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Kurikulum Merdeka for Arabic language learning according to Piaget's Cognitive Development theory

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of the Arabic educational process can't be separated from the curriculum that has been set and implemented properly. Kurikulum Merdeka, especially in Arabic language learning, is a new curriculum that has not been tested implementatively after its launch and is thought to be not following the level of student learning ability. Jean Piaget has given birth to a comprehensive theory of cognitive development which is the basis for the creation and development of educational curricula in the world. The purpose of cognitive development in Arabic language learning is to increase understanding to obtain new information. This study aims to determine the suitability and analyze the relevance of competence and objectives of Kurikulum Merdeka for Arabic language learning with Jean Piaget's cognitive theory. This study employs a descriptive analysis method along with a qualitative research design. While the method used is the method of observation and literature study. The data used is qualitative in the form of words, sentences, discourse, text, and the entire contents of Kurikulum Merdeka for Arabic language learning. The results of the analysis show that Kurikulum Merdeka for Arabic language learning achieves good results in its suitability and relevance to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development.

ABSTRAK

Keberhasilan proses belajar mengajar bahasa Arab tidak lepas dari kurikulum yang telah ditetapkan serta diterapkan dengan baik. Kurikulum Merdeka khususnya dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab merupakan kurikulum baru yang belum teruji secara implementatif setelah diluncurkannya dan diduga belum sesuai dengan tingkatan kemampuan belajar siswa. Jean Piaget telah melahirkan teori perkembangan kognitif yang komprehensif yang menjadi dasar dalam pembuatan dan pengembangan kurikulum pendidikan di dunia. Tujuan perkembangan kognitif dalam pembelajaran bahasa arab adalah untuk meningkatkan pemahaman untuk memperoleh informasi baru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kesesuaian dan menganalisis relevansi kompetensi dan tujuan kurikulum Merdeka untuk pembelajaran bahasa Arab dengan teori kognitif Jean Piaget. Desain penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif analisis. Adapun metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode observasi dan studi literatur. Data kualitatif yang digunakan berupa kata, kalimat, wacana, teks, dan keseluruhan isi kurikulum Merdeka untuk pembelajaran bahasa Arab. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa Kurikulum Merdeka untuk pembelajaran bahasa Arab mencapai hasil yang baik pada kesesuaian dan relevansinya dengan teori perkembangan kognitif Jean Piaget.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Merdeka; pembelajaran bahasa Arab; perkembangan kognitif; teori Jean Piaget

INTRODUCTION

Suwarna Pringgawidagda said that learning is a relatively permanent behavior change resulting from repeated practice (Ridho, 2018). In the learning process, there are two main activities, namely learning, which students must carry out, and teaching, which must be carried out by the teacher where the direction of these two activities is to achieve the goals that have been determined in their form, namely in the form of learning outcomes both cognitive, affective and psychomotor (Fauziah et al., 2021).

Arabic language learning as a second or foreign language has long been taught formally and non-formally in Indonesia, from elementary school to university and college level (Badi'ah, 2021). This is proof that Arabic has a very crucial role in Indonesian society. Therefore, Arabic language learning is one of the core lessons since establishing Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren and madrasah (Jailani, 2022).

However, it can be said that Arabic language learning is complex for those who are not native speakers of the language so not all teachers and students achieve the goal of learning and Arabic language learning at school. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to develop the existing learning curriculum (Dwipratama, 2023). One of the foundations in curriculum development is the foundation of psychology, one of which is focusing on cognitive development to be later adapted to the preparation of the curriculum. Therefore, a quality curriculum can be seen from its content and suitability with students' cognitive abilities (Anidar, 2017).

Kurikulum Merdeka, especially in Arabic language learning includes a new curriculum that has not been tested implementatively after its launch and is thought to be not following the level of student learning ability (Fitria & Sukirman, 2023), and process of implementing the curriculum still there are many problems also improvements (Qomaruddin, 2020; Supriyoko *et al*., 2022). This argument is based on the findings of an interview with one of the Arabic language teachers at the State Madrasah Aliyah and the author's observations through a literature study of several journals that have tried to implement Kurikulum Merdeka in several schools, both at the elementary and high school levels. Towards implementing this curriculum and seeing the little research that analyzes Kurikulum Merdeka, especially in Arabic language learning, further research on the suitability of goals and the relevance of competencies is urgently needed.

Various theories are appropriate for compiling and completing a lesson. One of the educational psychologists explained that one theory that has been widely implemented and is quite credible in the preparation of learning curricula is Jean Piaget's cognitive theory (Rahmah, 2022). Jean Piaget highlighted the need for a holistic approach to learning, in which a child builds understanding through investigating and experiencing their surrounding (Gbeleyi et al., 2022). Piaget divided the learning process into three stages: assimilation, accommodation, and equilibrium (balancing) (Carey et al., 2015). Piaget also suggested that the learning process must be adapted to the stages of cognitive development which are divided into four stages, namely sensorimotor (children aged 1.5- 2 years), pre-operational (2-8 years), concrete operational (7-8 years), and formal operational (14 years or more) (Ibda, 2015).

Researchers have reviewed several previous studies related to learning curriculum analysis as has been done by Priantini et al. with the title "Analysis of the Merdeka Curriculum and the Freedom Learning Platform to Create Quality Education" (Priantini et al., 2022), and relating to curriculum analysis based on by the theory of Jean Piaget which has been researched by Wahyuni et al. with the title of the journal "Merdeka Learning in the Perspective of Jean Piaget's Cognitivism Learning Theory" (Wahyuni et al., 2023), as well as research on the analysis of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum that has been carried out by Sasmita and Darmansyah with the title research "Analysis of Factors Causing Teacher Obstacles in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (Case Study: SDN 21 Koto Tuo, Kec.

Baso)" (Sasmita & Darmansyah, 2022). From all of this research, it can be concluded that Kurikulum Merdeka has succeeded in solving learning problems in the digital era and post-pandemic with an independent learning system that emphasizes the learning process by building student character. However, several things become new problems in the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka, one of which is that Kurikulum Merdeka especially in language learning, is not following the level of student learning abilities. The entire research still includes an analysis of Kurikulum Merdeka and its implementation in general.

Therefore, this study is intended to analyze Kurikulum Merdeka for Arabic language learning according to Jean Piaget's cognitive theory. This study aims to determine the suitability of the objectives and competencies of Kurikulum Merdeka or Arabic language learning and its relevance to Jean Piaget's cognitive theory. The novelty of this research compared to previous studies is the focus of studying Kurikulum Merdeka which is devoted to Arabic language learning according to Jean Piaget's cognitive theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Analysis of Kurikulum Merdeka

Curriculum analysis is the process of identifying subjects and educational programs contained in the curriculum for evaluation of the curriculum and further development (Firdaus et al., 2022). In developing the curriculum, four foundations must be used and built as foundations, one of which is the foundation of psychology (Azis, 2018). This psychological foundation means that in compiling the curriculum it is worth paying attention to matters relating to the characteristics of students (Bahri, 2017) which in reality are very diverse and have different levels of development at each level of education (Fitriani, 2018). Therefore the curriculum is required to be able to be formulated to the needs of students because the value of benefits for the development and progress of students is one of the things that should be considered in preparing the curriculum (Mubarok et al., 2021).

Kurikulum Merdeka is a curriculum concept introduced in Indonesia. It emphasizes a more flexible and student-centered approach to education. The term "Merdeka" translates to "independent" or "freedom" in Indonesian, suggesting a departure from traditional, rigid curricula to allow for greater freedom in teaching and learning methods (Faoziyah & Izzah, 2021). The purpose of Kurikulum Merdeka is to address the limitations of traditional curricula and to promote a more holistic and adaptable education system (Ferary, 2021; Sumarsih et al., 2022). This curriculum aims to foster critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and creativity among students. It seeks to empower students to become active learners who can apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. Kurikulum Merdeka places an emphasis on developing a wide range of competencies beyond just academic knowledge. These may include critical thinking, communication skills, collaboration, adaptability, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship. The curriculum aims to prepare students for the challenges of the modern world by equipping them with skills that are applicable in various domains, including the job market (Simatupang & Yuhertiana, 2021).

Kurikulum Merdeka is also a curriculum with diverse intra-curricular learning by offering a curriculum structure that is more flexible and focuses on essential material to provide flexibility for teachers to teach according to the needs and characteristics of students (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022; Hutabarat et al., 2022). This curriculum was officially launched by the Minister of Education and Culture in February 2022 as one of the Merdeka Belajar programs to improve the quality of learning (Aprima & Sari, 2022).

Compared to traditional curricula, Kurikulum Merdeka stands out for its focus on flexibility and student-centeredness. Traditional curricula often emphasize rote memorization and standardized testing, whereas Kurikulum Merdeka seeks to move away from this approach (Komarudin & Aziz, 2022). It encourages educators to tailor their teaching methods to the needs and interests of individual students, thereby promoting a more personalized learning experience (Oksari et al., 2022).

Additionally, Kurikulum Merdeka may differ from other curricula in terms of assessment methods. It might place less emphasis on traditional exams and more on project-based assessments, presentations, and other forms of evaluation that showcase practical application of knowledge (Mubarok et al., 2021).

Kurikulum Merdeka for Arabic Language Learning

As written in the material belonging to Kurikulum Merdeka development team, Arabic language learning in Kurikulum Merdeka is packed with characteristics oriented towards the realization of three things, namely language competence (*al kafaah al lughawiyyah*), communicative competence (*al kafaah al ittishaliyyah*), and cultural competence (*al kafaah al saqafiyyah*).

Kurikulum Merdeka divides Arabic language learning into six phases, namely Phase A (class I-II), Phase B (class III-IV), Phase C (class V-VI), Phase D (class VII-IX), Phase E (class X), Phase F (class XI-XII). And progress is divided into four elements: Reading and Viewing, Writing and Presenting, Listening, and Speaking (retrieved from http://repository.unj.ac.id/38701/; see **Table 1**):

Table 1. Phases and Progress of Arabic Language Learning in Kurikulum Merdeka

ELEMENT	PHASE A (Class I-II)	PHASE B (Class III-IV)	PHASE C (Class V-VI)
Listening	Intensive listening: Students can listen language components such as phonemes, words, intonation, discourse markers	Listening for responsive: Learners able to understand commands, greetings, questions	Listening for responsive: Learners able to understand the main idea and make a response simple
ELEMENT	**PHASE A (Class I-II)**	**PHASE B (Class III-IV)**	**PHASE C (Class V-VI)**
Speaking	Imitation speaking: Students can imitate words, phrases, and fifth	Speak intensively: Learners can use Arabic according to grammatical phraseological, lexical, or phonological as a global communication tool	Responsive speaking: Learners can respond by asking, answering in conversation very simple as a global communication tool
Reading and viewing	Read-View perceptive: Learners can read letters and understand words, and punctuation in the form of written text or visual text	Read-View selective: Learners can read and understand very discourse simply in written text or visual text	Read-View selective: Learners can read and understand brief discourse written text or visual text
ELEMENT	**PHASE A (Class I-II)**	**PHASE B (Class III-IV)**	**PHASE C (Class V-VI)**

Writing and presenting	Write-present imitation: Learners can imitate and display letters, words, punctuation marks, and sentences very simply. this category includes abilities to spell correctly.	Write-present intensively: Learners can produce and describe the vocabulary according to grammar and context.	Write-present intensively: Learners can produce and describe the vocabulary according to grammar and context.
ELEMENT	**PHASE D (Class VII-IX)**	**PHASE E (Class X)**	**PHASE F (Class XI-XII)**
Listening	Listening for selective: Learners are able explore that information heard	Listening for selective: Learners are able evaluate that information heard	Listening for extensive: Learners are able make a response from heard information
Speaking	Talking interactively: Learners can interact with simple text as a tool for global communication	Talking interactively: Learners can interact with the complex text as a tool for global communication	Speaking extensively: Students can speak producing language orally as a tool for global communication
Reading and viewing	Read-View interactive: Learners can understand and reflect on several paragraphs in the text written or visual text interactive	Read-View interactive: Learners can understand and reflect on several paragraphs in the text written or visual text interactive	Read-View Extensive: Learners can understand and reflect on written text or visual text short stories/articles/ essays/reports/books
Writing and presenting	Writing presents responsively: Learners can connect and present the sentence inside paragraphs on discourse limited and make an order logically connected of two or three paragraphs	Writing presents responsively: Learners can connect and present the sentence inside paragraphs on discourse limited, and make an order logically connected of four or five paragraphs	Writing presents extensively: Learners can produce written language freely and deeply and are able to display it in the context of the theme.

Source: Kurikulum Merdeka Development Team (Mursyid et al., 2023)

The specifications that will be analyzed in this study are the objectives and competencies of Arabic language learning for phase F (class XI-XII). Based on information from **Table 1**, Some changes need to be made to the learning objectives, resources, methods, and media using information and communication technology (Mahyudin *et al.*, 2021).

Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

According to Jean Piaget, the learning process consists of three stages, namely assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration or balancing (Nainggolan & Daeli, 2021). Aunurrahman stated that in his theory, Piaget argued that in general, all children develop through the same sequence, even though the type and their level of experience differ from one another (Barrouillet, 2015). The mental development of children occurs gradually from the next stage of moral development (Yahya, 2018).

Santrock stated that through his observations, Piaget divided the stages of individual cognitive development into 4 stages where each stage has different characteristics based on age level and is arranged sequentially and cannot be reversed because the previous stage underlies the next stage. These four stages are the basis for the next stage. are the sensorimotor stage (children aged 1.5-2 years) (Khiyarusoleh, 2016) the preoperational stage (2-8 years) (Marinda, 2020), the concrete operational stage (7/8 years to 12/14 years) (Mifroh, 2020), and the operational stage formal (14 years or more) (Hanafi & Sumitro, 2020).

As mentioned in Jaziela Huwaida's research that Jean Piaget emphasized the learning process rather than learning outcomes. In other research there also mentioned effective teaching practices based on their own experience (Chaturvedi *et al.,* 2021). For a cognitivist experience, learning does not only involve the relationship between stimulus and response, more than that learning involves a very complex thought process (Huwaida et al., 2023). This is relevant to Kurikulum Merdeka which emphasizes process rather than results (Hakiky et al, 2023). This is proven by the implementation of Merdeka Belajar which emphasizes the learning process with the formation of student character (Jojor & Sihotang, 2022; Nugraha, 2022). Therefore, this study aims to determine the suitability of the objectives and competencies of Kurikulum Merdeka for Arabic language learning with Jean Piaget's cognitive theory.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive analysis method, by reviewing and qualifying data from the object being studied and then testing it with scientific theory to provide an overall analytical picture that can be understood clearly and has strong substance (Sholikhah, 2016). A qualitative approach in a descriptive analysis study uses primary data and secondary data obtained from the results of unstructured interviews with respondents who are Arabic language teachers with Kurikulum Merdeka and Kurikulum Merdeka development team, as well as literature studies related to analysis of Kurikulum Merdeka and Jean Piaget's cognitive theory.

The main variables in this study are Kurikulum Merdeka and Arabic language learning. From these two variables, it will then be associated with Jean Piaget's Cognitive Theory, so that it can analyze the suitability of preparing material based on the phases and progress in the curriculum. This research has several stages based on Setyosari's book "*Metode Penelitian Pendidikan dan Pengembangan*", namely: 1) Literature study related to research and problem formulation, 2) Data collection using library study techniques, interviews, observations, and documents that are appropriate and accurate with research, 3) Processing of data sources from respondents who are the focus of research namely Arabic language teachers with a Kurikulum Merdeka and Kurikulum Merdeka development team, then taking an analysis of data processing, 4) Conclusions and Suggestions related to research.

The instruments of this study were compiled based on qualifications in Jean Piaget's cognitive theory which are associated with mastery of aspects of four language learning skills: 1) listening, 2) speaking, 3) reading, 4) writing. The specifications to be examined in Kurikulum Merdeka are the objectives and competencies of Arabic language learning for phase F (classes XI-XII). The three stages of data analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions, were completed. While the provisions of observation and referential sufficiency are used to determine the data's validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kurikulum Merdeka for Arabic Learning has different objectives and competencies in each phase. The phases to be discussed in this study are phase F for classes XI and XII or the equivalent of grades two and three in high school. Four elements must be implemented in Arabic language learning in Kurikulum Merdeka, namely: 1) Listening, 2) Speaking, 3) Reading and Viewing, and 4) Writing and Presenting. The following are the objectives and competencies for Arabic language learning according to Kurikulum

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Merdeka for phase F (grades XI-XII): 1) Listen. Listening extensively: Students can make responses from the information heard. 2) Speak. Speak extensively: Students can speak by producing spoken language as a global communication tool. 3) Reading and viewing. Extensive Reading-Viewing: Students can understand and reflect on written texts or visual texts in the form of short stories, articles, essays, reports, books. 4) Write and present. Writing-Extensive Presenting: Students can produce written language freely and in-depth and can present it in context according to the theme. In this phase, students can use technology to improve their skills in Arabic Learning (Alsubaie, 2022).

If adjusted to the four stages of Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, then phase F (grades XI-XII) or the equivalent of grades two and three in high school falls into the group of formal operational stages (14 years or more). According to Piaget, at this point, people have begun to think more abstractly, idealistically, and logically about concrete events (Marinda, 2020). The abstract quality of formal operational thinking is evident in verbal problem-solving (Nainggolan & Daeli, 2021). The concrete operational thinker needs to look at the concrete elements A, B, and C to draw the logical conclusion that if A = B and B = C, then A = C. On the other hand, the formal operational thinker can solve the problem even if this problem is only presented verbally based on Bjorklund's publications with title "*Children's Thinking: Cognitive Development and Individual Differences*" by Sage Publishing.

Formal operational thinkers are capable of abstracting as well as idealizing and imagining potential outcomes. Children at this age start to make assumptions about the ideal characteristics they want in both themselves and others based on Klahr & Wallace's book with title *"Cognitive Development: An Information-Processing View"* by Routledge. The formal operational concept also states that children can develop deductive hypotheses about how to solve problems and reach conclusions systematically (Basri, 2018).

Children can build on their concrete operations throughout this time to create more complex processes. Progress in children during this period is that they do not need to think with the help of concrete objects or events, they can think abstractly (Bujuri, 2018). Children are referred to as formal operations because they are already able to comprehend the structure of the argument and are not perplexed by the opposing views. The main characteristics of development at the formal operational stage are hypotheses, abstract, deductive, and inductive as well as logic and probability. At this stage, the child's language is more developed and can appreciate ideas in language (Nabila, 2021).

Discussion

The following are aspects of the goals and competencies of phase F in Kurikulum Merdeka for Arabic language learning and their relevance to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development: the first aspect is Listening (*Al Istima'*): In this element, students are directed to listen extensively with the aim that students can make responses from the information heard. This demonstrates that students must be able to critically evaluate what they are taught and be ready to offer solutions to any problems they encounter. This is in line with Jean Piaget's cognitive theory on the formal operational stage. Children are anticipated to be able to idealize and envision possibilities at this age (Carey et al., 2015). Listening in phase F can stimulate a child's thinking and encourage him to idealize what he hears. Meanwhile, responding to what children hear helps them develop ways of thinking by imagining logical possibilities that they can reason with.

The second aspect is Speaking (*Al Kalam*): In the speaking element, students are directed to speak extensively, with the aim that students can speak by producing spoken language as a global communication tool. This requires students to speak Arabic in the form of sentences with the vocabulary they have. That way, students can converse with each other in Arabic so that their vocabulary increases and can develop their speaking skills. This is in line with Jean Piaget's cognitive theory at the formal

operational stage. Children throughout this time do not need to worry about concrete things or occurrences; instead, they are able to think abstractly (Iba & Munakata, 2019). The aspect of speaking in phase F helps children to think without the aid of tools or objects. They think through speaking practice by developing the vocabulary they already have, so they don't need the help of objects or props and other supports in developing their speaking skills.

The next or the third aspect is Reading and Viewing (*Al Qira'ah wa At Tahlil*): In this element, students are directed to read and watch extensively, with the aim that students can understand and reflect on written texts or visual texts in the form of short stories, articles, essays, reports, or books independently without any assistance from the teacher. This is in line with Jean Piaget's cognitive theory at the formal operational stage. Children are already capable of comprehending the structure of an argument and are not perplexed by the opposing viewpoint-based Goswami's book with title "*Cognitive Development and Cognitive Neuroscience: The Learning Brain*" by Routledge. The reading aspect for phase F in Kurikulum Merdeka requires children to understand and reflect independently on written and visual texts, in this case, the teacher cannot intervene in the process of understanding and reflecting on students, thus helping students to understand something without any intervention from other parties or things. others that have the potential to make them confused and lose focus.

The fourth and the last aspect is Writing and Presenting (*Al Kitabah wa At Ta'bir*): In this last element, students are directed to be able to write and present extensively, with the aim that students can produce written language freely and in-depth and can present it in context according to the theme. This is consistent with Jean Piaget's cognitive theory at the formal operational stage. Children can create deductive theories about how to address issues and draw conclusions in a methodical manner based on Kyrle's book chapter with title *"Cognitive Development"* from Book "*Do I Dare Disturb the Universe*" by Routledge. In the writing aspect for phase F in Arabic language learning according to Kurikulum Merdeka, children do not only copywriting but also present extensively, so that children can produce written language freely. According to Jean Piaget's theory of development, at this stage, children can develop deductive hypotheses which are realized through free writing activities, then solve problems and reach systematic conclusions by presenting them in new contexts but still according to the theme.

Based on the description above, implementing the Independent Curriculum in learning Arabic aligns with Jean Piaget's theory. In practice, the Independent Curriculum prioritizes the process of students compared to the results they obtain (Wahyuni et al., 2023). This causes the existence of an ideal environment for implementing education to be important to note (Sriandila et al., 2023) because cognitive development is strongly influenced by the environmental condition students learn. In each phase, students are always required to carry out an activity that these students will significantly affect the learning experience they get, especially in learning Arabic.

CONCLUSION

After the researcher finished analyzing the goals and competencies of Kurikulum Merdeka in Arabic language learning for phase F or equivalent to grades two and three in high school, it was found that the goals and competencies were relevant to Kurikulum Merdeka and Jean Piaget's cognitive theory as evidenced by the compatibility between curriculum competencies and cognitive theory competencies. Jean Piaget is at the formal operational stage for children over 12 years of age. The competencies are: The ability of children or students to idealize and imagine possibilities, children can create deductive

theories about how to address issues and draw conclusions in a methodical manner, children can create more sophisticated operations using their concrete operations, children are able to think abstractly and do not require the use of concrete things or events to do so, the children can comprehend the structure of the argument and is not misled by the opposing viewpoint.

From the recent conclusions, it is hoped that the curriculum makers after this should select the cognitive level of the curriculum content so that the material compiled based on the curriculum is following the cognitive level. As for the compilers and developers of Kurikulum Merdeka, the final results of this research can be used as input and consideration in developing or revising the next Kurikulum Merdeka, especially in the preparation of phases, progress, and implementation of competency tests and material in the curriculum so that it covers all Jean Piaget's cognitive levels. For future researchers, if they want to do similar research, they should fully understand each cognitive level according to Jean Piaget.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In relation to the publishing of this essay, the author hereby certifies that there is no conflict of interest. The author attests that the information and material in the article are original.

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