THE STUDENTS' INTEREST IN LEARNING ENGLISH: A STUDY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MERDEKA CURRICULUM AT SDN 8 MAKALE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the level of student interest in learning English under the Merdeka Curriculum framework. This research adopted a descriptive quantitative method, employing cluster sampling to select one class as the subject of the study. Data collection was carried out using observation and a questionnaire designed to measure student interest. Data analysis reveals that fifth-grade students at SDN 8 Makale exhibit a high level of interest in learning English. This conclusion is supported by the questionnaire responses, with an average student score of 81%, indicating a high interest level, In conclusion, the study finds that fifth-grade students at SDN 8 Makale show a strong enthusiasm for learning English. These findings suggest that the Merdeka Curriculum effectively enhances students' interest in the subject.

Keyterms : *Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, implementation, Interest, English Learning*

INTRODUCTION

Education is an important foundation for the progress of a country because with education a country will achieve progress, both in increasing human resources and managing natural resources.

Teachers must be able to adapt their teaching and learning methods to the needs of their students according to their subject matter and learning environment. This is because national education, as stated in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, aims to

improve the quality of life and the dignity of the Indonesian people. Everything is set up in accordance with a set of rules known as the curriculum, which serves as the basis for implementing the process of learning (Khoirurrijal et al., 2022).

To support the success of a curriculum applied in the world of education, the curriculum that has been implemented needs to be reviewed and developed into a new curriculum. The purpose of developing an educational curriculum is to increase competitiveness, as well as add several national and international insights so students can later become the next generation of a strong nation and able to compete with international education.

Along with the development of increasingly modern times, of course, a curriculum is needed that can follow the development of science and technology so that it can support the progress of human resources (HR) and the country. Therefore, this Merdeka Curriculum recommends teaching English starting to be taught from the elementary level. Three primary factors are driving this: curriculum alignment, learning quality parity, and English as a necessary language for all Indonesian pupils. This is consistent with the government's pledge to advance the Pancasila student program in all its facets, including its emphasis on global diversity.

In the previous curriculum, namely the 2013 curriculum, there was confusion about the competencies that must be achieved by students at the junior high school level. Without English language education at the elementary level, students are expected to achieve intermediate-level competence without learning a solid foundation. Therefore, to overcome the gap in the achievement of this competency, the independent curriculum is here to provide a solution, namely providing basic level English education at the elementary level. Teaching English early with good planning will encourage the strengthening of the foundation of English. research shows that teaching English at the elementary school level has many benefits such as fostering confidence in English, building global awareness and intercultural competence and opening students' insights about cultural differences to foster tolerance.

The Merdeka Curriculum is currently considered a new curriculum adjustment method applied in several schools, with the existence of Merdeka Curriculum, that can certainly foster students' interest in creating learning that is considered high quality by the needs needed in the learning environment for students. Interest is a persistent tendency to pay attention to and remember many activities (Slameto, 2010).

Activities that a person likes, always pay attention to accompanied by a feeling of pleasure. Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge within a certain period that can bring changes to a person. Great interest affects learning because if the learning material to be studied is not by student interests, students will not learn as well as possible, because there is no interest in them. If the student realizes that learning is a means to achieve some goal that he considers important, and if the student sees that the

results of his learning experience would bring progress to him, he will most likely be interested in learning about it.

English language learning education would be carried out in elementary schools, starting with the Merdeka Curriculum taught in education units (Anindito Aditomo, 2023). Currently, several schools had implemented the Merdeka Curriculum and SDN 8 Makale had implemented this curriculum in the 2022/2023 school year. In connection with this, related to English language learning in the Merdeka Curriculum which is new to students at the elementary school level, especially at SDN 8 Makale, which only implemented English language learning in the odd semester of the 2023/2024 school year. Therefore, based on this phenomenon, the researcher is interested in knowing "Students' Interest in Learning English: A Study of the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 8 Makale".

METHOD

This research used quantitative research by using quantitative descriptive methods. The research was conducted at SDN 8 Makale, it is located on Lea-Makale, Tana Toraja of South Sulawesi on December 2023. The respondents involved in data collection were 23 students of the fifth-grade of SDN 8 Makale. This the research used questionnaires to collect data using the Likert scale and then analyze the data using the scoring method to know the student learning interests are categorized into high interest, medium interest and low interest classifications.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION
Finding

The researcher describes the students' result of data collection was obtained through questionnaires formulated based on theories and filled in by respondents as bellow:

Tabel 4.1
Results of student questionnaire scores

R	Student Answer Score	Category
s1	60	High
s2	70	Very High
s3	79	Very High
s4	61	High
s5	64	High
s6	56	High
s7	66	High
s8	67	High
s9	52	Medium
s10	74	Very High

s11	52	Medium
s12	80	Very High
s13	61	High
s14	69	Very High
s15	77	Very High
s16	69	Very High
s17	74	Very High
s18	75	Very High
s19	69	Very High
s20	46	Medium
s21	68	Very High
s22	54	Medium
s23	50	Medium
Total	**1493**	

Tabel 4.1 shows the average value of the questionnaire result regarding students' interest in learning English. It is clear that the average value of students is in the high category, namely very high, as a result of the fact that almost all students are happy when learning English. From 23 students, the highest score was 80 in the very high category, and the lowest score was 46 in the medium category, with a total score of 1493.

The researcher conclude that the percentage of the students' score is 81% which is classified as high category. It means students' interest learning English is high.

There were 11 students who obtained scores of 85-100 with very high criteria, 7 students who obtained 65-84 with high criteria, and 5 students who obtained 55-64 with medium criteria. None of the students fall into the low and very low criteria. Thus, to find out the classification of students can be seen in table 4.2.

Tabel 4.2
The percentage of questionnaire answers

Criteria	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	85-100	11	47,8%
High	65-84	7	30,4%
Medium	55-64	5	21,7%
Low	40-54	0	0%
Very Low	0-39	0	0%
Total		**23**	**100%**

From the table 4.2 above, it shows that out of 23 students, there are 11 students or 47.8% as very high, 7 students or 30,4% as high and 5 students or 21,7% as medium. It means the highest percentage of students score is 47,8 % with the very high category.

This happens because almost all students are enthusiasm in Learning English, like students active in class, doing the tasks given by the teacher earnestly and paying attention to the teacher's explanations.

Discussion

Based on the analysis of data that has been explained previously and associated with previous theories and the results of questionnaires that have been filled out by students, the results of the total number of 20 statements of learning interest indicators submitted to 23 grade V students show that the total score obtained is 1.493 and the maximum total score is 1.840. The learning interest of grade V students is then expressed into percentages with the formula % of learning interest equal to the total score obtained divided by the maximum score then multiplied by 100%. The calculation results show that the percentage of student interest in learning, which is 81%, is classified as high learning interest criteria.

Interest in learning is an attitude of obedience to learning activities, both regarding planning a study schedule and the initiative to make these efforts seriously Nurhasanah & Sobandi, (2016). This shows that interest is the tendency of one's soul towards an object, usually accompanied by a feeling of pleasure, because it will feel there is interest in that object.

The English learning process which is said to be still very new for students at SDN 08 Makale can run well so that students are very enthusiastic in following the learning process. At the time of learning most students are very enthusiastic, paying attention to the teacher's explanation and taking notes when learning English. Fun teachers do greatly influence learning activities in the classroom.

Based on observations made in grade V of SDN 08 Makale, students' interest in learning English subjects can be categorized as high. This can be seen during the learning process in class, students are very enthusiastic in participating in English language learning. Fun teachers also make students more excited about learning. Teachers apply cooperative learning so that English learning is not so difficult and boring for students.

From the exposure of data and research findings that have been described by researcher to find out the students interest learning english from abservation and four indicators used such as, feeling of pleasure toward learning English by 84%, students attention to learning and teacher by 80%, students interest in learning English by 76% and s tudents attention when participanting in learning by 84%. From the data obtained, total score students interest learning English in four indicators such us 1.493. The students interest learning English from the 4 indicators show in table 4.1 above is include in the High Category. This can be seen of the mean score of the students' interest learning English in the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 8 Makale which is 81%.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of the previous chapter, the researcher conclude that the students interest in learning English in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 8 Makale showed results of 81% and was included in the " High" category.

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