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Implementing Emancipated Curriculum in English Language Learning: **Teachers' Perspectives**

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Abstract The views of English language instructors regarding the implementation of the Emancipated Curriculum in English language instruction at a privately owned junior high school in Palembang have been covered in this essay. Two English teachers were used as a sample of total sampling in the qualitative case study design. Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection method, with a focus on indicators such as teachers' opinions regarding the curriculum's implementation, benefits, and drawbacks. To identify trends and classify the teachers' experiences, they were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. By distributing the transcripts and results to the participants, member checking was also carried out to ensure accuracy. The results showed that because the curriculum was adaptable, student-centered, and provided opportunities for creative instruction, teachers had a favorable opinion of it. Differentiated and project-based learning were thought to be beneficial for encouraging student participation and autonomy. However, teachers faced difficulties like inadequate training, insufficient time for teaching English, and difficulty obtaining pertinent educational resources. These findings show that appropriate institutional support, ongoing professional development, and sufficient resources are essential for the Emancipated Curriculum's successful implementation because they enable educators to successfully apply creative solutions.

Keywords: Emancipated Curriculum, Teachers' Perspectives

Introduction

Education is important to help students develop their intellectual, moral, and social potential. Pristiwanti et al. (2022) claim that education is a deliberate and intentional effort to create a pleasant learning environment in which students actively develop their potential for religious and spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills required by themselves and society. Education represents the development of a child's hidden abilities. According to Ilma and Dianti (2016), children are natural language learners, acquiring and learning languages automatically. From a very early age, they demonstrate an innate ability to absorb and internalize language sounds, structures, and patterns without formal instruction, supported by cognitive and social factors, as the human brain during childhood is especially primed for language acquisition.

In the Indonesian context, the 2013 Curriculum (K13) aimed to increase educational quality but was widely criticized for its inflexible structure, heavy content load, and lack of adaptability to diverse student needs (Putri & Maula, 2024; Tricahyati & Zaim, 2023). To address these challenges, the Ministry of Education implemented the Emancipated Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), which emphasizes differentiated learning, project-based activities, student autonomy, and the use of digital tools (Muin & Utami, 2024; Firdaus & Permana, 2024). This curriculum allows teachers more freedom to design and deliver lessons specific to their classroom context. However, teachers have encountered various obstacles in implementation, including limited training, insufficient instructional time—particularly for English—and lack of relevant learning materials (Safitri & Kusumaningtyas, 2023; Kusumawati et al., 2024). Previous research has found that educators are optimistic and concerned, highlighting that teacher perceptions are crucial in determining curricular effectiveness (Maulida et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2024).

Despite this growing body of literature, most studies have focused on primary or vocational schools, leaving limited evidence about how the Emancipated Curriculum is implemented in Islamic private junior high schools. This gap is significant because institutional culture, student characteristics, and resource availability strongly influence teachers' experiences. Therefore, this study offers novelty by investigating English teachers' perceptions at one Islamic private junior high school in Palembang that has implemented the Emancipated Curriculum since 2021. A preliminary observation and informal interviews with the English teachers revealed that while they recognized the curriculum's potential to foster student-centered learning and creativity, they faced challenges such as reduced teaching hours, lack of continuous training, and difficulty accessing appropriate materials. In light of these circumstances, this study aimed to explore teachers' perspectives, examine the perceived benefits and limitations, and offer recommendations to address practical challenges in implementing the Emancipated Curriculum.

Theoretical Framework

Implementation of Emancipated Curriculum

The Emancipated Curriculum is a kind of an educational approach that encourages flexibility in education through empowering schools and teachers to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of students. Muin and Utami (2024) state that under this curriculum, it is possible to develop teaching modules, design lesson planning, and establish the learning outcomes according to the characteristics of students. It focuses on intracurricular and situational learning that helps students to be self-reliant and it enables teachers to use different ways without being enslaved to strict forms like traditional Lesson plans. It is said to be more flexible than the former curriculum. It allows teachers, educators and schools more freedom in planning and executing classroom learning experiences. This is a method of instilling the ability of everyone to think independently. It is also advisable that teachers should be able to exercise intellectual freedom in teaching since the students will be unable to think independently when their teachers are restricted. Students will be empowered to achieve their potential without getting too dependent on established norms or values because they are encouraged to learn independent of that.

Benefits of Emancipated Curriculum

The advantages of the Emancipated Curriculum have been determined by several studies. According to Firdaus and Permana (2024), it assists students in realizing their potential, enables teachers to be creative, and makes the learning content easier to learn. It is also stated that Lestari et al. (2024) curriculum is holistic and enables students to become more active and teachers more flexible to incorporate local content. Suardipa (2022) extends this fact and offers that teachers are able to create context-based projects, whereas Putri and Maula (2024) also highlight the role of teachers as facilitators and motivators, who can make students step towards a deeper realization.

Limitations of Emancipated Curriculum

Although it has these benefits, there are also numerous limitations to the Emancipated Curriculum. Among the problems mentioned by Safitri and Kusumaningtyas (2023), there are a lack of references, teacher inability to adapt to new roles, and lack of teacher training. Kusumawati et al. (2024) also state that the minimized teaching hours, particularly of English, four or five down to only two hours, have adverse effects on language mastery. Akbar et al.

(2023) also note that insufficient support at school and ambiguous material regulations are still a problem in the implementation.

Material and Method

This paper implemented a qualitative case study design to explore how English teachers see the Emancipated Curriculum in a junior high school that has been implementing the Emancipated Curriculum since 2021. The research analyzed the meaning, practices, and reaction of the teachers in the English language learning curriculum. The participants of the study included a single English teacher in a junior high school governed by the Islamic religion in Palembang, the participants were selected through total sampling (Sugiyono, 2020). Semistructured interviews were used in collecting data, this gave the opportunity to participants to describe their experiences in detail. The interview guide included questions concerning the implementation of the curriculum, advantages, and constraints and classroom practices. Particularly, the instrument consisted of the indicators that were aimed at investigating the following aspects (1) the knowledge of the Emancipated Curriculum concepts and goals in teachers; (2) preparation and planning of learning activities relying on the curriculum principles; (3) perceived advantages, i.e., fostering student autonomy, creativity, and differentiated learning; (4) perceived limitations and challenges, i.e., limited time to teach and train teachers and the challenges in accessing the teaching materials. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes and to process all the replies through transcription (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Member checking was adopted to ensure that the data was correct and believable (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

The participants used in this research were two English teachers working at a privately owned Islamic junior high school in Palembang that has been using the Emancipated Curriculum since 2021. The researchers used total sampling as the selection technique, which implies that both teachers were the representatives of the entire population of English language teachers at the school (Sugiyono, 2020). The selection of these participants was due to the fact that they were directly engaged in the implementation of the curriculum in their classrooms and hence, would be the most appropriate sources that could be used in the study of attitudes, experiences, and challenges related to the implementation of curriculum. Their minds provided crucial qualitative information on how the Emancipated Curriculum is practiced in the real world of education.

This paper has used qualitative data which is the language and contents of the verbal comments of the teachers in the interviews. The study was centered on the perceptions, experiences and attitudes of teachers towards the implementation of the Emancipated Curriculum in English language learning. These were descriptive notes regarding the teaching strategies, curricular advantages, challenges and classroom activities. The two English instructors who had a direct role in the implementation of the Emancipated Curriculum formed the main source of the data. Additional data was collected using the relevant documents and field notes made during the interviews and were used to aid in the analysis of the responses of the teachers (Creswell and Guetterman, 2019).

Semi-structured interviews with the two English teachers were used in collecting the qualitative data in this study. The individual interviews were held in the form of conversation, and the participants were able to talk about their views, experiences, and challenges in detail (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). To ensure the consistency, an interview guide was created to address the key areas, including, but not limited to, implementation of the curriculum, its benefits, limitations, instructional methods, and the specific indicators mentioned above. The interviews were recorded and transcribed word-to-word and supplemented with field notes to include the contextual information and nonverbal expressions (Creswell and Guetterman, 2019). This was a strategy that enabled the researcher to get extensive, descriptive information regarding the research topic.

The thematic analysis was used to analyze the data in this study and it is productive in identifying patterns and themes in the qualitative data. The transcription of the interviews was done verbatim and the transcript was read by the researcher a few times in order to familiarize himself/herself with the content. This was followed by the process of coding by

marking relevant phrases and sections that were considered to portray the views of participants regarding the implementation of the Emancipated Curriculum. These codes were grouped into bigger themes depending on similarities, e.g. perceived benefits, obstacles and teaching methodologies. These categories formed central themes to be used to answer the research question: What are the teachers' perceptions about the implementation of the Emancipated Curriculum in English language learning? This process was guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) six-stage thematic analysis framework to include familiarization with data, the initial codes generation, the process of looking into themes, the review of themes, the definition and labeling of the themes and the final report generation. Member checks were also taken by the researcher to ascertain the credibility and accuracy of data that was interpreted.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study reveal English teachers' perceptions regarding implementing the Emancipated Curriculum in English language learning at a junior high school. Thematic analysis of the interview data produced three main themes: (1) implementation strategies, (2) perceived benefits, and (3) perceived limitations. These themes reflect how teachers interpret, apply, and respond to the curriculum.

Table 1.Themes and Sub-Themes of The Implementation of Emancipated Curriculum

| Themes | Sub-Themes | es Codes | | |
|--|---|----------|--|--|
| The Implementation of Emancipated Curriculum | Concept of Emancipated Curriculum | a. | The teachers claimed that the curriculum emphasizes student freedom in choosing learning paths and encourages teachers to adapt flexibly to class conditions. It aims for "no child left behind" and supports personalized, flexible instruction. The teachers acted as facilitators to develop creativity and independence. | |
| | Teacher Preparation | | The teachers said that they participated in multiple training sessions provided by supervisors and education officials. The teachers assumed that prepared lesson plans (RPP) and modules tailored to each class's needs, often starting with diagnostic tests. They adapt teaching methods based on class context and student readiness | |

Implementation of the Emancipated Curriculum

Both participants agreed that the Emancipated Curriculum encourages a flexible, student-centered learning approach that values learner autonomy. Teachers are no longer positioned as the core of education, but rather as facilitators who assist students in determining how they learn best. Teacher A emphasized that students have the freedom to direct their own learning, whereas Teacher B emphasized that each class can take a different path depending on the requirements of the students. In preparation, both teachers attended multiple training sessions, although they noticed that the material was frequently theoretical and varied in quality. Teacher A indicated that area supervisors led sessions, but Teacher B stated that continuing informal exchanges with peers helped clarify implementation. Diagnostic tests were used to guide lesson design, which was then adapted to the abilities and characteristics of each class. Teachers recognized the significance of adapting techniques and content to meet the learning styles of the present generation. Both stated that, while the training offered a basis, practical classroom application needed personal work and

adaptability. To summarize, despite minimal and inconsistent institutional support, both instructors displayed a strong commitment to the Emancipated Curriculum, regarding their job as adaptive facilitators who plan and teach based on students' readiness.

Table 2.Themes and Sub-Themes of Benefits of the Emancipated Curriculum

| Themes a | Themes and Sub-Themes of Benefits of the Emancipated Curriculum | | | | | |
|--|---|----------|--|--|--|--|
| Themes | Sub-Themes | | Codes | | | |
| Benefits of Emancipated Curriculum | Helping Students to Develop Their Abilities | a. b. | The teachers assumed that the students were more independent and responsible in completing tasks, such as making posters or using digital tools like Canva and Pinterest. The teachers stated that project-based learning motivated students to explore their own ideas and choose learning | | | |
| | | | styles that suit them. | | | |
| | Implementation of P5 Project | C. | One of the teachers said that the students engaged in projects like waste management, choosing specific topics (e.g., plastic waste) and developing creative solutions. | | | |
| | | d. | | | | |
| | Encouraging Teachers' Creativity | e. | The teachers were encouraged to be innovative in preparing materials, using technology (e.g., Google Drive, Slides) and adjusting strategies to different class dynamics. | | | |
| | Simple and Deeper Learning | f. | The teachers focused on essential competencies, reducing content overload. | | | |
| | | g. | The teachers prioritized meaningful learning and reflection rather than rushing to cover all topics. | | | |
| | | h. | The teachers' assumed Emancipated Curriculum was perceived as more modern and practical than previous curricula. | | | |
| | Implementation of Differentiated Learning | | The teachers said that the students were grouped by ability levels to foster peer learning. | | | |
| | | j. | The teachers mentioned that learning was adapted to students' backgrounds and readiness (e.g., some have no prior English exposure). | | | |
| | | k. | The teachers said that projects were modified based on students' interests (e.g., drawing posters, cooking demonstrations). | | | |

Perceived Benefits of the Emancipated Curriculum

Teachers saw the Emancipated Curriculum as highly effective for encouraging student independence and creativity via project-based learning. Students were allowed to express themselves through relevant projects, such as designing advertising or producing posters on sites such as Canva and Pinterest, allowing them to explore learning independently. Implementing P5 projects was also considered beneficial in developing holistic development, with students participating in real-life topics such as waste management, teamwork, and social responsibility. Teachers praised the curriculum's adaptability, which allowed them to be more creative and adaptive in lesson planning by utilizing digital tools such as Google Slides and Drive. They also praised the curriculum's simplified structure, which allowed for deeper exploration of essential competencies without being overwhelmed by excessive content. Differentiated learning was another key feature, where students were grouped based on ability and supported accordingly.

Table 3.Themes and Sub-Themes of Limitations of the Emancipated Curriculum

| nemes and Sub-Themes of Limitations of the Emancipated Curriculum | | | | | |
|---|--|----|---|--|--|
| Themes | Sub-Themes | | Codes | | |
| Limitations of Emancipated Curriculum | Inadequate School Assistance | a. | The teachers believed that the school's support was still limited, particularly regarding continuous training and practical mentoring. | | |
| | Shortened Teaching Hours | b. | One of the teachers stated that limited English class hours (2x/week) restricted material coverage. Teachers compensate by using WhatsApp, voice notes, and outside-class assignments, but still find it challenging to develop language skills deeply. | | |
| | Difficulties in Finding or Developing Materials | C. | The teachers faced challenges in finding suitable materials that match student needs and classroom dynamics. | | |

Perceived Limitations of the Emancipated Curriculum

Both participants highlighted several limitations that hinder the optimal implementation of the Emancipated Curriculum. One primary concern was the lack of practical and continuous support from schools and education authorities. Even though there were training courses, educators said they leaned too much on abstract ideas instead of giving hands-on tools for actual classrooms. Many felt unequipped when facing daily teaching problems - mainly because ongoing support was missing, along with advice tailored to their school environment. Lack of time popped up as a big hurdle, particularly among those teaching English. With fewer class periods scheduled, covering topics thoroughly became tough, so instructors started leaning on tech like WhatsApp; they'd send voice clips or video snippets to check in on assignments. A different big hurdle? Tracking down - or making - lesson stuff that actually fits what's supposed to be taught and what kids really need. Many educators said they were swamped, particularly in hectic stretches, trying to build or tweak lessons from scratch. When things got tough like this, it piled more stress on staff just to keep teaching at a decent level without enough tools handy. So yeah, even though the Emancipated Curriculum can bring real

value, whether it works well comes down to steady backing from schools, having enough hours in the day, also usable classroom resources.

These findings show that, while the Emancipated Curriculum provides great chances for more meaningful and flexible learning, its effectiveness depends on proper support systems, teaching time, and resource availability. Teachers' perceptions strike a mix between excitement about the curriculum's promise and realism about the practical challenges that must be overcome.

Discussion

This research showed English teachers usually liked using the Emancipated Curriculum, because it's adaptable, puts learners first, so boosts their own creative freedom. Their opinions line up with earlier findings - studies show this approach helps shape lessons around what students already know, care about, or experience locally (Muin & Utami, 2024; Lestari et al., 2024). Teachers feel good about it mainly since they think it lifts participation and results in English courses.

Some teachers saw themselves less as lecturers but more like guides - this lines up with Firdaus & Permana's 2024 take on learner independence in the Emancipated Curriculum. That idea fits what Sukma said back in 2022: teaching English well means knowing when to shift methods, pick content wisely, or tweak lessons based on students' real-time needs. Working with projects - especially via P5 - felt useful to educators because it sparked teamwork and fresh thinking during English classes, matching results from Suardipa (2022) along with Safitri & Kusumaningtyas (2023).

On top of that, educators felt the syllabus made organizing classes easier, letting them zero in on key English abilities instead of flooding learners with too much info. They liked this approach since it opened space for deeper dives into texts and communication practice (Numertayasa et al., 2022). Tools like Google Slides or WhatsApp? Seen as helpful - pushing teaching toward fresh, adaptable methods in language learning, which lines up with findings from Angga et al. (2022).

Yet educators admitted feeling held back when putting the English syllabus into practice. They mentioned getting little backing from schools, while ongoing workshops were missing - this made their job tougher. These views match earlier findings showing many institutions struggle to run regular teacher development programs for the updated curriculum (Akbar et al., 2023; Safitri and Kusumaningtyas, 2023). On top of that, cutting class time - from 4 or 5 hours down to just 2 per week - was viewed as a serious hurdle, echoing concerns raised by Kusumawati et al. (2024).

Some teachers said it's tough to find good English stuff that fits each learner's level. Maulida and team (2024) noticed this often happens when using the Emancipated Curriculum, particularly where supplies are tight. Without clear help or tools, many see these gaps as real roadblocks in teaching English well.

In short, teachers see the Emancipated Curriculum as a strong tool to boost English learning - helping students take charge, connect lessons to real life, or spark fresh teaching ideas. Still, they point out it's hard to use in class if schools don't offer enough backing, ongoing guidance, or proper materials. So even though they like what the curriculum aims to do, many stress that better support is key to making it work well in practice.

Conclusion

The aim here was to check how junior high English teachers saw the use of a freer kind of curriculum for teaching the subject. Findings showed they liked it - mainly because it allowed room to adjust lessons, covered core abilities, while encouraging hands-on tasks and putting learners first. They valued being able to match instruction with what students actually needed, which fit well with the approach's stress on different ways people learn and trusting educators to decide their own path. So the main query gets answered through real examples, pointing out this flexible setup helps both growth in kids and fresh ideas from teachers. Yet big problems popped up too, like weak backing from schools, missing proper preparation

sessions, tight schedules, plus expensive or hard-to-get English learning tools. All this means the program could work really well - if there's steady help and enough supplies available.

In light of the findings, schools and educational role players would do well to provide teachers with focus and continuous training in order for them to successfully implement the Emancipated Curriculum. Teachers could also benefit from accessible instruction materials and curriculum resources to help make their job easier. Also, Pdm may want to re-evaluate schedule of English subjects in order to offer and get language exposure more. This curriculum could be further tested on student perceptions of the course or in a comparative study within schools or areas to see how it affects English language development.

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