THE USE OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM IN TEACHING ARABIC AT UNITED ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL CAHAYA HATI BUKITTINGGI

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ABSTRACT
Kurikulum Merdeka adalah kurikulum yang menciptakan kondisi belajar yang menyenangkan bagi siswa dan guru sehingga pembelajaran tercapai sesuai dengan kebutuhan dan minat siswa. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami penggunaan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam merencanakan, melaksanakan, dan mengevaluasi pengajaran bahasa Arab. Metode penelitian yang diterapkan adalah deskriptif, yang berfokus pada mempelajari suatu fenomena secara detail atau membedakannya dari fenomena lainnya. Penelitian ini melibatkan guru dan perwakilan kurikulum di SMP Islam Terpadu Cahaya Hati Bukittinggi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam hal desain, guru menggunakan model pembelajaran sesuai dengan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, menghasilkan unit pembelajaran yang dipersiapkan dengan baik. Dalam hal pelaksanaan, guru melaksanakan pengajaran menggunakan unit pembelajaran yang dirancang dengan baik, meskipun mereka juga menggunakan beberapa buku teks dari kurikulum sebelumnya. Penilaian yang digunakan sesuai dengan peraturan. Sebagai kesimpulan, Kurikulum Merdeka berfungsi dan efektif di sekolah ini.
Keywords: Kurikulum Merdeka, Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab

ABSTRACT
The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that creates enjoyable learning conditions for students and teachers so that learning is achieved according to students' needs and interests. The purpose of this research is to understand the use of the Merdeka Curriculum in planning, implementing, and evaluating Arabic language teaching. The research method applied is descriptive, which focuses on studying a phenomenon in detail or distinguishing it from other phenomena. This research involved teachers and curriculum representatives at the United Islamic Junior High School Cahaya Hati Bukittinggi. The results show that in terms of design, teachers used teaching models in accordance with the Ministry of Education and Culture, producing well-prepared learning units. In terms of implementation, teachers carried out teaching using well-designed learning units, although they also used several textbooks from the previous curriculum. The assessments used were aligned with the regulations. In conclusion, the Merdeka Curriculum functions effectively in this school.
Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum, Arabic Language Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Arabic is one of the important subjects taught in Islamic schools, starting from the elementary level, through middle and high school, up to the university level. As a foreign language, its teaching requires creative efforts.

Arabic encompasses four essential skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It serves as a means to understand and express ideas, emotions, and information, while also developing religious competence, expanding general knowledge, and strengthening social and cultural awareness.

Teaching Arabic is the process by which a teacher conveys the Arabic language and

its knowledge to the minds of students in a proper way, enabling them to acquire the four desired language skills. It can also be seen as a process of reconstructing experiences through which learners gain knowledge of Arabic, the four language skills, as well as its values and orientations.

Good Arabic teaching is that which aligns with the educational curriculum. The curriculum represents the totality of direct and indirect educational experiences prepared by society to nurture individuals and equip them in light of the social environment, with the aim of realizing hopes and future achievements.

The role of teachers is crucial in achieving educational success. Arabic language teachers make efforts to prepare materials and activities that support the learning process. The teaching and learning of Arabic will continue to grow and will require new innovations to meet the challenges of the times. Teachers of Arabic as a foreign language have played an important role in achieving educational success. They have developed learning materials progressively, renewed teaching strategies, diversified teaching methods, and experimented with modern educational approaches.

Saleh Abdullah stated that the curriculum is a clear and well-defined path, consisting of a set of experiences and activities provided by the school under its supervision for the students, with the aim of engaging them in these experiences and interacting with them. As a result of this interaction, learning takes place or behavioral changes occur, leading to the achievement of comprehensive and integrated development, which is the ultimate goal of education.

A curriculum refers to a set of courses determined by the school for its students, which are evaluated by various stakeholders and participants. Therefore, educational curricula represent a collection of educational experiences prepared by the school to help students achieve psychological, social, and academic adjustment, as well as personal growth. This is accomplished through integration and harmony among its components, ultimately leading to the development and evaluation of the educational curriculum. ChatGPT said:

The Arabic language curriculum is the foundation of the entire educational system. Therefore, it holds a strategic position within the educational process. According to Rushdi Ahmad Tu'aymah, the curriculum is a fundamental component of the educational process—if not its very core. This is because it provides a comprehensive vision of what students should be taught in terms of knowledge, what skills they should acquire, and what values and attitudes they should develop. Moreover, the curriculum effectively translates the general objectives of education into practice.

It also proposes the steps through which society can shape its members in the desired way. Jack Richards stated that effective teaching depends on understanding the teaching context and recognizing the needs of both teachers and learners. It also requires careful planning of courses and educational materials, as well as monitoring the teaching and learning processes. In short, it is essential to view the teaching process as part of a set of interrelated factors and reciprocal processes.

The researcher, referring to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia (Decree No. 56 of 2022) regarding the implementation of the curriculum within the framework of educational recovery, noted that Indonesia has shifted from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum, while still emphasizing the

development of the 2013 Curriculum. The implementation guidelines for the Merdeka Curriculum at the secondary education level include two main activities:

1. Intra-curricular learning
2. The Pancasila Student Profile Project (P5)

The United Islamic Junior High School Cahaya Hati in Bukittinggi has adopted the Merdeka Curriculum for teaching Arabic, particularly for the seventh grade. However, the researcher observed that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic language teaching has not been fully realized. Therefore, this study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the use of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching Arabic at the United Islamic Junior High School Cahaya Hati Bukittinggi.

Based on initial observations conducted in October at the same school, it was found that textbooks based on the 2013 Curriculum issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs are still being used. Consequently, the Merdeka Curriculum has not been fully implemented at the United Islamic Junior High School Cahaya Hati Bukittinggi. When preparing instructional materials, teachers continue to employ teaching methods that align with the 2013 Curriculum.

The curriculum can also be understood as a set of courses determined by the school for its students, evaluated by a group of educators and participants. Thus, educational curricula are essentially pedagogical experiences organized by the school to enable students to achieve psychological, social, and academic adjustment, as well as self-development. This is accomplished through integration and harmony among its components, ultimately leading to the improvement and evaluation of the educational curriculum.

The curriculum for teaching Arabic is the foundation of the educational system; therefore, it occupies a strategic position within the learning process. Rushdi Ahmad Ta'imah considered the curriculum to be a fundamental component of education, if not its very core. This is because the curriculum provides a comprehensive vision of what should be offered to students in terms of knowledge, the skills they must acquire, and the values and attitudes that can be developed within them. Furthermore, the curriculum effectively translates the general objectives of education into practice.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method employed by the researcher in this study is the descriptive method. The descriptive approach focuses on studying a particular phenomenon in detail or distinguishing it from other phenomena. According to Muhammad Sarhan Ali Al-Mahmoudi, descriptive research aims to describe specific phenomena, events, or objects, to collect facts, information, and observations about them, to explain their particular circumstances, and to report their actual condition as they exist in reality. The research was conducted at the United Islamic Junior High School Cahaya Hati in Bukittinggi. The period of the research was from February to April in the year 2024.

The sources of data in this study were used to collect relevant information and data, as outlined below:

1. The Principal of the United Islamic Junior High School Cahaya Hati Bukittinggi — Ms. Raudhah al-Jannah
2. The Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs at the same school — Ms. Harlina

3. The Arabic Language Teacher at the United Islamic Junior High School Cahaya Hati Bukittinggi — Mr. Zulhajji

In this study, the researcher employed several methods for data collection:
1. Observation. Observation is an activity involving the act of watching and listening to relationships or phenomena occurring in a specific setting. In this research, the researcher served as an observer, listener, and participant, paying close attention to all teaching activities in the classroom—particularly those related to Arabic language instruction.
2. Interview. An interview is a structured conversation or dialogue conducted between the researcher and one or more respondents for the purpose of obtaining necessary research information. It involves the researcher asking questions to which the selected participants are expected to provide relevant answers related to the study.
3. Documentation. Documentation refers to the written or recorded evidence of past events, which may include written texts, photographs, or artifacts. Documents serve as records concerning groups of people or events within appropriate social contexts relevant to the focus of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the researcher's observations of Arabic language instruction, several stages are implemented, namely planning**,** implementation, and evaluation. From the results of an interview with Mr. Zulhajji, the Arabic language teacher at the school, it was found that the Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented for two years at Cahaya Hati Junior High School. According to him, this curriculum does not differ significantly from the previous one (the 2013 Curriculum).

1) Planning of the Merdeka Curriculum in Teaching Arabic

Based on the data collected through observation, interviews, and document review—and particularly through an interview with Ms. Harlina, the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs—the school has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum as effectively as possible, in accordance with KMA (Keputusan Menteri Agama) standards.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the instructional materials are organized as follows:

Secara umum, modul ajar yang dikontribusikan di Platform Merdeka Mengajar memiliki ketentuan komponen minimum sesuai dengan Panduan Pembelajaran dan Asesmen, yakni:

- Tujuan pembelajaran
- Rencana asesmen di awal dan akhir pembelajaran
- Langkah pembelajaran
- Media pembelajaran

Namun, untuk menunjang keterbacaan dan kemudahan pencarian modul ajar untuk pengguna, modul ajar yang tayang di Platform Merdeka Mengajar terdiri dari komponen sebagai berikut:

1. Informasi Umum
   1. Pemilihan jenis satuan dan jenjang pendidikan
   2. Pemilihan fase dan kelas
   3. Pemilihan mata pelajaran
   4. Penanda kebutuhan khusus*
   5. Judul modul ajar
   6. Deskripsi umum modul ajar
   7. Identitas penulis modul (nama dan asal organisasi)
   8. Gambar sampul (*opsional*)

2. Tujuan Modul
   1. Pemilihan/pengunggahan referensi Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran yang digunakan sebagai acuan penyusunan Tujuan Pembelajaran dari keseluruhan modul ajar

3. Rancangan Penggunaan
   1. Total alokasi Jam Pelajaran (JP)**
   2. Penentuan moda pembelajaran (*opsional*)**
   3. Target murid (*opsional*)
   4. Jumlah murid (*opsional*)
   5. Sarana dan prasarana (*opsional*)
   6. Prasyarat kompetensi (*opsional*)

4. Materi, Asesmen, dan Referensi
   1. Rancangan Modul Utuh, mengikuti ketentuan komponen minimum pada Panduan Pembelajaran dan Asesmen.
   2. *Modul ajar utuh setidaknya harus mencakup: tujuan pembelajaran, rencana asesmen, detail aktivitas, dan media pembelajaran.*
   3. Materi
      - Juul materi
      - Rangkuman Kegiatan

These are the learning materials used at the United Islamic Junior High School Cahaya Hati Bukittinggi.

MODUL AJAR 1a PENDIDIKAN AGAMA ISLAM DAN BUDI PEKERTI

SMP FASE D

A. Informasi Umum

Kode Modul Ajar	Bahasa Arab.D.VII.1a
Penyusun/Tahun	Zulhaji Nst/2024
Kelas/Fase Capaian	VII/Fase D
Elemen/Topik	Perkenalan
Alokasi Waktu	120 menit (3 Jam Pelajaran)
Pertemuan Ke-	1
Profil Pelajar Pancasila	Beriman, Bertakwa kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, dan Berakhlak Mulia, Bergotong-royong, Kreatif
Sarana Prasarana	LCD, Proyektor, Papan Tulis, Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahan
Target Peserta Didik	Regular/Tipikal
Model Pembelajaran	Problem-Based Learning
Mode Pembelajaran	Tatap Muka

B. Komponen Inti

Tujuan Pembelajaran
1. Peserta didik dapat memahami fungsi sosial, struktur teks dan unsur kebahasaan (bunyi, kata, makna dan gramatikal) dari teks sederhana yang berkaitan dengan tema: التعارف yang melibatkan tindak tutur memperkenalkan diri dan orang lain, menanyakan asal negara/ daerah dengan menggunakan kata tanya (هَلْ - مِنْ أَيْنَ).
2. Peserta didik dapat mendemonstrasikan tindak tutur memperkenalkan diri dan orang lain, menanyakan asal negara/daerah dengan menggunakan kata tanya (هَلْ - مِنْ أَيْنَ) baik secara lisan maupun tulisan.

Pertanyaan Pemantik
1. Apakah Anda pernah membaca tema Bahasa arab tentang perkenalan ?
2. Apakah manfaat Anda mengetahui mufradat tema perkenalan ?

Persiapan Pembelajaran
1. Guru melakukan asesmen diagnostik bagi siswa penguasaan mufradat tema perkenalan.
2. Guru menyiapkan bahan tayang powerpoint materi perkenalan.

The learning materials follow the standards established by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Arabic language teacher delivers lessons clearly and aligns instructional content with existing educational regulations.

The main difference between lesson planning (RPP) under the 2013 Curriculum and the instructional materials under the Merdeka Curriculum lies in their structure. Under the 2013 Curriculum, lesson plans primarily include the learning process in the class, while in the Merdeka Curriculum, the learning materials are enriched with various supplementary resources such as additional texts, pictures, illustrations, diagrams, videos, and audio recordings.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum is its emphasis on developing student independence and problem-solving skills. It promotes collaborative learning, encouraging students to take greater responsibility for their own learning process.

According to Mr. Zulhajji, although the Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented for two years, it is not substantially different from the previous curriculum. It closely resembles the educational model developed by JSIT (Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu), especially in the teaching of Arabic, which remains integrated with Qur'anic instruction.

By incorporating the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly P5 (The Pancasila Student Profile Project) and the value of tolerance, teachers are encouraged to be more flexible in recognizing the differences among students. Here, tolerance means not demanding excessively high linguistic intelligence from students in Arabic language learning.

While the 2013 Curriculum emphasized both teacher-centered and student-centered approaches, the Merdeka Curriculum introduces differentiation, which involves summarizing learning experiences at the end of each phase based on both student and teacher reflection. The key components of the Merdeka Curriculum include inquiry, questioning, learning community, modeling, and authentic assessment.

However, as Mr. Zulhajji explained, one of the main challenges in planning Arabic instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum is the difficulty of encouraging student participation, due to the foreign nature of the Arabic language and the challenge of getting students accustomed to speaking Arabic. Moreover, the school still relies on textbooks designed for the 2013 Curriculum, which limits full implementation of the new system.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the success of planning the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching Arabic can be measured through assessment, which differs from the evaluation model used in the 2013 Curriculum. Unlike the previous system that used UTS (Midterm Exam) and UAS (Final Exam), the Merdeka Curriculum employs two types of assessment:

Summative Assessment (Sumatif) — equivalent to midterm and final grades.

Formative Assessment (Formatif) — evaluation of student performance during each learning session.

2) Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Teaching Arabic

According to Permendikbudristek Regulation No. 12 of 2024, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum follows specific guidelines. At Cahaya Hati Junior High School, teachers carry out learning activities based on the units and principles outlined in the

regulation.

In practice, teachers implement the Merdeka Curriculum according to the standards of the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, some challenges remain. Teachers often experience difficulty in developing instructional materials because the resources available are not yet ideal. There is also confusion in applying the curriculum due to limited understanding and the absence of sufficient workshops or training sessions. Furthermore, students often lack clear direction regarding the intended learning outcomes.

In the classroom, following the planning stage, the implementation involves applying learning activities directly. Based on the researcher's second observation, during Arabic language classes, the teacher focuses significantly on facilities. Approximately 40% to 60% of these facilities—such as sound systems and projectors—are available at the school. Therefore, teachers must be innovative and creative, making lessons more contextual and connected to students' real-life environments. Teachers are also encouraged to use various instructional tools that help students better understand Arabic.

The role of technology in teaching Arabic is highly significant. Mobile phones are used to display videos and to support teacher monitoring. Since today's students belong to Generation Alpha, who often face challenges in social interaction, teachers and parents are encouraged to guide them in using technology wisely to maintain balance between social life and digital engagement.

Parents also play a vital role in supporting Arabic language education, particularly by monitoring their children's learning progress and ensuring responsible use of technology. Arabic language instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes collaboration. For example, students work in groups to create learning materials, play educational games, and engage in interactive activities.

The strategies used in Arabic teaching are largely consistent with those of the previous curriculum, focusing on the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains. However, greater emphasis is now placed on the affective aspect through practical exercises such as dialogues and interactive communication.

Students' responses to the Merdeka Curriculum have been positive; they find the learning process more comfortable and enjoyable because it provides them with greater freedom of expression and connects learning to their surrounding environment. Homework and assignments are fewer compared to the previous curriculum, which helps reduce learning pressure.

The main challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum include the limited availability of instructional materials, difficulties in application, and financial constraints, since the curriculum requires numerous activities such as educational visits and P5 projects. For Arabic language teaching in particular, implementation remains limited because students still struggle to adapt to the Arabic language.

3) Evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Teaching Arabic

In any educational system, evaluation is essential to determine whether the implemented program is achieving its objectives. Through evaluation, various obstacles in the teaching process can be identified and addressed, serving as a reference for improvement.

Based on the interview with Mr. Dzulhijjah, the Arabic teacher at Cahaya Hati Junior High School, the evaluation of Arabic instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum consists of two main forms: summative and formative assessment.

The evaluation process considers not only the learning outcomes, but also the teaching media and instructional process, which are assessed through direct observation and peer evaluation among teachers.

In evaluating the effectiveness of instructional materials, teachers rely on clearly defined learning objectives established from the beginning, ensuring that the materials align with the competencies students are expected to achieve.

The evaluation also includes monitoring the involvement of students, technology, and parents. Teachers coordinate with parents to monitor students' behavior both at school and at home, particularly regarding the use of smartphones.

Overall, the Merdeka Curriculum at the United Islamic Junior High School Cahaya Hati Bukittinggi has been implemented with an emphasis on flexibility, innovation, and responsiveness to students' learning needs, reflecting the core philosophy of independent learning.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching Arabic at the United Islamic Junior High School Cahaya Hati Bukittinggi has been effective. Planning utilized learning units aligned with Ministry standards, implementation involved collaborative methods that supported comfort and efficiency, and evaluation used both formative and summative techniques. Despite challenges such as limited materials and adaptation issues with Arabic learning, the Merdeka Curriculum overall contributed positively to the school's Arabic language education.

1. Planning of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic Language Teaching. Planning is a series of preparatory actions to achieve objectives. Based on interviews with the vice principal for curriculum, the school applied the Merdeka Curriculum according to KMA standards. The teaching materials were in line with the Ministry of Education and Culture guidelines. Unlike lesson plans under Curriculum 2013, the Merdeka Curriculum's learning units are enriched with supporting materials such as supplementary texts, illustrations, videos, and audio. This approach encourages students to be more independent and responsible in learning.

2. Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic Language Teaching. Based on Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, the school implemented learning in accordance with structured units. Teachers followed the Ministry's standards while integrating collaborative and student-centered learning. However, challenges were found, including teachers' difficulties in developing materials due to limited training, as well as students' lack of understanding of learning objectives. Technological tools, such as smartphones, were integrated to display videos during lessons, though this required parental guidance to balance social and digital life. Student responses to the Merdeka Curriculum were generally positive, as they felt more comfortable and free in expressing themselves. However, a lack of resources and adaptation difficulties with Arabic presented obstacles.

3. Evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic Language Teaching. Evaluation in the

Merdeka Curriculum was carried out both formatively and summatively. Teachers evaluated student performance through direct observation, assignments, and peer assessments. The evaluation also considered the role of technology and parental involvement, ensuring that learning objectives were met. Overall, the evaluation showed that the Merdeka Curriculum encouraged flexibility, innovation, and responsiveness to students' needs.

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