

ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON ENGLISH TEACHING ACTIVITIES BASED ON *MERDEKA BELAJAR* CURRICULUM

Feurica Azalia Zulfa*, Martin Kustati, and Darmayenti

UIN Imam Bonjol Padang

*feuricazulfa@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe English teachers' perception on English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang. This research is a descriptive qualitative research. The respondents of this study were English teachers at State Senior High School 2 Padang. Data collection of this research is observation, questionnaires and interviews. Data analysis techniques used in the results of this study are data reduction, data display and drawing conclusion. The results showed that the teachers' perception was positive and appreciated the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang, the teacher's perception of English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum was also positive and able to improve students' abilities because they were given freedom in the learning process, but the detailed understanding possessed by the teacher was still lacking. Based on these results it can be interpreted that in the future teachers must receive training regarding the curriculum and its use in learning English.

Keywords: Perception, English Teaching Activities, *Merdeka Belajar*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently using new school teaching and learning rules, namely the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. Every new policy issued by the government must have been through careful thought and has merit, especially for advancing Indonesian education. *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum is one of the government's policies to advance Indonesian education. The curriculum has been socialized and implemented by schools in Indonesia

Based on the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture no 56/M/2022 concerning guidelines for implementing curriculum in the context of learning recovery states that the implementation of learning uses the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. Nadiem Makarim, Indonesia's Minister of Education, explained that this new system is expected to create a fun learning environment rather than burdensome learners by a particular achievement of the score. Moreover, he also stated that the notion of *Merdeka Belajar* is expected to improve the quality of Indonesian human resources. As stated in Article 31 section 3 and Law on the National Education System year 2003, the function of the national education system must be able to improve the quality of human resources.

Teachers have to know objectives, contents, teaching methods, techniques, and evaluation approaches well and apply them in learning-teaching processes to manage the current curriculum's requirements. No matter how well the developed curriculum is, it will only achieve its objectives if teachers who put the curriculum into practice fulfill their tasks efficiently (Gurol, 2004). In other words, teachers as curriculum implementers have to train on implemented curriculum's principles, implementation approaches, objectives, evaluation, and technical competencies (Erturk, 1994; Tasdemir, 2003, cited in Konokman, 2017). In contrast, the teachers' perception is crucial to be considered to achieve those particular terms in the teaching-learning process.

Previous research comes from Anita Kusuma and Ririn Pusparini (2021), who has written *Vocational High School English Teachers' Perspectives on the "Merdeka Belajar" Curriculum*. This research results showed that not all teachers understand the concept of "Merdeka Belajar". The finding also showed that the implementation of a one-page lesson plan had yet to meet the expectation of *Merdeka Belajar*. The lack of understanding by the teacher in teaching using this curriculum raises the question of how the teacher's perception is in implementing the curriculum.

Based on the background above, the researcher wants to know English teachers' perception on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang and English teachers' perception on English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang.

METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive qualitative research type. Qualitative research is a research technique that produces descriptive data in the form of observed subjects' speech or writing and actions. The data needed was to find out the English teachers' perception about the English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang. Observation, questionnaire and interview sheet were the instruments of the research to gather information from the perception toward the English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum handled by teachers.

The data collection method is the method used to collect research data (Sugiyono, 2016). Observation, sharing the questionnaire and doing interview were conducted in collecting the data. The interview questions were based on the result of observation and questionnaire, with the aim of verifying and validating the findings of the observation; this known as data triangulation.

In this study, observation was intended to collect the data needed. The observation conducted in the classroom setting because the researcher aimed to explore the questioning English teachers' perception on English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. The purpose of classroom observation was to find out the natural condition about English teachers' perception on English teaching activities.

The researcher used questionnaire to collect the data from the teachers. The form of the questionnaire that used in this study was a closed questionnaire. The form of

a closed questionnaire, in which answers have been provided in the questionnaire and the respondent answers the statement by placing a check mark on the answer choices. The components of this questionnaire include teachers' perception on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum and English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. The results of this questionnaire was processed into data to support the achievement of this research.

Interview is one of the procedure for collecting data that used in this study. The researcher collected the main data in this study by doing interview with three teachers. The observed teachers are only the English teachers in the school. To know the perception of the EFL teachers, the researcher asked several questions provided by the researcher related to their perception on English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. The teachers are free to answer the questions. The kind of interview that is used in this study is structured interview. This aims to make the interview carried out properly and in a structured manner.

The data analysis technique in this study uses the model according to Miles & Huberman (1984), namely First, data reduction is the process of combining and uniforming all forms of data obtained into one form of writing (script) to be analyzed. The results of questionnaire and interview were converted into chart and scripts according to the formats. The researcher uses this data reduction to see the English teachers' perception on English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum.

Second, data display is processing semi-finished data that has been uniform in written form and already has a clear theme flow into a category matrix according to the themes that have been grouped and categorized, and will break down these themes into a more concrete and simple form. In this study, researchers will present data in the form of chart and writing (script) in a simple and coherent manner so that it is easy to understand about the English teachers' perception on English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum.

Third, conclusion/verification is the final stage in a series of qualitative data analysis. The researcher finds conclusion/verification answering for formulating problems. The researcher makes a conclusion from all the data that get in order to make clear and understand for the reader.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. English teachers' perception on Merdeka Belajar curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang

The result of the research shows that English teachers' perception on English *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang is good (85.6%). The teacher understand the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*. The data can be seen on following chart.

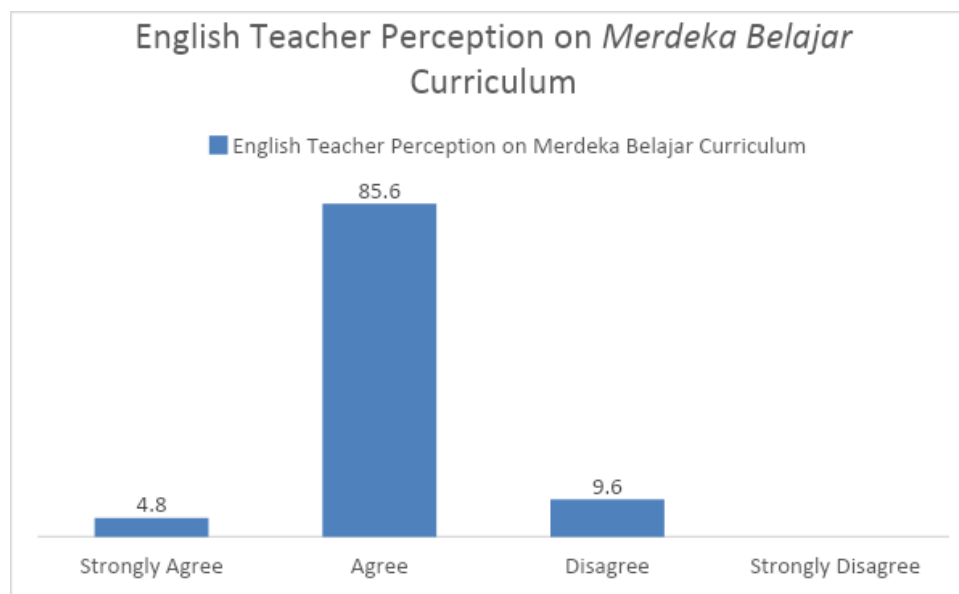


Chart 1. English teachers' perception on Merdeka Belajar curriculum

From the chart above, the data obtained in the questionnaire shows the teachers 90.4% agreed with the questionnaires. That data shows that teachers agreed that teachers understand and ready to use *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, teachers also master in English teaching activities using *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. Teachers also feel that English teaching activities using *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is effective. Thus, it can be conclude that according to the perception of teachers regarding English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, it is positive perception. This can be seen from the high percentage listed on the tables above.

It is also supported by the result of interview with English teachers. She stated that *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is actually good, but the lack of training from the school for the teachers made the application of the curriculum on English classroom is difficult. Beside that, *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum also had a students-centered type of teaching activities which made the teachers as a facilitator, motivator and mediator so the students can collaborate and be creative in developing or exploring their potential and interest in learning.

According to the English teachers at State Senior High School 2 Padang, *Merdeka Belajar* is not only giving freedom or independent on the English teaching activities but the teachers also feel that the concept of *Merdeka Belajar* can be used in a long time for the future education. But in fact that some Teachers (66.7%) disagreed to the statement that *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is better than the previous curriculum for their English teaching activities.

The results of the research above explain the perception of *Merdeka Belajar* at State Senior High School 2 Padang is positive. That was evidenced by the teachers, *Merdeka Belajar* is a curriculum that create independent and freedom for the teachers and students in learning so that students can explore and improve their knowledge and

potential while teachers still directing the teaching and learning process. Currently, the teachers feel understand the use of this curriculum but still need more training. Although the response to this curriculum is good and positive, teachers' doubts in *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum use made the teachers preferring the previous curriculum.

The results of this study are also in line with the results of research that has been conducted by Yulius Obeta Pendi, 2020 in his research entitled "*Merdeka Belajar* Reflected in the Professional Competence of English Teachers of SMP 01 Sedayu", whose research results explain that in the concept of *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, the teacher uses the learning method from internet media so students can look for reference sources not only from school books but they can look for them on the internet media, which will encourage a willingness to learn from students.

Teachers' understanding of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang is not fully understood. This is because there has been no specific training given to teachers in understanding the concept of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. However, the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang has started since the 2021/2022 academic year, where it has been implemented for 4 semesters per 2023, and the teachers are still learning to understand the curriculum along the way.

Although teachers also got a positive impact from the *Merdeka Belajar* program, it is known that only 1 out of 3 English teachers preferred to use the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum rather than the 2013 curriculum because she felt she could explore her potential and make teachers develop. But 2 teachers preferred to use the 2013 curriculum for various reasons, such as more familiar and easier to apply. Marmoah et al (2022) in their research stated there was inadequate teachers' preparation, so they did not really understand, and lack of material sources in implementing the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum.

2. English teachers' perception on English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang

Based on the research that has been done, it can be seen in the chart below that the teacher's perception on English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang is good. The data shows that 4.4% teachers strongly agreed and 81.07% teachers agreed to the statements about English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum.

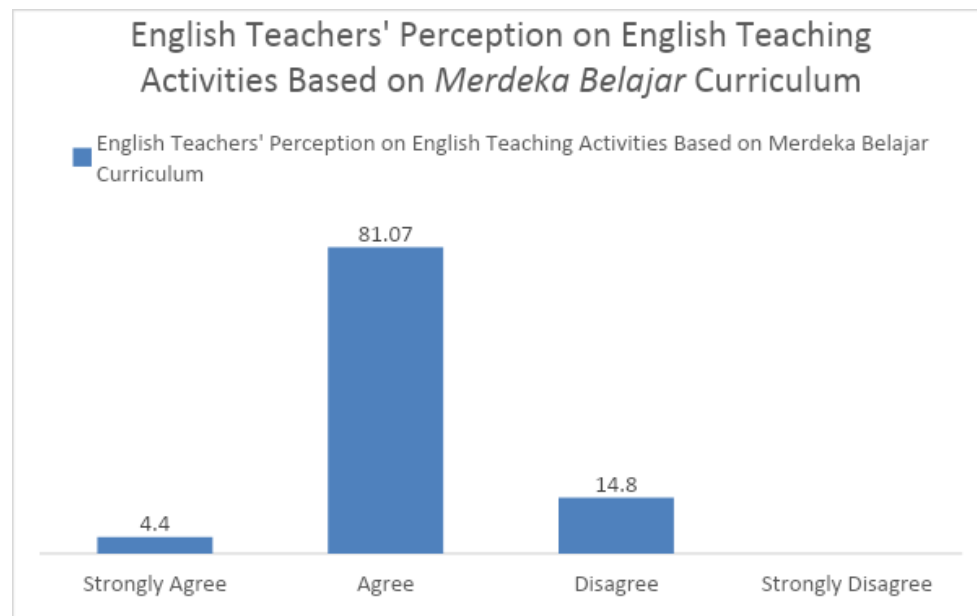


Chart 2. English teachers' perception on English teaching activities

The *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum has three important things in its teaching activities, namely students' participation, effective learning and learning equality. Based on this, in the results of the research that has been conducted at State Senior High School 2 Padang, the teacher's perception of English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum can be said to have received a positive reaction from the teacher.

The result of the questionnaire answered by teachers is that 85.6% of teachers agreed that students pay attention and are interested in the English teaching activities, students also obey the teachers' orders, and teachers feel the freedom makes English teaching activities more fun for students. The English material based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum also supports the students to be more active. Also, it gives the teachers space for them to observe on how students are interested in English teaching activities. The response and enthusiasm of the students are also in a good category. This curriculum certainly has an outstanding impact on future students because by implementing *Merdeka Belajar*, students can innovate themselves and develop their abilities according to their abilities.

Based on the research above explain that students' participation in English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is giving good response from students to the classroom activities. Learning English using *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, the activeness and response of students are very much needed. Mainly using the student-centered method, it also greatly supports students' activeness and makes them enthusiastic in learning English. This supports the theme of this curriculum which is the freedom to learn.

The teachers agreed that the students are considered to understand and students more active, and increased students' interest in English teaching activities using *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is about freedom in teaching and learning activities, and the Teachers strongly agreed 33,3% and 66,7% agreed that they feel free to determine and choose teaching techniques for students. Effective learning also talks about how teachers utilize English learning time effectively. Teachers answered that they disagreed that teachers are able to conduct learning in accordance with *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum and utilize English learning time effectively.

In this curriculum, the equality of learning that gained by students is also important. Learning equality means that there is no students that has been behind in gaining material from the teaching activities, which is one of the goals of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. Teachers are expected to achieve predetermined learning. This learning equality is related to the use of time and students' opportunities to learn. In this study, there are still some teachers who feel unable to keep up or balance time and learning using this curriculum.

It can be concluded from the data and interview above that teachers' ability to balance and catch up on material in learning using this curriculum has not yet obtained good results. Over time, teachers can balance the learning even though they have to use additional time. In addition to balancing learning, teachers are also expected to provide acceleration in learning English. Acceleration can be useful in helping students who have advantages in learning. That can increase the learning equality in English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis in the study of English teachers' perception on English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang, it can be concluded as follows:

1. English teachers' perception on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at State Senior High School 2 Padang is positive. Observation that been held on State Senior High School 2 shows that the school is already used *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum on every grade. Along with the observation, the data shows that teachers answered the questionnaire's statement 90.6% agreed to *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. Positive perception means that English teachers meet their expectations about *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum or in accordance with a predetermined rule as well as by their own experience in using *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at school. It is also supported by the interview with English teachers and they stated that *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum can improve students' abilities because they are given freedom in the learning process.

2. English teachers' perception on English teaching activities based on *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum also reaches a positive perception. In this part perception is on 85.47% of strongly agreed or agreed. The teachers feel that all the indicators of English teaching activities are meet the reality in English teaching activities using *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum on their classes. Student participation is increased from the previous curriculum, the teaching activities are more effective and equality of learning is on a good basis. The data from observation, questionnaire and interviews provide positive perception results from English teachers.

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