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ELT in Local and Global Lives: from Policy to Classroom Practices

## An Analysis of English Language Curriculum at Assa'adah Islamic Boarding School

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigated the integration and assessment of listening, speaking, viewing, and presenting skills within the specialized subjects of “Writing” and “Reading” at Assa’adah Islamic Boarding School, focusing on 4th-grade students under the Government Curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum. The study evaluated how the segmentation of the English language curriculum into these specialized subjects impacted the overall effectiveness of English language learning. Using a qualitative approach guided by the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation), data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, curriculum staff, and students, and a thorough examination of curriculum documents. The result revealed that the segmented curriculum allowed for a more focused and structured approach to teaching English, enhancing students’ retention and understanding of language skills. The unique boarding school environment further supported this development through practical activities such as public speaking (*muhadhoroh*) and English debate training by adopted Gontor Curriculum with the name Madrasatul Mu`allimin Al-Islamiyah) MMI Assa’adah. Overall, the segmented curriculum and the boarding school environment significantly improved the English learning experience, meeting the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum effectively.

Keywords: English Curriculum; Assa’adah; Writing; Speaking; Language Skills

### INTRODUCTION

Curriculum plays a fundamental role in shaping education, particularly in English language teaching. It acts as a dynamic framework that adapts to the evolving needs of students and the changing educational landscape (Yeung, 2012). In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology frequently revises the curriculum to reflect societal shifts and enhance educational quality. A significant recent change in this regard is the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum, which prioritizes six core competencies in English language education: listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, 2022). This curriculum offers schools increased flexibility in designing learning programs that cater to their students’ unique needs. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to align Indonesian English education with global standards, equipping students to face international challenges.

Assa’adah Islamic Boarding School in Serang, Banten, represents a comprehensive educational institution that integrates three distinct curricula: the Assa’adah Islamic Boarding School Curriculum,

the Ministry of Religious Affairs Curriculum, and the Ministry of National Education Curriculum (Assa'adah, 2023). The school primarily follows the curriculum of the Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School in Ponorogo, blending it with the other two national curricula.

Assa'adah Islamic Boarding School provides a unique case study in the application of the Merdeka Curriculum. Unlike most schools, Assa'adah has opted to divide the English language subject into specialized courses in “Writing” and “Reading,” reflecting a focused approach to these essential language skills. However, this specialization has raised critical questions regarding the integration and assessment of other vital English curriculum elements, such as listening, speaking, viewing, and presenting.

The distinctive implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at Assa'adah presents an opportunity to explore how the school has incorporated and assessed the full spectrum of English language learning, alongside its specialized emphasis on writing and reading. Given that Assa'adah is a boarding school, students experience a continuous and multifaceted learning process within both formal and informal environments on campus. This unique setting offers a rich context for understanding the complexities of curriculum implementation and its effects on student learning outcomes.

This research has focused on analyzing the curriculum structure at Assa'adah to evaluate how it has influenced the effectiveness of English language education at the high school level. The analysis aims to uncover the reasons behind the division of the English language curriculum into specialized “Writing” and “Reading” courses at Assa'adah. Additionally, the study investigates how the comprehensive elements of the English language curriculum—listening, speaking, viewing, and presenting—are integrated and assessed alongside these specialized courses. The research employs the ADDIE model as its analytical framework, providing a systematic approach to reviewing and enhancing educational programs. By applying this model, the researcher has critically assessed the current curriculum, identified areas for improvement, and suggested actionable recommendations. The structured analysis provided by the ADDIE model has facilitated a deep understanding of the curriculum's strengths and weaknesses and their impact on English language learning outcomes.

The findings of this study have significant implications for curriculum development at Assa'adah and offer valuable insights for other educational institutions. By examining the unique implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at Assa'adah, this research contributes to the broader discussion on effective curriculum strategies in English language education. It highlights the importance of contextualizing national educational frameworks to meet the specific needs of schools.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Method**

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the English language curriculum at Assa'adah Islamic Boarding School. The focus was on how the curriculum, segmented into "Writing" and "Reading," integrates key language skills like listening, speaking, viewing, and presenting. The case study method provided an in-depth analysis of the curriculum's effectiveness in enhancing language proficiency among high school students, as well as the influence of the boarding school environment on the implementation of both the Merdeka and MMI Curricula.

### **Setting and Participants**

The research was conducted at Assa'adah Islamic Boarding School's Senior High School (SMA Plus Assa'adah) in Serang, Banten, with a focus on the 4th-grade English curriculum. Participants included English teachers who taught "Writing" and "Reading" and were directly involved in implementing the curriculum changes, the Curriculum Development Team responsible for designing and implementing the curriculum and providing insights into its transformation, and 4th-grade students who participated in the "Writing" and "Reading" classes, offering perspectives on their learning experiences.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

The data collection for this study employed a combination of qualitative methods. Classroom observations were conducted to examine teaching strategies, student engagement, and the integration of various language skills. Documentation involved analyzing curriculum-related materials, such as syllabi, textbooks, and activity records. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were held with teachers, curriculum developers, and students to gather insights into the implementation of the curriculum and the participants' experiences.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The data analysis employed a qualitative descriptive approach using the ADDIE model. This process began with data condensation, where key curriculum elements from observations, interviews, and documentation were filtered and focused on. The next step involved data display, where the condensed data was presented in a structured format to highlight patterns and relationships. Finally, conclusion drawing was conducted to interpret the data, assess the effectiveness of the curriculum, and identify areas for improvement.

## **RESULT**

The findings of the study are presented in the Results section. The research revealed that Assa'adah Islamic Boarding School implemented a segmented English language curriculum, dividing the teaching into "Writing" and "Reading" subjects. This curriculum reform was guided by the ADDIE

model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation), with each phase contributing to the overall improvement of language learning.

During the **Analysis Phase**, teachers identified that students struggled with the previous curriculum, which combined all language skills, resulting in overwhelming and ineffective learning experiences. Both teachers and students expressed the need for a more focused approach. Students noted that the new curriculum allowed them to concentrate on writing and reading without feeling burdened by trying to master all language skills at once.

In the **Design Phase**, instructional materials were adapted to align with the Merdeka Curriculum while ensuring coherence with the school's learning goals. This phase emphasized integrating other language skills like listening and speaking within the reading and writing lessons.

The **Development Phase** saw the creation of high-quality lesson plans, multimedia content, and assessments for both writing and reading subjects, aiming to engage students while meeting curriculum goals. Assessments were tailored to measure progress in writing through essays and vocabulary tests, and reading comprehension through text analysis.

The **Implementation Phase** involved delivering the curriculum in classrooms, with observations showing that teachers used engaging methods such as group discussions and feedback-based learning. Students actively participated, and the use of support materials like worksheets contributed to a positive learning environment.

In the **Evaluation Phase**, both written and oral exams were used to assess language proficiency. Additionally, project-based learning and peer review sessions provided comprehensive evaluations of students' progress, ensuring a well-rounded assessment of both theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from this study on the transformation of the English language curriculum at Assa'adah Islamic Boarding School highlight significant improvements brought by the segmented approach, focusing on specialized "Writing" and "Reading" subjects. This transformation was driven by the need to address specific learning challenges faced by students and to enhance English proficiency. Both students and teachers responded positively to the curriculum change, emphasizing that separating writing and reading allowed for more focused instruction and better learning outcomes.

Compared to other institutions, such as **Al-Multazam Islamic Elementary School**, Assa'adah's curriculum is more advanced and structured. While Al-Multazam relied on basic methods and less varied teaching approaches due to a lack of qualified English teachers, Assa'adah Islamic Boarding School implemented a more comprehensive curriculum. This integrated approach, which also incorporates activities such as public speaking (*muhadhoroh*), ensures that students develop a wider range of English language skills beyond just reading and writing. The curriculum at Assa'adah is designed not only to meet the goals of the **Merdeka Curriculum** but also to promote practical language

use through real-life applications, setting it apart from the more limited teaching methods at Al-Multazam.

However, despite the overall success of the curriculum transformation, there were inconsistencies in how other essential language skills—such as listening, speaking, viewing, and presenting—were integrated into the specialized subjects. This often varied depending on individual teachers' methods. A more standardized approach to incorporating these skills would ensure a balanced and holistic learning experience for all students.

The evaluation phase underscored the importance of using a combination of traditional assessments, such as written and oral exams, along with innovative methods like project-based learning and peer reviews. These diverse assessment strategies were effective in fostering critical thinking and helping students apply language skills in real-world contexts. Nonetheless, further efforts are required to standardize the integration of these skills and refine assessment practices across the curriculum to ensure consistency and comprehensive language development.

## CONCLUSION

The study on the transformation of the English language curriculum at Assa'adah Islamic Boarding School demonstrated the positive impact of implementing a segmented curriculum for "Writing" and "Reading" subjects. Using the ADDIE model as a framework, the curriculum changes addressed the challenges of the previous approach, which combined all language skills into one subject, often overwhelming students.

The new curriculum allowed for a more focused and structured learning experience, providing teachers the opportunity to develop more specialized lesson plans and assessments. Students reported feeling more confident and less burdened by the learning process, resulting in better engagement and retention of language skills. However, the study also identified areas for improvement, particularly in the consistent integration of other essential language skills, such as listening and speaking, which varied depending on the teacher's method.

Overall, the segmented curriculum at Assa'adah Islamic Boarding School proved effective in enhancing both teaching and learning outcomes. The combination of traditional assessments and innovative project-based methods ensured a comprehensive evaluation of student proficiency, while the ADDIE model provided a structured approach to curriculum development and implementation. Moving forward, efforts to standardize the integration of all language skills and refine assessment practices will further strengthen the curriculum's effectiveness.

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