



## SOOTHING INDONESIA ENGLISH TEACHERS' NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS ON THE CURRENT SHIFT OF ELT CURRICULUM AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

Curriculum must always adapt with the changing condition and meet the challenge through times. Before a curriculum is implemented, it has been assessed through layers of tests and Quality Control. In short, a new curriculum surely has better quality in terms of meeting nowadays' challenges and requirements. However fine and perfect it looks on the level of R n D at the Ministry level, a new curriculum will always result in fuss among the front liners, the teachers. Various factors influence the speed of teachers' acceptability on this new education regulation.

This research was aiming to find English teachers perception on the current Merdeka Curriculum Implementation, the underlying factors of their negative perceptions towards its implementation, as well as aiming to seek solution to sooth teachers' anxiety and other negative perceptions by exposing the similarity and contrast analyses on both agents of the shift, the K2013 and Merdeka Curriculum. The soothing results are that K13 and Kurmer are still following the same ELT core tracks. The backward design and the text based English Syllabus are terms of content they share in commons especially in TALO, TAVI and TASP material designs. The differences are only on the general matters such as regulation, emphases on character shaping, active learning generated teaching methods and intensive IT media use by teachers.

**Keyword:** curriculum, IKM, K2013, syllabus design, text based

### INTRODUCTION

In the latest Vision of Education by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, it is stated, "mewujudkan Indonesia maju, berdaulat, mandiri, dan berkepribadian Profil Pelajar Pancasila." In other words, Education in Indonesia must create Indonesia to be progressive, independent and dignified country through educating and producing graduates who have the characters of Pelajar Pancasila such as Religious and pious, have noble characters, self reliant, critical, creative, collaborative, and respect unity in diversity.

Those objectives have actually been attempted through the previous Curriculum commonly called the "2013 Curriculum with the release of the 4Cs (critical thinking and problem solving, creativity, communication and IT skill and Collaboration) as the core 21st century skills by the P21 group (11). However it is measured by the current Minister of Education as too slow to show effect on the education quality due to the fact that Indonesia still got the low achiever position on the 2018 PISA (10) either it is the literacy, Mathematics or Science competence assessment and besides, Indonesia also has problems with producing the preferred characters of its student especially those characters that meet the job field requirements.

As the consequence, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology aimed at perfecting the previous curriculum by creating the new curriculum (episode 15 of Merdeka Belajar Policy and Platform Merdeka Belajar)(8) to accelerate both the strengthening of 21st century skills and the shaping of the projected characters (Pancasila Student Profile) with more humanistic touch inspired by the father of Indonesia Education

ideals, the legendary Ki Hajar Dewantara's. This new curriculum adopted the idea of independent learning and differentiated learning because students are human beings with each own uniqueness in character and with different pace in learning. Thus, it is named as Merdeka Curriculum. With this independent learning platform, plus the acceleration of efforts in mastering the 21st century skills, the shaping of the projected Pelajar Pancasila characters, and the emphasis on IT Based learning and Project Based Learning, it is greatly hoped to reach the vision of Indonesia Education much more quickly to become reality as it is expected to be attained in 2045 when Indonesia celebrate its centennial anniversary. By that time, Indonesia will be governed by dignified Golden Generation Leaders who are, by GOD's blessings, the successful products of nowadays' education.

However idealistic and perfect the new curriculum is, still there are some problems in acceleration among teachers, headmasters and education institutions. The pace in shifting the mindset and practices of the former curriculum to the latter vary largely among them. This can be the results of geographical location, composition of digital native and digital immigrant teachers in schools, and government supported schools (SMA Sekolah Penggerak /SMK PK) versus self-initiated schools in terms of Merdeka Curriculum implementation (IKM mandiri belajar/mandiri berubah/mandiri berbagi).

Psychologically, shifting from the safe zone to the uncertainty zone will cause anxiety among the affected agents, in this case teachers as the front line agents of the shifting implementation of the former curriculum to that of the new one. This, affects English teachers as well. There are various reasons of this anxiety with the major one due to lack of knowledge and mastery of the brand new curriculum. Moreover, teacher's mindset which regards changing curriculum as changing the administration work and lots of paper work also leads to their growing anxiety.

The term curriculum refers to the overall plan or design for a course and how the content for a course is transformed into a blueprint for teaching and learning which enables the desired learning outcomes to be achieved (Richards, JC and Rodgers,T (2001) ; Richards,JC 2013)(22)(23). Further, curriculum takes content (from external standards and local goals) and shapes it into a plan for how to conduct effective teaching and learning. It is thus more than a list of topics and lists of key facts and skills (the "input"). It is a map of how to achieve the "outputs" of desired student performance, in which appropriate learning activities and assessments are suggested to make it more likely that students achieve the desired results (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005) (30).

In language teaching, the curriculum development falls to three types of development /design i.e: 1) the forward design which starts from content, followed by process and ended by outcome ; 2) the central process design which starts from process followed by contents and then outcomes; and 3) the backward design which starts from outcomes followed by content and process, as Wiggins and McTighe (2005) elaborated based on Tyller's objective based approach (1949)(28). K2013 and Merdeka curricula coincidentally implement the backward design curriculum which involves :1)Identifying desired results ;2)Determining acceptable evidence of learning; 3) Planing learning experiences and instruction.

The most widespread example of backward design using standards in current use is the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001)(2), which is designed to provide a 'common basis for explicit description of objectives, content and methods of the study of modern languages, within a wider purpose of elaboration of language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks' etc. across Europe' (Council of Europe, 2001).

Language Teaching Syllabus of the backward design curriculum has the features such as needs based, ends-means approach, objectives or competency-based, sequenced from part skills to whole, pre-determined prior to course, and linear progression. Further Mc Kay (2000)(7) underlined that A related approach to backward design is through the use of standards (also known as benchmarks, core skills, performance profiles and target competencies). Standards are descriptions of the outcomes or targets students should be able to reach in different domains of curriculum content, including language learning, and are generally specified in very general terms. For example standards related to the use of both oral and written language could include Students' development of knowledge and understanding of:

The relationship between texts and contexts

Cultural reference in text

The relationship between purposes and structures of texts

Language forms and features of texts (McKay, 2000).

K2013 and Merdeka curriculum apparently use text based syllabus of which the key elements are :1) topics, organized according to whether they relate to community access, employment or further study; 2) texts, identified according to the type, or genre they belong to, to the curriculum outcome to which they relate; 3) language features, related to the type of text in which they are used; 4) skills and strategies, organized according to situation/register especially macro skill; 5) activities and tasks including teaching activities and assessment activities which determine the materials and resources required (Feez,1999; Feez and Joyce,1998)(3) (4).Teaching text in the 21st century language classroom, teachers should view text either as TALO (text as linguistics object) or TAVI (text as a vehicle of information) or even TASP (text as a spring board for production) so that based on each emphasis teacher can design the distinct materials and learning activities(Candlefield,2023)(1)

Though basically ELT prescribed in the K13 and Merdeka Curriculum are similar in origin, there are still negative perceptions among English teachers as the front line agents of the shift of both curricula. Based on the background above the writer conducted research in order to find out which factor becomes the major source of English teachers' negative perception on the shifting curriculum, and also to find out whether the core competences of the two current ELT curricula are similar or different so that the result will contribute antidote to sooth English teachers' negative perception.

## **METHOD**

This research is a qualitative research which aims at soothing English teachers' negative perceptions on the shifting of the current curriculum at secondary schools through comparative and contrastive analyses on the core competences prescribed on both ELT curricula (K2013 vs KURMER). The objects of the research were English teachers' negative perceptions on the changing ELT curriculum, and the core competences of two current ELT curricula in Indonesia. The subjects of the research were 50 English teachers in one particular English Teacher of Vocational School Community in South Lampung Regency (MGMP).

The Instruments of data collecting techniques used were questionnaire on teachers' perception towards the changing curriculum, and comparative and contrastive analyses on the core competences prescribed on both curricula. This research conducted procedure which staged the steps as: 1) setting the goal of research; 2) collecting literary sources regarding K2013 and Merdeka Curriculum; 3) setting the object, subject, population and sample of the research; 4) designing instrument of data collecting; 5) collecting the data; 6) analyzing data, and 7) drawing the conclusion.

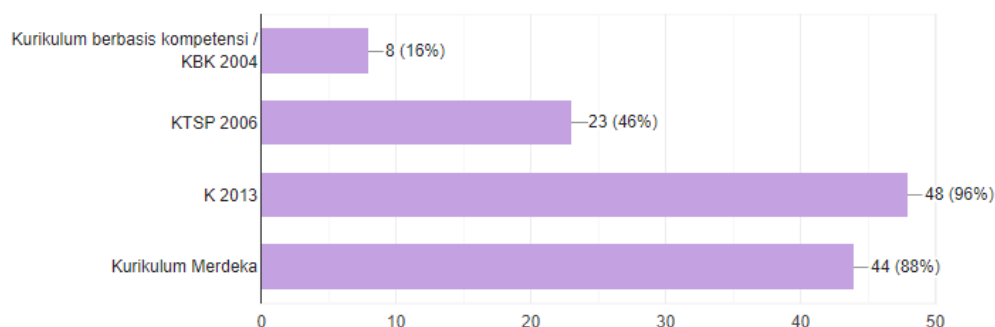
## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **I.1 Result of 'English Teachers' Perspectives Questionnaire' on the Changing Curriculum**

The results of the questionnaire on English teachers' perception towards the changing ELT curriculum are shown on the three bar graphs below. From 50 respondents, the results were the following. In one of the questions, English teachers were asked whether they ever experienced the shifting of curriculum before, and it can be seen that 8 teachers (16%) have experienced 4 times curriculum shifts starting from KBK 2004, KTSP 2006, K2013 and the latest Merdeka Curriculum all along their English teaching history. We can estimate the age of those teachers from seeing their curriculum shift history. The Majority though, were teachers who recently experienced the shifting of K2013 to Merdeka Curriculum 48 teachers (96%).

Sudah mengalami perubahan kurikulum selama mengajar (boleh pilih lebih dari satu) [Copy](#)

50 responses



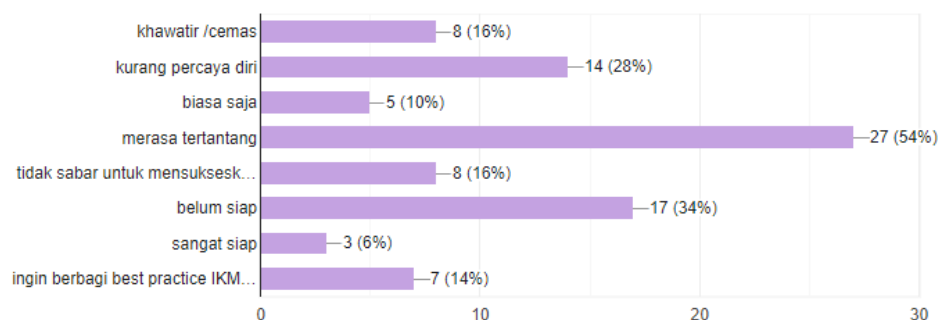
Graph 1 Experience of ELT Curriculum Shift

Another item of the questionnaire was asking English teachers' perceptions towards the shifting of K2013 to Merdeka Curriculum, and there were wide variety of answers. The answers fell into two grand categories, the positive perceptions and the negative ones. Interestingly, the positive perception that reached the highest rank was "feeling challenged to implement Merdeka Curriculum" (54%), followed by "impatiently waiting to succeed the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum" (16%), then really wish to share best practice (14%), and the lowest was "ready to implement Merdeka Curriculum" (6%).

Apa yang anda rasakan pada masa transisi perubahan Kurikulum 2013 menjadi Kurikulum Merdeka ? (boleh pilih lebih dari satu jawaban)

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50 responses

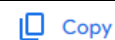


Graph 2 English Teachers' Perception towards the Shifting Curriculum

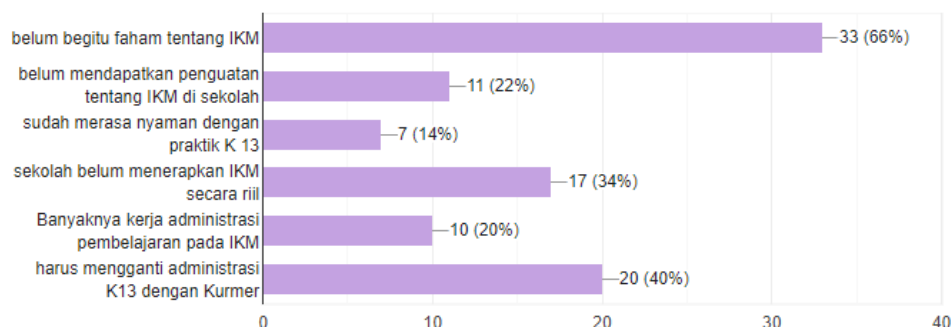
On the contrary, The negative perceptions were "not ready to implement the Merdeka Curriculum" (34%), "not confident in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum" (28%), "anxious in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum" (16%), and nothing particular about curriculum shift (5%).

Regarding those negative perceptions towards the change of K2013 and the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum, the follow up question on the reasons was given to dig deeper information to seek the solution of the research problem that is to find solution to sooth English teachers' anxiety and other negative perceptions.

Kira kira apa yang menyebabkan anda merasa belum siap, kurang percaya diri dan cemas mengenai IKM ini?( boleh jawab lebih dari satu)



50 responses



Graph 3 Reasons of English Teachers' Negative Perceptions towards the Changing Curriculum

The highest reason was "lack of knowledge about Merdeka Curriculum Implementation" (66%), followed by "the reluctance in changing the teachers' administration from that of k2013 to that of Merdeka Curriculum (40%)". The next reason was "their school had not implemented the Merdeka Curriculum validly" (34%) and "much more administration work on Merdeka Curriculum" was next (20%), followed by "no training about Merdeka Curriculum was facilitated by the school" (22%). The smallest percentage was that of "English teachers were 'getting used to implementing the K2013 as their save zone' (14%)."

## 1.2 Result of Comparative and Contrastive Analyses between Two Current ELT Curricula in Indonesia

The result of comparative and contrastive analyses on two current ELT curricula in Indonesia (K2013 and Merdeka Curriculum) fell into six areas namely : 1) Government regulation ; 2) Types of ELT syllabus integration ; 3) Aspects of the Learning materials ; 4) Hierarchy of English teachers' administration ; 5) Emphases of teaching method and media ; and 6) the nurturing of 21st century skills and character building as shown on table 1 below.

Table 1. Comparative and Contrastive Analyses between K2013 and Merdeka curriculum

Criteria	2013 ELT Curriculum	Merdeka ELT Curriculum
<b>1. Government regulation</b>	1. UU No 20, 2003 tentang Sisdiknas.(29) 2. PP No 19, 2005 Tentang 8 SNP(12) 3. Perpres No 87, 2017 tentang penguatan pendidikan karakter (14) 4. Permendikbud No 20, 2018 tentang penguatan pendidikan karakter pada satuan pendidikan formal(15) 5. Permendikbud No 37, 2018 tentang (KI/KD SMP/SMA) (16) 6. Permendikbud No 34, 2018 tentang (SNP SMK)(17) 7. Perdirjen PSMK No 464, 2018 tentang (Kompetensi Inti/Kompetensi Dasar SMK)(18)	1. UU No 20, 2003 tentang Sisdiknas.(29) 2. Permendikbud No 22, 2020 tentang Profil Pelajar Pancasila (19) 3. SK KABSKAP No 9, 2022 tentang Dimensi, Elemen dan Sub elemen Profil Pelajar Pancasila (24) 4. PP No 57, 2021 (8 SNP)(13) 5. Permendikbud No 5, 2022 (SKL)(20) 6. Permendikbud No 7, 2022 (SI)(21) 7. SK No 024H/KR/2022-KaBSKAP tentang Konsentrasi Keahlian SMK MAK Kurikulum Merdeka (25) 8. Kepmendikbudristek No 262, 2022 (struktur Kurikulum)(6) 9. SK KABSKAP No 033, 2022 tentang Capaian Pembelajaran (26)
<b>2. Types of ELT Syllabus</b>	Text based syllabus Functional syllabus	Text based syllabus Competence /Skill based syllabus

	Competence/ Skill based syllabus	
<b>1. Aspects of the Learning Materials</b>	Interpersonal Text Transaction Text Short Functional text Monologue texts: Descriptive text Procedure text, Narrative text , Recount text, Report Text, Exposition text Argumentative text Discussion text News item text	Listening -speaking element Reading - viewing element Writing -presenting Authentic texts: Descriptive text Procedure text, Narrative text , Recount text Short Functional Text Report Text, Exposition text Argumentative text Discussion text
<b>4.Hierarchy of Teachers' administration</b>	1. Kompetensi Inti /Core Competence 2. Kompetensi Dasar/ Basic Competence 3. Ministry issued Syllabus 4. RPP/Lesson Plan 5. Assessment Pre test-post test -summative test 6. Analysis of Assessment result 7. Remedial and enrichment	1. Capaian Pembelajaran / Learning Achievement 2. Tujuan Pembelajaran /Learning objective 3. Alur tujuan pembelajaran/ teacher made syllabus 4. Learning module ( lesson plan plus material ) 5. Assessment : A. Diagnostic assessment non cognitive B. Diagnostic assessment cognitive/pretest C. Sumative test 6. Analysis of Assessment Result 7. Remedial and enrichment
<b>5.Emphasis on methods and media</b>	Inquiry learning Discovery learning  Scientific method: 1.Observing 2.Questioning 3.Collecting information 4.Reasoning/analyzing 5.Communicating	Problem based Learning Project based learning IT based learning  Teachers' Teaching and Learning Resources Platform (PMM/ Platform Merdeka Mengajar )
<b>6.The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and character building</b>	Embedded Material 4 Cs: 1. Critical thinking 2. Creativity 3. Communication and IT skill 4. Collaboration  PPK(penguatan pendidikan karakter ) 1. Religius 2. Nasionalis 3. Mandiri 4. Gotong royong 5. Integritas	Cocurricular subject: Profil Pelajar Pancasila ( P3) 1. Bertaqwa kepada Tuhan YME 2. Berpikir kritis dan memecahkan masalah 3. Kreatif 4. Mandiri 5. Bergotong royong 6. Berkebhinekaan global  Tema P5 (projek penguatan profil pelajar pancasila ) 1. Gaya hidup berkelanjutan 2. Kearifan lokal 3. Bhineka Tunggal Ika 4. Bangunlah jiwa dan raganya 5. Suara Demokrasi 6. Berekayasa dan berteknologi untuk membangun NKRI

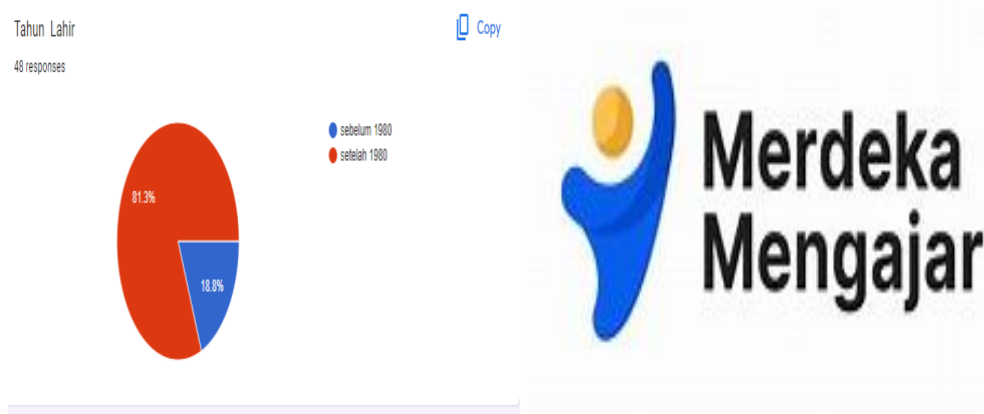
- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  | 7. Kewirausahaan<br>8. Kebekerjaan<br>9. Budaya kerja |
|--|---|

### I.3 The Differences between K2013 and Merdeka Curriculum

Seeing from the first and the fourth criteria, of course we can see the differences on the ministry regulation just as its nature that a curriculum has to be prescriptive. The former K2013 was based on the Permendikbud Number 37 2018 and Perdirjen PSMK number 464, 2028 while the latter is based on Kepmendikbudristek number 262, 2022 and SKKABSKAP number 033, 2022. Those regulations are dealing with prescription on the targeted basic competences or learning achievements that cannot be changed and to which teachers must refer when they prepare teaching administration. As for teaching administration, the Merdeka curriculum prescribes that teachers must do diagnostic assessments first either it is the cognitive or the non cognitive one to get the preliminary data for differentiated teaching and learning, because it is the core idea of independent learning: let the students study based on their pace, let the students become the center of their learning experiences.

The emphases on method and media of both curricula are also different. The former K2013 carried out the scientific approach which consisted of five steps: 1) observing; 2) Questioning/inquiring; 3) collecting information; 4) reasoning/analyzing; and 5) communicating. Teachers got invitation to have Training Of Trainers of K2013 implementation nationally, to later give training back in their province or regency as managed by the regions' education and culture office.

Meanwhile, the latter Merdeka Curriculum is emphasizing on the project based learning to trigger active learning on students' side, and the facilitation for teachers to also learn independently from the teacher teaching and learning resources platform popularly called PMM (platform Merdeka Mengajar). The bases for this media creation are that the number of Gen Y teachers and digital native teachers are increasing and outnumbering the digital immigrant and baby boomer teachers so that they have no difficulty in adjusting themselves with the application; besides, this platform is more economical and can target wider coverage of teachers all around the country if compared to inviting teachers to have training at the Ministry owned training centers which were more costly and getting smaller number of targeted teachers. In the case of English Teacher of Vocational School Community in South Lampung Regency, the number of digital native teachers is also larger than the number of digital immigrant teachers as shown on picture 1.1 below so that it is a promising possibility for active use of PMM.



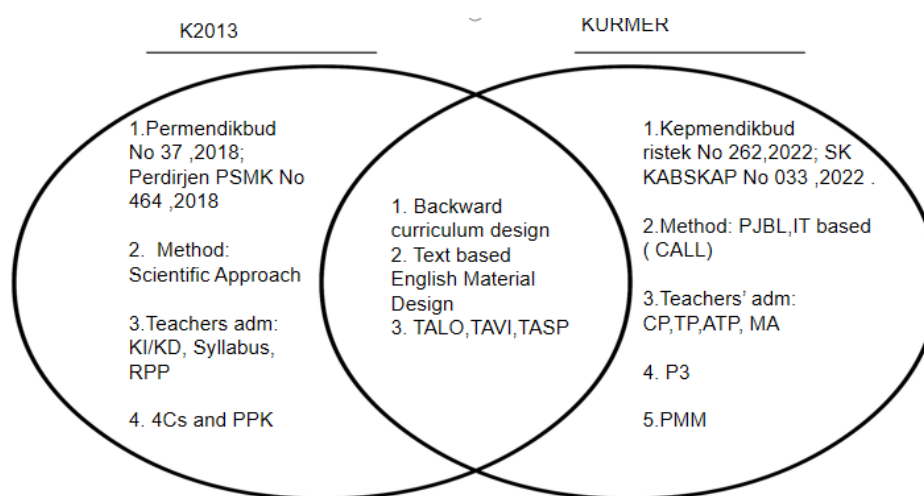
Picture 1.1. Digital native teachers and PMM

The last difference is in their way of nurturing and strengthening students' character in both curricula. The former K2013 had been in effort to build the 4Cs Skills (critical thinking and problem solving, creative, communication, collaboration) through embedded PPK in the teaching learning activity as stated on the lesson plan or RPP. The teachers in charge of assessing the characters are PPKN (civics), Religion and BK (counseling) teachers. On the contrary, the latter Merdeka Curriculum has formulated to build, nurture and strengthen the students' character as of P3 (profil pelajar Pancasila) that is, Students who always learn during

their lives and who have the characters of Religious and pious, critical thinking and problem solving ,creative, self reliant, collaborative, and always respects diversity globally. All teachers of general subjects are responsible in nurturing, building, and strengthening those characters through P5 ( Real Project Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila), and assessing those characters of P3 and P5 embedded as Co-Curricular beside their own subjects as intra-curricular.

#### I.4 The Similarity between K2013 and Merdeka Curriculum

From the criteria described on the table, item two -the types of ELT Syllabus and item 3- the aspects of the Learning Materials, we can see that they intersect on the Venn diagram 1.1. This means that they are somewhat similar in that both K2013 and Merdeka Curriculum were designed backwardly, starting from ministry designed basic competences/ learning achievements to teacher made/adjusted syllabus / Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran up to the Lesson plan (RPP) / Learning Module which is a Lesson plan plus materials ( Tyler,1949 ; Richards,2013). Further , the syllabus designs of both curricula are those of integrated ones .



Venn Diagram 1

Similarity and differences between K2013 and Merdeka Curriculum

The former K 2013 was integrating the text based syllabus with notional functional syllabus and skill/competence based syllabus , while the latter is combining the text based syllabus with skill/competence based ones still ( Nation,2020)( 9).

Since both curricula implement the text based syllabus, English teacher still can prepare text materials based on the three points of how teacher view the texts that is the TALO ( text as linguistic object ) , or TAVI ( text as vehicle of information), and TASP ( text as springboard for production )

However , there is a slight difference in the way how we teacher implement the TALO, TAVI and TASP in teaching texts between both curricula. The former K2013 divided the teaching of texts into four types :

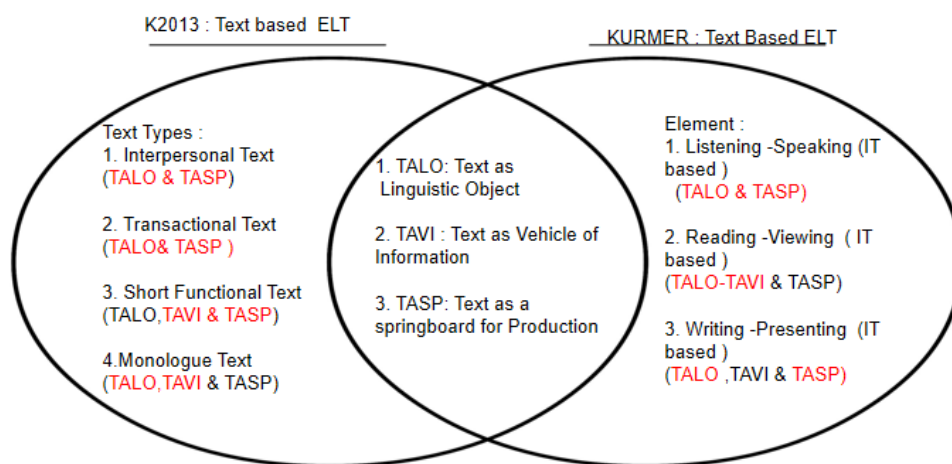
1. Interpersonal texts. Those texts involved in socializing in commonly appearing in the form of dialogues. Here teachers will introduce the lexico - grammatical aspects of the texts (TALO) such as the words, the expressions and which grammar aspects are involved. Then Teachers assess the students' ability in producing similar texts in written and oral forms (TASP) .
2. Transactional texts. Those texts involved in social interactions to get what we need which are also commonly appearing in the form of dialogue .Here teachers will introduce the lexico grammatical aspects of the texts (TALO) such as the words, the expressions and which grammar aspects are involved. Then Teachers assess the students' ability in producing similar texts in written and oral forms (TASP) .
3. Short Functional texts. Those short texts which are used in our daily life such as warning, notice, prescription, menu, schedule ,etc. In this type of text, teachers start involving comprehension on the message or information about particular content ; thus, TAVI is implemented here beside the TALO and TASP.



4. Monologue texts. Those texts which are called as genre of texts, such as descriptive, narrative, procedure, exposition, argumentation, discussion, news item texts, etc. In this kinds of texts, of course TAVI ( bringing students to comprehend content information ) plays very important role here beside knowing the lexico-grammatical features of the texts ( TALO). In the end students are assessed based on their reproduction of similar text of their own in the form of written or oral texts (TASP).

The current Merdeka Curriculum, also implements these TALO TAVI TASP points of view towards texts but in different way. The teaching of texts falls into three areas with the emphasis on using authentic text materials, involvement of IT media and execution on project based learning model.

1. Listening -Speaking element. In this element, the TALO and TASP ways play the important role in that students listen to text in conversation or mini talks, and try to gain new vocabulary, expression and grammar from the audio/audiovisual media to further produce similar text of their own orally .
2. Reading viewing element. In this element , TAVI ranks number one in order of importance, then come TALO and TASP. Students are exposed to explore and interact with texts as source of information about current issues either from paper based text or from internet based texts or infographic texts, for example what's inside a pyramid in a descriptive text , or what are the dangers of bullying in an exposition text , what are tips to keep awake in the class in a procedure and how to texts ,etc. Reading literacy skills are shaped here in this stage. Thus Comprehension questions are obligatory . Again , teachers must think of the way in delivering these through project based learning way.
3. Writing presenting element. In this element , TALO along with TASP are inseparable. Students are exposed to interact with texts of they will imitate or adjust so that they will produce similar texts of their own and are ready to present their texts in written form by making use of their IT skills such as canva presentation, video presentation, infographic presentation or other form with different IT applications. For the purpose of personal branding, students may be asked to share their own texts on their social media such as facebook, instagram, twitter, you tube, tik tok etc.



Venn Diagram 2  
Differences between K2013 and Merdeka Curriculum  
In TALO TAVI TASP implementation

## CONCLUSION

Based on the result and discussion above, to sum up English teacher must not get anxious and are suggested to erase all those negative perceptions towards the shift of the ELT curricula, because of the following promising facts:

1. For ELT, K2013 and Merdeka Curriculum are somewhat similar, in that they are backward designed curricula and text based designed syllabi.
2. The slight difference is only in the implementation of TALO, TAVI and TASP (previously on types of texts; currently on elements of English teaching).
3. Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes on Project based learning. Students become more active learners (their critical thinking, creativity, communication and IT, self reliance and collaborative skills are nurtured through project based learning group assignment).
4. The Majority of Indonesia English Teachers nowadays are digital natives; a promising fact for habituating IT based ELT (CALL) through PMM (State owned Teachers' learning resource application).

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