

EFL Students' Attitude Towards English Lessons Through Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of students towards English lessons within the context of the Merdeka curriculum. Specifically, the study aimed to investigate the impact of the Merdeka curriculum on students' attitudes towards English lessons, as well as identify the factors that contribute to students' positive attitudes towards the Merdeka curriculum at SMA Swasta Katolik Tri Sakti Medan. The analysis of qualitative data revealed that students exhibited favorable attitudes towards English lessons within the Merdeka curriculum. Specifically, in the cognitive component, the findings indicated that 62% of students held positive attitudes, 18% held negative attitudes, and 20% remained neutral. In the affective component, 53% of students displayed positive attitudes, while 22% exhibited negative attitudes and 25% maintained a neutral stance. Lastly, the conative component demonstrated that 59% of students showcased positive attitudes, 14% displayed negative attitudes, and 27% remained neutral. The present study employed qualitative data collection methods. The findings indicated that a majority of the student population, specifically 146 out of 197 students, expressed contentment in their English language learning endeavors. It was observed that certain factors contributed to the cultivation of positive attitudes among students towards English lessons. Firstly, students exhibited a preference for English lessons. Additionally, the presence of an engaging, knowledgeable, and perceptive subject teacher played a crucial role in creating an enjoyable learning environment. The impact of pupils' positive attitudes on their learning achievements is significant.

Keywords: *Students' attitudes, Merdeka curriculum, English lesson.*

INTRODUCTION

A curriculum refers to a comprehensive collection of subjects and educational programs offered by an educational institution, encompassing lesson plans designed for participants at a specific level of study. The curriculum encompasses a range of educational activities that are provided to students under the auspices of the school. Its primary objective is to effectively organize, create, administer, and assess the learning experiences of students. The primary purpose of the curriculum is to serve as a pedagogical instrument that facilitates the enhancement of students' cognitive capacities in pursuit of educational objectives. The implementation of a new curriculum necessitates the modification of all associated components. The curriculum, which serves as a structured and coherent learning program provided by educational institutions, is designed to facilitate the attainment of educational objectives by students. The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone multiple revisions, mostly driven by the necessity to align it with students' requirements and contemporary demands. Over the course of the past decade, Indonesia has implemented two significant revisions to its curriculum, specifically the 2013 curriculum and the Merdeka curriculum. The 2013 curriculum serves as a replacement for the Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) curriculum. The 2013 curriculum was developed with the aim of aligning with the objectives of the National Education System and National Education Standards. Its primary purpose is to uphold the quality of education at a national level, with a focus on nurturing the nation's citizens, fostering a sense of dignity, and promoting national character and civilization. The 2013 curriculum encompasses three distinct dimensions of evaluation, including knowledge-based elements, skill-based aspects, and behavior-based aspects. The primary emphasis of the 2013 curriculum lies in character education, aiming to produce graduates who possess qualities of productivity, creativity, innovation, and strong moral character. The curriculum implemented in Indonesian schools continues to be the 2013 version. The Merdeka curriculum is an educational framework that has been developed with a focus on the cultivation of Pancasila Student Profiles. The Merdeka curriculum places emphasis on both intra-curricular and extra-curricular activities as a means to enhance understanding of ideas and develop skills, hence enabling a more personalized and engaging learning experience for students.

The Merdeka curriculum is scheduled to be adopted as the national curriculum in the year 2024. Currently, the Merdeka curriculum is solely available as an alternative for educational institutions. In summary, it is not imperative for educational institutions to adopt the Merdeka curriculum presently, as each institution possesses the autonomy and obligation to design a curriculum that aligns with the unique requirements and circumstances of their own schools. The primary objective of every curriculum is to attain a superior standard of education, so enabling it to effectively contend on a worldwide scale. According to Amiruddin et al. (2023:40), the primary emphasis of the Merdeka curriculum lies in the examination and cultivation of students' literacy and numeracy skills. The acquisition of knowledge for pupils is mostly dependent on their literacy and numeracy skills, which serve as their foundational and primary assets. The acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills is expected to enhance students' acceptance and integration into academic environments. According to Shomos (2010:7), reading and numeracy represent only a fraction of the overall impact that education has on human capital. According to Shomos, the term "human capital" encompasses a range of qualities that enable individuals to make productive contributions, including knowledge, skills, experience, health, and intangible

aspects such as motivation. The productivity of an individual, which can be used as a proxy for pay, as well as their involvement, are significantly influenced by human capital.

Literacy is the main focus in the development of the Merdeka Curriculum in accordance with the Minister of Education and Culture Policy No. 23 of 2015 concerning cultivating character carries out a literacy program to cultivate character and develop literate individuals. Kalman and Rayes (2017:5) state Literacy is closely related to read and write activities. Also Luke (2009:2) state The term literacy refers to the reading and writing of text. Montoya (2018) explained that Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts.

Setiani, et al (2022:122) state Numerical literacy is the knowledge and skill of using various numbers and symbols related to basic mathematics to solve practical problems in various contexts of everyday life and analyzing information presented in various forms, then using the results of the analysis to predict and make decisions. Numeracy literacy is the ability to analyze, solve, formulate, and interpret problems, as well as give reasons and convey ideas in various situations. Barwell (2004:20) states numeracy somehow involves the use of numbers, calculation or diagrams in social practice. From the explanation above it can be interpreted that numeracy is the skill to use and process numbers.

At present, students are required to be able to master foreign languages, especially English, as an international language. In learning English and mastering the language, the students should have basics, namely; interest, motivation, and attitude. Attitude is one of basics when the students want to master the language. The students' attitude is one of the determinant parts in achieving good language learning. Certainly, the teacher needs the students to have a positive attitude so that the learning can run well. It is supported by Chamber's (1999:74) statement that learning occurs more easily, when the learner has a positive attitude towards the language learning. Thus, a person who holds strong beliefs that positively valued outcomes will result from performing the behavior will have a positive attitude. Conversely, a person who holds strong beliefs that negatively valued outcomes will result from the behavior will have a negative attitude. That is why in learning English, the students will have the positive respond about their lessons if they have good attitude.

Kudo (in Thuan ,2021:64) concludes that attitudes may play an essential role in language learning, as they would appear to influence students' success or failure in their learning. Based on the factors above, it is believed that attitude is the most important factor in influencing language learning. According to Jufrida et al (2019:401) in learning, attitude becomes the most pivotal aspect because it determining the success or failure of the students' learning. Rukh (2014:5597) also stated that Attitude is a variable thing and it can be changed governing to many external as well internal personality factors of a person. Eagly and Chaiken in Crano and Prislín (2008:131) state Contemporary theories see attitudes as an individual rather than a cultural construct, and suggest that attitudes comprise distinct cognitive, affective, and conative (behavioral) components.

Jain (2014:6) The cognitive component is an evaluation of the entity that constitutes an individual's opinion (belief/disbelief) about the object. Abun, et al.(2019:1495) state that Cognitive component of attitude refers to the thought, perception or ideas of the person toward the object of the attitude. This is also explained by Svenningsson, et al (2021:1533) that The cognitive component has to do with the role of cognition in a person's attitude toward a psychological object, such as beliefs and thoughts. Haddock and Maio (2008:116) state The cognitive component of attitudes refers to beliefs, thoughts and attributes we associate with a

particular object. In many cases, a person's attitude might be based primarily upon a consideration of the positive and negative attributes about the attitude object.

From the explanation above it can be interpreted that the cognitive component of an attitude is a statement of belief about something. Haddock and Maio (2008:115) stated the affective component of attitudes refers to feelings or emotions associated with an attitude object. Affective responses influence attitudes in a number of ways. A primary way in which feelings affect attitudes is due to affective reactions that are aroused in the individual after exposure to the attitude object. Abun, et al (2019:1495), Affective component is about emotional reactions or feelings of the person toward the object of the attitude such as like or dislike. Jain (2014:6) The affective component is the emotional response (liking/disliking) towards an attitude object. Affective component of attitude is about how students' feeling toward learning English. Their feeling, happy, enjoy, bored, afraid, anxiety, etc., during learning covered by this aspect. Students' emotions toward learning give strong influence to the process of receiving the materials.

The conative component, also known as the behavioral component, constitutes the third element of attitude. The conative component refers to the behavioral aspect exhibited by humans in their actions towards a certain object or entity. According to Abun et al. (2019:1495), the authors noted that the behavioral or conative component of attitudes is associated with the behavioral response towards the object of the attitude. According to Haddock and Maio (2008:116), the behavioral component of attitudes pertains to previous behaviors in relation to an attitude object. All of the activities or acts undertaken by students in the process of learning English can be classified as conative attitudes. The study encompassed various aspects of learning engagement, including the frequency of note-taking, participation in class discussions, response patterns to questions, attention span, and related factors. When students engage solely in supplementary activities during class, they are more likely to acquire the course materials effortlessly, hence enhancing their ability to concentrate. The three components of attitude are interrelated and collectively encompass one's approach towards learning English in its whole..

METHOD

The study employed descriptive qualitative research with a case study design to analyze students' attitude towards English lesson in Merdeka curriculum. After collecting the data, the students' responses in the questionnaire, identified every statement whether positive or negative after grouped into the components. For data collected through essay papers, the writer will analyze the data by narrating each student's answer sheet so that the writer will conclude the data through narration. In analyzing the data, data analysis was carried out using a qualitative descriptive method with simple statistical calculations. In the first part is a research problem on how the attitude of students towards English lessons in the First Year Students of SMA Katolik Tri Sakti Medan, the second part is for research problems on how the Merdeka curriculum influences students' attitudes in English lesson, and the last part is for research problems on what can increase their positive attitudes towards the Merdeka curriculum.

Participants

The research subjects were class X SMA Swasta Katolik Tri Sakti Medan for the 2023/2024 Academic Year. The writer chose all students of class X as the object of this research. The total number of student is 197 students.

Instruments

This study analyzed students' attitudes through their responses to statements from the questionnaire and essay through the attitude component towards English lessons at the Merdeka curriculum. Questionnaire is one of the most widely used tools to collect data in especially social science research. Essay questions will answer questions about what factors can increase students' positive attitudes in learning English. The main objective of questionnaire and essay in research are to obtain relevant information in most reliable and valid manner. The data in this study were taken from a questionnaire consisting of 30 question items (the first 10 items related to student behavior, the second 10 items related to student cognitive, and the third 10 items related to student feelings) and from an essay consisting of 5 question items.

Data Analysis Technique

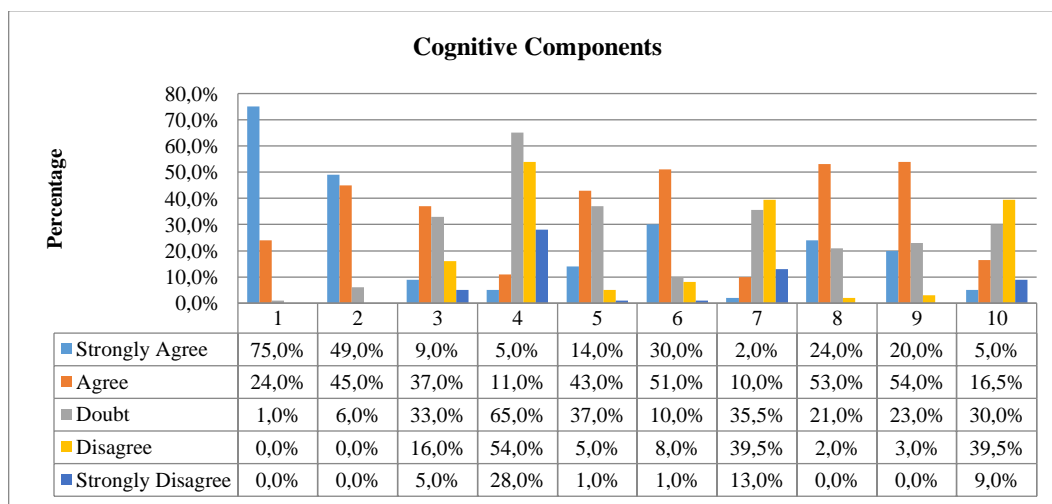
The data analysis technique used in this study was a qualitative descriptive method with simple statistical calculations. The data collected from the questionnaire and essay responses were analyzed by categorizing and grouping the statements into components, namely cognitive and affective components. The percentage of positive and negative statements in each component was then calculated and presented in tables to provide an overview of the students' attitudes towards English lessons in the Merdeka curriculum.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

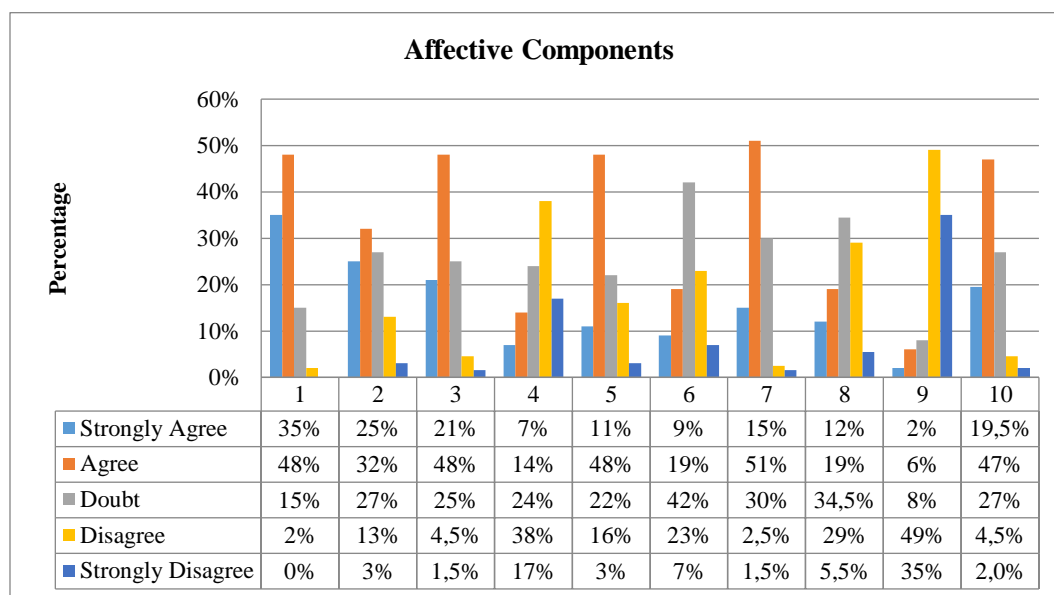
The objectives from this study, the author found that the results of the questionnaire which showed that the percentage of the attitude of students towards English Lessons in the First Year Students of SMA Katolik Tri Sakti Medan. The percentage of analysis can be seen from the table below.

Table 1. The Percentage of Cognitive Components



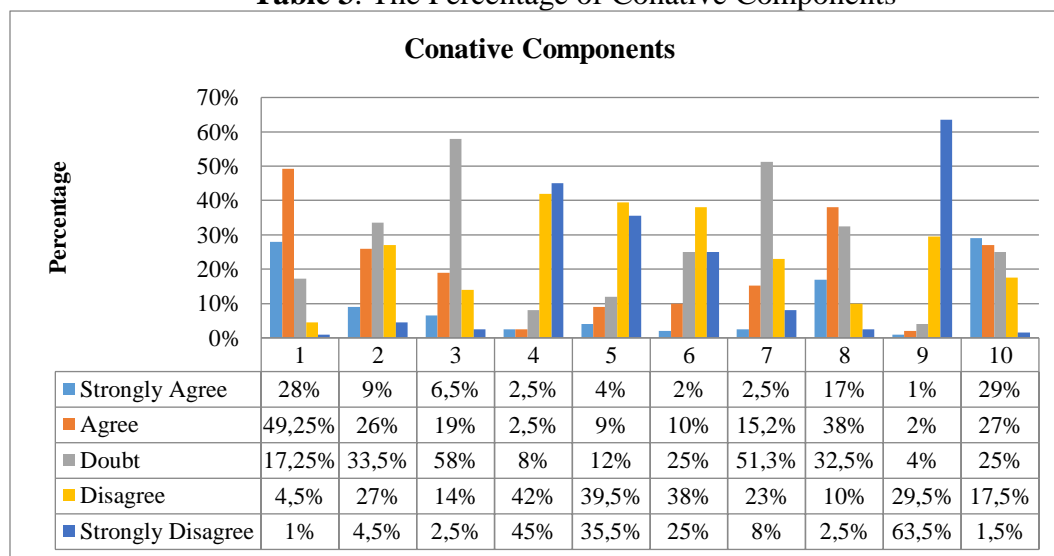
From the table above it can be seen that, students who have a positive attitude will support English and reflect their opinions, beliefs and thoughts about English. There are 10 statements from the cognitive component, there are 5 positive statements (1, 2, 5, 8, and 9) and 5 negative statements (3, 4, 6, 7, and 10).

Table 2. The Percentage of Affective Components



From Table 2 above, the affective component is related to someone's feeling. An object can be perceived by a person as being a sense of fun or unpleasant or like or dislike. There are 10 statements from the affective component; there are 4 positive statements (1, 3, 7 and 10) and 6 negative statements (2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9).

Table 3. The Percentage of Conative Components



From Table 3 above, conative component or behavioral component in attitude structure shows how the behavior or the trend behaves that exist within a person with respect to the object which he faces. There are 10 statements from the conative component; there are 5 positive statements (1, 3, 7, 8 and 10) and 5 negative statements (2, 4, 5, 6, and 9).

Based on the total number of 197 students' responses to the statements in the questionnaire, it can be seen how the Merdeka curriculum influences students' attitudes toward English lessons. This can be seen more clearly in the table below:

Table 4. Students' Responses of Merdeka Curriculum

Statement	Responses	Description
The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in learning English is easier and more effective. (<i>indicator from questioner sheet point 5</i>)	112 students (positive responses)	Based on the total of responses, it can be concluded that the Merdeka curriculum influences students' attitudes towards English lessons. This is proven by the responses of students who choose to answer in agreement that learning English becomes easier and more effective because of the Merdeka curriculum.
Through the Merdeka curriculum, my self-confidence to express myself as an independent and responsible individual has increased. (<i>indicator from questioner sheet point 8</i>)	151 students (positive responses)	The Merdeka curriculum influences students' attitudes to become more confident in expressing a work. This curriculum also fosters a personality that is more independent and responsible as a student, this is evidenced by the number of respondents who answered in agreement with the statement.
I like the Merdeka curriculum because learning is centered on student activities. (<i>indicator from questioner sheet point 7</i>)	130 students (positive responses)	By centering teaching and learning activities on students, students like the Merdeka curriculum, this is because students become more active and have a big role in achieving good learning outcomes. This attitude is a positive attitude towards learning.
Merdeka curriculum makes me have a lot of time to play. (<i>indicator from questioner sheet point 6</i>)	124 students (positive responses)	The concept of student-centered learning does not make the students themselves feel free to play without paying attention to the lesson. This can be seen from the student's response to the statement that there are more students who answer disagree, this is a positive attitude towards learning.

There are many students' responses to the Merdeka curriculum, it can be said that this curriculum influences students' attitudes towards learning, especially English lessons. Based on the results of the questionnaire above, it can be concluded that the student's attitude is positive, this is indicated by the students receiving learning, students being active, independent, more creative and focused during English lessons. Not only that, even when given a negative statement (Independence curriculum makes me have a lot of time to play) students still give a positive response by choosing not to agree. This is a good thing for the evaluation of the Merdeka

curriculum. Therefore it can be said that the Merdeka curriculum influences students' attitudes toward English lessons to be positive. To achieve good learning outcomes, students need to like the lesson itself first so that learning can run well. Therefore, to find out what factors can make students increase their positive attitude towards English lessons, the writer provide an essay test as an instrument. The following is a description of the results of the student essay test answers:

No	Question	Number of student responses	Description
1	Do you feel that there has been a change in learning in English lessons in the Merdeka curriculum? Please explain!	Positive: 176	Students agree that there are learning changes that occur in English lessons in the Merdeka curriculum. These changes are learning to be better, more effective and efficient, students are more active during class, students' self-confidence increases, study time is getting denser due to increased project assignments, technology use is getting maximized, speaking skills are increasing and interactions with teachers are getting closer.
		Negative: 19	There are still students who think that learning in English lessons in the K13 curriculum with the Merdeka curriculum is the same and there is no difference.
		Doubt: 2	Students feel they are missing lessons and are not active during class so they feel that there is a change in learning in English lessons.
2	Does the Merdeka curriculum improve your English skills? Please give your reason!	Positive: 156	English language skills increased during the Merdeka curriculum, this was evidenced by student responses stating that the Merdeka curriculum made students more confident when speaking in public in English, more creative, expressive, easier to understand because there was more practice than theory, the ability to cooperate with friends increases, trains students to be ready with the TOEFL and there is moral encouragement from the teacher to be even better.
		Negative: 36	There are some students who feel that their skills have not changed or have not increased, this is because the self-learning system makes it difficult for some students to understand the lesson and besides that they basically don't like English lessons. This is quite a strong reason because the main factor for getting good learning outcomes is having to like the subject first.
		Doubt: 5	There are still at least 5 students who doubt their English skills, this is because these students don't like English lessons.

			Most students agree that the Merdeka curriculum is appropriate because students feel learning becomes easier due to the many practical learning activities that produce students who are creative, more skilled, have increased computer skills and are able to compete. This is a positive attitude because students accept existing changes.
		Positive: 143	
3	In your opinion, is the Merdeka curriculum appropriate? Why?		According to other students, the Merdeka curriculum is still not appropriate to implement. The reason is because of immature preparation to adapt both from the side of the teacher and the students themselves. In general, the learning of the Merdeka curriculum is carried out by means of self-study students, for some students this is a difficult thing because not all students are capable. There are still at least 4 students who doubt their English skills, this is because these students don't like English lessons.
		Negative: 50	
		Doubt: 4	
		Positive: 146	Students enjoy learning English because learning English is fun so they become more confident, active in learning, knowledge increases, and speaking skills increase, this will have a positive impact on their future.
4	Does learning English make you happy? Give your reasons!		Students don't like learning English because they think the lesson is difficult, less interesting, and confusing plus the way the teacher teaches is not fun and makes students confused.
		Negative: 31	
		Doubt: 20	Neutral students. They might like it or not depending on how the teacher teaches in class.
			The things that make students happy while learning in general are:
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The class atmosphere is calm and quiet• While listening to songs• Depending on the subject• Learn while playing• Working in groups (cooperating)• While joking• Able to answer teacher's questions• Using learning media• Study at ease without rushing• Get encouragement from parents, family and friends• Appreciated• More learning practice than theory• Depends on how the teacher teaches.
5	What makes you happy while studying? Give your reasons!	197	

Students will prefer it if the teacher teaches calmly and is able to lead the class well so that all students can understand the lesson

Based on the results of data analysis in the table above, the authors conclude that factors that can increase students' positive attitudes towards English lessons are divided into 2, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors come from within the students themselves, the willingness to learn and gain new knowledge will affect students' attitudes towards English, besides that students will like learning if the subject matter is liked. Almost all students of the Tri Sakti Medan Catholic Private High School like English lessons, this is a positive attitude towards English lessons.

External factors are teachers, and the classroom environment. The teacher teaches well, judges fairly, learning is thorough and not centered on just one student, uses instructional media, explains by example, and is not rigid in class because students feel happy being able to play while learning. In addition, a calm and compact class atmosphere also influences students' attitudes towards a lesson. And the results of the essay test showed that there were 146 students who answered "yes". They were happy when learning English and it was all because of the factors described above.

Discussion

Based on the results of the research, the authors found that students' attitudes based on the three attitude components, namely the cognitive component, the affective component, and the conative component, were positive. This is evidenced by the results of the questionnaire which showed that the percentage of students' attitudes towards English lessons through the Merdeka curriculum was positive, that in the cognitive component the results of positive attitudes were 62%, negative attitudes were 18% and neutral 20%, in the affective component the results were positive attitudes as much as 53% , 22% negative attitude and 25% neutral attitude, and the conative component shows the results of 59% positive attitude, 14% negative attitude and 27% neutral.

Table 4. The Result of Attitudes' Components

Attitudes' Components	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Cognitive Component	62%	18%	20%
Affective Component	53%	22%	25%
Conative Component	59%	14%	27%

The student's attitude is influenced by factors such as whether students like or dislike the subject matter, class conditions when learning, and what influences the most is how the teacher teaches and motivates students. Therefore the teacher's influence is very large for students, teachers are expected to be wiser in seeing the condition of students, especially in this Merdeka curriculum. Because it turns out that even though there were 143 students who said the Merdeka

curriculum was correct, there were 50 other students who felt this curriculum was not right because of insufficient preparation both from the teacher's side and from the students' side.

The findings of this study have important implications for improving students' positive attitudes towards English lessons in the Merdeka curriculum. Firstly, the cognitive component revealed that while most students recognized the importance of English and its potential impact on their future, there was a subset of students who found it difficult and complicated. This suggests a need for better instructional strategies that help students overcome their difficulties and perceive English as more accessible and manageable.

Secondly, the affective component showed that students took pride in using English but lacked motivation to immerse themselves in English songs and utilize the language in the classroom. This highlights the importance of creating a conducive learning environment that encourages students to actively engage with English outside the classroom, such as by incorporating more interactive activities and promoting the use of English in day-to-day communication. Lastly, the conative component revealed that students pushed themselves to improve their English skills and expressed a desire to take additional English courses. This indicates a potential avenue for offering supplementary English programs or opportunities for students to enhance their English proficiency beyond the curriculum. The implications of this study suggest the need for educators and curriculum designers to address the challenges faced by students in learning English, foster a motivating and supportive learning environment, and provide additional avenues for language development. By implementing these strategies, it is likely that students' positive attitudes towards English lessons in the Merdeka curriculum can be further enhanced, leading to improved language proficiency and overall educational outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The inclusions of this research are presented by the data which have been analyzed in the previous chapter. From all the data analysis about the students' attitude towards English lesson through Merdeka curriculum, it can be concluded as follows: The results of the study show that respondents tend to have a positive attitude towards English. Cognitively, most of the respondents agree that English is an important language and has a good impact for the future but some of them tend to be negative with the statement that English is difficult and complicated to learn. This means that they know it is important but don't want to learn about English grammatically and they are forced to learn it because English is a compulsory subject. On the affective component, students have pride in using English but they have no desire to listen to English songs and often use English in class. Conatively, they push themselves to get better at English and try to take English courses. In addition, most of the respondents cannot use English fully. This shows that the language used in English class is a mixture of Indonesian and English. Merdeka curriculum influences students' attitudes in English lessons to be positive. Out of a total of 197 students, there were 112 students who felt that learning English had become easier and more effective so they would prefer learning English. Merdeka curriculum also makes 151 students more independent and responsible. Because the learning was centered on student activities, it made 130 students like English lessons and even so, it did not make 124 students choose to play rather than study because students felt they were given responsibility in learning independence. The factors that can increase students' positive attitudes towards English lessons are that first students must like English lessons, then the subject teacher must be fun, smart and wise to see the condition of their students so that learning becomes fun.

In conclusion, this study aimed to explore the attitudes of first-year students towards English lessons in the Merdeka curriculum at SMA Katolik Tri Sakti Medan. The research design employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, utilizing both a questionnaire and essay as research instruments. The findings of the study revealed positive attitudes among students towards English lessons, as evidenced by the analysis of the three attitude components: cognitive, affective, and conative.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on understanding the factors that can increase students' positive attitudes towards English lessons in the Merdeka curriculum. By utilizing a combination of questionnaire and essay responses, a comprehensive analysis of the students' attitudes was achieved. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations in this study. While the findings showed positive attitudes among the students, the study did not delve deeply into the factors that contribute to these positive attitudes. Future research could focus on exploring and identifying specific instructional strategies or interventions that can enhance students' positive attitudes in learning English within the Merdeka curriculum. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into students' attitudes towards English lessons in the Merdeka curriculum. It serves as a foundation for further research and suggests the need for future investigations to identify effective measures that can increase and sustain positive attitudes towards English lessons, thus improving students' overall language learning experience.

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