgdia.v20i2.50771>.

⁷ Usman Usman, “Project to Strengthen Pancasila Student Profile as an Application of Differentiated Learning in the Independent Curriculum: A Case Study at a Senior High School in Pandeglang, Indonesia,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia Gemilang* 3, no.1 (2023): 104, <https://doi.org/10.52889/jpip.v3i1.159>.

⁸ Rusdiono Muryanto, “Heutagogy Approach in Merdeka Curriculum,” *Pedagogia Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 20, no. 2 (2022):74, <https://doi.org/10.17509/pgdia.v20i2.50771>.

schools are known as *Sekolah Penggerak* or piloting schools. The guidelines for the implementation of *Sekolah Penggerak* program regulated in the decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1177/M/2020, it is stated that the purpose of *Sekolah Penggerak* program is to improve competence and character in accordance with Pancasila student profile.⁹

Based on government data in 2023, in 34 provinces and 509 districts or cities in Indonesia there are 14,237 schools that have been registered in *Sekolah Penggerak* program. Among these thousands of schools, there are only 46 *Sekolah Penggerak* in Kudus district.¹⁰ Meanwhile, for the level of Islamic junior high schools in Kudus, there are still a few that have implemented Merdeka Curriculum, among them are school X, school Y, and school Z. Based on the result of preliminary research that the researcher conducted with teachers in those schools, as starters, they implement the Merdeka Curriculum only for 7th-grade students. Those schools have implemented Merdeka Curriculum learning in all subjects in 7th-grade, one of them is English subjects.

English subjects at the junior high school level are included in the basic education category. It is caused by the elimination of English subject at the elementary school level because it was no longer included in the compulsory curriculum¹¹, so that several schools in Indonesia eliminate English education or include it in local content learning (*mulok*). So many students do not have English skills at all when they tapped into secondary education. In fact, learning English in the era of globalization is very important for students, because almost all systems use English in their operation. In addition, English is also well-known as an international language used by various countries, so the ability

⁹ Fahrian Firdaus Syafi'i, "Merdeka Belajar: Sekolah Penggerak," *PROSIDING SEMINAR NASIONAL PENDIDIKAN DASAR "Merdeka Belajar Dalam Menyambut Era Masyarakat 5.0"*, (2021): 40, ISBN 978-623-98648-2-8.

¹⁰ Kemdikbud, "Sebaran Sekolah Penggerak," accessed on May 17, 2023, <https://psp-web.pauddikdasmen.kemdikbud.go.id/#/home>

¹¹ Permendikbud, "Permendikbud RI No. 67 Th 2013 tentang Kurikulum Sekolah Dasar (SD)," (June 28 2013).

to communicate in English is also very important, which means that English subjects are very important to learn.

One important component that cannot be separated from the implementation of Merdeka curriculum is assessment.¹² Assessment is one of the important components of curriculum tools, used to see and measure the achievement of student competency levels.¹³ It is also in line with Rosidah's opinion that stated, as an integral part of the curriculum assessment is used to measure a student's achievement. It should be noted that a good learning process requires a good assessment system, and also planned and rational system.¹⁴ So, assessment is done to measure the success of learning. Curriculum success standards can be seen, one of which is through the assessment results. Assessment activities in English subjects in the Merdeka Curriculum include the process of preparing assessment activities, implementing, and utilizing assessment results.

There was a previous study related to the assessment process in Merdeka Curriculum. This was conveyed by Robby Shadri, et al., with the title “Assessment in The Merdeka Curriculum: How Are The Teachers’ Perspectives on It?”¹⁵ This research explained that teachers' assessment in Merdeka Curriculum consists of three assessments. There are diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, and all the assessments were carried out by the teacher at the end of learning. Teachers assess student learning outcomes based on several aspects, namely aspects of knowledge, attitudes, and

¹² Siskha Putri Sayekti, “Systematic literature review : pengembangan asesmen pembelajaran kurikulum merdeka belajar tingkat Sekolah Dasar,” *Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar*, 2 (2022): 24., <https://doi.org/10.25134/prosidingsemnaspgsd.v2i1.21>.

¹³ Robby Shadri, et al., “Assessment in The Merdeka Curriculum: How Are The Teachers’ Perspectives on It?” *Pendidikan dan Pengajaran* 7, no. 1 (2023): 203, <https://dx.doi.org/10.33578/pjr.v7i1.9127>.

¹⁴ Cholifah Tur Rosidah, et al., “Analisis kesiapan guru mengimplementasikan asesmen autentik dalam kurikulum merdeka belajar,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar* 12, No. 1 (2021): 90, <https://doi.org/10.21009/JPD.012.08>.

¹⁵ Robby Shadri, et al., “Assessment in The Merdeka Curriculum: How Are The Teachers’ Perspectives on It?” *Pendidikan dan Pengajaran* 7, no. 1 (2023) 202-209, <https://dx.doi.org/10.33578/pjr.v7i1.9127>.

skills they have during the learning process. The results of the assessment presented in the school report are based on the Merdeka Curriculum reporting app. Overall, teachers have understood and carried out assessments in accordance with the guidelines in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Based on that previous study, it is declared about teachers' understanding in implementing assessment in accordance with Merdeka Curriculum. It is different from this study. This study focuses on how teachers conduct English subjects assessments in Merdeka Curriculum in general. This study also discuss the obstacle encountered by the teachers during its implementation.

Merdeka curriculum provides opportunities for teachers to gain freedom in teaching students. Teachers are given the opportunity and freedom in teaching students in Merdeka curriculum. One of them is freedom in preparing and conducting assessments for students. The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in reality raises several problems or obstacles. Based on preliminary research conducted by the researcher on one of the teachers who have implemented Merdeka curriculum, one of the major problems that arise is the implementation of assessment. It is still classified as an adjustment stage in implementing Merdeka Curriculum. It needs a lot of adjustments and there are many obstacles in it.¹⁶ Based on the Merdeka Curriculum policy, grade 7 junior high school students are categorized as stage D in all subjects, including English.¹⁷ Therefore, 7th grade English teachers must be able to carry out English subject assessments well to achieve learning objectives in accordance with the output standards of phase D in Merdeka curriculum.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in conducting a research entitled "The English Subject Assessments of Merdeka Curriculum (A Case Study at Islamic Junior High Schools in Kudus)". This study aims to explore the implementation of English subject assessments

¹⁶ Interviewed about English subject assessment of Merdeka curriculum with the English teacher, March 2, 2023.

¹⁷ Badan Standar, Kurikulum & Asesmen Pendidikan Kemdikbud, Riset dan Teknologi, "Panduan Pembelajaran dan Asesmen Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Pendidikan Dasar, dan Menengah," (2022): 12.

and the obstacles of Merdeka Curriculum implementation at several *Sekolah Penggerak* in Kudus.

B. Research Focus and Scope

Based on the research background above, the researcher limits the problems in this study. This research focuses on the assessment process in Merdeka Curriculum and the obstacles at several Islamic Junior High Schools (*Sekolah Penggerak*) in Kudus in the 2022/2023 academic year. The subjects of this research are English teachers who teach English using Merdeka Curriculum and also the vice principal of curriculum.

C. Research Questions

The implementation of Merdeka curriculum caused several changes in various aspects of education, one of them is the assessment process. It is still classified as an adjustment stage, so it needs a lot of adjustments and there are many obstacles in it. So, based on that problem, the researcher formulated the following questions:

1. How the English subject assessments of Merdeka Curriculum is carried out by teachers at Islamic Junior High Schools in Kudus?
2. What are the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing the English subject assessments of Merdeka Curriculum at Islamic Junior High Schools in Kudus?

D. Research Objectives

Based on the research questions above, the researcher formulated the objectives of this study as follows:

1. To explore the English subject assessments of Merdeka Curriculum carried out by teachers at Islamic Junior High Schools in Kudus.
2. To know some obstacles faced by English teachers in implementing the English subject assessments of Merdeka Curriculum at Islamic Junior High Schools in Kudus.

E. Research Significance

The researcher hopes that this research will be able to make several contributions:

1. Theoretically

The researcher hopes that the results of this research can provide an overview that makes it easier for other researchers who want to conduct similar research, so that this research becomes useful information and a useful reference for further research.

2. Practically

The researcher hopes that the results of this study can be applied as a reference for teachers in assessing students, using methods or techniques in the assessment process. Thus, teachers can improve their abilities to make the assessment process effective and efficient. The results of this study are also expected to add new insights, knowledge, and experiences about the assessment of English subjects in Merdeka Curriculum for the researcher and readers.

F. Definition of Key Terms

The following are some definitions or key terms provided to ensure that readers share the same concept or perspective on various terminologies used in this research. Besides that, it also aims to prevent misinterpretation or ambiguity. There are several keywords related to this research such as Merdeka Curriculum, assessment, and English subjects.

1. Merdeka Curriculum

The new curriculum in Indonesia, which aims to improve the quality of learning, has just been established by the government as one of Merdeka's learning programs. This curriculum is developed in a more adaptive manner as part of learning renewal. This curriculum emphasizes essential material and character development of the Pancasila student profile.

2. Assessment

Planned and continuous efforts of teachers in seeking information about students' knowledge and understanding both in terms of process and results in the

learning process. Assessment has also been understood as a process of evaluating the effectiveness of teaching activities in the teaching process and also when it was completed.

3. English Subject

One of the subjects taught to develop four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which has the purpose that students can understand and produce oral or written texts, and also have the ability to communicate in English at a certain level.

G. Organization of Thesis

1. The Complementary Pages

The first section there are: the title, approval pages, statements of originality, abstract, motto, dedication, acknowledgment, preface, table of contents, list of pictures, list of tables, and list of charts.

2. The Contents of the Research

There are five chapters in this study, which are as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction

Chapter I contains the research background, research focus and scope, research questions, research objectives, research significances, the definition of key terms, and the organization of the thesis.

Chapter II: Review of Related Literature

Chapter II describes the theories that support research based on linguists including theoretical description, theoretical framework, and review of previous studies.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

Chapter III contains the research method, settings, data collection technique, research data validity, data analysis technique, and ethical consideration.

Chapter IV: Results and Analysis

Chapter IV contains the results and discussions about the assessment process of Merdeka curriculum and the obstacles in Islamic junior high schools.

Chapter V: Conclusion and Suggestion

Chapter V is in the form of conclusions and suggestions from research conducted has been done, as well as being the conclusion of the discussion.

3. The Closing Pages

The last section of references, appendices, and curriculum vitae.

