

ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH TEACHER PERCEPTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum brings significant changes in the education system, including English language learning in senior high schools. This study explores English teacher' perceptions of the Independent Curriculum, particularly in lesson planning, implementation of the teaching and learning process, and assessment of student learning outcomes. With a single case study qualitative approach through interviews and observations with one English teacher at SMAN 8 Malang, the results show that teacher have the freedom to develop lesson plans that are flexible and student-centered. Teacher combine PBL and PJBL models to increase students' active participation and critical and creative thinking skills. The assessment system is holistic through formative and summative approaches, covering academic, social, and communication aspects. This curriculum provides flexibility for teacher in developing innovative learning strategies, but it requires increased pedagogical competence and policy support for optimal implementation.

Keywords: Independent Curriculum, English Teacher Perception

INTRODUCTION

Education is an important foundation in building quality human resources for the country in the future. When the world was hit by the Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19) pandemic, It affects on lifestyles in all aspects, including socio-cultural, economic, and educational aspects. Kemendikbudristek established the "Independent Curriculum" policy in 2020 in an effort to change the curriculum (Syah et al., 2023). To date, Indonesia has used the Independent Curriculum as its curriculum. The Independent Curriculum implemented is a recent development in Indonesia's educational system that covers all aspects, including learning approaches and learning outcomes. By providing opportunities to learn informally, relaxed, and fun but still paying attention to students' abilities. This Independent Curriculum aims to build their character (Fauzan et al., 2023). Teachers have an important role in the Independent Curriculum's implementation. Based on Telaumbanua (2024), teacher's role is as an educator who bridges the curriculum and students. The teacher as a driver in self-directed learning means that a teacher is expected to be active and enthusiastic, creative, innovative, and more skillful as a facilitator of change in schools. Educators are expected to be more proactive which encourages successful program implementation. In implementation, teachers can choose the most appropriate methods, materials, and strategies for each group or individual. In addition to academic aspects, the Independent Curriculum emphasizes the formation

of strong moral and ethical values through interaction and real examples of teachers. For this reason, the role of teachers in building student character and ethics is very important. With their involvement and creativity, teachers can increase how well the Independent Curriculum was implemented in schools. According to Andiro et al., (2024), teacher perception is the process by which educators choose, arrange, and analyze the knowledge and experiences that already exist is known to create a meaningful overview. In previous research conducted by Zamasi (2024), this article discusses how teachers perceive changes in the 2013 Curriculum to the Independent Curriculum. The study's findings indicate that there are many differences between the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum. Based on the findings of previous studies, it only explored teachers' perceptions of curriculum changes in general without delving deeper into specific aspects such as implementation planning, and assessment in Independent Curriculum. Therefore, a comprehensive study is needed to explore how English teacher perceive the Independent Curriculum especially in senior high schools. To close this gap, this research analyze the perceptions of English teacher which include planning (designing lesson plan), implementation (teaching and learning process), and assessment (assessing student learning achievement) in implementing the Independent Curriculum in senior high school.

METHOD

Research Design

To explain the perception of English teacher, the researcher use single case study design with a descriptive qualitative approach. The focus of the researcher wanted to explore the experience of English teacher in implementing the Independent Curriculum in one school. The focus of the research is the reason why this method was chosen so that the perceptions of English teacher regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum given by participant can be described properly using this method.

Data Sources

To find out the perceptions of English teacher, data sources in this study were collected using interview and observation with an English teacher at SMAN 8 Malang who has implemented the Independent Curriculum. Interview and observation were conducted directly to obtain information related to teachers' views on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Data Collection

The researcher collected data through face to face interview and observation with English teacher from SMAN 8 Malang, the teacher will be interviewed and observed directly by the researcher to get the data needed. The interview was conducted face-to-face with an interview duration of about 30-40 minutes by giving a series of questions asked to the participant and recorded with the participant permission for the purpose of accuracy in transcribing and analyzing the data. After conducting interviews, the author will make observations and be directly involved to make observations in learning activities.

Data Analysis

To analyze the interview data, the research used thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke. Thematic analysis is a technique used to identify, examine, and report themes in data. Thematic analysis organizes and provides detailed explanations of your data as a whole (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

FINDINGS

Designing the Lesson Plan

Based on the interview results, it shows that participant view lesson plans as the “weapon” for teacher in teaching. Lesson plans are not just administrative documents, but guidelines that must be prepared by considering the uniqueness of each class, especially in terms of student learning styles. According to them, teacher are required to be able to facilitate this diversity so that learning objectives can be achieved optimally, both in terms of students' understanding and skills. In developing learning objectives, participant refer to the Learning Outcomes which are then elaborated into Learning Objectives and Flow of Learning Objectives. Learning objectives are adjusted to the needs and characteristics of students faced in the classroom.

Participant said that the learning activities are organized based on the learning objectives that have been set, and are chosen in such a way that they are in line with the skills to be achieved. For example, if the learning objectives targets communication skills, then the activities designed must also lead to the practice of speaking or active communication. Participant mentioned the use of methods such as guided vision and open question-response, giving students the space to talk to the teacher and classmates freely. Before developing more specific learning activities, participant need to conduct diagnostic assessment of students' learning styles in each class, such as whether students tend to be visual, kinesthetic, or auditory. The results of this diagnostic process will be the basis for determining the most appropriate approaches and strategies, given that although the material taught is the same, the needs between classes can be very different.

In developing learning materials, participant often relate the content to actual issues. This is done so that the material becomes more contextualized and easily understood by students. For example, in teaching news text or argumentative text, participant choose current topics that are close to students' lives. Participant also often add strategies in the learning used in the lesson plan. This aims to foster students' interest in learning while facilitating understanding of the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Various approaches such as dictation, discussion, and project-based learning are used as part of the varied and interesting learning strategies.

In terms of assessment planning, participant focused on assessing language skills in accordance with the main activities, such as listening, speaking, reading, or writing. participant stated the importance of preparing lesson plans that are relevant to student needs. According to them, lesson plans that are not aligned with the real conditions in the classroom are considered ineffective, because they are unable to bridge students' learning needs. Therefore, lesson plans must always be flexible. The participant stated that she always made adjustments and modifications to

the lesson plan, although it was still based on the subject matter that had been agreed upon at the beginning of the semester.

Teaching Activities in the Classroom

In learning activities, participant stated that teacher are given flexibility in choosing learning models by adjusting to the characteristics and needs of students in the classroom. Based on classroom observations, it can be seen that participant apply two different learning models in the tasks given to students, namely Problem Based Learning (PBL) and Project Based Learning (PJBL). Participant have a positive perception of the implementation of English learning in the Independent Curriculum. Participant stated that the Independent Curriculum provides high flexibility in choosing and implementing learning models. Learning models are often used including inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning. The selection and combination of learning models is carried out adaptively, adjusted to the needs of students and diverse classroom conditions. Participant said that by combining various learning models, students can be better facilitated in achieving learning objectives according to their characteristics and learning styles. participant considered that this was important to help students achieve learning objectives optimally. Furthermore, the participant also revealed that the application of varied learning models received positive responses from students. He considered that students showed enthusiasm and spirit during the learning process. According to him, this is because the approach used can facilitate students' talents, interests, learning styles, and ability levels, ranging from beginner, intermediate, to advanced. Thus, students feel they have the space to explore and develop their abilities to the fullest.

Regarding how to open the lesson, the participant adjusts to the situation of the class at that time. She realizes that the condition of each class is different, for example, classes after sports lessons certainly have a different atmosphere compared to classes that do not. In delivering the core activities, the participant starts the learning with pre-activity such as triggers in the form of pictures, writings, or videos relevant to the learning topic to brainstorm students' prior knowledge. He prefers an inductive approach, where students are first given a topic or stimulus, then through a series of activities, students are directed to understand the material being studied. The materials used also vary, ranging from text, visual, to audio-visual, which are adapted to students' learning styles. In the closing part of the lesson, the participant provides an opportunity for students to reflect. He does not directly summarize the material that has been learned, but invites students to convey their understanding through questions such as "What can you learn from today's activity?". The participant views that reflection is important so that students can summarize their understanding independently, as well as train critical thinking skills.

Participant emphasized that Independent Curriculum strongly supports teacher creativity in teaching. Freedom in choosing learning models, developing materials, and determining relevant approaches provides space for teacher to continue to innovate and adapt learning to the context and characteristics of students. To encourage active student participation, teacher use various strategies

such as pair work discussions, group projects, individual assignments, mind mapping, and assignments in the form of written text. These strategies are adjusted to the students' characteristics, including considering whether they are extroverted or introverted. Teacher also provide alternative learning resources such as videos or visuals to accommodate students who are less interested in reading long texts. When dealing with less active students, teacher usually take a personal approach by asking about the obstacles they face. After finding out the problem, participant provide direction and motivation so that students can overcome these obstacles and re-engage in the learning process.

In terms of English teaching experience, the participant stated that teaching is a fun and inspiring experience. He said that in the learning process there is often an exchange of knowledge between teachers and students. In fact, it is not uncommon for students to provide views or information that exceeds the participant's expectations, thus creating a two-way learning situation and mutual learning. The biggest challenge faced by participants in implementing learning is the diversity of student abilities. With the background of students who come from zoning, affirmation, and achievement pathways, the level of ability that students have varies greatly. The participant realized that the class she faced was not homogeneous, but very heterogeneous. Therefore, he felt the need to make maximum efforts in facilitating all students so that they could still understand and master the learning material despite their different abilities.

Assessing Student's Learning Achievement

Participant stated that the assessment in the Independent Curriculum must be flexible and adapted to the characteristics of each learner. According to him, the assessment is not carried out uniformly, but pays attention to certain aspects such as visual, auditorial, or kinesthetic. This is done because of the uniqueness and potential of individual students. Participant stated that in assessing students' ability in learning English, it can be seen from various aspects, including oral tests, written tests, class activeness, empathy, and the ability to collaborate with friends. Students' learning progress is assessed by comparing the results of formative assessments at the beginning and end of the semester to see the improvement. The communication aspect is also one of the important indicators in the assessment. Participant assess students' ability to use English verbally both when interacting with teacher and peers inside and outside the classroom.

Participant stated that formative assessment is conducted to measure student progress throughout the semester by comparing assessment results at the beginning and end of the semester. In addition, participant implemented observational formative assessment by observing students' responses and understanding during learning. This assessment is done directly through classroom interaction, where participant assess the extent to which students understand the material based on the speed and accuracy of their responses. As a form of appreciation, participant give ratings in the form of symbols, such as stars or categories such as awesome, excellent, great, good, good, fair, and poor. This approach aims to provide direct feedback to students and motivate them to be more active in the learning process. In summative assessment, participant combined various forms of assessment such as written tests, oral tests, and performance-based assessments. Participant emphasized that summative assessment should not only focus on written text-based exams, but also consider other relevant forms of evaluation to measure students' overall skills.

According to participant, teacher should make adjustments to the assessment of students with special needs or who have learning difficulties. Teacher needed to provide special attention and individualized approaches according to students' learning styles and personalities, such as introverts and extroverts. In terms of evaluating overall learning outcomes, participant used holistic assessment. The final grade given reflects students' abilities in the four main skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing-which are obtained from various forms of assessment during the learning process. In addition, according to participant, activeness, task completion, and students' attitudes during the learning process need to be considered as part of the final evaluation.

DISCUSSION

The results of the interviews showed that participant viewed lesson plans as the “weapon” for teacher in teaching. This view emphasizes the importance of the lesson plan not only as an administrative document, but also as a guide that must be prepared by considering the uniqueness of each class, especially in terms of students' learning styles. This shows that teachers are expected to be able to adapt teaching strategies to the diversity of student learning styles in order to optimally achieve learning objectives. This understanding is in line with Rahdiyanta (2016) that lesson planning is made to assist educators in carrying out the teaching and learning process in order to achieve the learning objectives that have been set.

In preparing the lesson plan, participant refer to the Learning Outcomes which are then translated into Learning Objectives and Flow of Learning Objectives. The elaboration of these learning objectives is adjusted to the needs and characteristics of the students faced in the classroom, indicating that lesson plans must be designed contextually and in accordance with the realities in the field. This supports research conducted by Salsabilla et al. (2023), the components of the Independent Curriculum-based lesson plan can be added according to the subject. Teacher are given the freedom to develop lesson plan components according to the environmental context and student learning needs. For example, if the TP targets communication skills, the learning activities designed will lead to speaking practice or active communication. The use of methods such as guided vision and open question-response provide space for students to speak both with the teacher and classmates freely. This shows the importance of classroom interaction that can facilitate students' communication skills. In this case, participants focused on improving language skills through active interaction.

In addition, the importance of early diagnosis of students' learning styles in each class was also emphasized by participant. Knowing whether students tend to learn visually, kinesthetically, or audiovisual provides a strong basis for determining appropriate approaches and strategies. In this line with research according to Sufyadi et al. (2021), before preparing lesson plans, teacher need to conduct diagnostic assessments of students. Diagnostic assessment is carried out to determine the level of competence, strengths, and aspects that need to be developed by students. The results obtained from this assessment are used as a guide for teachers in designing a learning process that is tailored to the needs of each learner. In addition, in certain conditions, various external factors such as family conditions, readiness to receive material, motivation levels, and students' interest in

learning can be taken into consideration in determining the most effective learning methods and strategies.

In developing learning materials, participant often link the content with actual issues. This is done so that the material becomes more contextual and easily understood by students. The selection of current topics such as news texts or argumentative texts that are close to students' lives reflects the effort to make learning more relevant and interesting. This approach not only enhances the connection of the material to students' real life, but can also foster students' curiosity and interest in learning the topics taught. This is in line with the principle of a flexible Independent Curriculum as explained by Wahyudin et al. (2024), Curriculum development needs to be flexible, namely by giving educators the freedom to adjust and enrich subject matter. This kind of freedom is needed so that the curriculum that students learn remains relevant to environmental changes, current issues, and the learning needs of students. With the freedom to choose and adapt teaching modules, teacher can be more flexible in adjusting learning strategies based on students' learning styles. By giving teacher the space to innovate in delivering materials, this can improve the quality of learning and ensure learners not only gain knowledge, but also skills that they can apply in their daily lives.

Furthermore, participant also emphasized the importance of flexibility in developing lesson plans. Lesson plans that are not aligned with the real conditions in the classroom are considered ineffective because they are unable to bridge students' learning needs. Therefore, adjustments and modifications to the lesson plan are very important steps, although they are still based on the subject matter that has been agreed upon at the beginning of the semester. This is in accordance with the Ministry of Education and Culture's goal of providing flexibility to schools and educators to design and implement the curriculum according to the potential and needs of each learner. Thus, the Independent Curriculum is expected to help students become more independent, creative and innovative (Khoir et al., 2024). Overall, the interviews with participants showed that developing an effective lesson plan requires a deep understanding of students' needs and characteristics, as well as the ability to adapt to changes in the learning process. This confirms that teachers do not only act as material deliverers, but also as facilitators who can create a learning environment that is inclusive and responsive to student diversity.

In learning activities, participant stated that teacher are given flexibility in choosing learning models by adjusting to the characteristics and needs of students in the classroom. This reflects the principle of flexibility in Independent Curriculum, which provides space for teacher to design more adaptive and contextualized learning. Based on the results of classroom observations, participants applied two different learning models in the tasks given to students, namely Problem Based Learning (PBL) and Project Based Learning (PJBL). Participant have a positive perception of the implementation of English learning in the Independent Curriculum. Participant stated that the Independent Curriculum provides high flexibility in choosing and applying learning models, and allows the integration of various learning models such as inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning. The selection of models that vary and are tailored to the needs of students and diverse classroom conditions shows the ability of participants to take a more personalized and relevant approach to student characteristics. The participant also considered that the use of various learning models received positive responses from students. He revealed that

students showed high enthusiasm and spirit during the learning process. This reflects that the approach used can facilitate various learning styles, talents, interests, and ability levels of students, ranging from beginners to advanced. This is in line with the results of Citrawati's research (2024) which shows that the Independent Curriculum has a positive influence on the learning independence of inclusive students by providing flexibility for teachers to choose their own teaching strategies and materials, and the role of teachers has a significant impact on increasing student independence.

In addition, the participant realized the importance of adjusting the opening of the lesson to the condition of the class at that time. Therefore, in delivering the core activities, participants start with the initial stages such as triggers in the form of pictures, writings, or videos that are relevant to the learning topic. Participant prefer an inductive approach, where students are given a topic or stimulus first, and through a series of activities, students are directed to understand the material being studied. The materials used also vary, ranging from text, visual, to audio-visual, which are adapted to students' learning styles. In the closing part of the lesson, the participant provides opportunities for students to reflect. He invited students to convey their understanding through questions such as *"What can you learn from today's activity?"*. This shows that the participant views reflection as an important part of learning, which can help students summarize their understanding independently while practicing critical thinking skills. This is in line with Rizki and Fahkrunisa's research (2022), in the implementation of learning, students are required to be more proactive and students are given the freedom to explore. In the Independent Curriculum, the teacher's job in the classroom is only as a facilitator when students need help.

Participant also emphasized that the Independent Curriculum strongly supports teacher creativity in teaching. The freedom to choose learning models, develop materials, and determine relevant approaches provides space for teacher to innovate and adapt learning to the context and characteristics of students. To encourage active student participation, participant use various strategies such as paired discussions, group projects, individual tasks, mind mapping, and assignments in the form of written texts. These strategies are designed to accommodate differences in student characters, including paying attention to whether students are extroverted or introverted. Facing students who are less active, participant take a personal approach by asking about the obstacles they face, and after knowing the problem, provide direction and motivation so that students can overcome these obstacles. This approach shows that participants are not only focused on teaching, but also on building better relationships with students and facilitating their holistic development.

However, the biggest challenge faced by participant is the diversity of student abilities that come from different backgrounds, such as zoning, affirmation, and achievement pathways. The participant realized that the class was very heterogeneous, so she felt the need to make maximum efforts in facilitating all students to understand and master the learning materials. This shows that, although the curriculum provides flexibility, the diversity of student abilities remains a big challenge that requires special attention from teacher in designing and implementing effective learning.

The assessment system in the Independent Curriculum participant states that assessment must be flexible and adapted to the characteristics of each learner. This statement emphasizes the importance of adaptive assessment, which is not carried out uniformly, but takes into account certain aspects such as visual, auditorial, or kinesthetic. This shows that participant really understand that students are unique and have different potential individually, so the assessment approach must be able to reflect this diversity. This is in line with research by Mustopa et al. (2021), teachers have the flexibility to adjust the assessment system to the conditions of the class, so as to provide a fairer and more accurate assessment. With a more comprehensive assessment system, the teaching and learning process becomes more meaningful and encourages students to develop optimally. Teachers use learning outcomes assessment to monitor, assess the process, measure student progress, and improve learning outcomes. The purpose of assessing learning outcomes by educational institutions is to assess how well students in a subject meet the Competency Standards. Participant stated that in assessing students' ability in learning English, various aspects must be considered, including oral tests, written tests, classroom activeness, empathy, and the ability to collaborate with friends. This shows that participant are applying a more holistic assessment approach, which measures not only cognitive abilities, but also students' social and emotional skills.

Students' learning progress is assessed by comparing the results of formative assessments at the beginning and end of the semester to see the improvements made. The formative assessment conducted by the participant focused on the learning process, providing immediate feedback to students to help them correct deficiencies and develop further skills. This finding is supported by Darwin et al. (2023), in formative assessment, teachers can observe and analyze student needs during learning, identify obstacles experienced by students, and monitor student progress. The results of this assessment will later be used as useful feedback for students and educators in the process of evaluating and improving learning. This approach also allows teacher to adjust their teaching strategies based on the assessment results obtained throughout the semester. In addition, participant apply observational formative assessment by observing students' responses and understanding during learning. This assessment is conducted directly through classroom interactions, where participants assess the extent to which students understand the material based on the speed and accuracy of their responses. This approach underscores the importance of direct observation of students as part of a more contextualized assessment process. By conducting observational assessments, participant can gain a clearer picture of how students interact with the subject matter and the extent to which they understand the content taught in the dynamic context of the classroom.

As a form of appreciation, participant provide ratings in the form of symbols, such as stars or categories such as “awesome,” “very good,” “great,” “good,” “fair,” and “poor.” This approach aims to provide direct feedback to students and motivate them to be more active in the learning process. By giving more descriptive and symbolic assessments, participant create a more positive learning atmosphere, which can increase students' motivation and engagement in learning. This kind of assessment can also reduce the pressure felt by students who may feel anxious about numerical or grade-based assessments. In summative assessment, participant combine various forms of assessment such as written tests, oral tests, and performance-based assessments. This shows that

the summative assessment conducted by participant is not only fixated on written text-based exams, but also considers other relevant forms of evaluation to measure students' overall skills. According to Izzulhaq et al. (2024), the combination of formative and summative assessments in the Self-Curriculum not only serves to assess the final outcome, but also provides useful guidance during the learning process. This approach creates a more comprehensive evaluation system, promotes learner development, and ensures that learning is more effective and meaningful.

Participant also emphasized that teachers must make adjustments to the assessment of students with special needs or who have learning difficulties. Teachers need to provide special attention and individualized approaches according to students' learning styles and personalities, such as introverts and extroverts. These adjustments are essential to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to develop and achieve their best potential. This principle is aligned with the concept of inclusivity in education which emphasizes the importance of supporting all students, including those with special needs or learning difficulties. In terms of evaluating overall learning outcomes, participants use holistic assessment, where the final grade awarded reflects students' abilities in four key skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing-acquired from various forms of assessment throughout the learning process. This approach reflects participants' understanding that assessment should involve all aspects of students' abilities, not just limited to certain abilities. Thus, participant ensured that the assessment covered all the essential skills in English language learning, which enabled a more comprehensive and objective assessment of students' progress. In addition, participants also considered that students' engagement, task completion and attitude during the learning process should be considered as part of the final evaluation. This shows that participant pay attention to students' attitude and behavior as important indicators in the learning process, which reflects the understanding that learning is not only about academic achievement, but also about character building and students' positive attitude in facing learning challenges.

CONCLUSION

The Independent Curriculum provides extensive flexibility for teacher in designing, determining learning and assessment models. Thus, learning is more innovative, adaptive and effective according to the conditions and needs of students. Therefore, high pedagogical competence is needed so that teacher can design learning strategies that are not only in accordance with curriculum standards, but also able to optimize student potential and skills to the fullest.

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