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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to **HUELE Journal of Applied Linguistics, Literature, and Culture**, published by the English Education Study Program at Pattimura University. This **Volume 4, Issue 1, 2024** presents five compelling articles that delve into significant themes in English language education. One article examines the commonly encountered challenges in online EFL learning from the perspective of students at PSDKU MBD, providing valuable insights into their experiences. Another contribution explores the impact of the Kampus Mengajar program on teaching and learning, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing educational practices. Additionally, a case study investigates teachers' implementation of authentic speaking assessments in senior high schools in Ambon, shedding light on assessment practices in the region. A further article discusses the integration of critical thinking in writing development, emphasizing its importance in fostering higher-order thinking skills among students. Finally, a literature review addresses the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesia's early childhood education (PAUD), offering a comprehensive overview of its implications for language learning. Collectively, these articles provide innovative perspectives and practical strategies that enrich the understanding of language teaching and learning in diverse educational contexts.

Commonly Encountered Online EFL Learning from the Perspective of Students at PSDKU MBD

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore students' perception on problems and issues they encountered during the implementation of online learning. Students who live in remote areas at PSDKU MBD UNPATTI were frequently subject to unprecedented hardship in online study. This study employed qualitative descriptive research design where the data was collected through interview, observation and documentation. The result show that although they enjoyed online learning, these students expressed some challenges they faced in online teaching and learning process. The challenges were ranged from infrastructure to digital literacy. They stated that infrastructure factor has been the greatest challenge in their online learning activities. Lack of opportunities to interact with their lecturers have caused ineffectiveness in knowledge gain. These students also sounded the urgent needs for capacity building in regards to technology and digital literacy. These EFL learners are also facing the daunting dual task of learning the material while sharpening their digital capacity. The students who predominantly come from diverse remote areas in Southwest Maluku region are known to be less fortunate as compared to their counterpart students in main campus in Ambon city who have better teaching and learning facilities. Implication borne in the study will be further discussed in this study.

Keywords: *Perception, problems, EFL learner, online learning, remote areas.*

INTRODUCTION

One obvious sign that human activities have been forced to change is the implementation of online learning in education sector where teaching and learning activity must be held in online mode. Nowadays even after the pandemic has long gone, the online learning seemed to be one of the teaching learning modes preferred by lecturers and students according to their needs and situation. Online learning or e-learning is a rapidly growing pedagogic mode that supports the flexibility of users who are beyond the constraints of time and place (Njonge, 2023; Prabowo et al., 2024; Sandi Sukandi, 2022). Online learning or e-Learning can be defined as process of learning that involves the use of gadgetry and requires internet connection to deliver lesson or conduct the teaching and learning activities. It is evident that e-learning has changed from a completely online course to utilizing technology to deliver part or all of the course beyond the time and space limitation.

The recent shifting from conventionally 'face-to-face' teaching and learning to virtual classroom activities has taken place within which some concern from various parties were arouse (Enyoojo et al., 2024; Nur et al., 2023). Despite the myriad advantage this technology-driven teaching platform may offer, it still has certain shortcomings. Teachers, school administrators, students and parents alike, cannot escape the drawbacks of online learning. Students, for example, who notably come from various social and economic background with different economic and social status, have been reportedly fragile for the online learning (Wei et al., 2023). Problem arises from the virtual learning activities range from health to social aspects. Frequent exposure to blue light from mobile phone known to have bad impact on young people eyesight.

Learning online is even harder for students who live in remote and isolated areas such as in Southwest Maluku Regency or Maluku Barat Daya (MBD) in Maluku Archipelago, in Indonesia. Located in isolation hundreds of miles away from the provincial capital, this area is covered by vast seawater that at times create difficulties to its inhabitant to go out, or for visitors to get in. To cater the students' needs, lecturers from main campus were assigned to visit the region and teach the students there. All this had to change due to the pandemic situation, and online learning was then implemented within which some problematic issues are inevitably encountered (Hidayat et al., 2024; Sandi Sukandi, 2022; Tsang et al., 2021). Some challenges linked to learner isolation, frustration, pressure, extra expenses, health issues, and increased exposure to cyber bullying and online violence are the effects students may encounter in online learning. This current study tries to identify the actual condition happens in the research site by posing two research questions. What are the common challenges and problematic issues faced by students during the implementation of online learning and how do the students cope with the hardship of online learning at PSDKU MBD UNPATTI.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The online learning or distant learning has been a trend in education realm and was in its peak during the pandemic outbreak in recent years. Before the pandemic or even aftermath of the pandemic, the online learning still holds an essential role in teaching and learning practices. Many studies have shown that distant or online learning have been beneficial for education practitioners as it offers flexibility in usage and is cost efficient. Online learning can be done in various places and within flexible timeframe. It provides cost efficiencies for the administration of its implementation, efficiency in the provision of facilities to learn as well as cost efficiency for expenditures as it require no transportation costs and needs. The online-learning gives flexibility in choosing the time and place. Furthermore, online learning provides opportunities for students

to independently hold the entire procession in the learning process. Online learning offers a myriad of advantages that can be evaluated by technical, social and economic criteria.

Additionally, online learning has its pedagogical merit, leading to different ways of conceiving knowledge generation and acquisition. Online learning increases access to learning and training opportunities, provides increased opportunities for updating, retraining and personal enrichment, improves cost effectiveness of educational resources, supports the quality and variety of existing educational structures, enhances and consolidates capacity. Distant learning is convenient because many of the technologies are easily accessible from home. Many forms of distance learning provide students the opportunity to participate whenever they wish, on an individual basis, because of distance learning flexibility. This kind of education is quite affordable, as many forms of online learning involve little or no cost.

Distant learning can offer increased interactions with students. In particular, introverted students who are too shy to ask questions in class will often "open up" when provided an opportunity to interact via e-mail or other individualized means. Online learning can balance inequalities between age groups, geographical expansion of education access, delivering education for large audiences, offering the combination of education with work or family life, etc. If in a confined classroom the number of students cannot be more than thirty as would create noise, online learning may accommodate hundreds of pupils in one class, provide opportunities for teachers to have more time preparing. In addition, due to the frequent use of online media, as Bali and Liu (2018) points out, students may become innovative in learning.

While the above-mentioned studies have shown the strength side or the benefits of the online learning mode in education sector, this learning mechanism is not without weak points or drawbacks. Several studies reveals that the geographical condition in diverse parts in Indonesia has caused 'discrepancies' in accessing internet service (Nabilah, 2020). From health side, studies have shown the exposure to high internet usage affect the health of students. Not to mention, ability of low income-parents to provide educational facilities for their children to participate in online learning has been an issue (Kusuma, 2022; Sandi Sukandi, 2022).

With the rise of concern of online learning, the teaching must be based on some essential consideration. If not considered cautiously, as argued by Yan (2020) academic failures might occurred and it is already happened when online learning conducted ineffectively. Teachers should bring into account their role in teaching online as to provide knowledge effectively through online media and affectively impact the online learners. The online teacher has role related to the process pertaining to learning, information storage, memory, thinking and problem solving. An online teacher must be able to act as manager where he would create and provide safe and conducive

online class atmosphere to every student. He supposely to be clever and tactful in distributing and share tasks among his pupil as to create fairness and equality. Daniel (2020) asserts that teaching should provide variation as to attract students attention and motivation to learn, especially in online platform. Scales of adaptation and differentiation within the approach should be used to better differentiate between different learners (Gillett-Swan, 2017). In an online teaching, similar to any conventional teaching mode, the teacher should be able to maintain his affective role. It is imperative that online teacher behave appropriately as to exert good example for his students.

Providing good example of interaction or influencing students to properly interact with other students and the online classroom atmosphere is crucial to effective online teaching and learning. Furthermore, the online teacher has managerial role in which he should be capable in planning the online course, organizing it, leading the online learning process carefully and fully in control of the 'traffic'. Certainly, the challenges that teachers face is quite heavy because teachers must be able to have creativity in developing attractive teaching strategies in online learning. Additionally, teachers are required to be able to choose the right and user-friendly media in the online learning process from the many available online learning alternatives to suit the needs of the students. It is essential to realize that online learning should be addressed tactfully to fulfill the learning aspects such as process knowledge, moral, skills, intelligence and aesthetics. While educators are urged to constantly evaluate effectiveness and adaptability of online learning needs.

While students have certain role to be played in order to achieve effective teaching and learning in an online platform.

Following is the list of the role the students may have in online learning.

1. Students use appropriate technology to interact collaboratively with each other and teacher, and use feedback and consultation to develop and refine knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

2. Students are self-responsible for their own learning. They should decide what they want to learn, establish their goal, research and develop their subject.

3. Students research current data to answer questions and solve problems

4. Students learn to solve problems by assessment, data collection, and developing and implementing strategies using relevant information.

5. Students identify communication barriers, their causes, and solutions.

6. Students promote life-long learning and know how to access and use information when instruction is finished.

The following were the common challenges faced by students and lecturers during online learning:

1. Technical issues with the use of technology.

2. Students' Low Motivation in Learning Process.

3. Students have difficulties to adjust to the learning schedule.

4. Unsupportive Environment.

5. Data privacy.

Dhawan (Dhawan, 2020) discusses several solutions to problems associated with online education. The solutions may include pre-recording video lessons or lectures; humanizing the learning process by making it more interesting, dynamic, and interactive; creating forums for communication using social media and other digital platforms; continuously improving the quality of the online courses; allowing students to ask questions and provide feedback; and promoting collaborative learning, project-based learning, and group-based learning.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method. The research was conducted at English Education Study Program, Pattimura University PSDKU MBD which is located on Jl. Kampung Babar, Tiakur, Kabupaten Maluku Barat Daya (MBD).

Research Site and Participants

Initial step taken was a preliminary study, in which the researchers observed the problematic situation in research site and decided to examine the condition. Researchers took 6 students of English Education study Program PSDKU FKIP UNPATTI MBD in academic year of 2022 as the informants in this study.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this step, the researchers collected the data by using interview, observation and documentation (Lodico et al., n.d.). After collecting the data, in this step the writers identified and described the data regarding the challenges and problems experienced by the students. At a later stage, the researchers made classification of the data and then synthesized the suggested solution offered by the students for better and effective implementation of online learning.

The process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions were sorted for analysis. In this process, the researcher tried to reduce the data that suit the nature of the study. Data display is the second element of Miles and Huberman's model of qualitative data analysis. It is an organized, compressed

assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action. The data that had been reduced were organized and compressed. After reducing and displaying the data, the researchers drew conclusion and conducted verification. Drawing conclusion involves stepping back to consider what the analyzed data mean and to assess their implications for the existing questions. Moreover, verification involves revisiting the data as many times as necessary to verify the emergent conclusions. In this last step, the researchers made some conclusions based on their findings.

FINDINGS

Six students participated in this study. Their accommodation ranged from own houses, stay with their relatives, while four students stay in boarding houses (*kost*). These student parents' occupation are fisherman and farmers, even they identified their parents' job as odd jobs or even jobless. Only one stated that his parent is a civil servant or PNS. In terms of ownership of gadgetry to assist these students in the process of online learning all the participant students reported that they own HP Android. Three people have their own laptop, two have personal computer desktop and one student has an *ipad*. None of them reported to have tablet or other gadgetry differ from the ones that have been mentioned. When asked about various application and platform that they have been using, the two most frequent platform used in the online learning are Google meet and Zoom web conference tool. All of the students agreed that these two platforms have been used frequently by lecturers to deliver the lesson. Follows in the second place is *WhatsApp* and Google classroom. Some reported the use of Canvas platform as the third most used platform in online learning they have had. Microsoft teams and e-learning have been the least used tool during online learning. While in their experience, these students never used platform or application such as *padlet, schoology, tricider, telegram*, or *edmodo*.

The result of the study reveals that not all of these students are digital native despite the fact that they are included in the category of millennial who supposedly to have special capacity in technology. All of them are not fluent in the application and platforms such as Canva for presentation. Although Power point has been a common presentation tool, there are still couple of these students who are not able or are not fluent in working with the power point. The interactive application for online learning such as *Mentimeter, Tricider, Quizizz, Bandicam, Camtasia, Adobe Premiere Pro*, etc. are found to be unfamiliar tool to these students.

Figure 1. Students' familiarity to various Application and platforms for online learning
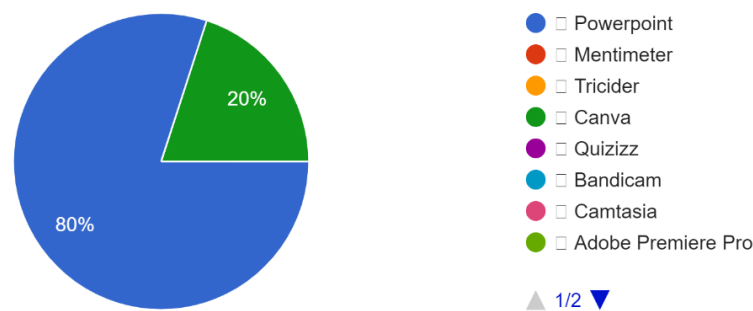
The result on the perceptions towards online learning at the English Education Study Program PSDKU FKIP of Pattimura University in Maluku Barat Daya (MBD) was revealed in terms of challenges and constrains that prevent them from participating in the online course satisfactorily. The challenges have been in various forms according to the experience of the students. They are ranging from the limited internet quota to the low affordable capacity to buy the internet data packet. Half of the number of the students expressed their incompetency to afford internet package for assisting them in online learning.

Result of the Interview

The objective of this research is to find out students' perception on the challenges and problems during online learning. Six participants DS, IM, HI, LA, PW and SA said that they enjoyed on line learning during pandemic situation. Some excerpts from the students are as follow:

> *"In my opinion we had to enjoy the online learning despite many challenges. We have difficulties getting very smooth internet connection. In my place it is expensive to buy data package. Sometimes I cannot afford it. I'm not rich" [Student DS}*

> *I had difficulties understand lecturers when attending online class. I can hardly listen to the lecturers' voice. [Student LA].*

When asked about their 'coping mechanism' to minimize the negative impact of challenges during online learning the students sometimes had to work together. They had to ask their peers when there is something that they do not understand during the online learning. They rarely able to ask for clarification to the lecturers due to psychological barrier. They felt shy or reluctant to ask the lecturer directly.

"I frequently had to attend online class by sitting next to my fellow students so I can ask them whenever I can understand something. I just too shy to ask directly to the lecturers" [Student SA].

"I felt bored sometimes and always felt sleepy during online learning. I did not find variation in learning and teaching online so far" [Student PW].

From the interview results based on the question, *"Based on your experience, what are the factors that disturb you most during online learning?"* The interviewees reflected that there are so many disturbing factors such as quality of sound. The visual problem and many more. Sometimes they had to walk to campus to get signal just to find that the lecture was canceled.

"Sometimes I had to walk long distant try to get some internet connection. It was annoyed that the lecturers had to cancel the class on short notice. I can use that time working instead of wasting it. I have side (odd) job" [Student IM]

If you have to choose between online learning and offline learning, which one do you prefer? Give reason. This item gets almost unison feedback from the students that although they have no serious issues regarding the implementation of online learning, they would prefer to have offline face to face class.

What would you suggest to improve online learning at PSDKU MBD? This question was responded by the students by stating various thought.

"I think if we should learn better there should be coordination between various parties. Local authority should provide very good internet connection. They should build cooperation with internet provider to provide fast internet for us". [Student IM].

"Electricity frequently went on and off. It is so annoying. PLN should provide good service so we can learn and work safely" [Student SA].

"We should get more training on technology mastery as well as the lecturers so we can learn better and the teachers can teach better with a lot of variation using various application and platforms. Thus, we can be happy and motivated to learn" [Student PW].

DISCUSSION

Online learning during Covid-19 has obviously brought about many challenges for educators, students, school administrators, and parents. The challenges have been associated with limited technological infrastructure, socio-economic factors, lack of experience to conduct

assessment and supervision in an online mode, etc. Adedoyin & Soykan (2020) as cited in Sukandi (2022) brought up the issue of extra workload for teachers and education staff, and incompatibility with some specific subject matters or cultures, add to the hardship of these stakeholders. There are also other challenges linked to learner feeling of isolation, frustration, pressure, extra expenses, health issues, and increased exposure to cyber bullying and online violence (Daniel, 2020; Gillett-Swan, 2017; Nur et al., 2023).

In accordance with the finding of many studies such as above, the following were the common challenges faced by students during online learning at English Education Study Program, PSDKU UNPATTI. First issue as stated by the participants in this study regarding the technology or digital literacy. A mastery in technology aspect has been part of concern to most of teachers and students. Within the implementation of online class that deals with the use of technology, there are various problem and concern experienced by teachers, lecturers and students. Several technical issues in using technology in their online classes have been identified through several studies. The current study has confirmed previous findings of some other studies. Among the issues were the bad internet connection, unstable internet network, limited data package as well as unsupported gadgets (Enyoojo et al., 2024; Herliandry & Nurhasanah, Maria Enjelina Suban, 2020; Rahimi, 2024; Shahbodin et al., 2024). People are experiencing technical difficulties because of the high usage rate of online learning systems, video streaming software, and other digital tools. The platforms are overloaded: poor quality video and audio, internet problems. Internet connection is either unstable or the current data plan is not enough to cover the progressive e-learning needs.

Students' low motivation in learning process was listed as the next challenge perceived by the students in English Education PSDKU MBD, were their motivation which was sometimes not sufficiently high to participate in their online classes. Many of them stated that lack of variation in online teaching and the lesson tend to be monotonous. This has resulted in students feeling bored or uninterested toward learning. This in turn create gap in language learning process. Other challenges which come from students, that is time management, students are difficult to adjust to the learning schedule. Another point is lack of interaction between students and lecturer that can influence the students in understanding the material.

Another challenge emerged from the findings were the unsupportive environments. As the learning took place at students' houses the situations were not as supportive as those in the university. The crowd, the noise, and the parents' requests to help with the household chores disturbed the online learning. From the very beginning of school shutdown, teachers and students have been connected using multiple digital tools without paying attention to the amount, and nature of the personal data they collect. Reaching the main objective of a quick transition to online

learning, they had to neglect their privacy, especially when large e-learning software suppliers offer temporary free subscription plans. The recent case of Zoom, a remote conference services company that has appeared to store all video conference recordings on storage space without a password, proves they have to thoughtfully approach choosing the digital tools for online learning delivery.

CONCLUSION

As the aim of this study is to know students' perception of online learning, some conclusion can be drawn in regards to the challenges and problematic issues faced by students during the implementation of online learning or distant learning policy at PSDKU English Study Program. The result of this study shows that, there are still some hidden problematic issues that need to be seriously addressed by concerned parties. Student participants reveal the underlying needs in technology literacy while expecting that the lecturers need to build their capacity in technology mastery. This is perceived by the students as an alternative to create more engaging and interactive learning in online class. In regards to second research question of this study, the researchers have to admit that due to some factors, a comprehensive package in understanding this coping mechanism have not been sufficiently addressed. Thus, further research should necessarily be taken by future researchers. Through this simple study, all parties and stakeholders have to realize the condition of the students thus, some steps to overcome the problematic issues in PSDKU MBD can be overcome. Lecturers, local authority, internet provider should then work closely side by side to answer this issue. As the online learning has become a trend and will likely to persist, the mastery of technology and ability to operate the gadget and all the online application is surely required. Lastly, this study was done amidst various limitation, thus the result may be subject to bias or other validity indicators. However, the researchers hope that this simple study may be act as a foundation to do more comprehensive study regarding similar issue.

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The Impact of Kampus Mengajar Program on Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT

The *Kampus Mengajar* Program, an integral component of Indonesia's Independent Campus initiative, represents a strategic approach to educational enhancement through university student involvement in elementary education. This qualitative study investigated teachers' perceptions regarding the role and impact of *Kampus Mengajar* students in facilitating the learning process at SD Negeri 84 Ambon. The research employed structured interviews with purposively selected participants, including classroom teachers from grades one through six, a shadow teacher, and the school principal, to gather comprehensive insights into the program's implementation and effectiveness. Data analysis followed a systematic qualitative approach, involving thorough transcription and thematic analysis of interview responses. The findings revealed four key dimensions of program impact: successful implementation of innovative teaching strategies, particularly through technology integration; significant enhancement of student learning outcomes, especially in literacy and digital competencies; development of effective teacher-student collaborative relationships; and improvement in school administrative processes. These outcomes demonstrate the program's effectiveness in enhancing educational quality through structured student involvement while providing valuable insights for future program implementation and educational policy development in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Kampus Mengajar Program, Teacher Perception, Educational Innovation, Technology Integration, Qualitative Research*

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of higher education in Indonesia has witnessed significant developments through various innovative programs, with the *Kampus Mengajar* Program emerging as a crucial component of the Merdeka Campus (*Kampus Merdeka*) initiative. This program represents a strategic approach to educational enhancement by involving university students from diverse academic backgrounds in supporting teaching and learning activities, particularly at the elementary education level (Wahyuni et al., 2022).

The *Kampus Mengajar* Program, initiated in 2020 and subsequently expanded in 2021 with support from the Education Fund Management Institution (LPDP), serves as a practical implementation of the "*Merdeka Belajar*" concept. This educational reform movement aims to provide students with experiential learning opportunities beyond traditional classroom boundaries

while simultaneously addressing educational challenges in underserved communities (Sumarni et al., 2022). Research has demonstrated that such service-learning programs can significantly impact both the participating students and the target communities, fostering mutual learning and development (Muslimin & Deswila, 2023).

The program's implementation is guided by several fundamental principles that emphasize the complementary nature of student involvement in the teaching-learning process. As outlined by Widiyono et al. (2021), these principles include: strengthening student competencies, fostering quality culture, and enhancing learning materials and strategies without supplanting the role of existing teachers. This approach aligns with contemporary educational theories that advocate for collaborative learning environments and mentorship models in educational development (Putri et al., 2022).

Student activities within the *Kampus Mengajar* framework encompass various dimensions, including collaborative teaching, development of interactive learning media, and creation of engaging learning environments. Recent studies have highlighted the program's particular focus on improving literacy, numeracy, and technology adaptation skills among elementary school students (Ashari et al., 2022; Martina et al., 2022). These focus areas are crucial in addressing the fundamental challenges faced by Indonesian education, especially in regions with limited resources and technological access.

The present study aims to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the role of *Kampus Mengajar* students in facilitating the learning process at SD NEGERI 84 AMBON. This research is particularly significant as it contributes to the growing body of literature on the effectiveness of service-learning programs in Indonesian education reform (Khotimah et al., 2021). Understanding teachers' perspectives is crucial for evaluating the program's impact and identifying areas for potential improvement in future implementations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Evolution and Implementation of Kampus Mengajar Program

The *Kampus Mengajar* Program represents a significant initiative within Indonesia's educational reform landscape, functioning as a cornerstone of the MBKM (*Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka*) framework in partnership with elementary schools. This program emerged as a response to the need for innovative approaches in education, particularly focusing on providing students with opportunities for experiential learning beyond traditional classroom environments. The program also emphasizes the development of technological innovation within educational contexts (Widiyono et al., 2021).

Since its inception, the program has undergone five implementation periods, with student selection processes managed by the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education. Selected participants receive comprehensive guidance from various competent stakeholders before being strategically placed in selected schools within their geographical regions. This placement aims to facilitate effective learning assistance while maintaining local context sensitivity (Widiyono et al., 2021).

The program's impact extends beyond mere academic support, encompassing multiple domains of educational development. Student participants engage in various roles, including direct learning assistance, school administration support, technology integration facilitation, and participation in incidental school activities. This multifaceted approach has demonstrated significant positive outcomes for both participating students and partner schools.

Understanding Teacher Perception in Educational Context

Teacher perception represents a complex psychological construct that fundamentally influences educational practices and outcomes. According to Sugihartono (2007), perception marks the initial phase of human behavioral response, beginning with sensory processing or sensation. This process involves the reception of stimuli through sensory organs, followed by cognitive interpretation in the brain, culminating in what we recognize as perception.

Walgito (2003) provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding perception, defining it as the systematic organization and interpretation of stimuli received by an organism or individual. This process imbues stimuli with meaning and integrates them into individual activities. Furthermore, Walgito (2003) emphasizes that perception is shaped by both internal and external factors, creating a dynamic interplay between personal and environmental influences.

In the specific context of teacher perception, this construct encompasses how educators comprehend and interpret various aspects of their professional environment, including student interactions, pedagogical approaches, classroom dynamics, and broader educational contexts. These perceptions hold significant influence over teaching methodologies, student interactions, and educational decision-making processes. The variation in teacher perceptions can be attributed to diverse professional experiences, personal backgrounds, and individual perspectives. Additionally, external factors such as institutional policies, administrative support systems, and classroom conditions play crucial roles in shaping these perceptions.

This theoretical foundation of teacher perception provides essential context for understanding how educators interpret and respond to educational innovations and interventions, including programs like *Kampus Mengajar*. Their perceptions significantly influence the

implementation success and sustainability of such educational initiatives, making them crucial considerations in educational research and program evaluation.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the role of *Kampus Mengajar* students in facilitating the learning process at SD Negeri 84 Ambon. A qualitative methodology was selected due to its capacity to provide rich, detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives (Faridah et al., 2023). This approach enabled the researchers to explore the complexity and nuance of teachers' views regarding the implementation and impact of the *Kampus Mengajar* program in their school context. The study design focused on gathering detailed narratives and interpretations from participants to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the program influences teaching and learning processes.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at SD Negeri 84 Ambon, a public elementary school that has been actively participating in the *Kampus Mengajar* program. The selection of participants followed a purposive sampling strategy to ensure the collection of relevant and information-rich data. The study population comprised teachers who had direct experience working alongside *Kampus Mengajar* students in their classrooms. Specifically, the participants included homeroom teachers from grades one through six, providing a comprehensive representation across all elementary grade levels. Additionally, the school principal and a mentor teacher were included to obtain administrative and supervisory perspectives on the program's implementation.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process utilized structured interviews as the primary instrument. The interview protocol was carefully designed to explore teachers' perceptions across multiple dimensions of the *Kampus Mengajar* program's implementation. The structured format ensured consistency across interviews while allowing for detailed responses from participants. Each interview was audio-recorded with participant consent to ensure accurate data capture and facilitate thorough analysis.

Data analysis followed a systematic qualitative approach. The process began with the verbatim transcription of all recorded interviews, converting oral data into text format for detailed analysis. The transcription process was conducted meticulously to ensure the accuracy of the data.

Following transcription, the researchers employed thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns within the data. This analytical process involved multiple stages:

First, researchers familiarized themselves with the data through repeated reading of transcripts. Second, initial codes were generated to identify meaningful segments of text. Third, these codes were grouped into potential themes. Fourth, themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. Finally, themes were defined and named to capture the essence of the participants' perspectives.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, the researchers employed member checking, allowing participants to review their interview transcripts and preliminary interpretations. This process helped ensure that the analysis accurately represented the participants' views and experiences.

FINDINGS

Implementation of Innovative Teaching Strategies

The analysis revealed that *Kampus Mengajar* students have successfully implemented innovative teaching approaches that significantly enhanced the learning environment. Teachers consistently reported the introduction of novel teaching methods, particularly through technology integration and interactive learning materials. As noted by Ms. Eti, a senior teacher:

> *"There is something new because, basically, there are new things or new knowledge. Teachers may also not be able to provide or apply it through learning to students. But through the existing college students, apart from observing, they also did something new like that, so it was really extraordinary."*

This observation highlights a critical aspect of the program's impact: the introduction of pedagogical innovations that complement existing teaching practices. The reference to "something new" suggests that *Kampus Mengajar* students are effectively bridging the gap between traditional teaching methods and contemporary educational approaches. This finding aligns with current research on educational innovation, which emphasizes the importance of introducing novel teaching strategies while maintaining respect for established pedagogical practices.

The school principal further emphasized the technological dimension of these innovations:

> *"Learning using Infocus is very good because, with advances in IT, programs created by collagers, such as displaying pictures or videos, really help students in the learning process."*

The principal's observation underscores the significant role of technology integration in modern education. The mention of specific tools like Infocus and the creation of multimedia

content demonstrates a practical implementation of technology-enhanced learning. This integration represents a systematic approach to modernizing classroom instruction, moving beyond traditional chalk-and-talk methods to more interactive and engaging learning experiences.

Mr. Edo, a fourth-grade teacher, provided additional insight into the methodological diversity:

> *"According to my observations, the class 4 homeroom teacher has a lot of learning media or methods provided when colleagues teach. They are present to provide very high levels of learning process activities."*

This testimony reveals the multifaceted nature of the pedagogical innovations introduced through the program. The reference to "high levels of learning process activities" suggests the implementation of active learning strategies that engage students more deeply in the learning process. The variety of learning media mentioned indicates a comprehensive approach to addressing different learning styles and needs.

Enhancement of Student Learning Outcomes

The analysis indicated significant improvements in student learning outcomes across multiple domains. Ms. Sani highlighted the impact on student engagement:

> *"It is very good and very helpful because with the Kampus Mengajar college students, the students are actively involved because they are presented with various videos provided by students, making it easier for the children in the learning process."*

This observation is particularly significant as it demonstrates the direct correlation between innovative teaching methods and increased student engagement. The mention of video presentations suggests a shift toward multimodal learning approaches, which research has shown to be particularly effective in enhancing student comprehension and retention. The emphasis on active involvement indicates a successful transition from passive to active learning strategies.

The improvement in reading skills was particularly noteworthy, as observed by Ms. Eti:

> *"For example, there are two students in Grade 5 whose reading is a bit difficult, but now it is starting to show or there is progress."*

This specific example provides concrete evidence of the program's impact on fundamental literacy skills. The observation of progress in struggling readers suggests that the individualized

attention and innovative teaching methods employed by *Kampus Mengajar* students are effectively addressing learning challenges that may have been resistant to traditional teaching approaches.

Development of Teacher-Student Collaborative Relationships

The research findings emphasized the emergence of strong collaborative relationships between *Kampus Mengajar* students and their assigned classes. The shadow teacher emphasized this collaborative dynamic:

> *"The main benefit of Kampus Mengajar college students at this school for the fifth and sixth periods is their ability to collaborate with teachers in carrying out their work programs in various places, such as the classroom and the library."*

This observation highlights the programmatic success in establishing effective collaborative frameworks across multiple educational spaces. The reference to both classroom and library environments indicates a comprehensive approach to collaboration that extends beyond traditional instructional settings. This multi-space collaboration suggests the development of a holistic educational partnership that addresses various aspects of the learning process.

Mr. Edo provided specific insight into the collaborative problem-solving approach:

> *"That's when Kampus Mengajar collagers have strategies that can find out that there are students who are found unable to read or can't read at all... they can embrace it and then create literacy, which is done in class or in the library."*

This testimony reveals the strategic nature of the collaborative relationship, particularly in addressing specific learning challenges. The mention of literacy intervention strategies demonstrates how collaboration facilitates targeted educational support. The systematic approach to identifying and addressing reading difficulties suggests a well-structured partnership between *Kampus Mengajar* students and regular teaching staff.

The principal's perspective provided institutional context:

> *"There are many contributions because I always involve the collagers in preparing the curriculum, and there are school activities because the collagers pursuing this have a good mindset regarding problems."*

This administrative insight indicates the integration of *Kampus Mengajar* students into higher-level educational planning and decision-making processes. Their involvement in curriculum preparation suggests recognition of their potential to contribute meaningfully to educational

program development. The reference to their "good mindset regarding problems" implies a valuable contribution to the school's problem-solving capacity.

Impact on Technology Integration and Digital Literacy

The implementation of the *Kampus Mengajar* program has demonstrated significant influence on technological integration in educational practices. Ms. Mei emphasized this technological advancement:

> *"With the existence of Kampus Mengajar, college students help teachers... especially regarding the learning process in class, by using several teaching aids that use IT, which have a very positive impact on the students' ability to understand and grasp the lesson more quickly."*

This observation reveals the dual impact of technology integration: enhancing teaching capabilities while simultaneously improving student comprehension. The reference to "positive impact" and quicker grasp of lessons suggests that technology integration has successfully accelerated the learning process. The mention of IT-based teaching aids indicates a systematic approach to modernizing instructional methods.

The school principal provided institutional perspective on technological adaptation:

> *"Yes, there are changes, and these changes are extraordinary. The enthusiasm of the students with Kampus Mengajar collagers has also made the teachers start to get used to digital tools such as Infocus, using speakers, and others."*

This testimony highlights the cascading effect of technology integration, where student enthusiasm drives teacher adoption of digital tools. The principal's characterization of these changes as "extraordinary" suggests a significant transformation in the school's technological landscape. The specific mention of digital tools indicates concrete evidence of technological advancement in teaching practices.

Ms. Sani's observation focused on student engagement with technology:

> *"The students are actively involved because they are presented with various videos provided by students, making it easier for the children in the learning process, and they are happier because of the learning videos shown."*

This finding demonstrates the positive correlation between technological integration and student engagement. The reference to student happiness suggests enhanced emotional engagement

with learning materials, while active involvement indicates improved behavioral engagement. The emphasis on video-based learning highlights the successful implementation of multimedia teaching strategies.

Enhancement of School Administrative Processes

The research revealed substantial improvements in school administrative processes and organizational efficiency through the *Kampus Mengajar* program implementation. The principal provided insight into the strategic involvement of program participants:

"There are many contributions because I always involve the collagers in preparing the curriculum, and there are school activities because the collagers pursuing this have a good mindset regarding problems so that they can provide input or suggestions so that it becomes an experience for the collagers in the future."

This observation demonstrates the program's impact at the institutional level, particularly in curriculum development and strategic planning. The principal's deliberate inclusion of *Kampus Mengajar* students in curriculum preparation indicates a recognition of their potential to contribute to educational program development. The reference to their "good mindset regarding problems" suggests that these students bring fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to addressing administrative challenges. Furthermore, the mention of "experience for the collagers in the future" indicates the program's role in developing future educational leaders.

The shadow teacher provided comprehensive insight into the programmatic implementation:

"For Kampus Mengajar college students at SD Negeri 84 Ambon batch 6, I think they are very good and very supportive of being in the SD Negeri 84 Ambon institution. The work program they have implemented is very good, which they will continue to carry out in the meantime. The education at this school is also very good because of these five college students, who always come on time, even until the afternoon at this educational institution."

This detailed observation highlights several key aspects of administrative enhancement: punctuality, commitment, and program sustainability. The emphasis on timeliness and extended presence at the institution suggests a significant contribution to the school's operational efficiency. The reference to program implementation quality indicates successful integration of *Kampus Mengajar* initiatives into existing school structures. Moreover, the mention of program continuity suggests sustainable administrative improvements.

Mr. Edo elaborated on the broader institutional impact:

"The Kampus Mengajar at the school really has the biggest impact, especially for me as the 4th grade teacher. It has had a huge impact or change and provides motivation for the students. With enthusiasm, the students have different learning patterns, such as having enthusiasm."

This testimony reveals the interconnected nature of administrative and educational outcomes. The reference to "biggest impact" suggests transformative changes at both administrative and pedagogical levels. The observation about changed learning patterns indicates that administrative improvements have positively influenced classroom dynamics. The emphasis on student motivation demonstrates how enhanced administrative processes can contribute to improved educational outcomes.

Ms. Mei further elaborated on the administrative support structure:

"With the existence of Kampus Mengajar, college students help teachers. They work together, see the shortcomings that exist in the school, and they also provide input, especially regarding the learning process in class, by using several teaching aids that use IT, which have a very positive impact on the students' ability to understand and grasp the lesson more quickly."

This observation highlights the systematic approach to administrative improvement through collaborative problem-solving. The reference to identifying and addressing shortcomings indicates a diagnostic approach to administrative enhancement. The mention of IT integration suggests modernization of administrative processes alongside pedagogical improvements. The emphasis on collaborative work demonstrates the development of effective administrative partnerships between regular staff and *Kampus Mengajar* participants.

These findings collectively demonstrate that the *Kampus Mengajar* program has facilitated significant administrative improvements through:

1. Enhanced curriculum development processes
2. Improved operational efficiency
3. Sustainable program implementation
4. Integrated technology adoption
5. Collaborative problem-solving approaches

The analysis reveals that these administrative enhancements have contributed to creating a more efficient and effective educational environment, benefiting both students and staff at SD Negeri 84 Ambon.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal several significant insights regarding the implementation and impact of the *Kampus Mengajar* program at SD Negeri 84 Ambon. The analysis demonstrates that the program has successfully facilitated educational innovation while fostering meaningful collaboration between participating students and school staff. These outcomes align with previous research by Widiyono, Irfana, and Fidausia (2021), who emphasized the program's role in enhancing educational quality through student involvement.

The implementation of innovative teaching strategies emerged as a central theme in this study. Teachers consistently reported the introduction of novel pedagogical approaches, particularly through technology integration and interactive learning materials. This finding corresponds with research by Ashari et al. (2022), who identified technology adaptation as a crucial component of the *Kampus Mengajar* program's success. The observed improvements in student engagement and learning outcomes suggest that these innovative approaches effectively address contemporary educational challenges while maintaining sensitivity to local contexts.

The study revealed significant enhancement in student learning outcomes, particularly in literacy and technology skills. This improvement aligns with the program's core objectives as outlined by Martina et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of strengthening basic competencies in elementary education. The observed progress in reading abilities and digital literacy suggests that the program successfully addresses fundamental educational needs while preparing students for increasingly technology-dependent learning environments.

Teacher perceptions indicated strong support for the collaborative aspects of the program. The development of effective partnerships between *Kampus Mengajar* students and regular teaching staff demonstrates the program's success in creating sustainable educational improvements. This finding supports previous research by Khotimah et al. (2021), who identified collaboration as a key factor in successful program implementation. The positive response from teachers suggests that the program effectively complements existing educational practices while introducing innovative approaches.

The integration of technology in teaching practices emerged as a particularly successful aspect of the program. Teachers reported increased confidence in utilizing digital tools and multimedia resources, indicating successful technology adoption. This outcome reflects the findings of Faridah et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of technological competency in modern educational settings. The observed improvements in both teacher and student technological literacy suggest that the program effectively bridges the digital divide in elementary education.

Administrative improvements resulting from the program's implementation indicate its broader institutional impact. The involvement of *Kampus Mengajar* students in curriculum development and school operations demonstrates the program's potential for systemic educational enhancement. This finding aligns with research by Hasriadi (2022), who emphasized the importance of comprehensive educational innovation that encompasses both pedagogical and administrative dimensions.

The study's findings suggest that the *Kampus Mengajar* program has successfully achieved its objectives of improving educational quality while providing valuable experiential learning opportunities for participating students. However, the research also indicates areas for potential program enhancement, particularly in terms of long-term sustainability and systematic integration with existing school structures. These insights contribute to the growing body of literature on educational innovation in Indonesian contexts while providing practical implications for program improvement.

The positive outcomes observed at SD Negeri 84 Ambon suggest that the *Kampus Mengajar* program represents an effective model for educational enhancement through student involvement. The program's success in facilitating both pedagogical innovation and administrative improvement indicates its potential for broader implementation in similar educational contexts. Future research might explore the long-term impacts of such programs and investigate factors contributing to sustained educational improvement.

These findings hold significant implications for educational policy and practice, particularly in the context of Indonesian elementary education. The successful implementation of the *Kampus Mengajar* program at SD Negeri 84 Ambon provides valuable insights for similar initiatives aimed at enhancing educational quality through student involvement and technological integration. The study contributes to our understanding of effective strategies for educational innovation while highlighting the importance of collaborative approaches in educational enhancement.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided substantive evidence regarding the effectiveness of the *Kampus Mengajar* program at SD Negeri 84 Ambon, demonstrating significant positive outcomes across multiple educational domains. The research findings indicate that the program has successfully implemented innovative teaching methodologies, particularly through the integration of technology-enhanced learning and interactive pedagogical approaches. The analysis revealed notable improvements in student learning outcomes, especially in areas of literacy, digital competency, and overall academic engagement. Furthermore, the program has facilitated the

development of effective collaborative relationships between *Kampus Mengajar* students and regular teaching staff, contributing to a more dynamic and responsive learning environment. These outcomes align with the program's core objectives of enhancing educational quality through active student involvement in teaching and learning processes.

The implications of this research extend beyond the immediate context of SD Negeri 84 Ambon, offering valuable insights for broader educational policy and practice in Indonesia. The successful implementation of the program demonstrates its potential as a model for educational enhancement through structured student involvement in elementary education. The observed improvements in both pedagogical practices and administrative processes suggest that the *Kampus Mengajar* program represents an effective approach to addressing contemporary educational challenges while building capacity for sustained institutional development. Future research should focus on investigating the long-term sustainability of these improvements and exploring factors that contribute to successful program implementation across diverse educational contexts. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge regarding educational innovation in Indonesia and provide evidence-based support for the expansion of similar initiatives in other educational settings.

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Teachers' Implementation of Authentic Speaking Assessment: A Case Study of Senior High Schools in Ambon

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates authentic assessment practices in speaking lessons at senior high schools in Ambon city, Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research examined the types of authentic assessment tasks implemented by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and their perceptions regarding implementation. Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis from seven experienced English teachers across three public senior high schools: SMA Negeri 2 Ambon, SMA Negeri 3 Ambon, and SMA Negeri 5 Ambon. The study employed Miles and Huberman's interactive model for data analysis, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Findings revealed that teachers utilized eight distinct authentic assessment tasks: oral interviews, picture-cued descriptions, video clips, information gaps, story/text retelling, role plays, oral reports, and debates. Role-play emerged as the most frequently implemented task, with all participating teachers incorporating it into their speaking assessments. Teachers demonstrated positive perceptions toward authentic assessment, acknowledging its benefits in enhancing student motivation, developing practical skills, and improving learning outcomes. However, implementation challenges persisted, including time constraints with large classes, resource limitations, varying student proficiency levels, and assessment complexity. Recommendations emphasize the need for targeted professional development in authentic assessment methodology, institutional support for resource allocation, and strategic approaches to overcome implementation challenges. This study contributes to the understanding of authentic assessment practices in EFL contexts and provides practical insights for educational stakeholders seeking to enhance speaking assessment methods.

Keywords: *Authentic assessment, speaking ability, EFL teachers' perceptions, assessment tasks, senior high school*

INTRODUCTION

Language proficiency encompasses four fundamental skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Among these, speaking holds particular significance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts as it serves as both a crucial medium of communication and an indicator of overall language mastery. Research has demonstrated that effective speaking abilities positively correlate with comprehensive language acquisition and facilitate meaningful communication in real-world contexts (Idayani & Rugaiyah, 2017). Speaking proficiency requires the integration of multiple linguistic components, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, comprehension, and

fluency, making it a complex skill that demands careful pedagogical attention (Jannah & Hartono, 2018).

Assessment plays a vital role in the teaching-learning process, providing essential information about students' understanding and progress (Thomas, 2012; Amua-Sekyi, 2016). Contemporary assessment approaches have evolved alongside learner-centered and communicative teaching methodologies, shifting from traditional progress-focused evaluations to more comprehensive methods that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and capabilities in authentic contexts. This evolution has been particularly pronounced in Indonesia following the 2013 curriculum reforms, which emphasize authentic assessment practices across all subjects, including EFL instruction.

Authentic assessment, as defined by O'Malley and Pierce (1996), encompasses multiple forms of evaluation that reflect students' learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes within relevant classroom activities. This approach offers a diverse assessment menu that enhances students' ability to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and strategies effectively. Furthermore, it promotes self-directed learning, increased motivation, and learner autonomy while providing teachers with valuable insights into whether learning objectives have been met or require additional attention (Widiastuti & Saukah, 2017).

However, preliminary research conducted at SMA N 2 and SMA N 3 Ambon revealed several challenges in implementing authentic assessment in speaking lessons. While teachers employed various authentic assessment methods, including oral interviews, picture-cued descriptions, and oral reports, these approaches often failed to adequately address students' needs and proficiency levels. Despite the apparent benefits of authentic assessment, teachers frequently resorted to repetitive tasks due to limited professional development opportunities and faced constraints related to time and facilities. The performance-based nature of speaking assessment further complicated the implementation of authentic evaluation methods.

This study aims to investigate the current state of authentic assessment implementation in speaking lessons at senior high schools in Ambon, addressing two primary research questions:

1. What types of authentic assessment tasks do EFL teachers use to measure students' speaking skills?
2. What perceptions do EFL teachers have about the use of authentic assessment in speaking lessons?

The findings of this study will contribute to the theoretical understanding of authentic speaking assessment and provide practical insights for educators seeking to enhance their assessment practices in EFL contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Skills in EFL Context

Speaking represents a fundamental skill in language acquisition, often serving as a primary measure of achievement in language learning. The interactive nature of speaking involves direct communication between speakers and listeners, facilitating the exchange of ideas and immediate feedback. According to Bahadorfar and Omidvar (2014), speaking encompasses the transmission of meaning through verbal and nonverbal symbols across diverse contexts. The form and meaning in speaking are shaped by speakers' experiences, environment, and communicative purposes. Nunan (2003) emphasizes that speaking proficiency requires learners to understand when, why, and how to employ language across various social situations. Success in speaking is characterized by the ability to engage in meaningful conversations, effectively convey thoughts, and achieve mutual understanding with interlocutors.

Teaching speaking in EFL contexts presents unique challenges and opportunities. Many EFL teachers recognize interaction as crucial for developing speaking abilities in a foreign language. This aligns with Nunan's (2003) perspective that teaching speaking aims to enhance communicative competence, enabling students to express themselves and navigate social and cultural contexts appropriately. Febriyanti (2010) conceptualizes teaching speaking as guiding students to produce English speech sounds, utilize appropriate stress and intonation patterns, select context-appropriate vocabulary, organize thoughts logically, and develop fluency. While recreating authentic foreign language environments within EFL classrooms presents challenges, teachers can prepare students for independent functioning in English-speaking contexts through structured practice and guidance.

Several key principles govern effective speaking instruction in EFL contexts. Nunan (2003) emphasizes creating opportunities for students to develop both fluency and accuracy, with neither aspect receiving disproportionate attention. Teachers should implement pair and group activities to maximize student discussion opportunities while minimizing teacher speaking time. Additionally, meaning negotiation should be emphasized, encouraging students to clarify understanding through requests for clarification, repetition, or explanation. Speaking activities should incorporate both transactional speech, focused on completing specific tasks or exchanging goods and services, and interactional speech, aimed at establishing and maintaining social relationships.

Authentic Assessment Framework

Teaching and assessment are inherently connected in language acquisition, with assessment providing critical feedback on teaching effectiveness and student progress (Brookhart, 2001; Sethusha, 2012). Amua-Sekyi (2016) defines assessment as the evaluation of activities conducted by teachers and students to gather information for improving teaching and learning processes. This integral component of learning provides teachers with insights into student understanding and progress (Widiastuti and Saukah, 2017). Traditional assessment methods, particularly standardized tests, have faced criticism for their limited ability to evaluate diverse student outcomes and higher-order thinking skills.

Wiggins (1990) conceptualizes authentic assessment as tasks requiring students to apply knowledge in solving real-world challenges. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) and Brown (2004) identify four primary categories: performance assessment, portfolio assessment, self-assessment, and teacher observation. Performance assessment involves students generating responses observed across various situations and evaluated using specific rubrics. Portfolio assessments compile systematic collections of student work demonstrating development. Self-assessment promotes student autonomy through direct involvement in the evaluation process, while teacher observation encompasses systematic monitoring of student performance during both spontaneous and planned activities.

The characteristics of authentic assessment, as outlined by Wiggins (1998) and Ayubi, Erlina, and Desvitasari (2021), include tasks that replicate real-life scenarios, require judgment and creativity, and engage students actively with subject matter. These assessments mirror real-world activities, accommodate multiple assessment formats, present ill-structured problems, and encourage students to demonstrate knowledge to specific audiences. These elements contribute to meaningful teaching and learning activities that support both task completion and overall student development.

Authentic Assessment in Speaking Context

Authentic assessment of speaking skills requires careful consideration of students' ability to comprehend and communicate meaningful information in real-world situations. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) outline specific procedures for implementing authentic speaking assessment, including identifying purpose through learner needs analysis, planning assessment timing and instructional goals, developing appropriate rubrics and scoring procedures, establishing

performance standards, engaging students in self and peer assessment, and selecting suitable assessment activities.

The implementation of authentic assessment in speaking contexts offers several advantages. Burns (1999) notes that teachers can evaluate individual student language acquisition by observing activities that demonstrate skills in concrete, meaningful situations. This approach enables teachers to identify learning challenges and support student improvement effectively (Andrade & Cizek, 2010, as cited in Mursyida et al., 2020). Williams (as cited in Ojung & Allida, 2017) emphasizes that authentic assessment allows students to demonstrate learning outcomes by applying knowledge in real-life situations, enhancing comprehension and meaning-making from classroom content.

However, implementing authentic assessment in speaking contexts presents notable challenges. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) emphasize that successful implementation requires thorough understanding and commitment from teachers. Practical constraints include time limitations with large student populations and the complexity of creating authentic assessments, which encompasses managing classroom activities, providing instructions, scoring assignments, and offering feedback (Rukmini & Saputri, 2017). Additionally, authentic assessment often requires more resources than traditional testing methods, potentially increasing implementation costs.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research methodology to investigate teachers' perceptions and implementation of authentic assessment in speaking lessons. Following Ary (2006), this approach was selected for its effectiveness in understanding social phenomena from the perspective of human participants. The qualitative design enabled an in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences, challenges, and strategies in implementing authentic assessment practices within their specific educational contexts.

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at three senior high schools in Ambon city: SMA Negeri 2 Ambon, SMA Negeri 3 Ambon, and SMA Negeri 5 Ambon. These schools were selected based on their implementation of the 2013 curriculum and their established English language programs. Seven English teachers participated in the study, distributed as follows: one teacher from SMA Negeri 2 Ambon, two teachers from SMA Negeri 3 Ambon, and four teachers from SMA Negeri 5 Ambon. All participants were experienced educators with more than ten years of teaching

experience and active involvement in professional development programs. The selection of participants was based on their experience in implementing authentic assessment practices and their willingness to participate in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study employed three primary data collection instruments to ensure comprehensive understanding and methodological triangulation. First, a structured questionnaire was administered to gather initial data about the types of authentic assessment tasks used by teachers. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in implementing authentic assessment. The interview protocol focused on three key areas: implementation processes, perceived benefits, and encountered challenges. Third, document analysis was performed on teachers' assessment materials, lesson plans, and scoring rubrics to validate and complement the interview data.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model (as cited in AECT, 2001), which comprises three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data reduction, the researchers systematically selected, focused, simplified, and transformed the raw data from interview transcripts, questionnaires, and documents. The data display phase involved organizing the reduced data into systematic patterns and relationships, facilitating the identification of key themes and patterns. Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification process involved developing initial conclusions about the research questions and verifying these conclusions through reference to the original data and existing literature.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed several validation strategies, including methodological triangulation through multiple data collection methods, member checking with participants to verify interview interpretations, and peer debriefing among the researchers to enhance the analysis's credibility. These procedures helped maintain the rigor and reliability of the research findings while acknowledging the inherent subjectivity in qualitative research.

FINDINGS

Types of Authentic Assessment Tasks Used by EFL Teachers

The investigation of authentic assessment tasks implementation revealed diverse practices among participating teachers. Through systematic analysis of questionnaire responses and document examination, eight distinct assessment types emerged from the nine categories proposed

by O'Malley and Pierce (1996). Table 1 presents a comprehensive distribution of these tasks across all participating teachers.

Table 1. Distribution of Authentic Assessment Tasks

No.	Types of Authentic Assesment Task in Assessing Speaking Skill	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	76	T7
1	Oral Interviews		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
2	Picture-cued Descriptions		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Radio Broadcasts							
4	Video Clips	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
5	Information Gaps							✓
6	Story/Text Retelling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
7	Role Plays	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Oral Reports	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
9	Debates	✓						

Note. √ indicates implementation; - indicates non-implementation

Role-play activities emerged as the predominant assessment method, with all seven participating teachers incorporating this approach into their speaking assessments. This unanimous adoption suggests teachers' recognition of role-play's effectiveness in simulating authentic communication scenarios. The prevalence of role-play activities aligns with communicative language teaching principles, particularly in facilitating meaningful interaction and contextual language use.

Picture-cued descriptions, video clips, story/text retelling, and oral reports demonstrated substantial implementation rates, with six teachers utilizing each of these methods. This high adoption rate indicates teachers' preference for assessment tasks that combine visual stimuli with verbal expression, enabling students to demonstrate both comprehension and production skills. The integration of multimedia elements, particularly through video clips, reflects teachers' adaptation to modern pedagogical approaches.

Oral interviews, despite their potential for authentic one-on-one assessment, showed moderate adoption with five teachers implementing this method. This pattern might reflect the practical constraints of conducting individual interviews in large classroom settings. The limited implementation of information gaps and debates, each used by only one teacher, suggests potential challenges in orchestrating these more complex interactive tasks.

Analysis of individual teacher practices revealed varying degrees of assessment diversification. The data presented in Table 2 demonstrates that while some teachers, particularly T7, implemented a broad range of assessment tasks (77.8% of possible tasks), others maintained a more focused approach. This variation might reflect differences in teaching experience, professional development exposure, or institutional resources.

Table 2. Implementation Frequency of Authentic Assessment Tasks

Teacher	Number of Tasks Implemented	Percentage of Total Tasks
T1	5	55.6
T2	6	66.7
T3	6	66.7
T4	5	55.6
T5	4	44.4
T6	5	55.6
T7	7	77.8

Teachers' Perceptions of Authentic Assessment Implementation

Teachers' perceptions regarding authentic assessment implementation encompassed three primary dimensions: procedural considerations, perceived benefits, and implementation challenges. These findings, systematically categorized in Table 3, emerged from detailed analysis of semi-structured interview data and document examination.

Table 3. Teachers' Perceptions on Implementation of Authentic Assessment

Category	Key Findings
Implementation	• Systematic integration with learning objectives
	• Development of comprehensive assessment criteria
Process	• Regular student engagement and feedback mechanisms
	• Structured planning and preparation procedures
	• Continuous evaluation and modification of methods
	• Enhanced student motivation and participation
Benefits	• Development of practical communication skills
	• Improved learning outcomes and assessment accuracy

Category	Key Findings
	• Professional development opportunities for teachers
	• Strengthened classroom engagement
	• Time constraints in large class settings
	• Limited availability of resources and facilities
Challenges	• Varying levels of student readiness and proficiency
	• Complexity in assessment administration
	• Balancing individual and group assessment needs

The implementation process revealed a structured approach among participating teachers. Most participants emphasized the importance of systematic planning and preparation, particularly in aligning assessment tasks with curriculum objectives. Teachers demonstrated awareness of the need for clear assessment criteria and rubric development, though their approaches varied based on institutional contexts and student needs.

Regarding pedagogical benefits, teachers consistently reported positive impacts on student engagement and learning outcomes. The authentic nature of assessments was perceived to enhance student motivation by establishing clear connections between classroom activities and real-world communication needs. Teachers particularly valued the opportunity to observe and evaluate students' practical language application skills.

Professional benefits extended beyond immediate classroom outcomes. Teachers reported that implementing authentic assessment enhanced their own professional development by necessitating continuous refinement of assessment strategies and deeper engagement with pedagogical principles. This professional growth aspect emerged as an unexpected but significant benefit of authentic assessment implementation.

The challenges identified through this investigation centered on practical and pedagogical constraints. Time management emerged as a primary concern, particularly in large classes where individual assessment requirements posed significant logistical challenges. Resource limitations and varying student proficiency levels further complicated implementation efforts, requiring teachers to develop adaptive strategies and modified assessment approaches.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of findings from this study reveals several significant insights into the implementation of authentic assessment for speaking skills in EFL contexts at senior high schools

in Ambon. The analysis aligns with the research objectives and provides meaningful implications for pedagogical practice and assessment methodology.

The investigation into authentic assessment task implementation revealed that teachers utilized eight out of nine tasks proposed by O'Malley and Pierce (1996), demonstrating substantial adoption of authentic assessment principles. Role-play emerged as the predominant assessment method, implemented by all participating teachers. This finding aligns with previous research by Hidayah (2017) and Sahyoni and Zaim (2017), who identified role-play as an effective tool for authentic speaking assessment. The preference for role-play activities suggests teachers' recognition of its efficacy in simulating real-world communication scenarios while allowing for controlled assessment conditions.

The varied implementation patterns across different assessment tasks warrant careful consideration. While tasks such as picture-cued descriptions, video clips, and oral reports showed high adoption rates, information gaps and debates were minimally utilized. This disparity might reflect both practical constraints and pedagogical preferences, echoing findings from Idayani and Rugaiyah's (2017) study on assessment strategies. The complete absence of radio broadcast tasks, despite their potential for authentic listening-speaking integration, suggests a possible gap in assessment diversity that merits further investigation.

Teachers' implementation processes demonstrated both strengths and areas for development. The findings indicate systematic approaches to assessment planning and execution, particularly in establishing clear learning objectives and assessment criteria. However, variations in rubric development and scoring procedures suggest potential inconsistencies in assessment standardization. This observation aligns with Jannah and Hartono's (2018) findings regarding the challenges of maintaining assessment consistency in speaking evaluation. The emphasis on regular student feedback and engagement reflects adherence to O'Malley and Pierce's (1996) recommendations for authentic assessment implementation, though the depth of student involvement in self-assessment varied across participants.

The perceived benefits of authentic assessment implementation encompassed multiple dimensions of the teaching-learning process. Teachers reported enhanced student motivation and improved practical language skills, supporting Andrade and Cizek's (2010) assertions regarding the positive impact of authentic assessment on learning outcomes. The development of both hard and soft skills through authentic assessment tasks suggests broader educational benefits beyond language proficiency, consistent with Williams' (cited in Ojung & Allida, 2017) findings on the comprehensive impact of authentic assessment practices.

Implementation challenges identified in this study reflect both systemic and pedagogical concerns. Time constraints and large class sizes emerged as primary obstacles, supporting Rukmini and Saputri's (2017) findings on practical challenges in authentic assessment implementation. The complexity of assessment administration and resource limitations further complicated implementation efforts. However, teachers demonstrated adaptability in developing strategies to address these challenges, including modified assessment approaches and group evaluation methods. This adaptive response indicates professional resilience and commitment to authentic assessment principles despite practical constraints.

The findings suggest implications for both practice and policy in EFL assessment. The need for enhanced professional development opportunities, particularly in assessment design and rubric development, emerges as a critical consideration. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of institutional support in providing necessary resources and facilitating appropriate class sizes for effective authentic assessment implementation. These implications align with broader discussions in the literature regarding the conditions necessary for successful authentic assessment practices in language education.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the implementation of authentic assessment in speaking lessons at senior high schools in Ambon, examining both the types of assessment tasks employed and teachers' perceptions of their implementation. The findings revealed that teachers utilized eight distinct authentic assessment tasks, with role-play emerging as the predominantly implemented method across all participants. Picture-cued descriptions, video clips, story/text retelling, and oral reports demonstrated substantial adoption rates, while information gaps and debates showed limited implementation. Teachers' perceptions indicated positive attitudes toward authentic assessment, acknowledging its benefits in enhancing student motivation, developing practical skills, and improving learning outcomes. However, implementation challenges persisted, particularly concerning time constraints, large class sizes, resource limitations, and assessment complexity. The systematic analysis of these findings contributes to the broader understanding of authentic assessment practices in EFL contexts and provides valuable insights for educational stakeholders.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations emerge for enhancing authentic assessment implementation in EFL contexts. First, educational institutions should prioritize professional development programs focused on authentic assessment methodology, particularly in areas of task design, rubric development, and student engagement strategies. Second,

administrators should consider practical constraints such as class size and resource availability when developing assessment policies. Third, teachers should be encouraged to diversify their assessment tasks, particularly in implementing currently underutilized methods such as information gaps and debates. Future research could explore the effectiveness of specific authentic assessment tasks in different educational contexts and investigate strategies for overcoming identified implementation challenges. These efforts would contribute to the continued development of effective authentic assessment practices in EFL education, ultimately enhancing students' speaking proficiency and overall language competence.

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Critical Thinking Integration in Writing Development

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the integration of critical thinking in writing education through library research design, focusing on the relationship between critical thinking strategies and writing quality enhancement. The research examines four key dimensions: the impact of critical thinking instruction on writing development, the challenges and opportunities in digital writing environments, the complexities of assessing critical thinking in writing, and the synergistic relationship between critical thinking and creativity. The findings reveal that specific critical thinking strategies—particularly argumentation, analysis, and synthesis—significantly enhance students' writing capabilities across educational levels. Digital writing environments, while presenting challenges in information evaluation and ethical considerations, offer valuable opportunities for collaborative learning and immediate feedback. The study also identifies limitations in traditional assessment methods, highlighting the need for alternative approaches such as portfolio-based evaluations and detailed rubrics. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the fundamental connection between critical and creative thinking processes in writing development, demonstrating how their integration fosters analytical rigor and innovative expression. These findings contribute to understanding effective writing instruction in contemporary educational contexts and provide insights for educators developing comprehensive writing programs incorporating critical thinking development.

Keywords: *Critical thinking, writing development, digital literacy, cognitive processes, educational assessment*

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between critical thinking and writing quality has become increasingly significant in contemporary education, mainly as academic and professional contexts demand more sophisticated analytical and communicative capabilities. Critical thinking involves the systematic evaluation and analysis of information, contributing fundamentally to developing coherent and persuasive written discourse (Facione, 2015; Halpern, 2013). The complexity of modern information settings and evolving educational demands necessitates a deeper understanding of how critical thinking shapes effective writing practices across various contexts (Brookfield, 2012; Paul & Elder, 2014).

The integration of critical thinking in writing instruction reveals significant patterns in educational outcomes. Research demonstrates that critical thinking strategies enhance writing quality through specific mechanisms: improved argumentation, deeper analysis, and practical

synthesis of information (Brookfield, 2012). These cognitive processes contribute to writing development, though their effectiveness varies by context (Bailin et al., 1999; Kuhn, 2015). Understanding these variations in effectiveness becomes crucial for developing targeted instructional approaches that meet diverse educational needs.

The digital age has transformed writing instruction through technological tools and platforms. Writers must navigate digital environments where evaluating source credibility and managing information overload become crucial skills (Walsh-Moorman & Pytash, 2022). While digital platforms facilitate collaborative writing and immediate feedback, they also present challenges in maintaining ethical standards and managing the spread of misinformation (Mills et al., 2017). Understanding how these digital tools impact critical thinking development in writing has become essential for modern education, particularly as technological integration reshapes educational practices.

The assessment of critical thinking in writing presents distinct challenges, particularly regarding standardized testing approaches. Traditional assessment methods often fail to capture the complexity of critical thinking processes in writing tasks (Çavdar and Doe, 2012). This limitation has prompted the exploration of alternative evaluation methods, including portfolio assessments and detailed rubrics that better reflect the integration of critical thinking in writing (Bissell & Lemons, 2006; Narayan, 2023). The effectiveness of these assessment approaches varies across educational contexts and purposes, highlighting the need for more nuanced evaluation frameworks.

The relationship between critical thinking and creativity emerges as a fundamental aspect of effective writing instruction. Research indicates that these cognitive processes are inherently interconnected, with critical thinking providing the analytical framework necessary for developing and refining creative ideas (Lau, 2011). This relationship influences how writers approach complex writing tasks, synthesize information, and develop original insights (McKinley, 2015; Rahmat, 2020). Integrating these complementary processes supports the development of writers who can analyze effectively and innovate meaningfully.

Based on library research design, this investigation examines theoretical frameworks and educational practices in critical thinking and writing instruction. Through analysis of scholarly works, this research contributes to understanding how critical thinking enhances writing quality and its implications for contemporary educational contexts. The findings are particularly relevant for educators seeking to develop effective instructional strategies that foster analytical and creative writing capabilities.

METHOD

This study employed library research design to explore the role of critical thinking in writing through analysis of scholarly literature. The research process involved examining academic sources accessible through Google Scholar, focusing on peer-reviewed journals, books, and credible online resources that address the intersection of critical thinking and writing. Selection criteria emphasized works that provided theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence regarding critical thinking applications in various writing contexts, with particular attention to educational practices and assessment methods. Following George's (2008) approach to library research, this study systematically examined existing knowledge to build upon established theories and findings in critical thinking and writing instruction.

The analysis evaluated the gathered literature for relevance, credibility, and contribution to understanding critical thinking's role in writing enhancement. Through thematic analysis, information was categorized into distinct areas, exploring the relationship between creativity and critical thinking, the impact of critical thinking on audience engagement, and implications for educational practices. This methodological approach facilitated the exploration of diverse viewpoints and theoretical frameworks (Parker, 2022). The findings derived from this library research provide insights into the significance of critical thinking in effective writing instruction and its practical applications across educational contexts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Critical Thinking Instruction and Writing Quality Enhancement

Analysis of critical thinking instruction reveals complex relationships between cognitive development and writing proficiency across educational contexts. The implementation of structured argumentation exercises demonstrates significant impact on students' ability to construct coherent written discourse, particularly in developing balanced perspectives and evidence-based reasoning (Jamaludin et al., 2007; Midgette & Haria, 2016). This enhancement manifests through several key mechanisms: improved thesis development, strengthened logical progression, and more sophisticated integration of supporting evidence. For example, when engaging with controversial topics, students trained in critical thinking frameworks show greater capacity to acknowledge and address counterarguments while maintaining argumentative coherence. The development of synthesis skills through systematic source evaluation enables students to create more nuanced academic arguments, moving beyond simple compilation to meaningful integration of diverse perspectives (Darowski et al., 2016; Mateos et al., 2018).

Writing performance at collegiate levels exhibits distinct patterns of development through critical thinking integration, with disciplinary variations playing a crucial role in effectiveness (Liu & Yao, 2019; Varelas et al., 2015). The research indicates particularly strong outcomes in disciplines requiring complex analytical writing, such as philosophy, literature, and social sciences. When examining writing samples across academic levels, evidence suggests that explicit critical thinking instruction catalyzes more sophisticated approaches to source integration and argument construction (Zohar & Dori, 2003). This improvement manifests most notably in students' ability to identify implicit assumptions, evaluate evidence quality, and construct well-reasoned counterarguments.

Digital Environments and Critical Thinking Development

The transformation of writing instruction through digital platforms introduces multiple challenges and opportunities for critical thinking development. Contemporary digital environments demand increasingly sophisticated evaluation skills while simultaneously offering enhanced tools for collaborative learning and immediate feedback mechanisms (Altınay, 2016; Wineburg & McGrew, 2019). Digital platforms fundamentally reshape how students engage with information sources, necessitating new approaches to source verification and ethical content integration. The research reveals an emerging pattern where successful digital writing instruction combines traditional critical analysis with new media literacy skills, particularly in evaluating online source credibility and managing information overload (Lionenko & Huzar, 2023; Meirbekov et al., 2022).

The ethical dimensions of digital writing extend beyond conventional academic integrity concerns to encompass broader issues of information responsibility and digital citizenship. Students must navigate complex considerations regarding content sharing, attribution practices, and the implications of digital permanence in their writing (Carver et al., 2011). The findings suggest that effective digital writing instruction requires explicit attention to these ethical dimensions, particularly in developing students' awareness of their role in information dissemination and their responsibility in maintaining academic standards. This awareness becomes particularly crucial in collaborative digital environments, where the boundaries between individual and collective work often blur.

Assessment Frameworks and Critical Thinking Evaluation

Current assessment methodologies for critical thinking in writing demonstrate significant limitations in capturing the complexity of cognitive development and analytical progression.

Traditional standardized assessment approaches, while providing quantifiable data, often fail to address the nuanced aspects of critical thinking development in writing tasks (Rear, 2019). The research indicates that portfolio-based evaluation systems offer more comprehensive insights into students' analytical development, particularly through longitudinal documentation of writing progression and metacognitive reflection. These alternative assessment frameworks enable educators to examine both the products and processes of critical thinking in writing, revealing patterns of development that might otherwise remain obscured in traditional evaluation methods.

The integration of technology-enhanced assessment tools has introduced new possibilities for evaluating critical thinking in writing, while simultaneously raising questions about measurement validity and reliability. Digital platforms supporting collaborative writing and peer review processes have transformed assessment practices, enabling more dynamic and interactive evaluation approaches (Wylie & Lyon, 2019). Implementation of detailed analytical rubrics addressing specific critical thinking criteria has proven effective in establishing clear evaluation parameters while maintaining assessment objectivity (Bernstein & Isaac, 2018). However, the research suggests that successful assessment frameworks must balance standardized criteria with flexibility to accommodate diverse writing contexts and disciplinary requirements.

Integration of Critical and Creative Thinking

Analysis of the relationship between critical and creative thinking reveals intricate connections that fundamentally influence writing development and quality. Research demonstrates that effective integration of these cognitive processes enhances both analytical rigor and innovative expression in writing tasks (Misechko & Lytniova, 2022). This synergistic relationship manifests particularly in advanced writing contexts where complex problem-solving and original insight generation are required. The findings indicate that writers who successfully integrate critical and creative thinking demonstrate enhanced ability to identify novel approaches to analytical tasks while maintaining logical coherence and argumentative validity.

The development of imagination and innovative thinking capabilities, when grounded in critical analysis, contributes significantly to writing sophistication across various genres and contexts. Writers who cultivate this integrated approach show increased capacity to challenge existing paradigms while constructing well-reasoned arguments (Oatley, 2013). The research suggests that this integration is particularly effective in addressing complex writing tasks that require both analytical depth and creative problem-solving. These findings have significant implications for writing instruction, suggesting the need for pedagogical approaches that explicitly

foster the development of both critical and creative thinking capabilities through structured yet flexible writing activities.

Pedagogical Implications and Future Directions

The synthesis of findings across these domains suggests several crucial implications for writing instruction and assessment in contemporary educational contexts. First, the development of effective writing instruction requires explicit attention to the integration of critical thinking frameworks while maintaining flexibility for creative expression. Second, digital writing environments necessitate new approaches to assessment that can effectively capture both analytical rigor and creative innovation. The research indicates a pressing need for professional development programs that equip educators with strategies for fostering integrated thinking approaches in writing instruction.

Future research directions should focus on several key areas: the development of more sophisticated assessment tools capable of capturing the complexity of integrated thinking processes, investigation of the long-term impact of technology-enhanced writing instruction on critical thinking development, and examination of cross-cultural variations in critical thinking approaches to writing. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the transfer of critical thinking skills across different writing contexts would contribute valuable insights to understanding the sustainability of these cognitive developments.

CONCLUSION

This research establishes the fundamental significance of critical thinking in enhancing writing quality across educational contexts through specific cognitive mechanisms and pedagogical approaches. The findings demonstrate that critical thinking strategies, particularly argumentation, analysis, and synthesis, significantly improve students' writing capabilities by fostering deeper engagement with content material and strengthening their ability to construct coherent, persuasive arguments. The investigation further reveals both challenges and opportunities in digital writing environments, emphasizing the necessity for robust evaluation skills in managing information abundance and maintaining ethical standards. Moreover, the assessment of critical thinking in writing necessitates innovative approaches beyond traditional standardized testing, suggesting the value of portfolio-based evaluations and detailed rubric systems that effectively capture the complexity of cognitive processes in writing development.

The integration of critical thinking with creative processes emerges as crucial in developing comprehensive writing instruction that prepares students for the complexities of modern

communication. This relationship manifests through structured frameworks that enhance both analytical rigor and creative expression, while the findings emphasize the importance of adapting critical thinking instruction to specific educational contexts while maintaining focus on developing transferable skills applicable across academic and professional settings. This research contributes significantly to understanding how critical thinking enhances writing quality and provides valuable insights for educators seeking to implement effective instructional strategies that foster both analytical and creative writing capabilities in contemporary educational environments. The findings underscore the need for continued research into assessment methodologies and the long-term impact of technology-enhanced writing instruction on critical thinking development.

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The Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesia Early Childhood Education (PAUD): A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in early childhood education (PAUD) in Indonesia, which aims to promote holistic development by fostering creativity, critical thinking, and independence. Using a qualitative literature review, this research analyzes existing studies to evaluate the effectiveness, challenges, and impact of the curriculum. Findings show that the curriculum improves learning outcomes, especially in language and social skills, through flexible and adaptive teaching methods. However, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, resistance to change, and unequal access to technology hinder its implementation. This study recommends comprehensive teacher training, clear communication of the curriculum's benefits, and continuous evaluation to overcome these challenges and improve the quality of early childhood education in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Kurikulum Merdeka, Early Childhood, Education, Creativity, Critical Thinking*

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main areas that is very influential in human life. Guterres' study, (2022,) said that in the 2022 Summit, the UN Education transformation emphasized that education must change to remain relevant and effective in the face of rapid progress. That is why the curriculum changes from time to time. Curriculum changes aim to prepare future generations and equip children with the knowledge, skills, and competencies essential to face future challenges (Gouëdard et al., 2020).

Indonesia introduced the Merdeka Curriculum, a new educational framework designed to foster students' independence and creativity. Implemented from early childhood to high school, the curriculum aims to empower students to explore their interests and talents (Sulistyowati & Wulandari, 2024). Merdeka Curriculum is a transformative approach in the educational framework in Indonesia, especially in the realm of early childhood education (PAUD). Angin and Rahayu (2024), in their research, said that this curriculum is designed to empower educators and learners and encourage a learning environment that emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, and independence in early childhood. The shift towards the Merdeka Curriculum reflects a broader

global trend in education that emphasizes the importance of holistic development, where the focus is not only on academic achievement but also on children's emotional and social growth (Nasution, & Indrasari, 2024).

Implementing the existing curriculum requires students to pursue high grades in lessons and have expertise in their respective fields (Selian & Irwansyah, 2018). This can be a factor in students' inability to express themselves freely. According to Ristek (2021), in the context of the independent curriculum, learning is directed to stimulate students to learn without feeling forced or pressured. Therefore, the Merdeka Curriculum was created to allow students to express themselves. This adaptability is especially important in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) environments, where children come from various backgrounds and have different learning styles. Research has shown that when teachers are empowered to customize their approaches, this results in more effective learning experiences and better engagement from students (Nurzen, 2022)

Despite its promising framework, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is not without challenges. Nasution and Indrasari (2024) said that Educators often face obstacles such as inadequate training, limited resources, and resistance to change from traditional teaching methods. Overcoming these challenges is critical to the successful implementation of the curriculum, as teachers play a crucial role in translating curriculum objectives into effective classroom practices.

As said earlier, the early childhood education sector has also been asked to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at the early childhood education level aims to enable early childhood to learn more freely while playing, which is often referred to as independent play. The essence of this independent learning is to create a fun learning atmosphere without any pressure to get certain grades (Sudaryanto et al, 2020). However, a comprehensive evaluation is needed to assess the long-term impact of this curriculum on children's overall development and their readiness to face future educational challenges.

In conclusion, this literature review aims to explore various aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation in Early Childhood Education (PAUD), examining its effectiveness, challenges, and overall impact on early childhood. By analyzing existing research, this study seeks to provide insights into how the Merdeka Curriculum can be effectively implemented to improve the quality of early childhood education in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative literature review approach that focused on analyzing existing scientific works to analyze and identify patterns in the implementation of The Merdeka Curriculum in Early Childhood Education, especially in Indonesia. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative

research means an inquiry process for understanding based on different methodological traditions of inquiry that explore social or human problems. Then the method used is a literature study through content analysis. To collect data, researchers searched for various relevant studies as well as previous studies, identifying information related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia, especially in Early Childhood Education. The search was conducted on December 10, 2024, using the Scopus and Google Scholar databases. These two databases were chosen because they provide credible and high-quality information, ease of data extraction, and relevance to the research topic. The data sources were primary and secondary data. The process of research activities began with collecting literature data, reading, and analyzing data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in early childhood education (PAUD) has yielded promising results, as evidenced by various studies that highlight its effectiveness in enhancing learning outcomes, fostering creativity, and promoting critical thinking among young learners. The literature indicates that the curriculum's emphasis on flexibility and adaptability allows educators to tailor their teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students, ultimately leading to improved engagement and academic performance (Angin & Rahayu, 2024; Hasna, 2023).

Effectiveness of Kurikulum Merdeka

Research indicates that the Kurikulum Merdeka significantly enhances learning outcomes among early childhood learners. As noted by Angin and Rahayu (2024), the curriculum fosters creativity, critical thinking, and independence, which are essential skills for navigating a rapidly changing world. The emphasis on holistic development aligns with Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, which posits that social interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development. By creating an environment that encourages exploration and inquiry, the Kurikulum Merdeka supports the idea that children learn best when they are actively engaged in their learning processes (Veryawan, 2023).

Initial studies suggest improvements in language development and social skills, with children in more interactive learning environments demonstrating greater enthusiasm for learning (Hasna, 2023). This aligns with the principles of constructivist learning theories, which advocate for learning as an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge rather than passively receiving information. The curriculum's focus on independent play and exploration allows children to develop essential life skills, preparing them for future educational challenges.

Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development

Despite the positive outcomes associated with Kurikulum Merdeka, challenges related to teacher preparedness remain a significant concern. Many educators report feeling unprepared to implement the curriculum effectively due to a lack of training and resources (Hasna, 2023). This finding is consistent with the literature, which emphasizes the need for comprehensive professional development programs that equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge (Nurzen, 2022). Addressing these gaps in teacher training is essential for ensuring the successful implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka and maximizing its benefits for early learners.

Barriers to Implementation

The literature also highlights several barriers to the successful implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka, including resistance to change from traditional teaching methods and concerns about the curriculum's effectiveness (Nurzen, 2022). Educators may hesitate to embrace new practices due to fears of deviating from established norms, which can hinder the adoption of innovative teaching strategies. To overcome these challenges, targeted support and clear communication about the curriculum's benefits are essential for fostering a positive attitude toward its implementation (Albar & Nugroho, 2024).

Technology Integration

The integration of technology into the Kurikulum Merdeka framework presents both opportunities and challenges. As digital tools become increasingly prevalent in education, they can enhance the learning experience by providing interactive and personalized learning opportunities (Angin & Rahayu, 2024). However, disparities in access to technology can exacerbate existing inequalities in education, particularly in rural and underserved areas (Nasution, & Indrasari, 2024). Ensuring equitable access to technological resources is crucial for all students to fully benefit from the curriculum and to foster an inclusive learning environment.

Long-term Impact on Early Learners

While initial studies indicate that Kurikulum Merdeka has a positive impact on early learners, comprehensive evaluations are necessary to assess the long-term effects of this curriculum on children's overall development and readiness for future educational challenges (Veryawan, 2023). Ongoing research is needed to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum over time and to identify best practices for its implementation in various PAUD settings.

In summary, the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in early childhood education shows significant promise in enhancing learning outcomes and fostering holistic development among young learners. However, addressing challenges related to teacher preparedness, resistance to change, and equitable access to resources is essential for maximizing the curriculum's potential. Continued research and support are necessary to ensure the successful implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka, ultimately improving the quality of early childhood education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in early childhood education (PAUD) in Indonesia shows significant potential to improve learning outcomes and promote overall development among young children. While preliminary findings suggest improvements in areas such as language development and social skills, challenges related to teacher readiness, resistance to traditional teaching methods, and equitable access to technology must be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of the curriculum. To ensure the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, it is recommended that a comprehensive professional development program be established to equip educators with the necessary skills and knowledge. In addition, targeted support and clear communication about the benefits of the curriculum should be provided to foster a positive attitude towards its implementation. Finally, ongoing research and evaluation are essential to monitor the long-term impact of this curriculum on children's overall development and their readiness to face future educational challenges, to contribute to the continuous improvement of early childhood education in Indonesia.

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