



## WRITING TEACHING PRACTICE BY MUHAMMADIYAH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER BASED ON CURRICULUM MERDEKA: A STUDY BASED ON INTERVIEW DATA

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### ABSTRAK

Studi ini meneliti praktik guru sekolah dasar di Muhammadiyah ketika mengajar surat bahasa Inggris sebagai bagian dari kurikulum gratis. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif deskriptif, para peneliti mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa guru menggunakan strategi sentral siswa dan berbasis konstruktivis, seperti permainan canva, video, dan dialog dialog, mendukung pengembangan kosa kata dan penulisan kepercayaan. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa prinsip-prinsip kurikulum independen sebagai pembelajaran, yang merupakan siswa yang menarik dan otonom dalam lingkungan sekolah agama, melalui pendidikan kreatif dan adaptif, adalah siswa yang menarik dan otonom. Pengetahuan ini memberikan para pendidik dan keputusan politik. Pembuat memberikan wawasan yang berguna yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan penulisan di kelas sekolah dasar EFL.

Kata kunci: Pengajaran menulis, Kurikulum Merdeka, Sekolah Dasar Muhammadiyah.

### ABSTRACT

*This study examined the practices of primary school teachers in Muhammadiyah when teaching English letters as part of the free curriculum. Using a descriptive qualitative case study approach, researchers collected data via semi-structured interviews. The results show that teachers use student-centered and constructivist-based strategies, such as canva games, videos, and dialogues, supporting vocabulary development and trust writing. The study shows that the principles of independent curriculum as learning, which is an engaging and autonomous student in a religious school environment, through creative and adaptive education, is an engaging and autonomous student. This knowledge provides educators and political decisions. Makers provide useful insights aimed at improving writing in EFL primary school classrooms.*

**Keywords:** *writing instruction, Kurikulum Merdeka, Muhammadiyah elementary school*



## INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, Indonesia's educational landscape has experienced major changes, most notably through the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum). This curriculum seeks to promote student-centered learning, flexibility, and the development of essential competencies such as creativity, critical thinking, and literacy (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). One of the crucial aspects emphasized in the Kurikulum Merdeka is literacy development, with writing skills receiving renewed attention due to their foundational role in academic success and lifelong learning (OECD, 2021).

Writing is a fundamental skill in language learning that enables students to express their thoughts, construct knowledge, and engage in reflective thinking. In elementary education, writing instruction plays a vital role in developing students' cognitive and communicative competence from an early age (Graham et al., 2019). Effective writing pedagogy requires not only attention to linguistic structure but also an understanding of the learners' needs, context, and curriculum goals. Writing, as a productive language skill, is not only a means of communication but also a tool for critical thinking, reflection, and knowledge construction (Hyland, 2019). However, teaching writing at the elementary level presents unique challenges, particularly in balancing mechanical aspects of

writing with creativity and content generation (Graham, 2020). These challenges are further compounded by the varying levels of teacher preparedness and institutional support across different school contexts. Teachers are thus expected to integrate explicit writing instruction with opportunities for meaningful, creative expression approach that requires thoughtful pedagogy, contextual awareness, and alignment with curriculum goals.

Within the scope of English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction in Indonesian elementary education, writing is a fundamental and complex skill. Writing in the EFL context is not only about linguistic accuracy, but also involves idea generation, organization, and goal-driven communication. It requires the integration of grammar knowledge, vocabulary acquisition, cultural awareness, and higher-order thinking skills (Hyland, 2019). In addition, effective writing instruction in EFL contexts must take into account learners' proficiency level, motivation, exposure to the target language, and the sociocultural background that shapes their learning experiences.

The Kurikulum Merdeka promotes a shift from teacher-centered instruction to differentiated, formative, and student-driven learning practices, which necessitate substantial



pedagogical adaptation. Teachers are encouraged to act as facilitators who guide students through personalized learning pathways while ensuring that core competencies are achieved. However, this shift also places increased demands on educators, particularly in terms of curriculum interpretation, material development, and classroom management. These challenges are even more nuanced in faith-based educational institutions such as Muhammadiyah elementary schools, where teaching practices are situated within the intersection of national education mandates and Islamic educational values (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

In Muhammadiyah elementary schools, which are part of one of the largest Islamic educational organizations in Indonesia, the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka reflects both opportunities and constraints. While the curriculum promotes pedagogical freedom and contextualization, it also requires teachers to reconfigure their instructional strategies and adapt to more formative, student-driven practices (Zuhdi et al., 2023). How writing is taught and the pedagogical beliefs that underpin these practices, thus become important areas of inquiry, especially in schools striving to harmonize national education goals with religious and cultural values.

This study aims to explore how Muhammadiyah elementary school teachers conceptualize and implement writing instruction within the framework of the Kurikulum Merdeka. By analyzing interview data from selected teachers, this research seeks to uncover the pedagogical strategies, challenges, and innovations that characterize their classroom practices. The findings are expected to contribute to the discourse on curriculum enactment in faith-based schools and provide insights into improving writing instruction in the context of educational reform.

#### METHODOLOGY

This research used a qualitative descriptive research design because it described a phenomenon of how writing instruction is implemented in an English classroom at a Muhammadiyah elementary school under the Kurikulum Merdeka. To achieve the objectives of this study, the researchers adopted a case study method. As Creswell (2009) explains, this qualitative approach allows for an in-depth investigation of a program, activity, or process that includes participants. The case in this study focused on how a teacher implemented writing instruction for fourth-grade students, including the challenges faced and the strategies applied within the



framework of the Kurikulum Merdeka.

This study was guided by a socio-constructivist theoretical framework (Vygotsky, 1978), which views learning, especially writing instruction, as a socially situated process. In this view, learning to write is not an isolated individual activity, but a dialogic process shaped by social interaction, scaffolding, and cultural tools within the learning environment. This framework supported the analysis of how curriculum principles are transformed into classroom practices through teacher agency and context.

This research was conducted at a Muhammadiyah elementary school located in Tanjungpinang. The site was chosen because it supports the goal of the research, particularly in providing an authentic setting where the Kurikulum Merdeka is actively implemented in English instruction. The researchers used purposive sampling in selecting the participants. Purposive sampling is a technique used to select participants who are considered to have deep knowledge or experience related to the research topic (Sugiyono, 2009). In this study, the selected participant was an English teacher who is actively involved in

teaching English from grades 1 to 6, with a special focus on writing instruction for fourth-grade students.

The teacher is chosen based on her qualifications, including a bachelor's degree in English Education, and her active role in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka. Her involvement in professional development programs and curriculum workshops equipped her with various pedagogical strategies, especially those supporting differentiated and student-centered instruction. Her classroom practice offered valuable insights into how national curriculum policies are interpreted and applied in daily teaching activities. To maintain the confidentiality of the participant, a pseudonym is used in the report.

This research utilized data that were collected through a semi-structured interview conducted face-to-face. This method allowed for flexibility and depth in exploring the teacher's experiences and perspectives. The interview covered several key topics, such as the teacher's understanding of writing instruction under the Kurikulum Merdeka, teaching strategies employed, classroom practices, challenges encountered, and how curriculum principles and school



values were embedded into the writing lessons. The interviews were conducted in a quiet and distraction-free setting in the school environment to ensure participants' comfort and encourage open communication. The researcher acted as the interviewer and maintained a professional yet empathetic demeanor throughout the session to build rapport and trust. Prior to the interview, the participants were informed about the objectives of the research, the nature of the questions, and their rights as participants. The interviews lasted for approximately 60 minutes, with 13 questions asked, and were audio-recorded with the consent of the teacher concerned. The recording was later documented in full detail to guarantee data accuracy and facilitate in-depth analysis.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The teacher employed a student-centered teaching procedure rooted in multimodal instruction, integrating both digital and conventional media to support students' writing development. The teaching procedures included the use of game-based learning through Canva, educational videos, and puppet-based dialogues to create an engaging and interactive classroom

atmosphere. One of the supporting strategies was vocabulary dictation, where students listened to English sentences and transcribed them under the teacher's guidance. Pre-writing activities were also conducted through informal conversations to help students become more comfortable with the vocabulary before beginning their writing. These procedures emphasized gradual scaffolding, contextual learning, and active student involvement, which are all core aspects of constructivist teaching aligned with the Kurikulum Merdeka.

Despite applying a variety of engaging teaching procedures, the teacher still encountered several challenges. A major challenge was the students' limited English proficiency, particularly in vocabulary and sentence structure. Since English is introduced only in Grade 3 under the Kurikulum Merdeka, many fourth-grade students had minimal exposure to the written form of the language. This posed difficulties in implementing more advanced writing tasks. Another challenge was maintaining students' motivation and interest during lessons. To overcome this, the teacher designed learning activities that were enjoyable,



visually rich, and connected to the students' daily lives.

To respond to the students' diverse proficiency levels, the teacher adapted and modified her teaching procedures creatively. Writing activities were introduced through familiar vocabulary and oral communication, which allowed students to gain confidence before attempting written tasks. The integration of Canva-based games, visual texts, and puppets reflected her commitment to making learning not only accessible but also enjoyable. These tools acted as differentiated support mechanisms tailored to students' developmental readiness. Her ability to alternate between different media and make effective use of technology demonstrated strong teaching flexibility and innovation.

The emphasis on pre-writing activities, such as informal conversation and vocabulary dictation, demonstrates awareness of the critical role that scaffolding plays in supporting language acquisition. These practices allow students to access prior knowledge, build confidence, and familiarize themselves with the target vocabulary before engaging in more demanding writing tasks. This approach aligns with Nation's (2009) framework for

writing instruction, which advocates extensive input, controlled practice, and a focus on developing fluency in the early stages of writing instruction.

Additionally, the teaching procedures applied by the teacher were in line with the values emphasized in the Kurikulum Merdeka, such as fostering student independence, contextual learning, and joyful education. By emphasizing enjoyment, relevance, and student-centeredness, the teacher created a supportive learning environment that allowed students to engage at their own pace. Her use of authentic and interactive learning materials, along with a focus on foundational skills and confidence-building, showed her dedication to implementing holistic and responsive instruction. This balance between cognitive development and emotional engagement embodied the spirit of the Kurikulum Merdeka and illustrated how curriculum ideals can be effectively realized in classroom practices.

Most importantly, this teacher's practice also demonstrates pedagogical flexibility, an important quality for educators navigating the complexities of curriculum change. Her ability to alternate between traditional and digital



media, accommodate students' diverse ability levels, and innovate within the constraints of limited resources reflects a reflective and adaptive teaching attitude. This flexibility is crucial not only for successful curriculum implementation but also for meeting the unique needs of students in diverse school environments, including Muhammadiyah schools.

Teachers' teaching practices demonstrate a thoughtful implementation of Curriculum Merdeka in EFL writing classes, incorporating constructivist pedagogy, differentiated instruction, and multimodal engagement. Although there are still challenges - especially regarding students' abilities and limited resources - the creative and student-centered approaches documented in this study offer promising strategies for improving writing instruction in similar contexts. The results add to the expanding body of research on curriculum changes in Indonesia and offer practical guidance for teachers, curriculum designers, and decision-makers aiming to enhance English language instruction in primary education.

While these instructional strategies are promising, they were not without significant

challenges. Among the most pressing were the limited English proficiency of students, especially in vocabulary and sentence construction, as well as the uneven availability of teaching resources and technological infrastructure. These limitations are further amplified by the fact that English is introduced relatively late in elementary education under the Merdeka Curriculum framework (typically from Grade 3), resulting in a steep learning curve for both teachers and students when engaging in writing tasks.

Despite these constraints, the teachers in this study demonstrated high levels of instructional creativity and pedagogical adaptability. By using visual aids, game-based platforms (e.g., Canva), puppet dialogues, vocabulary dictation, and oral pre-writing discussions, they created an accessible and fun learning environment. Such approaches not only support student learning but also contribute to building student confidence and reducing writing anxiety, affective factors that are often overlooked in language learning. These practices serve as practical examples of how differentiated teaching can be operationalized in EFL classrooms, accommodating different levels of student



readiness while focusing on essential writing competencies.

At least, the findings of this study make a significant contribution to the ongoing discourse on curriculum reform in Indonesia, particularly in faith-based and semi-autonomous educational institutions such as those operated by Muhammadiyah. The findings highlight the important role of teacher agency in interpreting and implementing national policies in diverse school settings. Teachers are not only top-down implementers of curriculum directives, but also active agents who adapt, modify and re-contextualize curriculum objectives to suit the needs of students and their socio-cultural contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that writing instruction practices in Muhammadiyah elementary schools within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum are student-centered, multimodal, and contextual, utilizing creative strategies such as game-based learning through Canva, puppet dialogues, and vocabulary dictation to support students' writing skill development. Although the approach used is innovative, teachers face

challenges such as students' low English proficiency and difficulty maintaining their motivation, which are addressed through differentiated instruction and the use of visually appealing media. Teachers' flexibility and responsiveness in adapting lesson plans reflect the core values of the Merdeka Curriculum: free, enjoyable, and comprehensive learning. These findings emphasize the importance of teachers' active roles, adaptability, and creative integration between digital and traditional media in effective writing instruction, and contribute valuable insights into the implementation of the national curriculum in religious-based schools such as Muhammadiyah.





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