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English Teachers' Strategy in Implementing the Independent Curriculum in EFL Classroom at Senior High Schools in Barru

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of Independent Curriculum in English learning in school is a significant step in promoting education that is more student-centered, inclusive and relevant. The curriculum gives opportunity to the students to foster creativity and better English proficiency. This research aims to describe how the implementation of independent curriculum in EFL classroom in accordance to determine the proper teaching strategy that the English teachers apply in the classroom. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach to get the data in the form of interview, observation and documentation. The results showed that English teachers in each school which was the subject of this research used a variety of strategies in teaching English in the classroom. Most of these strategies still used the conventional one even though the learning curriculum has changed. This was due to the lack of knowledge, training, and experience about this independent curriculum. Although the independent curriculum has been launched since February 2022, in fact there were still many schools that have not implemented this curriculum along with teachers who do not understand the intricacies of this independent curriculum.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Independent Curriculum is known as a learning approach that prioritizes the advancement of students' decisive reasoning abilities, creativity and Independent. The principles of this curriculum emphasize engaging learning experiences, character development and integration between subjects. With regards to English language learning, the execution of Independent Curriculum provides new challenges and opportunities.

The objectives of implementing Independent Curriculum are to improve students' ability to speak English, develop critical thinking skills, and form an inclusive and creative attitude. The method used in implementing Independent Curriculum in English learning is to integrate the principles of this curriculum into the learning design. Learning activities that prioritize student participation, group discussions, collaborative projects, and problem-based learning are applied in every learning meeting. In addition, the selection of learning materials is also based on contemporary issues and students' needs in communicating in English in everyday life.

The implementation of Independent Curriculum in English language learning in schools is a significant step in promoting education that is more student-centered, inclusive and relevant. The curriculum gives the opportunity to the students to foster decisive reasoning abilities, creativity and better English language proficiency, while connecting learning to real-world issues. Through the execution of Independent

Curriculum, education in Indonesia can produce a generation that is ready to face complex challenges with deep understanding, courageous thinking, and a strong work ethic. On the other hand, the existing curriculum is considered insufficient to improve the quality of education as reflected in the low student learning outcomes indicators. Therefore, the government is more trying to develop a new curriculum to overcome this problem.(Hamdi et al., 2022)

In contrast, the Independent Curriculum is still less mature in its application in the learning process (Almarisi, 2023). Preparation is the starting point for everything, including determining and implementing a policy. In this case, namely the policy of the new curriculum. The lack of preparation for their independent curriculum ultimately makes it difficult for students and teachers to implement the new curriculum. This can be seen especially during the pandemic. Many students have difficulty following lessons. Teachers also have difficulty operating technological devices to deliver material

In other cases, the independent curriculum requires training that is quite long (Ayu Purnamasari S, Muhammad Amin, 2022). Implementing the Independent Curriculum requires greater time and resources than traditional learning methods. Due to the students are given the freedom to organize their own learning, teachers must spend extra time helping students who need additional guidance. Apart from that, this program also requires more resources such as textbooks and equipment.

Aside from that, the obstructions in carrying out the independent curriculum are seen basically in terms of facilities, students and teachers have not yet mastered the independent curriculum. The implementation of new policies must certainly be accompanied by intensive socialization. Without socialization, the parties involved and implementing the policy will most likely not understand the urgency of the policy. Then in the end, the curriculum didn't work well.

This is also a deficiency of the independent curriculum implemented by the government. Socialization is not provided intensively and comprehensively, so there are still disparities in education and information that occur in various parts of Indonesia. This inequality is related to the quality and facilities of educational infrastructure

Curriculum changes also have an impact on education, especially on students whose achievements are increasingly lower. In fact, these changes can also have an impact on schools, namely that the goals or vision of a school will also be disrupted (Rahmadhani et al., 2022). At certain levels or stages of education, subjects that were previously separated are now combined. This combination may save teaching time, but there are also disadvantages. The weakness is that the learning that students undergo becomes unfocused because at one time they study two different topics. Apart from that, the vision of a school is also in disarray because the allocation of subjects has changed. This is very influential on vocational school level subjects. The lesson allocation from 60% for vocational subjects to 70% and 40% for general subjects was changed to only 30% in this independent curriculum. This decision has a good effect on prioritizing students' vocational abilities, but the consequence is that knowledge generally receives less attention and less optimal.

Based on the result of first observations in November 2022 at SMA Negeri 4 Barru as one of the sample schools, the author found that the school has already used this curriculum. This curriculum is applied for new students who registered as X class students. In reality, this curriculum is still limit to use by every schools due to they used the former curriculum. Based on the English teachers' opinions, there are various kinds of problem experienced in implementing this independent curriculum, especially in learning English. It begins from the difficulty of the students in adapting the methods and strategies taught, even come from the teacher itself.

The teachers who initially had started to master the content of the past educational program, specifically the 2013 educational program, were endure with the emergence of a new curriculum whose content was almost entirely different from the prior one. This also makes it hard for them for they have to rearrange the teaching strategies and methods that are suitable for the students. Though that there are not too much differ, they have to rack their brains in applying the material contained in this new curriculum.

Apart from learning strategies and methods, material changes and learning achievements are further obstacles in applying this new curriculum. She found that in this new one the learning materials to be taught to the students underwent many changes. In addition, learning outcomes also experienced the similar problem. Meanwhile for the students themselves, the one that burden them is they have to go back to study all subjects at school as the students at the beginning of the school year will not be divided into several class majors. They will only get the class direction when they move up to the next level.

From this statement, the researcher wants to see the teacher's strategy as the implementer in the class regarding to the application of independent curriculum, school readiness in preparing for the implementation of the independent curriculum and students' views regarding the application of this curriculum concept to their learning process in the EFL classroom at Senior High Schools of Barru.

2. THEORY OVERVIEW

Teaching strategy is a generalized plan for a lesson which include structure, desired learner behavior in terms of goals of instruction and an outline of planned tactics necessary to implement the strategy (Gill & .,

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2017). Furthermore, Issac described that showing strategies are that way of behaving of the educator which he appears in the class i.e., the improvements of the showing systems, giving appropriate boost for opportune reactions, boring the learnt reactions, expanding the reactions by additional exercises, etc.(Russell, 1980). An instructor is expected to have instructional method, technique, and strategy capabilities. For educational experience to be conveyed all the material more successfully, the educators need a strategy to help the learning experience, and the strategy assumes a significant part in making more viable and dynamic learning with the goal that it makes the students keen on learning. Subsequently, the strategy is vital, claimed and dominated by an educator, and the strategy can likewise help the educator during the time spent material to the students (Siregar et al., 2022).

Muhammad Rashid (Rashid, 2004) explained the teaching strategies as follows; 1) lectures strategy, 2) demonstrations strategy, 3) tutorials strategy, 4) programmed instructions strategy, 5) heuristic strategy, 6) question-answer strategy, 7) project strategy, 8) group discussion strategy, 9) role playing or simulated social skill training.

In the learning process, teachers use some strategies to engage students' interest so that the students will understand learning material. Marzano (Kiftiah, 2019) collected strategies into nine groups as follows: 1) identifying similarities and differences, 2) summarizing and note-taking, 3) reinforcing effort and providing recognition, 4) homework and practice, 5) non-linguistic representation, 6) cooperative learning, 7) getting objectives and providing feedback, 8) generating and testing hypotheses, 9) cues, questions and advanced organizers.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this research, the author used a descriptive qualitative approach to get descriptive data in the form of words written or spoken of teacher also behaviors that can be observed (Azizah, 2022). Numerous techniques were utilized to collect the data, including observation, interviews that based on constructivism theory, and documentation. In this research, the author has two purposes. First, the writer wants to describe the implementation of the independent curriculum in the school specifically in the classroom. Second, the writer needs to explain the appropriate strategy to apply in teaching English in the classroom at senior high schools in Barru academic year 2023/2024.

This research conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Barru and SMA Negeri 4 Barru which are located in Barru district, Soppeng Riaja district and Mallusetasi district, Barru Regency, South Sulawesi. These schools work under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture in carrying out its activities. This research will conduct at these schools where the target of the research is the English teachers. Those teachers have taught in all grade in those schools.

The author chose these schools as research sample because they are the educational units that has implemented the independent curriculum in their learning system and also as a guide for the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The English teachers have also attended many trainings and gained a lot of knowledge about implementing the independent curriculum at the school.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the previous discussion, the author has mentioned the indicators of the implementation of the independent curriculum. In this indicator, several questions were asked to English teachers. However, before asking about these questions, the author wants to know the opinions of the teachers about general matters regarding the independent curriculum and the obstacles faced while implementing this curriculum. The teachers gave different responses. From Asriana's perception as the English teacher of SMAN 4 Barru, the independent curriculum is the curriculum implemented after the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP). This curriculum optimizes the needs of students. Therefore, teachers must know the character of the students before starting the lesson. Before starting the lesson, an initial assessment is held which is called a diagnostic assessment. This assessment will be the answer to knowing students' abilities and needs.

She also revealed that the word Merdeka, which was pinned as the name of the new curriculum, did not mean that students and teachers are freed from the usual learning and teaching tasks, but the independence intended here was that teachers know and better understand the needs of students based on their character. The students would also be more flexible in receiving material from the teacher. One of the characteristics of this curriculum was the P5 program. In this program the teacher chose and determined the theme that would be completed in one semester, while the students can choose what activities they would practice in the P5 program based on the theme given. This was what distinguished the previous curriculum, KTSP, from this independent curriculum.

In contrast to the previous opinion, Asriana revealed various obstacles faced. One of them was that in this independent curriculum, the time allocation for learning English was reduced from the original 4 hours to only 2 hours per meeting. This makes the teachers' teaching time not reach 24 hours. Therefore, they have to search for other hours outside of school. For example, if a school has only 10 study groups with 2 English teachers, then one of the teachers must find for other hours at another schools.

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The atmosphere in the classroom was also different. According to her, her teaching style was still the same as in previous years. She still often used conventional strategies, although she has combined them with new ones. However, another obstacle she found was from the students. She said that students become less able to master English because they did not have basic vocabulary.

The second teacher, Nur Hudayah, an English teacher at SMAN 2 Barru, said that the independent curriculum was a very student-centered curriculum. Students who used to be the objects, in the independent curriculum, were now the subjects where they had to be very concerned about learning. She also said that the independence meant by this curriculum was student-centered activities, starting from learning styles and others. In addition, she also revealed that because this curriculum was new to the teacher, she experienced obstacles in mastering its contents. One of them was due to the lack of training and deeper knowledge about the independent curriculum.

The third teacher, Reskianawidyaningsih Wahid as an English teacher at SMAN 2 Barru, also expressed a different opinion. According to her, the independent curriculum was a curriculum given to teachers and students to exercise freedom of expression in learning according to the given theme. She added that in this curriculum the teacher did not teach as usual. In this curriculum the teacher gave a theme and students were asked to respond to what they were able to achieve from that theme.

Apart from the above, Reskiana also revealed various obstacles she faced. The first was that students at the school rarely use Indonesian. The students tend to use the local language, Bugis. Therefore, when she taught the English subject, she found it difficult to provide material. The second one told that students' interest in learning English was still lacking. She said that students still thought that English was not crucial in terms of achieving their goals and jobs in the future because there were still many students who chose local jobs then it made them think that they did not need to learn English.

4.1 Differentiated teaching and learning

In this first indicator, the author emphasized on how the English teachers' strategy in implementing differentiated learning in the classroom. In addition, the author also asked about how the English teachers' strategy in increasing the potential of students' English learning achievements. The author also wanted to know how the English teachers' strategy in managing the results of formative and summative assessments for English learning in the classroom about differentiated learning.

From the results of interviews about differentiated learning, these English teachers expressed a variety of different opinions. According to Asriana, in implementing differentiated learning, she conducted diagnostic assessment at the initial stage. In this diagnostic assessment she gave some questions to the students. According to her, this diagnostic assessment was divided into two, namely cognitive and noncognitive assessments.

The similar one was also stated by Nur Hudaya. She also used diagnostic assessment to implement this differentiated learning in the classroom especially in English lessons. However, she applied this diagnostic assessment to differentiate students' characteristics. One of them was the students' learning style in the classroom. She arranged a list of questions to be answered by the students by giving a check symbol $(\sqrt{})$ to the answer that suited them.

From the answers, it could be found that there were some students who have kinesthetic, auditory, and visual learning styles. From these different learning styles, she must prepare teaching materials in kinesthetic forms such as various kinds of outdoor learning for students whose learning styles were kinesthetic. For auditory students, she would prepare teaching materials in the form of MP3s or similar with it. While for visual students, she would prepare teaching materials in the form of videos.

In addition to differentiated learning, the author also asked about the strategies used by English teachers in improving the potential of English learning outcomes. Based on Nur Hudaya's idea, she saw and developed many learning models that she got from the internet where she applied the strategy in accordance with the times and technology. These strategies not only keep up with the times but also favored by the students themselves. Even so, she argued that the strategy was almost the same as the way she has been teaching it in the last 10 years ago. Along with that, according to her, teachers still have to learn about this.

Reskiana was another case. She considered that the strategy in developing the potential of student learning outcomes was determined in terms of knowledge sources. For this reason, she assigned students to find sources of information at home and then presented the results of the search in front of the class. This was because students still restricted in using laptops and cellphones at school, except during certain class hours and must be supervised by the teacher concerned. It was also different with Asriana. In developing potential learning outcomes, the strategy she applied was based on the differentiated learning discussed earlier and also by using the results of the diagnostic assessment.

The author also asked the teachers for their opinions on the strategies they used in managing the results of formative and summative assessments in English language learning. For Asriana, the strategy she used in managing assessment results was to give different treatment at each level. In addition, she assessed how the students behave during the learning process in the classroom. In addition, she also gave some

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questions on the spot, which means that the questions are given directly at that time without having to wait for a long time.

Another thing was expressed by Nur Hudaya. She revealed that in managing the results of formative and summative assessments, the grades of daily assignments are taken into consideration. The report card that would be issued at the end of the semester depended on the daily grades. She said this because she has not received sufficient training on formative and summative assessment. Therefore, she mostly looked at students' daily lives in giving assessments. Meanwhile, from Reskiana's side, she has not implemented the management of formative and summative assessment results because she still did not really understand the management procedures.

4.2 The substance of student's competency achievement is simpler, essential and deeper

In this indicator, the author emphasized on how the English teachers' strategy in measuring the competency standards of graduates in English language learning. The second was how the English teachers' strategy in implementing learning outcomes in English language materials in the classroom. In addition, the author also wanted to know how the English teachers' strategy in preparing learning objectives.

From the results of the interview, the author found several different opinions. For Reskiana, when she wanted to measure graduate competency standards, she looked at the level of students' understanding. She would ask again related to the material presented. From there she could provide an assessment based on the responses given by students.

A different opinion was given by Asriana. She revealed that when measuring graduate competency standards, she provided material based on learning outcomes (CP). The CP explained various materials such as recount text, narrative text and descriptive text. Each material must be given an assessment by paying attention to 4 skills in English learning. Each skill was given different material.

In line with Asriana, Nur Hudaya also adjusted the assessment material based on learning outcomes (CP). This was followed by looking at the flow of learning objectives (ATP) and so on. The determination of the assessment was based on the indicators requested by the material. For example, if the material requested was to produce a text, then that text would be given to students instead.

In addition, the author also asked about how the English teachers' strategy in implementing learning outcomes. On Nur Hudayah's side, determining the competency standards of graduates was related to implementing learning outcomes. In terms of producing procedure text, for example, she said that if you wanted the learning to be more interesting, then adapted it to the learning that students like. Students could make procedure texts in the form of recordings, videos and various other kinds that matched students' interests.

The recording or video would be uploaded to their social media, then that it would become a motivation for other students. The results of the work could also be seen by outsiders other than the school community. In her opinion, this kind of strategy was more interesting than the conventional way that only told the students to write or do assignments in exercise books.

It was different on the Reskiana's side. The strategy in implementing learning outcomes varies. She thought that the strategy used depends on the theme. If you only applied one strategy, students usually felt bored. She also revealed that in this independent curriculum, the learning was determined by theme, one theme in one semester. Even though it was only one theme, it has a lot of material in it. Therefore, the strategies used are also different. For example, some worked in groups, some individually. In addition, she also usually provided competitions with the aim that students could further deepen the English material.

Meanwhile, from Asriana, determining learning outcomes was also aligned with learning objectives. After understanding the learning outcomes, the flow of learning objectives must also be determined. From this flow, then she made the learning objectives.

4.3 The period of fulfilling the learning outcomes is more flexible

In this indicator, the author asked various questions such as how the English teachers' strategy in providing the best teaching to achieve learning objectives in English materials and how the English teachers' strategy in planning English learning at the beginning of the school year.

The first one came from Reskiana. In providing the best teaching to achieve learning objectives in English learning, students were informed about the learning objectives and targets to be achieved. This would enable the students to focus on the learning objectives. After that, she would return to the first strategy which was asking questions and students providing responses to the questions given.

In contrast to what Asriana said. She said that one of the best ways to teach English material was to provide ice breaking at the beginning and middle of the material if the English subject on a particular day was the last hour of the lesson. This aimed to keep students from getting sleepy and re-energized to learn. In addition, she also usually used other learning media such as cellphones, laptops and LCD to help students translate some unknown vocabulary through the internet. In line with Asriana, Nur Hudayah also used various media to provide the best teaching to students in English learning.

In addition to the best teaching, the author also asked about the teachers' strategy in planning English learning at the beginning of the school year. Reskiana told that the strategy she used in planning learning at the beginning of the year was to increase students' interest in learning by providing various kinds of games as an initial stage. Then afterward she conveyed the importance of using English. In other words, she gave a little introduction to English. Then she would test their ability to speak English by making students spoke English in front of the class.

This was not similar with Nur Hudayah. At the beginning of the school year, she would conduct a diagnostic test to find out the characteristics of each student. Then afterward, she divided the students' ability levels based on the results of the diagnostic test. For example, for students whose learning style was auditory, she made material about music or the like. For students whose learning style was visual, she made materials about movies and the like. For kinesthetic learning styles, students are invited outside the classroom to learn.

On Asriana's part, at the beginning of the school year, she adjusted the material at the beginning of the school year based on the learning outcomes (CP). According to her, in the CP, all the material was already available to be taught. She rather followed what has been regulated by the learning outcome indicators that have been determined in the independent curriculum. The CP provided details of what would be taught in E phase which means for first class and F phase for second and third class.

4.4 Project-based learning

In this indicator, the writer asked about English teachers' strategies in organizing time project allocation for English learning. The author also asked about the English teachers' strategy in implementing this project-based learning. In addition, the author asked about the teacher's strategy in creating innovative, creative and fun learning in English materials.

Nur Hudayah said that she completed the project allocation for English learning in one session. The time used was about 2 weeks for two meetings. However, this time was uncertain. It was based on the topic or project being taught. If the topic was a little arduous, then the time needed could be more than two weeks. For example, when students were assigned to make a news item in the form of a video, then she gave about 3 weeks to complete the material.

Asriana expressed a different opinion. She said that the time allocation used was determined by the theme coordinator. The time used also varies. Usually the time for project-based learning would be done in the middle to the end of the semester. This project-based learning was related to the P5 program. In this program, the theme coordinator made a teaching module and then distributed it to the supervising teacher who has been assigned beforehand. The teacher read the teaching module and then applied it to the students.

Reskiana described that the time allocation for project-based learning quite required a lot of time. She has to set a target in advance where the project must be completed in the specified time. She usually took a month for students to complete the work at home. While at school they would still study as usual, and would be reminded to complete the work at home. Then she did not fully use the time to study as usual but how to double check the purpose of the project, the sustainability and the results of the project.

In addition, Reskiana gave more direction to her students to find their own materials at home. After that, they would present the results of the material in front of the class. Then she has re-explain the material for students who did not understand or for students who were lacking in mastering the material.

The author also asked about the strategies used by teachers in creating innovative, creative and fun learning. Nur Hudayah explained that in creating fun learning, she adjusted the material based on the students' interests and interests. She often employed media such as cell phones, which were owned by each student. The cell phone would be used in doing assignments where the assignments should be uploaded by the students on their respective social media accounts. She thought that students should be more motivated to learn if they operated cell phones that were connected to the internet.

Even so, she still limited the used of these cellphones. She said that the school actually prohibited students from bringing their cell phones or other electronic devices to school. However, for teaching and learning purposes at school, they are allowed to bring them with a note that the teacher who taught the material at that time should be responsible for supervising the collection of students' cellphones after finishing teaching. When they learned English, she allowed the students to use their cell phones and it would be returned after the English lesson was over.

It's different with Reskiana. In making learning innovative, creative and fun, she used materials that students like. For example, if students studied descriptive text, they started from the language features and then discussed the tenses used. She would present the formula and then the students were given a challenge to come to the front of the class to answer the question. If they are successful, she would give rewards for the success of the students who answered the questions. She concerned that every now and then students should be given rewards so that they can be enthusiastic about learning.

Different perception came from Asriana. She revealed that for innovative, creative and fun learning, she often used various media such as cellphones and laptops as tools to create a pleasant classroom atmosphere. Apart from media, she gave various quizzes related to English with the aim of increasing the

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students' vocabulary.

From the various opinions stated by these teachers, they used various strategies in teaching English which in accordance with the implementation of the independent curriculum in their respective schools. Even though these teachers encountered various kinds of obstacles, they kept tried to provide material that was required to the needs of students. They hope that the government could facilitate them in improving their quality as educators by providing various kinds of training, thus that the implementation of this independent curriculum could run well and smoothly.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the previous research findings and discussion, the author concluded that English teachers in several schools in Barru used various learning strategies in implementing the independent curriculum in their respective schools. In the independent curriculum, learning in the classroom was student-centered. Therefore, these teachers must adjust the strategies that will be used in teaching English and adapt these strategies to the needs and characteristics of students. This was intended that student could understand and mastered the material being taught.

In implementing the independent curriculum, these teachers still experienced many obstacles in understanding the contents of the curriculum. Some of them did not understand how to process formative and summative assessments. This was because there has not been much training and knowledge about this, made it difficult for them to master it. Even so, these teachers are kept trying to hone their skills to provide useful knowledge to the students according to the needs and characteristics of the students.

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