

THE ROLE OF BASIC CONCEPTS OF INDONESIAN LANGUAGE IN LEARNING BASIC EDUCATION OF THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM

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Abstract

This study discusses the implementation of the fundamental concepts of the Indonesian language in primary education under the Merdeka Curriculum. The method used is a literature review, analyzing various documents and sources related to curriculum implementation. The results highlight the importance of mastering language skills in the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as the challenges faced by educators in adapting materials and teaching methods. The conclusion emphasizes the need for continuous teacher training and better provision of learning resources.

Keywords: Fundamental Concepts, Merdeka Curriculum, Indonesian Language Learning.

1. Introduction

Education is one of the main pillars in nation building. Along with the changing times, the education system in Indonesia continues to evolve to answer the challenges of globalization, technology, and the need for competent human resources. Education in Indonesia has undergone various changes along with the times. One of the major changes implemented in the education system is the presence of the Independent Curriculum which will be implemented in 2022 (Dhomiri, Junedi, & Nursikin, 2023). This curriculum is designed to provide greater freedom for teachers and students in carrying out learning. The main goal of the Independent Curriculum is to create learning that is fun, flexible, and centered on the needs and potential of each student. Learning is expected to focus not only on the cognitive aspect, but also on character development and life skills that are relevant to the development of the times.

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, education in Indonesia has the goal of improving the quality of human life through the development of students' potential to become individuals of faith, piety, virtue, health, skill, creativity, independence, and democratic and responsible citizens. In achieving these goals, education must be carried out with an approach that is in accordance with the characteristics of students and the development of the times. Education in Indonesia, despite various advances, still faces a number of challenges. One of the biggest challenges is the low quality of education, especially at the basic education level. Based on data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Indonesia ranks at the bottom in terms of reading, mathematics, and science skills. The 2023 PISA report shows that the literacy ability of Indonesian students is still low, with an average score of 371, far below the global average of 489 (Kemendikbudristek, 2023). Another fact that reflects the low quality of learning in Indonesia is the data of the Education Progress Index (IKP) which shows that many Indonesian children still experience difficulties in terms of reading skills. Based on data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud), around 27% of 4th grade elementary school students in Indonesia cannot read fluently, which indicates a deep problem in basic literacy skills, including the ability to read and understand Indonesian texts (Kemendikbud, 2019).

At the basic education level, Indonesian learning not only focuses on mastering the four basic language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but also on strengthening students' character and emotional intelligence. In this new curriculum, there are efforts to make learning more relevant to students' lives, through a

more contextual and real-life approach. This is especially important given that early childhood students tend to have an easier time understanding and applying the things they learn if the material is directly related to their daily lives.

This paper aims to delve deeper into the role of the basic concept of the Indonesian language in learning at the basic education level, especially in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Given the importance of Indonesian as a communication tool and a means to develop critical thinking, there is a need for systematic efforts to improve students' language skills. By understanding and implementing the basic concepts of Indonesian properly, it is hoped that students will be able to master the four language skills well, which in turn will support the achievement of broader educational goals. Indonesian language learning based on the Independent Curriculum is expected to provide space for students to better appreciate Indonesian language and literature, as well as strengthen their communication skills in daily life. Therefore, the role of the basic concept of the Indonesian language is very important to support learning that not only prioritizes technical language mastery, but also to form the character of students who are creative, critical, and competitive in the global era. This writing is expected to provide insights and solutions in overcoming problems faced in Indonesian language learning, as well as contribute to developing learning strategies that are more effective, creative, and in accordance with the objectives of the Independent Curriculum.

2. Methods

The method used in writing this article is *literature review*. *Literature review* is a research method used to collect, analyze, and organize information obtained from various sources relevant to the research topic. The source of writing this article is from various reference books, journals with themes that are the object of discussion of the writing, and *literature*. The literature study in this study is limited to materials contained in library collections, without involving field research. Data collection is carried out by accessing various sources of literature such as books, journals, articles, and materials from the internet. This research uses a qualitative approach, which is a systematic method to study or research objects in a natural context without any manipulation or hypothesis testing. This approach aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic being researched.

3. Results and Discussion

The Role of Basic Indonesian Concepts in Basic Education Learning in the Independent Curriculum

The basic concept of the Indonesian language plays a very important role in basic education learning, especially in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum, which will be implemented in 2022, aims to provide freedom for teachers and students to undergo a more flexible learning process and emphasizes learning based on the needs and characteristics of each student. One of the important aspects of basic education learning in the Independent Curriculum is the strengthening of language skills which includes four main competencies: reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Damayanti, Jannah, & Agustin, 2022). The basic concept of Indonesian is the main foundation in achieving this goal, because language is a communication tool used in all aspects of learning.

The basic concept of Indonesian includes various fundamental elements that must be mastered by students, such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and other basic skills related to language. In the context of basic education, mastery of basic concepts of the Indonesian language is very vital, because Indonesian is the main means of conveying ideas, communicating, and obtaining and disseminating information (Iqbal et al., 2023). Therefore, Indonesian learning at the basic level must be able to develop basic language skills that can be used to enrich students' knowledge in various subjects. The basic concept of Indonesian includes language skills that can be used in daily life. This is not only limited to reading and writing skills, but also speaking and listening which are integral parts of effective communication. In addition, the ability to appreciate and understand literary works in Indonesian is also one of the goals of learning Indonesian. Thus, this basic concept has a great impact on the success of basic education in the Independent Curriculum, because every learning in elementary school uses Indonesian as the main means.

The Independent Curriculum provides flexibility for teachers to arrange learning according to the needs and characteristics of students. Indonesian learning in the Merdeka Curriculum not only aims to teach technical language skills, but also to develop students' character and creativity (Dhomiri, Junedi, & Nursikin, 2023). In this case, mastery of the basic concept of the Indonesian language is very important to achieve this goal. Teachers can adapt learning materials with a variety of approaches, from the use of literary texts to the use of digital media, so that students can learn languages in a more enjoyable way and in accordance with their interests and talents.

The Merdeka Curriculum, which was launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in 2021, has various advantages and disadvantages in its implementation. One of the drawbacks is immature preparation. Although this curriculum is expected to bring significant changes in the Indonesian education system, further assessment and evaluation are still needed to make its implementation more effective. In addition, the existing system is still not well planned, as seen in the application of the basic concept of Indonesian in elementary schools, where there is still little discussion about efforts to improve the quality of education (Zuariah et al., 2024). The lack of competent human resources (HR) is also an obstacle, considering that this curriculum requires educators who are ready to implement it optimally (Daga, 2021). On the other hand, the Independent Curriculum also has various advantages. One of them is its relevance to the needs of 21st century education, which is more interactive and based on the development of character and student competencies. This curriculum transforms project-based learning that can encourage students to be more active in exploring actual issues and developing the skills necessary to face future challenges. Additionally, the curriculum is simpler and more in-depth, providing ample time for students to understand essential material such as literacy and numeracy. Students are also given the freedom to choose subjects according to their interests and talents, which allows for maximum development (Nurhida et al., 2024).

In learning to write poetry, teachers can provide examples of poetry texts that are in accordance with the theme that is currently relevant, for example the theme of the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this activity, students are not only trained to develop writing skills, but also invited to think critically, creatively, and expressively in stringing words. In the Independent Curriculum, this learning process is emphasized on strengthening the affective and psychomotor aspects of students, so that they can not only produce works, but also be able to appreciate and appreciate literary works better (Ningrum & Suryani, 2022). In addition, Indonesian learning in the Independent Curriculum also prioritizes the development of speaking and listening skills which are very important in daily life. For example, teachers can give students the opportunity to practice speaking in front of the class, either in the form of speeches, presentations, or group discussions. In this way, students are invited to be more confident in expressing their opinions and ideas. In addition, listening skills are also very important in language learning, because students need to listen and understand the information conveyed by teachers or classmates.

The Independent Curriculum also supports more inclusive learning by prioritizing equality and equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their social, cultural, or physical backgrounds. Learning in elementary schools, especially in Indonesian subjects, is focused on the ability to communicate effectively and respect cultural diversity (Karuniawati, 2022). With this policy, it is hoped that students can enjoy a fun learning process that is beneficial for their personal and academic development. However, to ensure the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the role of teachers is very important, especially in compiling materials that are in accordance with the characteristics and interests of students. Teachers are expected to be facilitators who can develop effective learning methods, as well as have a positive impact on improving students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities.

Educators' Challenges in the Application of Basic Indonesian Concepts in Basic Education Level Learning of the Independent Curriculum

The application of the basic concept of the Indonesian language in learning at the basic education level in the Independent Curriculum presents various challenges for educators. Although the Independent Curriculum provides freedom and flexibility in determining the methods and materials of learning, the main challenges faced by educators remain large. These challenges are not only related to the technical aspects of teaching, but also involve internal and external factors that affect the success of Indonesian learning in elementary schools.

One of the biggest challenges faced by educators in implementing the basic concepts of Indonesian in the Independent Curriculum is the limited time available to teach various language skills. Although the Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility in the preparation of learning schedules, there is still a limited number of lesson hours for each subject, including Indonesian. In fact, to master the basic concepts of the Indonesian language well, students need enough time to practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. This time constraint often causes educators to have difficulty delivering material in depth, especially if there is a need to pay special attention to students who have difficulty mastering the language.

Educators face challenges in compiling Indonesian learning materials that are relevant and interesting for students. One of the advantages of the Independent Curriculum is that it provides space for educators to innovate in arranging material according to students' interests and needs. However, not all educators have the skills and experience to design creative and engaging learning. Without engaging material, students may feel bored and less motivated to

learn. In this case, educators need to develop the ability to choose appropriate texts, both fiction and nonfiction texts, as well as design activities that can develop students' language skills as a whole. The text used in learning must also be relevant to students' daily lives, so that they can more easily understand and appreciate Indonesian.

Another significant challenge is the huge variation in students' language skills. In elementary school, students have different backgrounds in language mastery, whether it is due to environmental, economic, or educational factors (Zuariah et al., 2024). Some students may already have good reading skills, while others still have difficulty recognizing letters or understanding the text being read. This makes educators have to be more careful in adjusting the teaching approach according to the abilities of each student. Educators need to pay special attention to students who have difficulties in language, either through remedial approaches or giving additional assignments. However, this certainly requires more time, which is often limited by the number of hours of lessons available.

In rural areas or remote areas, there are still major challenges related to limited access to adequate learning resources. Most schools in these areas face the problem of lack of quality teaching materials, whether in the form of textbooks, digital learning devices, or other supporting devices. In addition, teachers in these areas may also lack adequate training on the use of technology in learning. In fact, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the use of technology to improve students' language skills, such as by utilizing online learning applications or platforms that can increase students' insight and language skills (Karuniawati, 2022). Without adequate resource support, the application of basic Indonesian concepts in learning will be hampered.

Many educators have received training on the Independent Curriculum and basic concepts of the Indonesian Language, but the implementation in the classroom is not always in accordance with what is taught in the training (Jannati, Ramadhan, & Rohimawan, 2023). This can be caused by various factors, such as the inability to manage the class properly, time constraints, and difficulties in adapting the material to the abilities and needs of students. Educators who are not well trained in implementing new approaches in Indonesian teaching may have difficulty in creating effective and enjoyable learning. Therefore, continuous training and support from peers and schools are needed to overcome this problem.

The Merdeka Curriculum not only emphasizes on the achievement of academic competence, but also on the formation of students' character. One of the big challenges for educators is to integrate character values in Indonesian learning. Language learning is not only limited to language skills, but also a means to form attitudes and character values in students. For example, in learning to read, students can be trained to read with attention and empathy, while in learning to write, students can be taught to write responsibly and respect the opinions of others. The integration of character in Indonesian learning requires a holistic approach, where every aspect of language learning must support the formation of positive character of students (Ningrum & Suryani, 2022).

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion that has been presented, the following conclusions can be drawn. The role of the basic concept of Indonesian in basic education learning in the Independent Curriculum shows that this basic concept is very important to support essential language skills for students. Indonesian learning in the Merdeka Curriculum not only teaches technical language skills, but also develops students' character and creativity. By strengthening reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, students can master language as the main means of communication used in various areas of life. The Independent Curriculum provides educators with the flexibility to tailor the material to the needs and interests of students, but challenges such as time constraints and variations in students' abilities need to be overcome in order for these goals to be achieved to the fullest.

The challenges faced by educators in applying the basic concepts of Indonesian are very complex, ranging from time constraints, difficulties in compiling interesting materials, to the variety of students' language skills. In rural areas, obstacles such as lack of access to adequate learning resources and limited teacher training are also significant barriers. Therefore, to overcome these challenges, continuous training for educators and adequate resource support are needed. The application of the basic concept of Indonesian in the Independent Curriculum must also integrate students' character values so that learning does not only focus on language skills, but also on the formation of positive attitudes and values in students.

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