

# Crafting an English Ebook for the *Merdeka* Curriculum: Insights from Indonesian High School Teachers

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## Abstract

Need analysis is an essential component of Research & Development (R&D) and cannot be separated from the process as a whole. This study analyzed the need for an English ebook model based on the *Merdeka* curriculum for Indonesian Senior High Schools. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study investigated the requirements for the research purpose. Data were collected through questionnaires from 68 English Senior High School teachers in Pandeglang, Banten Province, Indonesia, and analyzed qualitatively. The findings revealed that almost all English teachers agreed that the English coursebook should reflect the *Merdeka* curriculum, with a preference for interactive ebook formats. Both students and teachers expressed a need for an introductory English ebook as a learning medium in the classroom. Specifically, teachers emphasized the importance of incorporating local content and interactive elements. These findings provide a foundation for developing an English ebook model based on the *Merdeka* curriculum, tailored to the needs of Indonesian Senior High School students and aligned with current educational trends.

**Keywords:** ebook, *Merdeka* curriculum, model, need analysis

## 1. Introduction

The development of the fifth industrial revolution (IR 5.0) has significantly transformed global education systems, particularly in English language education, necessitating an evolution in teaching methodologies and learning experiences (Syarifuddin et al., 2023). This transformation underscores the importance of integrating innovative technologies into offline and online learning environments, making digitalization an essential component of modern education. In an era where knowledge is accessible almost instantly, English plays a crucial role as a widely spoken global language.

In this new educational context, educators are compelled to adapt their teaching methods to incorporate strategies that meet the needs of 21st-century learners (Barrot, 2018). Education 5.0, an extension of IR 5.0, focuses on enhancing student learning through technological means (Fahlevi, 2022). This approach aims to develop students' technological literacy while promoting responsible usage (Martin et al., 2018). Digital books, or ebooks, have become essential tools in Education 5.0, combining human capabilities with technological innovations (Bozkurt et al., 2016).

Despite technological advancements, traditional coursebooks remain fundamental in English language instruction (Atiullah et al., 2019). These resources offer structured activities to improve language skills and support student-centered learning methodologies (Cunningsworth, 1995). Recognizing the importance of standardized educational materials, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has developed coursebooks as essential learning tools for public schools (Rinekso, 2021). Available in both digital and print formats, these resources must align with the current curriculum to effectively meet educational goals, addressing the diverse needs of students in a linguistically and culturally rich nation.

Curriculum changes in Indonesia have shaped educational strategies to reflect the demands of the digital age. Significant reforms have led to the *Merdeka* curriculum, developed in response to the low literacy and numeracy scores from the PISA 2018 assessment, highlighting the need for innovative teaching methods and optimized content

(Thooyibah et al., 2019). These reforms are strategic initiatives addressing the unique challenges faced by Indonesian students. The government's response to the PISA results emphasizes enhancing literacy and numeracy skills through curriculum innovation. The recent emphasis on digital education, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, underscores the necessity for accessible digital resources like ebooks to complement traditional approaches.

The *Merdeka* curriculum promotes student-centered learning and critical thinking skills, preparing students for success in a rapidly changing world. However, a need for more suitable digital resources aligns with its objectives. High-quality educational materials that meet the curriculum's demands are essential. This research aims to fill this gap by developing an English ebook model designed explicitly for the *Merdeka* curriculum.

While considerable research exists on the educational benefits of ebooks, including their impact on learning outcomes and student engagement (Ebied & Shima, 2015; Rockinson et al., 2013; Fitriawati & Syarif, 2018; Alshaya & Oyaid, 2019; Sun et al., 2012), a gap remains in creating an English ebook model tailored to the *Merdeka* curriculum. The literature indicates ebooks' potential for promoting interactive learning, but there needs to be more curriculum-specific content for the Indonesian educational context. For example, Rockinson et al. (2013) found that ebooks improve affective and psychomotor learning, suggesting more engaging educational experiences. However, existing studies often need to pay more attention to the specific requirements of the Indonesian education system under the *Merdeka* curriculum. Developing ebooks aligned with curriculum goals is crucial, as it ensures that content supports national objectives and respects Indonesian learners' linguistic and cultural diversity.

This study addresses this gap by developing a framework for an English ebook based on a comprehensive needs analysis for Indonesian senior high schools. Such a framework ensures that educational resources align with curriculum objectives and improve student learning outcomes (Wijayanto et al., 2017). This study aims to conduct a need analysis to identify the requirements for developing an English ebook model based on the *Merdeka* curriculum for Indonesian Senior High Schools. The study aims to gather insights from English teachers to determine their preferences and requirements for an interactive ebook format that aligns with the *Merdeka* curriculum. By focusing on need analysis, this study provides a foundation for developing an English ebook model that aligns with the educational goals of the *Merdeka* curriculum, addressing the specific needs of Indonesian Senior High School students and teachers. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discussion on curriculum development and digital education in Indonesia by presenting a model that balances technological integration with effective pedagogical practices.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Ebooks in English Language Teaching

Teachers in the 21st century are recognized for their creativity and innovation (Hartono et al., 2019). Using technology to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) has long been a teacher's concern. With the development of technology, students can access internet sources no matter where they are or how much time they have available (Andujar & Hussein, 2019). Ebooks are electronic learning objects that combine interactive computer features with a book's traditional format (Smeets & Bus, 2015). Students are interested in using an ebook in language education because it can be used on various electronic devices, from smartphones to tablets, computers, and ebook readers.

Studies show that using ebooks in EFL classes is a great way to get students more involved in their studies and increase their language proficiency (Chen et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2020). The use of ebooks has grown in popularity, and Ebooks in language-learning environments have also received much attention (Al-Harthi et al., 2020; Jia & Chen, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). The growing demand for Ebooks in EFL education is mainly due to the many advantages of ebooks, including that they are readily accessible, have searchable resources and portable content, are easy to download, and support fast updates and instant translation into multiple languages. Ebooks are becoming increasingly popular in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education because of their many advantages, including their accessibility, searchable resources, and portable content, as well as the fact that they can be downloaded and quickly receive updates as well as immediate translation into various languages (Felvegi & Matthew, 2012; Zarzour et al., 2020).

### 2.2 The Concept of Merdeka Curriculum

The reform of Indonesia's national curriculum in English Language Teaching (ELT) presents a new challenge for English teachers. They must consider good lesson design, practical teaching and learning methods, and results from learning assessment (Sofiana et al., 2019). Teachers and students can use the *Merdeka* curriculum to design their learning system, which they hope will help them achieve their educational and learning goals in a fun way. The term

"*Merdeka* curriculum" still refers to the applicable curriculum when discussing the freedom of thought and innovation it represents (Nurihayanti, 2021). It is a post-pandemic learning recovery curriculum (Adisti et al., 2023). Autonomy in learning will shape the character of critical, creative, and innovative students in their education, produce real works, dare to appear to express their opinions, and form suitable, strong characters. Teaching drives learning in and out of the classroom to meet students' learning and innovation demands.

The Indonesian Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology presented the *Merdeka* curriculum to return education to UUD 1945's concepts of schools, teachers, and students exploring new things and learning methods. There is still an emphasis on teachers in front of the class, walking in one direction, and giving lectures to students. So that students can only focus on the teacher's explanation and take notes. Students will become bored as a result of this situation. They are not used to thinking to formulate a problem and solve it. In addition, the minimum level of a subject's content is a constant source of anxiety for students. A student's academic performance is measured by the grades and rankings they earn on assignments and tests taken in class. If their children fail academically, this rule affects students and parents. The *Merdeka* curriculum encourages students to learn independently and have fun while keeping the spirit of education (Ainia, 2020).

According to Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy, education is about guiding children's various natures to achieve the safety and happiness they deserve as human beings and citizens in society. Every child is not a blank sheet of paper on which the teacher or parents can scribble whatever they want; instead, they are born with the inherent human nature to be a person. It is the teacher's responsibility to help the student discover his or her true nature and guide him toward achieving the highest level of well-being and safety based on that nature. Ki Hadjar Dewantara is a classical Indonesian education model that aims to develop the potential of Indonesia's youth in cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and personal aspects like sociality and spirituality (Wahyudi et al., 2021). As Ki Hadjar Dewantara demonstrated, educational concerns cannot be separated from efforts to meet current challenges. Education in Indonesia today has more diverse demands than when Ki Hadjar Dewantara introduced the concept, which may have been needed in his day. In other words, educators first serve as models or samples, then as facilitators or teachers.

### 2.3 The Characteristics of English Subjects in the *Merdeka* Curriculum

As mentioned before, the *Merdeka* curriculum is more focused on essential materials. Therefore, the learning load on the subject will be less. It demonstrates how the *Merdeka* curriculum emphasizes quality before quantity. The *Merdeka* curriculum focuses on essential materials so teachers have more time to apply more interactive and collaborative learning methods (Kemdikbud, 2022). Examples of these strategies are learning through discussion and argumentation, project-based learning, and problem-based learning (Supini, 2021). If the material is essential, the teacher will have more time to focus on student learning, such as formative assessments. Therefore, the teacher can understand students' initial abilities and learning needs. Finally, a teacher can teach and give assignments suitable to the student's abilities and characteristics. The school also feels the results of teaching fundamental subjects. The school has much space to use conceptual material based on the content and mission of the school and the surrounding environment. Schools no longer emphasize student achievement but focus on soft skills. Thus, students get a more meaningful and enjoyable learning experience. Schools can improve students' literacy and numeracy skills to help better prepare them for their future.

The *Merdeka* curriculum is more flexible than before. In the classroom, students learn more independently. For example, students no longer learn in class by reading books or simply memorizing, but students can study anywhere to create a work or project. The *Merdeka* curriculum also sets competencies or learning outcomes for each phase rather than each year. It allows teachers to customize learning flow and speed to student needs. Lesson hours shift from 13.00-14.00 in *Merdeka*. Instead of weekly, these learning hours are annual. That lets schools develop operational curriculum more freely. High school students are no longer divided by primary in *Merdeka*'s available curriculum. Focus subjects are suitable for students. The *Merdeka* curriculum allows teachers to use textbooks, literacy and numeracy tests, teaching modules, and more. The Ministry of Education and Culture also released an Android app and website, *Merdeka Mengajar*, for teachers. Principals, as well as teachers, may register for a training module.

The *Merdeka* curriculum superseded the 2013 curriculum and reflects government education changes. Schools, teachers, and students can innovate, develop, be creative, and study independently with the *Merdeka* curriculum (Daga, 2021). The *Merdeka* curriculum has five English subject characteristics (Kemdikbud, 2022). They are (a) learn written, oral, visual, and multimodal text types, (b) teachers can choose text types using CP (Capaian Pembelajaran), (c) the learning method is learner-centered, (d) it develops language abilities like listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting, and (e) learning outcomes are CEFR Phase E (B1) and Phase F (B2).

Therefore, the characteristics of the *Merdeka* curriculum help schools and teachers design more optimal learning that is fun and meaningful for students. The *Merdeka* curriculum wants learning that can develop students holistically to become Pancasila Students and ready to face a better future.

#### 2.4 A Comparison of the 2013 Curriculum and the *Merdeka* Curriculum

The curriculum is the most significant part of national education. It has to adapt to the times (Qurtubi, 2021). Curriculum changes often improve education because the previous curriculum lacked materials and learning systems, so it must be updated. Modifications to the curriculum enhance Indonesian education (Melisa & Hakim, 2023). This table compares the 2013 and *Merdeka* curriculum (Lestari & Emilia, 2023).

**Table 1.** Comparison Between the 2013 and the *Merdeka* Curriculum

Aspects	2013 Curriculum	<i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum
Objectives	To enable students to use the language in different contexts in different text types	To enable students to use the language in different contexts in different text types
Learning material	Text	Text
Level of schooling	Year 7- Year 12	Phase A- Phase F
Learning and teaching references	Main Competence (KI), Basic Competence (KD), Syllabus, and lesson plan (RPP)	Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), and Teaching modules (MA)
Benefits	The teacher just teaches, following the KI, KD, syllabus, and RPP.	The teachers can be creative, teaching based on the needs of the students in line with their language development.

Both the 2013 and *Merdeka* curriculum have a national education system and standards. In the *Merdeka* curriculum, the Pancasila Student Profile is developed further than in 2013. The 2013 curriculum emphasizes basic competencies (KD) and core competencies (KI). In the *Merdeka* curriculum, learning outcomes (CP) are the expected competency. Learning outcomes (CP) contain knowledge, attitudes, and skills for student competence in each phase. Phase E means class X in high school, and phase F is classes XI and XII.

The 2013 curriculum comprises extracurriculars and intracurriculars. *Merdeka* uses intracurricular, extracurricular, and Pancasila student profile-building. The 2013 curriculum has weekly lesson hours, whereas *Merdeka* has annual ones. The 2013 curriculum uses a subject-based learning structure. *Merdeka's* curriculum includes subject-based learning organizations. Students must write an essay for graduation, yet the 2013 curriculum does not exist.

All courses are taught using the scientific approach in the 2013 curriculum. The *Merdeka* curriculum employs a differentiated approach based on student ability. In addition, *Merdeka* students must complete a project to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile. The 2013 curriculum uses formative and summative assessments; however, the *Merdeka* curriculum uses only formative examinations and reflections to shape student learning based on abilities. Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project was assessed in *Merdeka* but not in 2013. The assessment in the 2013 curriculum is characterized by attitude, knowledge, and skill assessments, but the assessment in the *Merdeka* curriculum is not separated.

Both the 2013 and *Merdeka* curriculum use textbooks and non-textbooks. In addition to *Merdeka*, teaching modules, learning objectives flow (ATP), and the Pancasila Student Profile strengthening project are used. Each level of education has curriculum implementation, assessment, and learning rules based on the curriculum device in the 2013 curriculum. *Merdeka* incorporates learning and assessment criteria, school operational design, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project, and inclusive education implementation.

#### 2.5 Learning Outcomes

This study determined the *Merdeka* curriculum's English learning outcome or *Capaian Pembelajaran*. At the end of tenth grade (Phase E), students use spoken, written, and visual English texts to communicate with the context, purpose, and reader following the CP analysis. English learning now contains narration, description, procedure, exposition, recount, report, and authentic texts. Students express their views and discuss current events in English during this phase. They read for information-implicit inference skills for understanding developed in English.

Students write with more diversity and graphics and comprehend the purpose and audience (Kemdikbud, 2022).

**Table 2.** English Learning Outcomes (CP) at 10<sup>th</sup> Grade (Phase E) of Indonesian Senior High School

No	Aspect	Description
1.	<i>Learning Objective</i>	In Phase E, students use spoken, written, and visual English depending on the situation, purpose, and audience/reader.
2.	<i>Text Type</i>	Descriptive, narrative, procedure, exposition, recount, report, and authentic text.
3.	<i>Learning Outcomes Based on Elements</i>	
	<i>Listening-Speaking</i>	At the end of Phase E, students can communicate in English with teachers, peers, and others. Questions and methods are used to start and maintain conversations. They understand the main points of youth-related discussions and presentations. They explore youth issues and interests in English. They make comparisons. Signs like gestures, pace, and pitch can convey meaning.
	<i>Reading-Viewing</i>	At the end of Phase E, students can comprehend and react to various texts, such as reports, expositions, procedures, descriptions, and narratives. The students read to obtain knowledge or to become competent. They distinguish and assess the key points and particulars of diverse texts. These texts can be interactive, multimodal, or printed. They can also be digital. They are gaining comprehension of the key concepts, problems, and story progression in various text genres. They recognize the author's objectives and learn basic inference techniques that can help them understand the information suggested in the texts.
	<i>Writing-Presenting</i>	By the end of phase E, students had completed guided exercises that helped them produce a range of fiction and nonfiction writings with an understanding of audience and purpose. They organize, generate, review, and edit various text types using self-correction procedures like capitalization and punctuation. To communicate concepts, they employ common verbs and terminology in their writing. To appeal to a variety of audiences and accomplish a range of objectives, they employ a variety of presentation styles while presenting content in print and digital formats.

Learning outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran*) in English subjects have numerous components. These include listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting. Developing an English ebook provides learning resources students must master to meet English proficiency standards. Even if it is the basis of learning, the ebook is most important. Learning success depends on how many students master the curriculum material.

### 2.6 Pancasila Students Profile in the Merdeka Curriculum

It is well-known that Pancasila is the state foundation that must be implemented in the daily life of every Indonesian citizen. To understand Pancasila, everyone should see how it is applied in the real world, not just memorize it. Therefore, Indonesia's education system should aim to produce students capable of thinking critically, comprehensively, and proudly of their national identity as Indonesian students (Sulistiyati et al., 2021). Faith, fear of God Almighty, and noble character, independence, mutual cooperation, global variety, critical reasoning, and creativity comprise the Indonesian Pancasila Students Profile (Nurihayanti, 2021).

The six dimensions should be fully integrated into the school curriculum. This activity necessarily involves using a teacher's supplementary creativity in learning management by helping the students develop their souls according to the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. (Sulistiyati et al., 2021).

The complicated issue for Indonesian students these days, both inside and outside of school institutions, is moral degradation. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) has compiled data on students' behavior deviations in recent years, including brawls, bullying, narcotics abuse, drug dealers, cigarettes, alcohol, sexual crimes, and mobile phones for pornographic activities (Saptaria & Setyawan, 2021). This attitude toward students' problems unquestionably requires an expanded role for educational institutions, encompassing all aspects of the school and surrounding environment, to develop individuals with outstanding character qualities. Beginning with the President creating a Character Strengthening Center (Puspeka), the Ministry of Education and Culture implements the Pancasila Student Profile (Juliani & Bastian, 2021; Karyoto et al., 2020).



Figure 1. Dimensions of Pancasila Students' Profile

The Centre for Character Strengthening (Puspeka) stated that Pancasila values are essential for Indonesian youth as they adapt to the times. Pancasila Student Profile, a Ministry of Education and Culture policy, spearheads national education improvement. The Pancasila Student Profile emphasizes the need to prepare students for global citizenship, social justice, and 21st-century competencies based on the nation's noble values and morality (Rusnaini et al., 2021).

Thus, teachers must ensure that the Pancasila Student Profile is achieved in six dimensions that address Indonesian and global attitudes, behavior, and cognitive capacities. Students must be allowed to study current issues, such as industrial revolution 5.0, anti-radicalism, regional culture, entrepreneurship, mental health, and democratic life.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

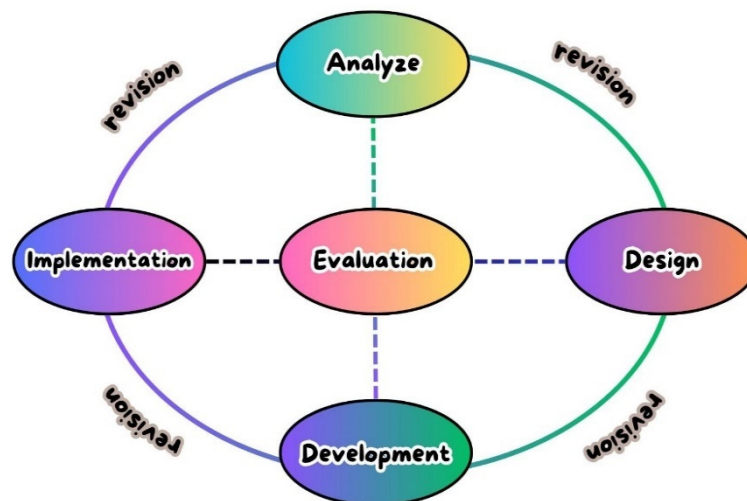


Figure 2. ADDIE Model

This study employs a Research and Development (R&D) approach to develop an ADDIE-based English ebook model aligned with the *Merdeka* curriculum for Indonesian Senior High Schools. The ADDIE model, which includes the Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation phases, is particularly suitable for systematically addressing the instructional needs identified in educational settings (Aldoobie, 2015).

### 3.2 Participants and Setting

The research was conducted with 68 English teachers from the English Teacher Working Group Association in Pandeglang, Banten Province, Indonesia. This association is instrumental in enhancing the development and quality of English teachers in Indonesia. The participating teachers were selected for their direct experience and implementation of the *Merdeka* curriculum in their teaching practices.

### 3.3 Data Collection

A descriptive qualitative approach was used to gather insights into the needs for an English ebook model. Data were collected through an online survey using Google Forms, designed to capture comprehensive insights into teachers' needs, gaps, and preferences regarding English teaching resources. The questionnaire consisted of ten open-ended questions focusing on teachers' perceived needs for an English ebook aligned with the *Merdeka* curriculum, current gaps in available English teaching resources, and preferences for interactive and locally relevant content in English ebooks.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed qualitatively to identify common themes and insights (Creswell, 2014). This analysis focused on understanding teachers' specific requirements for an ebook that would enhance classroom learning and align with the *Merdeka* curriculum. This phase involved analyzing critical information on teachers' needs, lacks, and wants. The findings were used to inform the design and development phases of the ebook model.

## 4. Results

The results of this study highlight the critical need for an English ebook model tailored to the *Merdeka* curriculum for Indonesian Senior High School students. Through the need analysis conducted among 68 English teachers from Pandeglang, Banten Province, Indonesia, several key findings emerged:

### 4.1 Necessities

The data revealed that most teachers (63.2%) must start using English textbooks aligned with the *Merdeka* curriculum. Furthermore, 55.9% of teachers reported not having access to English ebooks based on the *Merdeka* curriculum. It underscores the necessity for educational resources that meet the curriculum's objectives and support English language development in line with global standards. The absence of resources that align with the goals of the *Merdeka* curriculum proved a significant barrier to teachers' ability to deliver this new curriculum in full. Suppose teachers need teaching materials that are relevant to the curriculum. In that case, students will miss those English learning experiences according to the structure and context of the *Merdeka* curriculum.

**Table 3.** Teachers-Students' Necessities

No	Statements	Respond			
		(4) Very Suitable	(3) Suitable	(2) Less Suitable	(1) Not Suitable
1.	The teachers are currently using an English textbook suitable for the <i>Merdeka</i> curriculum.	1.5 %	7.4 %	27.9%	63.2%
2.	The teachers have an English book in the form of an ebook (digital book/electronic book) based on the <i>Merdeka</i> curriculum	2.9%	8.8%	32.4%	55.9 %

### 4.2 Lack

Teachers frequently reported challenges when teaching English with the current textbooks and ebooks. Expressly, 72.1% of respondents indicated that they often face difficulties related to the content, explanations, and language

usage in existing materials. It highlights a significant gap in the availability of suitable teaching resources, emphasizing the need for more effective and comprehensive materials. The findings show that most teachers need help with the existing materials, especially with content appropriateness, language acceptability, and relevance to Indonesian cultures. The reason is that it creates trouble for the student to comprehend what is being taught and the teachers to tailor learning to fit the needs of the students.

**Table 4.** Teachers-Students' Lack

No	Statements	Respond			
		(4) Very Often	(3) Often	(2) Seldom	(1) Never
1.	The teachers have occasionally had trouble teaching English subjects using the books or ebooks they are currently using. (Examples include book/ebook contents, book material explanations, language usage, etc.)	19,1 %	72,1 %	7,4%	1,5%

#### 4.3 Wants

**Table 5.** Teachers-Students' Wants

No	Statements	Respond			
		(4) Strongly Agree	(3) Agree	(2) Disagree	(1) Strongly Disagree
1.	The teachers feel enthusiastic when teaching using English textbooks in the form of ebooks	50 %	44,1 %	4,4%	1,5%
2.	The teachers feel enthusiastic when teaching using English textbooks in the form of ebooks that are suitable for the <i>Merdeka</i> curriculum	67,6 %	30,9 %	0	1,5%
3.	The teachers feel enthusiastic when teaching using English textbooks in the form of ebooks that have ebook packaging that is complete and easy to use	61,8 %	35,3 %	1,5 %	1,5 %
4.	The teachers feel happy when they use an English textbook in the form of an ebook that has an attractive and creative design and layout	58,8 %	39,7 %	0	1,5 %
5.	The teachers feel happy when they use English textbooks in the form of ebooks, which have up-to-date and contextual material topics suitable to students' life	76,5 %	20,6 %	1,5 %	1,5 %
6.	The teachers feel happy when using English textbooks in the form of ebooks, which contain material and assessments according to English language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting	76,5 %	22,1 %	0	1,5 %
7.	The teachers feel happy when they use English textbooks in the form of ebooks, which have interactive elements such as 3D models, pictures, animations, audio and video	64,7 %	32,4 %	0	2,9 %

The survey results regarding teachers' preferences for ebook features highlight a strong desire for resources that are not only educationally effective but also engaging and aligned with modern technological trends. A substantial



proportion of teachers expressed enthusiasm for English ebooks incorporating interactive elements, which can enhance student engagement and provide a more dynamic learning experience. Specifically, 67.6% of teachers emphasized the importance of having ebooks that are interactive and packaged in a complete and user-friendly manner. Additionally, 58.8% of respondents strongly agreed that an appealing and creative design and layout would make the ebooks more attractive and engaging for students.

Moreover, the content of the ebooks should be contextual and up-to-date, with 76.5% of teachers strongly agreeing that the material should relate to contemporary topics relevant to students' lives. This contextual relevance is crucial for maintaining student interest and ensuring learning is connected to real-world situations. Teachers also highlighted the need for ebooks to comprehensively cover all essential English skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting, with 76.5% in agreement on this point.

Finally, 64.7% of teachers strongly supported the inclusion of interactive features such as 3D models, animations, audio, and video within the ebooks. These elements are vital for fostering a more engaging and immersive learning environment catering to diverse learning styles and preferences. Overall, these findings emphasize the demand for ebooks that align with curriculum goals and incorporate innovative features to engage students in the learning process effectively.

## 5. Discussion

The findings from this study underscore the significant need for an English ebook model aligned with the *Merdeka* curriculum, addressing specific needs, wants, and lacks identified by English teachers in Indonesian Senior High Schools. This discussion explores the implications of these findings and connects them with relevant educational theories and literature.

The results revealed that a significant proportion of teachers (63%) do not currently use English coursebooks aligned with the *Merdeka* curriculum, and 55.9% need access to English ebooks. This gap highlights the need for resources that meet the curriculum's objectives and support language development following educational standards. It aligns with Kholis and Azmi (2023) and Tunaz and Aksu (2023), who emphasize the importance of understanding students' needs and learning expectations to design effective educational materials. The *Merdeka* curriculum's emphasis on flexibility and personalized learning requires resources that can be adapted to diverse student needs (Iqbal et al., 2023; Mulyadi et al., 2023).

The field of educational research has repeatedly highlighted the critical problem of curriculum-resource alignment, which these results highlight. Inconsistent student outcomes and ineffective curriculum implementation might result from a mismatch between curriculum objectives and available materials. Because of this, it is necessary to have a multi-stakeholder strategy in which policymakers, teachers, and curriculum designers work together to create context-specific materials like the *Merdeka* curriculum. Ensuring that all students, regardless of location, have access to quality resources is essential for fairness in education, which depends on alignment, which is critical for effective pedagogy.

The study found that 72.1% of teachers frequently need help with current English books/ebooks, citing issues with content depth, material explanations, and language use. It supports Hutchinson and Waters' (1990) argument that students often struggle to distinguish between their target competency and current proficiency, making it essential for educational materials to bridge this gap. By identifying these lacks, teachers can adapt teaching methods and materials to meet student needs better (Awaliyah & Tiarina, 2023).

This gap underscores the necessity of implementing quality control measures while creating educational materials. One way to address these difficulties is by ensuring that the resources regarding language and education are up to par. Localized examples and context-driven materials could enhance students' understanding of the material, an issue caused by a lack of relevant content.

A substantial percentage of teachers expressed enthusiasm for teaching with ebooks, with 67% favoring resources aligned with the *Merdeka* curriculum. This is consistent with Almunawaroh's (2023) findings on the positive impact of digital formats in English Language Teaching (ELT). Ebooks offer several advantages, including portability, accessibility, and the potential to motivate students (Yalman, 2015). The versatility and affordability of digital technology enhance its appeal in educational contexts, supporting Akpokodje & Ukwuoma's (2016) observations of cellular technology use in and out of school.

This enthusiasm for digital resources emphasizes their potential to transform classroom practices, particularly in areas with restricted access to traditional print materials. Teachers can establish more inclusive and adaptive learning

environments by using the beneficial aspects of digital formats, including interactivity and scalability. Additionally, there is a substantial opportunity to seamlessly integrate these resources into current teaching practices, given the growing prevalence of digital devices among students and teachers.

The study highlighted teachers' preference for ebooks with attractive design and layout, with 58% strongly agreeing. Anwar et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of clear and engaging design to prevent confusion and enhance comprehension. Ebooks incorporating interactive elements such as 3D models, animations, and multimedia components can provide a more engaging learning experience, as Bozkurt and Bozkaya (2015) suggested. These features support constructivist learning theories, which advocate for active learner engagement and interaction with content (Gibson & Gibb, 2011).

Interactive and engaging features are critical in personalized learning frameworks like the *Merdeka* curriculum, as they enhance student motivation and accommodate diverse learning styles. For example, auditory learners are likelier to engage with aural components, while visual learners benefit from animations and 3D models. This multi-modal approach to learning ensures that resources are inclusive and effective across various student profiles.

Teachers strongly agreed on the need for contextual and relevant content, with 76% emphasizing material that reflects students' lives. This aligns with situated learning theory, which posits that learning is more meaningful when connected to real-world contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Ebooks incorporating contemporary topics can enhance learning efficiency and make content more relatable and engaging for students (Çırakoğlu et al., 2022).

Integrating the current and relevant content is also consistent with worldwide educational trends, where relevance to students' personal and social situations is becoming increasingly important. This method improves understanding and promotes critical thinking by allowing students to connect classroom information to real-world applications. Furthermore, using culturally relevant examples allows students to better relate to the information, increasing participation and knowledge retention.

The insights from this study underscore the importance of developing educational resources that align with the *Merdeka* curriculum while incorporating interactive and engaging elements. These findings have significant implications for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers, highlighting the need for collaboration in designing resources that meet the evolving needs of students and teachers. Developing an English ebook model based on these insights can address current gaps and support the *Merdeka* curriculum's objectives, fostering a more dynamic, student-centered learning environment.

### 5.1 Implications of Findings

The implications of this study's findings are significant, particularly for curriculum development, teacher training, and educational policy:

1. Ebook models should incorporate multimedia and interactive aspects due to the preference for engaging, contextually relevant materials. Constructivist learning theories stress active involvement and personal connection with content. According to Bozkurt & Bozkaya (2015) and Gibson & Gibb (2011), interactive ebooks featuring animations, 3D models, and videos may help students learn and apply language skills.
2. The 76% of teachers who support content reflecting students' experiences highlight the significance of situated learning, which ties learning to real-world contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They argue that ebooks should include culturally appropriate and current content to interest students and strengthen the curriculum's student-centered approach. According to Çırakoğlu et al. (2022), students respect relatable and meaningful content.
3. Teachers must be proficient in digital tools and able to incorporate them into lesson plans to implement an interactive ebook model. Many teachers reported difficulties with existing materials. Thus, more training is needed to help them use and customize ebook content for their students. Professional development on digital literacy and curriculum-based adaptation could assist teachers in realizing the ebook's potential and solve this study's limitations.
4. Policymakers should prioritize digital resources and teacher support for the *Merdeka* curriculum's digital learning drive. Funding and resource allocation for high-quality digital learning tools that meet curriculum standards are necessary to overcome instructors' current restrictions. Accessible training and technical support could make these tools more useful in many educational settings.

### 5.2 Applications of Findings

The insights gained from this study offer several practical applications for the design and implementation of the

English ebook model:

1. Research suggests that an effective ebook model should incorporate interactive features like multimedia and customizable information to accommodate varied learning methods. This design would make learning more individualized and exciting, supporting Merdeka's goals. The ebook can also help students retain and use language skills by including localized information that reflects Indonesian culture and current events.
2. Ebooks with audio, video, and interactive quizzes enhance accessibility for auditory and visual learners. According to the report, teachers want engaging and fun learning resources. Interactive content lets students practice language skills at their own pace, encouraging Merdeka-required autonomous learning and self-assessment.
3. Collaboratively developing the ebook model with teacher input ensures that content fulfills classroom needs and addresses teaching obstacles. Developers can use teachers' comments on content, interactive features, and instructional design to build compelling and implementable materials.
4. The proposed ebook model is unique. Therefore, a pilot testing phase would help instructors evaluate its impact and gather input for further modification. Pilot tests in several Indonesian locations can uncover regional learning gaps and make the ebook more globally relevant. Develop an ebook that facilitates meaningful learning throughout Indonesia's diverse educational landscape by iteratively updating the model based on feedback.

## 6. Conclusion

This study comprehensively analyzes the need for an English ebook model tailored to the *Merdeka* curriculum for Indonesian Senior High School students. Through an extensive need analysis involving 68 English teachers, the study identified significant gaps in the availability of resources that align with the Merdeka curriculum's objectives and highlighted vital features that teachers desire in educational materials. The findings indicate that most teachers need access to English ebooks that meet the Merdeka curriculum standards, underscoring the necessity for resources that support effective language development and align with global educational trends. The enthusiasm expressed by teachers for interactive and engaging digital formats highlights the potential of ebooks to enhance teaching and learning experiences. Interactive elements, contextual content, and comprehensive coverage of essential English skills are crucial features teachers seek in an ebook model, reflecting a shift towards more dynamic and student-centered learning environments. These insights have important implications for curriculum developers, teachers, and policymakers, emphasizing the need for collaboration in designing resources that address the evolving needs of students and teachers. By developing an English ebook model incorporating these findings, educational stakeholders can support the Merdeka curriculum's objectives and foster a more engaging and practical learning experience for Indonesian Senior High School students. Future research should explore the implementation and evaluation of the developed ebook model to assess its effectiveness and impact on student learning outcomes. Expanding the scope of the study to include diverse regions within Indonesia can also provide a more comprehensive understanding of educational resource requirements across the country. In conclusion, developing an English ebook model based on the *Merdeka* curriculum represents a significant step towards improving educational resources and supporting the curriculum's goals. By addressing the specific needs and preferences of teachers and students, this initiative can enhance the quality of English language education in Indonesia and prepare students for success in a rapidly changing world.

## 7. Recommendations for Future Research

This study offers significant insights and suggests various research opportunities. This study could further be expanded to other Indonesian locations to understand educational needs and the efficacy of the ebook model. The long-term effects of ebook use on student learning outcomes, particularly in establishing the *Merdeka* curriculum competencies, should be examined in future longitudinal studies. Additionally, teacher and student comments on ebook features may help optimize the model for varied educational environments and learning preferences.

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### **Authors contributions**

Nur Azmi Rohimajaya was responsible for the study design and revising the manuscript. Rudi Hartono was responsible for data collection. Issy Yuliasri drafted the manuscript and Sri Wuli Fitriati revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. The authors contributed according to their respective roles.

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