

**THE ISSUES OF THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM IN INDONESIAN LANGUAGE  
LEARNING AT SMP PGRI DARU, TANGERANG**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to analyze various problems that arise in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian language learning at SMP PGRI Daru, Tangerang. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that focuses on providing an in-depth depiction of the challenges experienced by teachers and students during the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The research subjects include Indonesian language teachers who teach grades VII and IX, as they are directly involved in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the school. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with teachers as well as documentation, including learning tools and student learning outcome notes. The data obtained were then analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions as outlined in the data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman. The results of the study indicate that the transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum still presents various challenges, particularly in adjusting learning outcomes, preparing teaching modules, and designing a learning objective flow that matches the characteristics of the students. The limitations of learning facilities, especially the limited availability of textbooks, have become the main obstacles in the Indonesian language learning process. Nevertheless, the use of digital devices such as gadgets can serve as an alternative solution in providing additional learning resources for students. From a pedagogical perspective, learning has shown efforts toward being interactive and enjoyable, but the role of the teacher still tends to be dominant, so student engagement has not been fully optimal. In addition, internal factors such as students' interest, attitude, and concentration in learning, as well as external factors like the learning environment, school facilities, and parental support, also influence the success of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, this study recommends improving teacher competence through In-House Training, strengthening the implementation of differentiated learning, and optimizing educational facilities and infrastructure to support the more effective implementation of the Independent Curriculum.*

*Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum; Indonesian Language Education; Implementation Challenges.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Education is an ongoing process aimed at guiding students to develop better qualities in line with cultural values and Pancasila. Ki Hajar Dewantara emphasized that education should balance exemplifying, motivating, and supporting students.

Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 3, states that "National education functions to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the nation's life, aiming to develop the potential of students to become humans who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens".

According to Insani (2019), education definitely includes a curriculum, because without a curriculum, education cannot be implemented. Meanwhile, Wahyuni (2015) states that the curriculum in education is used as a goal for carrying out education in Indonesia. The curriculum is not merely seen as an ordinary document, but as an important document that makes education better to achieve national education goals. How can education be achieved if educators still do not fully understand the curriculum currently in use? Therefore, educators must better understand the current curriculum for an effective teaching and learning process, in order to achieve the desired learning objectives.

The independent curriculum is a curriculum with a variety of intracurricular learning so that students can achieve their potential optimally, understand concepts, and strengthen the competencies they possess. It also allows teachers the freedom to choose the most suitable and appropriate teaching materials for their students, tailored to each student's learning needs and interests. This independent curriculum also strengthens the achievement of the Pancasila student profile, which is developed according to themes determined by the government.

Problematics, according to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (2008:1103), is 'something that has not yet been solved.' Problematics is a condition in the form of an issue within a certain situation. In the context of learning, problematics refers to the educational process facing various obstacles or problems that arise. These obstacles can disrupt, complicate, slow down, or even prevent the achievement of learning objectives. These problems cause a discrepancy between expectations and the reality that occurs. Therefore, learning problems are issues that must be addressed by finding solutions so that learning objectives can be achieved as desired.

According to Ridwan et al (2023), the implementation process requires collaboration between the government, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and the community in supporting a sustainable educational transformation. Thus, it is expected that these efforts will lead to significant advancements in the Indonesian education system.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which is an approach aimed at providing a thorough description of phenomena occurring in the field without manipulating the research variables. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for revealing the problems faced by teachers and students in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning at SMP PGRI Daru, Tangerang.

The research was conducted on October 8, 2025, at SMP PGRI Daru, Tangerang. The research subjects included Indonesian language teachers who teach in grades VII and IX, as they are directly involved in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. In addition, the researcher also collected additional data from learning documents and school records to support the interview results.

The data collection used includes in-depth interviews conducted with Indonesian language teachers to obtain information related to the implementation, obstacles, and strategies of teachers in applying the Merdeka Curriculum. Additionally, documentation covering learning tools with notes on teaching and learning activities, as well as student evaluation results relevant to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The data obtained was analyzed through three stages, according to Miles & Huberman (1994), namely data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and focused on data relevant to the research focus. Then, the data was presented in narrative form to facilitate understanding of the problems encountered. The final stage was drawing conclusions, which describes the main findings related to the issues of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian language learning at SMP PGRI Daru, Tangerang.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The research was conducted on October 8, 2025, at SMP PGRI Daru, Tangerang. This study aims to explain the issues of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning using a qualitative approach. The researcher conducted the study and obtained information from interviews with key parties who have relevant information, including how the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in Indonesian language learning and the problems encountered when applying the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning. This is reinforced by research findings through notes related to the implementation of Indonesian language teaching and learning.

Based on the research results, the data on the problems of the independent curriculum in Indonesian language learning at SMP PGRI Daru, Tangerang can be described. This is in accordance with the research focus and the implementation of the independent curriculum in Indonesian language learning in grades VII and IX. Then, the researcher collected data through interviews with Indonesian language teachers who teach in grades VII and IX, as well as by gathering notes.

**Table 1. Class VII**

Name	Understood	Don't really understand
Putri	70%	30%
Amel	90%	10%
Pita	80%	20%
Sifa	60%	40%
Tiara	50%	50%

**Table 2. Class IX**

Name	Understood	Don't really understand
Putri	70%	30%
Maya	60%	40%
Kia	80%	20%
Aurel	50%	50%
Salma	60%	40%

The research data presented in Tables 1 and 2 show differences in students' levels of understanding of Indonesian language material in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In grade VII, the majority of students demonstrate a level of understanding ranging from sufficient to good, with material mastery percentages between 50% and 90%. Nevertheless, there are still some students with relatively low levels of understanding. This condition indicates a disparity in learning abilities among students within the same class, so the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires adaptive teaching strategies that can accommodate the diversity of learning abilities.

Findings in grade IX show a nearly similar pattern, where students' levels of understanding also vary. Some students have achieved a high level of understanding of the learning material, while others still experience difficulties in grasping the taught content. This confirms that obstacles in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum are not only faced by students in the early grades but are also experienced by students in higher grades. This variation in understanding levels is influenced by several factors, including students' readiness to learn, the teaching approaches and methods applied by teachers, as well as the availability and use of learning resources that support the learning process.

### Discussion

The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that emphasizes freedom of creative thinking and provides opportunities for students to learn and express themselves in a comfortable, engaging, and supportive environment. The curriculum serves as a guideline used as a reference in the implementation of teaching and learning activities. Quoting Fathurohman (2020), the curriculum has objectives that it aims to achieve. The curriculum has several components. According to Hamalik (2013), these curriculum components include learning objectives; Goliah et al. (2022), content or teaching material; and Firqah (2019), the process or system of delivery through media and evaluation.

Based on the interview results regarding the problems faced by teachers in teaching Indonesian using the Merdeka Curriculum. Indonesian learning plays a central role in the education process because language is the main means through which students understand knowledge and abstract concepts. In the Merdeka Curriculum, there are issues faced by teachers at SMP PGRI Daru, namely the need to adjust from Curriculum 2013 to the Merdeka Curriculum, including adjustments to Learning Outcomes (CP), Teaching Modules, and Learning Objective Flow (ATP). Therefore, SMP PGRI Daru organizes In-House Training (IHT) to enhance the teachers' competencies.

The Merdeka Curriculum at SMP PGRI Daru will be implemented starting in the 2024/2025 academic year for grade VII (seven) and in the 2025/2026 academic year for grade IX (nine). After the teachers have obtained clear information regarding the Merdeka Curriculum, it will gradually be implemented for all grades in the 2025/2026 academic year. This was conveyed by the principal in charge of the curriculum.

Sugiyarta et al. (2020) stated that one of the main characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum is the use of a two-way learning approach. The learning process occurs through active interaction between students and teachers, thus providing students with the opportunity to ask questions and actively participate in learning activities.

Indonesian language learning activities using the Merdeka Curriculum consist of three stages. First, the teacher provides a stimulating question, which is a question related to the material that will be taught to the students. Then, the teacher encourages students to think critically and asks what the students did well this morning, as well as gives advice to the students. Second, the teacher explains the material and interacts with the students. Third, the teacher concludes the lesson by providing a summary of the learning; in addition, the teacher also reviews the material that has been taught to the students. If the students cannot answer, the teacher will briefly re-explain the material so that the students can answer the questions given by the teacher, and then the teacher assigns tasks to the students. Before concluding the lesson, the teacher ends the learning session with a greeting.

The effort to implement Indonesian language learning in the Merdeka Curriculum in this lesson was carried out well. The learning process has been conducted interactively and enjoyably. However, it has not been optimal in its implementation, as the teacher tends to be more active than the students. This aligns with the opinion of Melani and Gani (2023) that in the initial activities, Indonesian language teachers engage students by connecting their experiences with what is being learned and by conveying the learning objectives to be achieved. The most important thing is that the teacher must direct the material to be delivered so that students are prepared to learn and enthusiastic to participate in the lesson. Next, the core learning activities require interaction between students and teachers. If the teacher establishes good interaction with the students, there is a greater chance of achieving differentiated learning objectives. Indonesian language teachers should strive to engage students actively in discussions to identify problems and solutions.

The results of the data collection and analysis related to the issues of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian Language learning, particularly at SMP PGRI Daru, Tangerang.

For now, the first issue found in the Merdeka Curriculum experienced by students is the difficulty in learning due to the limited number of books available in schools. The large amount of assignments given by teachers is intended to make students proficient in completing tasks and to prevent them from being passive. However, this difficulty can be overcome with the presence of gadgets (mobile phones) as a source for reading and finding references through digital media.

The second issue found in the Merdeka Curriculum is that Khaerunnisa et al. (2021) stated that a learning strategy can be explained as a method used to implement a plan that has been designed in the form of concrete and real activities, with the aim of achieving the desired learning outcomes. In teaching poetry, teachers need to present the material slowly so that students can understand the content of the poem well. In addition, utilizing various learning styles, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, can implement differentiated learning. For example, providing learning videos for students with a visual learning style, holding group discussions for students with an auditory learning style, and using games or experiments for kinesthetic learners.

In this Merdeka Curriculum Learning, it turns out that there are still existing challenges, resulting in data obtained from both external and internal factors. The internal factor is that students tend to enjoy Indonesian Language Learning material, provided that the teacher explains it well. This aligns with Muliani's (2022) view that internal factors are influences from within the students themselves, focusing on the students, their attitudes, and abilities. In addition to internal factors,

external factors such as the learning environment, availability of school facilities and infrastructure, as well as the role of parents, are important components in supporting the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. A comfortable learning environment and adequate facilities can create a more conducive learning atmosphere, helping students to focus better and make the most of the learning process. In addition, parental involvement plays a significant role, particularly in providing guidance and motivation to students while studying at home. Therefore, continuous synergy between the school, teachers, students, and parents is needed to ensure that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can be carried out effectively, optimally, and sustainably.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings and discussion results, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning at SMP PGRI Daru, Tangerang, still faces various challenges, so it has not been carried out optimally. The transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum requires a high level of adaptability from teachers, especially in understanding learning outcomes, preparing teaching modules, and designing learning objective flows that are adjusted to the needs and characteristics of students. Although efforts to implement the curriculum have been made, limitations in pedagogical readiness and the availability of learning resources still pose a significant obstacle. In addition, the research results show that the lack of learning facilities and infrastructure, especially the limited availability of textbooks, also affects the quality of Indonesian language learning. However, this condition can partly be addressed through the use of digital technology, such as gadgets, which help students access alternative learning resources. From the learning aspect, the teaching and learning process has led to a more interactive and enjoyable atmosphere, but the dominance of the teacher's role is still evident, so student participation has not developed optimally. The success of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is also influenced by internal factors, including students' interest, attitude, and concentration in learning, as well as external factors such as school facilities, learning environment, and parental support. Therefore, continuous steps are needed in the form of improving teacher competence, strengthening the application of differentiated learning, and developing educational facilities and infrastructure to support the more effective and sustainable implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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