



## ANALYSIS OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN ENGLISH LEARNING THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *MERDEKA* CURRICULUM AT THE EIGHTH GRADE

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated the implementation of classroom management in English learning and examined the challenges teachers encountered under the Merdeka Curriculum in the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were gathered through observations, interviews, and documentation involving three English teachers and students across eight classes. The analysis applied Miles and Huberman's framework of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Findings revealed that classroom management was evident in areas such as lesson preparation, classroom organization, enforcement of rules, assessment, and group activities. Nevertheless, its execution was not yet fully effective. Teachers struggled with managing instructional time, arranging seating based on student needs, and promoting active participation in discussions. Moreover, the integration of digital resources and diverse teaching strategies remained underutilized. The study identified major challenges, including inadequate facilities, low student motivation, and teachers' difficulties in differentiating instruction in accordance with Merdeka Curriculum principles. Despite these limitations, teachers consistently enforced classroom rules, demonstrated punctuality, and provided feedback to sustain learning. The research concludes that effective classroom management is vital to achieving successful English instruction and suggests that teachers adopt more adaptive and innovative practices to strengthen curriculum implementation.

**Keywords:** *Classroom Management, English Learning, Merdeka Curriculum*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a cornerstone of human development, shaping mindset, character, attitudes, language competence, and social engagement. It also fosters critical, creative, and innovative thinking that advances intellectual growth while reinforcing moral values (Aziz & Najicha, 2024; Fadilah et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, education is pivotal in preparing a self-reliant and competitive society. Consequently, enhancing educational quality is fundamental to driving sustainable development and national advancement.

To achieve this goal, the Indonesian government introduced the Merdeka Curriculum, designed to be flexible and student-centered. This curriculum emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, and active participation in learning (Safitri et al., 2022; Jaya et al., 2025). It also aligns with the Pancasila Student Profile, ensuring that instructional objectives embody national values (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Since 2022, over 140,000 schools have adopted the Merdeka Curriculum as part of post-pandemic recovery efforts (Rahayu et al., 2022). Unlike the rigid, content-heavy 2013 curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum offers

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greater flexibility, permits annual time allocation, and integrates digital technology. However, this flexibility also presents challenges, particularly for teachers managing diverse classroom needs.

Teachers are central to the curriculum's success, functioning as implementers, adapters, developers, and reflective practitioners (Agustinus, 2022; Lesiana et al., 2023). In English learning, such adaptability allows teachers to design lessons suited to students' proficiency, learning preferences, and cultural contexts. The curriculum promotes communicative, project-based, and task-based learning, requiring teachers to provide meaningful and interactive experiences. Technology use is also expected to enrich lessons and prepare learners for global communication (Mubarok et al., 2023).

Classroom management emerges as a critical factor for successful English instruction under this framework. It involves structuring the classroom environment, enforcing rules, managing instructional time, and cultivating positive teacher-student relationships. Effective management also supports project-based learning by fostering collaboration and participation while maintaining discipline and productivity (Mubarok et al., 2023). Without such management, achieving the curriculum's objectives becomes highly constrained.

Preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi reveal that classroom management in English learning under the Merdeka Curriculum has yet to reach optimal implementation. Lessons were at times less engaging, with limited use of instructional media and strategies, leading to student disengagement and boredom. Several learners remained passive and unmotivated, while teachers encountered difficulties in handling time, maintaining discipline, and addressing individual differences. Additionally, the integration of digital tools remained underdeveloped. These shortcomings hindered the realization of the Pancasila Student Profile, which emphasizes creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

Accordingly, this study was designed to describe how classroom management is enacted in English instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi and to identify the key challenges teachers face. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for strengthening classroom management and enhancing the effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Classroom Management

Classroom management is defined as teachers' efforts to plan, organize, and create a conducive learning environment. Astuti (2019) emphasized that classroom management involves the arrangement of facilities, infrastructure, and the learning environment to support effective learning. Similarly, Bonab et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of time management, facilities, and positive teacher-student relationships to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

The main goal of classroom management is to create a structured, participative, and conducive environment (Nurlatifah et al., 2024). Effective classroom management is also closely linked to student competency achievement (Asngari & Hidayah, 2022). Key components of classroom management include physical arrangements, rules and routines, positive teacher-student relationships, and discipline management (Sabrina, 2022). Haerena (2016) also emphasized aspects of teacher professionalism such as punctuality, clear communication, and appropriate appearance.

Various classroom management approaches are applied, including authority, behavioral change, group processes, and technology-based approaches (Adianto et al., 2020). The principles underline flexibility, positive reinforcement, and the cultivation of self-discipline (Nurlita, 2020).

### 2.2 The Importance of English Learning and Teacher's Role

English learning plays an essential role as a global language for international communication (Quimosing, 2022). In Indonesia, English is taught from elementary

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school to higher education to equip students with 21st-century skills (Andayani, 2022).

In this context, teachers play multiple roles such as controllers, facilitators, managers, assessors, and role models (Khanh, 2024). Teachers are not only responsible for delivering content but also for motivating learners, fostering positive relationships, and supporting student development.

### 2.3 Merdeka Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum is a new educational policy in Indonesia designed to promote freedom, creativity, and innovation in learning (Marisa, 2021). It integrates literacy, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and technological mastery to prepare students for the digital era (Devian et al., 2023).

The main objective is to shape the profile of Pancasila learners while granting students and schools autonomy in learning and assessment (Vhalery et al., 2022).

Its characteristics include (1) project-based learning to strengthen character; (2) emphasis on essential materials for deeper understanding; and (3) flexible implementation according to schools' contexts (Utami et al., 2022). The principles highlight contextual, enjoyable, and sustainable learning (Nuraini et al., 2023).

Implementation consists of three stages: planning, execution, and evaluation. Teachers are given flexibility to design modules, apply differentiated learning, and conduct authentic assessments (Saroh et al., 2023).

### 2.4 Classroom Management in the Merdeka Curriculum

Recent studies emphasize classroom management in the Merdeka Curriculum context. Qorzah et al. (2024) outlined four stages: planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. Puspita (2023) stressed the importance of rules, time allocation, and consistent discipline, while Ferdiansyah (2023) highlighted adaptive strategies and positive communication.

Mursyid et al. (2023) added the significance of group-based approaches to promote student collaboration and participation, aligning with the values of the Merdeka Curriculum.

### 2.5 Challenges of Implementation

Despite its potential, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum poses challenges. Teachers often struggle with time management, limited facilities, and insufficient competence in project-based learning (Habib et al., 2023). Furthermore, low student participation and lack of technological support are persistent issues (Astuti et al., 2024).

## 3. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, which aimed to provide a systematic and accurate description of classroom management in English language teaching under the *merdeka* curriculum. According to Sugiyono (2019), a qualitative approach seeks to understand natural conditions of the subject, while Furidha (2023) emphasizes that descriptive research describes findings accurately and orderly.

### 3.1 Research Subjects

The research subject was eighth grade students and English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi. The eighth grade students consisted of eight classes and three English teachers. Therefore, researcher analyzed classroom management practices in English teaching under the Merdeka Curriculum, along with the challenges faced by teachers during implementation.

### 3.2 Sources of Data

Two types of data were used, primary data and secondary data. And also the instruments of the research were observation, interview and documentation.

### 3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which consists of three stages:

- a) Data Reduction
- b) Data Display
- c) Conclusion Drawing/Verification

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Results

The implementation of classroom management in English learning under the Merdeka Curriculum at the eighth grade of

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SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi was realized through several dimensions, including lesson planning, classroom organization, implementation of rules and discipline, time management, use of media, student interaction, and evaluation. The findings were collected through observation, interview, and documentation.

In terms of learning planning, teachers attempted to adapt lesson materials and assignments to students' abilities, yet the level of success varied. Some materials and tasks were relevant to learners' daily lives and adjusted to their comprehension, while others were monotonous, too difficult, or not aligned with students' readiness. This condition often led to passive student behavior and limited participation.

The use of digital media and technology also showed inconsistencies. In several classrooms, projectors and laptops were employed to display videos or slides that supported visualization and listening skills. However, in other classes, teaching relied primarily on lectures and textbooks, with minimal integration of technology, thereby limiting the potential for interactive learning.

Regarding classroom organization, learning aids such as projectors and whiteboards were strategically placed to be accessible for all students. Nevertheless, student seating remained conventional and did not reflect learners' individual characteristics or collaborative needs. The static arrangement restricted opportunities for group interaction and limited the flexibility required for student-centered approaches.

Teacher's consistently implemented rules, routines, and discipline, including punctuality, classroom cleanliness, English greetings, and prohibition of cellphone use. These rules were applied clearly and consistently, contributing to an orderly classroom atmosphere. However, time management was generally ineffective, with lessons dominated by explanations, leaving little room for discussion, reflection, or proper closure of activities.

In terms of student interaction and group learning, participation remained uneven. Only a small number of students actively engaged in discussions, while many remained passive or contributed only when prompted. Although teachers regularly

provided feedback and reinforcement, either individually or collectively, student-centered participation was still limited.

Finally, documentation analysis of the Flow of Learning Objectives (*Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran/ATP*) and teaching modules (*Modul Ajar*) showed systematic planning aligned with CEFR B1 standards. Lesson plans included structured activities such as group work, role-plays, and projects, as well as integration of audio-visual media. Despite this alignment, classroom practices often diverged from the plans, indicating a gap between design and implementation.

The challenges identified during the implementation included, limited understanding of the *merdeka* curriculum due to general training that did not focus specifically on English teaching. Then, ineffective time management, with lessons often extended or incomplete. After that, low student participation as learners were still adapting from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches. Also limited access to technological resources and restrictions on student cellphone use. Next, inflexible classroom layouts, which hindered collaboration. The last, the difficulties in applying differentiated learning to accommodate varying student abilities.

**Discussion**

The findings suggest that classroom management under the Merdeka Curriculum has been realized, though not fully aligned with its intended principles. Teachers' ability to enforce rules and routines created a structured and disciplined environment, in line with *Permendiknas No. 41 of 2007* which emphasizes orderly and conducive learning processes. The consistent use of polite communication and reinforcement also reflects Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which highlights the role of interaction in student development.

However, the persistence of conventional seating contradicted recommendations for flexible arrangements that support collaboration. This aligns with Putra et al. (2025), who noted that rigid layouts hinder student interaction. Similarly, ineffective time management limited opportunities for deeper learning. Isna et al. (2025) emphasized that lost instructional

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time undermines the achievement of learning goals, a challenge also evident in this study.

The integration of technology was partial, with some teachers maximizing its potential and others relying on traditional methods. This reflects Karlina et al. (2024), who found that resource limitations constrain teachers' innovation. Moreover, the limited differentiation of materials and assignments confirmed Tomlinson's (2001) theory of differentiated instruction: when learning does not accommodate varied readiness levels, students become passive and disengaged.

Low student participation further indicated difficulties in transitioning from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Zuariah et al. (2024) highlighted that successful curriculum implementation depends on fostering active involvement, which remains a challenge in the observed classrooms.

Compared with previous research, Fathurrahman et al. (2022) highlighted school-level management readiness, Rizki et al. (2024) emphasized teacher creativity in elementary schools, and Ritan et al. (2023) found structural limitations at the high school level. This study contributes specifically by examining micro-level classroom management in junior high English learning, offering a focused perspective on teacher strategies and challenges.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that while classroom management under the Merdeka Curriculum was realized through rules, order, and structured planning, its effectiveness was constrained by limited curriculum understanding, time management issues, passive student participation, and inadequate differentiation. Addressing these challenges is essential to fully achieve the student-centered vision of the Merdeka Curriculum.

**5. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that classroom management in English learning under the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi has been implemented through structured practices such as lesson planning, material delivery, task design, consistent rule enforcement, punctuality, and feedback provision. These efforts reflect

teachers' attempts to establish order and a supportive learning climate.

Nonetheless, challenges persist. Differentiated instruction has not been fully realized, tasks were often repetitive, digital media use was limited, and seating arrangements remained traditional, restricting collaboration. Ineffective time allocation further reduced opportunities for discussion and practice, while student participation was uneven, with many learners remaining passive. This reveals a gap between the flexible, creative, and student-centered ideals of the Merdeka Curriculum and classroom realities.

To address these issues, enhancing teacher capacity in applying innovative and differentiated strategies, maximizing technology integration, and improving school facilities are essential. Strengthening student engagement through collaborative, participatory methods is also critical. For future research, it is recommended to examine the effectiveness of specific classroom management models, explore technology-based interventions, and conduct comparative studies across different schools to identify best practices in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

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