

STUDENTS' TOPIC INTEREST IN LEARNING ENGLISH BASED ON KURIKULUM MERDEKA AT SMPN IN SUNGAI SERUT DISTRICT IN THE CITY OF BENGKULU

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KEYWORDS

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Merdeka,
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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this survey research were to find out students' topic interest in learning English based on Kurikulum Merdeka at SMPN in Sungai Serut District in the City of Bengkulu. The population was 343 grade eighth students and the samples were 134 students. The instrument of the research was questionnaire. In terms of classification, it comprised three aspects (enjoyment, attention, and curiosity). The results of this research showed that some of the students' topic interest were respectively as followed: Lyrics of the songs (very high interest), paying attention (high interest), ability and willingness in implementing actions (high interest) recount text (high interest), greeting cards, location of things, comparison, and notice (high interest), obligation and prohibition, and general truth (high interest) command, invitation, and asking for permission (high interest), past activities (high interest) current activities (high interest). Thus, the highest level of students' interest was lyrics of the songs and the lowest interest was current activities. It was suggested that the teachers should enhance or optimize students' interest in learning English.

KATA KUNCI

Kurikulum
Merdeka,
Pembelajaran
Bahasa Inggris,
Topik yang
Diminati Siswa,

ABSTRAK

Tujuan dari penelitian survei ini adalah untuk mengetahui topik yang diminati siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris berdasarkan Kurikulum Merdeka di SMPN di Kecamatan Sungai Serut, Kota Bengkulu. Populasinya adalah 343 siswa kelas delapan dan sampelnya adalah 134 siswa. Instrumen penelitian ini adalah kuesioner. Dalam hal klasifikasi, terdiri dari tiga aspek (kesenangan, perhatian, dan rasa ingin tahu). Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa beberapa topik yang diminati siswa adalah sebagai berikut: Lirik lagu (minat sangat tinggi), meminta perhatian (minat yang tinggi), kemampuan dan kemauan dalam mengimplementasikan tindakan (minat yang tinggi) teks recount (minat yang tinggi), kartu ucapan, lokasi benda atau hal-hal lain, perbandingan, dan pemberitahuan (minat yang tinggi), keharusan dan larangan, dan kebenaran umum (minat yang tinggi), perintah, ajakan, dan meminta izin (minat yang tinggi) kegiatan di waktu lampau (minat yang tinggi), kegiatan saat ini (minat yang tinggi). Dengan demikian, minat siswa tertinggi adalah lirik lagu dan minat terendah adalah kegiatan saat ini. Disarankan agar para guru meningkatkan atau mengoptimalkan minat siswa dalam belajar bahasa Inggris.

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INTRODUCTION

Syatir (2011) states that interest could give students more motivation to use their abilities. Interest is also considered as an essential factor that contribute to students' success in their chosen educational fields. It is because when students have a genuine interest in their chosen subject, their chances of achieving success in that field increase. People who are interested in English, for example, would gain an

understanding of the language much faster than people who are not interested in English. As Tobias (1994) stated that for readers, studying and remembering interesting topics are easier than studying and remembering other topics.

Interest is critical in learning because if an individual lacks interest in acquiring knowledge about something, it would not work well, whereas if a person is interested in the object of the problem, good results can be expected. When learning English, some students find it hard to understand what they read, like figuring out the main idea and answering questions and in order to do better, students need to know language well, including words and how sentences are put together (Rachman, 2018).

There are many attempts made by researchers to investigate about research that related to the students' interest in learning English. It means that the study of students' topics interest is considered important as a tool to undertake a proper learning process for them. However, analysing the students' interest in learning English might display such terribly wide results to be analysed. Moreover, the analysis result probably would too general and less comprehensive. Therefore, the researcher tries to focus on a particular domain for the students' interest in learning English that is the topics' interest. Specifically, the students' interest in this study are divided into 3 aspects, enjoyment, attention, and curiosity, as suggested by Nurjanah (2011). Thus, the limitation for this research is only to know about students' topic interest in learning English based on Kurikulum Merdeka at eighth grade of Junior High School which only focused on Junior Public Schools in Sungai Serut district of Bengkulu City. As a guideline, the following questions are as followed: 1) How is students' interest on each topic in learning English based on Kurikulum Merdeka? 2) Which topic is students most interested in?

The objectives of this study were to find out students' interest on each topic in learning English based on Kurikulum Merdeka and to know which topic is students most interested in.

METHODS

Participants / Subject / Population and Sample

The research design that would be used in this study was a survey. Survey is a unique method for gathering information from a diverse group of individuals, offering advantages such as access to a large population for improved statistics, the capacity to collect abundant data, and the use of validated models (Jones et al., 2013). From the population, the researcher chose the students at eighth grade of SMPN 7 Kota Bengkulu and SMPN 10 Kota Bengkulu as the samples of the research. Arikunto (2010) stated that if the population is less than a hundred, the entire population must be used as the sample. However, if the population was one hundred or more, it should be taken at a rate of 10% -15%, 20% -25%, or even higher. In this research, the researcher used random sampling. There were 383 students at eighth grade of both Junior High Schools in Sungai Serut District, 180 students of eighth grade in SMPN 7 Kota Bengkulu and 203 students of eighth grade in SMPN 10 Kota Bengkulu. The researcher took 35% of all students of eighth grade or 134 students in total from both schools.

Instruments

This research used questionnaire which consisted of 13 topics and in Bahasa or Indonesian. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher. There were three indicators in the research which were enjoyment, attention, and curiosity (Nurjanah, 2011) and also this was the reference for making the questionnaire. The researcher used Kurikulum Merdeka as reference for the topics in the questionnaire. After checked the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher analysed it by using the interpretation guidelines according to SPSS Indonesia to make sure if the research questionnaire is valid. Also, in order to collect the data, the researcher used the following steps: 1) The questionnaire used Google Form, 2) The researcher shared the questionnaire, 3) The researcher collected the questionnaire from the students after they filled the questionnaire, 4) The data was analysed by the researcher, 5) The data of the questionnaire were displayed by the researcher.

Data Analysis Procedures

In analysing the answers or the responses of the questionnaire, the researcher used Scoring Scale. The researcher used four scales as followed: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

Table 1. Scoring Scale

Category	Scale
a. Strongly Agree	4
b. Agree	3
c. Disagree	2
d. Strongly Disagree	1

After collecting the data, the data analysis that was used was this following formula:

$$P = F/N \times 100\%$$

Notation:

P = the Percentage

F = the Frequently

N = Number of Respondents (Sugiyono, 2013).

Then, to calculate the level of students' topic interest in learning English, the researcher classified the score ranges to get the description relevant to each specific topic. In order to determine the range of criteria scores, the following formula was used:

$\text{Score range} = \frac{\text{the highest score} - \text{the lowest score}}{\text{max score}}$	
Highest score = 4	Lowest score = 1

(Riduwan, 2011)

FINDINGS

1. The Students' Interest on Each Topic in Learning English Based on Kurikulum Merdeka

The researcher had done research toward 134 eighth grade students of SMPN in Sungai Serut district of Bengkulu city, SMPN 7 Kota Bengkulu and SMPN 10 Kota Bengkulu. The researcher used questionnaire which consisted of 63 statements related to 13 topics based on Kurikulum Merdeka.

According to the data analysis, it was revealed that the average interest of students in topic 13 was 3.30. In average, the students displayed very high enthusiasm in topic 13.

Table 2. Topic 13: Lyrics of the songs

Topic 13: Lyrics of the songs	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.30	Very High

Source: The Data Analysis Result (2022)

In topic 1, its average for students' interest was 3.20 which resulting from the total score in topic 1 divided with numbers of students' answer.

Table 3. Topic 1: Asking for attention, checking for understanding, showing appreciation, asking and giving opinion

Topic 1: Asking for attention, checking for understanding, showing appreciation, asking and giving opinion	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.20	High

The average of students' interest in topic 2 was 3.18. Based on the average, the students have high interest in topic 2.

Table 4. Topic 2: Ability and willingness in implementing action

Topic 2: Ability and willingness in implementing action	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.18	High

According to the data analysis, it was found that the average interest of students in topic 11 was 3.17. The mean score of topic 11 which obtained by students' answer of questions 55-57 was 3.17 that showed the students have high interest in it.

Table 5. Topic 11: Recount text

Topic 11: Recount text	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.17	High

The average for topic 5 was 3.15 which showed the students are interested in it. The analysis result of students' interest in topic 5 can be seen in table 7 below.

Table 6. Topic 5: Greeting cards

Topic 5: Greeting cards	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.15	High

It showed that the mean score of this topic was 3.15 which was acquired from students' answers of the questions 34-36.

Based on the result of data analysis, it showed that the mean score of students' interest in topic 6 was 3.15. In average, it showed that the students have high interest in topic 6.

Table 7. Topic 6: Location of things

Topic 6: Location of things	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.15	High

The average level of students' interest in topic 9 was found to be 3.15 according to the data analysis result. It was obtained from students' answer of questions 49-51.

Table 8. Topic 9: Comparison

Topic 9: Comparison	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.15	High

The analysis of the frequency distribution revealed that out of 134 students, the students have high interest in topic 9 that consisted of three questions in it which was based on Kurikulum Merdeka.

According to the data analysis result, the students generally have high interest in topic 12. It showed that the mean score was 3.15 from answering questions number 58-60 by students in topic 12.

Table 9. Topic 12: Notice

Topic 12: Notice	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.15	High

Based on the result of data analysis, it showed that the average of students' interest in topic 3 was 3.14 where it was acquired from the answers of 134 students in questions number 19-24.

Table 10. Topic 3: Obligation and Prohibition

Topic 3: Obligation and Prohibition	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.14	High

The average of students' interest in topic 7 according to the result of data analysis was 3.14. It was obtained from answering questions number 40-45 by the students. It was showed that the students have high eagerness in topic 7.

Table 11. Topic 7: General truth

Topic 7: General truth	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.14	High

According to the result of data analysis, it was discovered that the mean score of topic 4 was 3.12. It was calculated from the students' responses to questions 25-33.

Table 12. Topic 4: Command, invitation, and asking for permission

Topic 4: Command, invitation, and asking for permission	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.12	High

It showed that the mean score of topic 4 was obtained by divided the total scores with numbers of students' answer.

It was revealed that 134 students expressed high interest in topic 10 which it was discovered that the mean score for topic 10 was 3.11 and it calculated from students' responses to questions 52-54.

Table 13. Topic 10: Past activities

Topic 10: Past activities	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.11	High

The average of students' interest in topic 8 was 3.08 based on the result of data analysis. It was showed on the table below.

Table 14. Topic 8: Current Activities

Topic 8: Current Activities	N	Mean	Category
	134	3.08	High

Based on the analysis of the frequency distribution, it displayed that from students' answers of questions number 46-48, the students showed high enthusiasm in this topic.

2. Students' Most Interested Topic

There was one topic that the students most interested in, and that was topic 13 which mean score was 3.30 of students who interested in it. On the other hand, topic 8 had the lowest mean score which was 3.08 of students interested in it.

Table 15: The Mean Scores of Students' Topic Interest

Topic	No. of Questions	Mean Score	Category
Topic 13: Lyrics of the songs	61-63	3.30	Very High
Topic 1: Asking for attention, checking for understanding, showing appreciation, asking and giving opinion	1-12	3.20	High
Topic 2: Ability and willingness in implementing action	13-18	3.18	High
Topic 11: Recount text	55-57	3.17	High
Topic 5: Greeting cards	34-36	3.15	High
Topic 6: Location of things	37-39		
Topic 9: Comparison	49-51		
Topic 12: Notice	58-60		
Topic 3: Obligation and prohibition	19-24	3.14	High
Topic 7: General truth	40-45		
Topic 4: Command, invitation, and asking for permission	25-33	3.12	High
Topic 10: Past activities	52-54	3.11	High
Topic 8: Current activities	46-48	3.08	High

Total:	63	41.04
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DISCUSSION

Kurikulum Merdeka is the curriculum used in the Indonesian educational system, and there are 13 topics in it which are asking for attention, asking and giving opinion, checking for understanding, and showing appreciation which all of those included in topic 1. Then, there are ability and disability, willingness and unwillingness in topic 2. On the other hand, obligations, prohibition, and suggestions are included in topic 3. On topic 4, there are imperative sentence, invitation, asking for permission. Furthermore, greeting cards are included in topic 5. Likewise, topic 6 learned about the description or presentation of the existence of people, objects, and animals. Additionally, general truth as well as daily life are included in topic 7. In topic 8, the students learned about present continuous tense. On the other hand, the students learned about comparison in topic 9. Also, in topic 10, simple past tense is included. Furthermore, topic 11 is about recount text. Notice can be found in topic 12 whereas lyrics of songs related to teenage life are included in topic 13.

1. Topic 13: Lyrics of Songs

The material in topic 13 is lyrics of songs related to teenage life. The average score for this topic is 3.30 which indicated that the students had very high interest in this topic. According to Manasia (2014), the concept of creating an emotional case for why learning is joyful represents the subject's feelings rather than their thoughts. Students found learning English interesting and enjoyable because of songs. Songs use engaging words and sound good, making the learning experience fun. The songs' rhythm and melody make it easier to remember words and the emotions connected to them.

2. Topic 1: Asking for Attention, Checking for Understanding, Showing Appreciation, Asking and Giving Opinion

According to the findings of data analysis, it is expressed that 3.20 is the average of students' interest in topic 1. It revealed that students were very interested in it. Positive attitude toward English language learning motivates learners both instrumentally and integratively (Ditaul, 2012). The topic of learning English, specifically focusing on asking for attention, checking for understanding, showing appreciation, and asking and giving opinions, is highly interesting to students for several compelling reasons. Firstly, the ability to ask for attention is a practical skill that students recognize as crucial in various situations. In other hand, checking for understanding is another aspect that captures students' interest. Being able to confirm comprehension not only ensures effective communication but also empowers students to navigate conversations with confidence. Furthermore, expressions of appreciation resonate with students because they understand the significance of using language to convey positive feelings.

3. Topic 2: Ability and Willingness in Implementing Action

The average score for topic 2 is 3.18. The students had high interest in topic 2 due to students' interest in learning about how to speak or to state their ability or disability in doing something, and how to express their willingness or unwillingness to do some things. According to Toli and Kallery (2021), students' interest is impacted by the connection between their learning and real-life situations because it discusses topics

that are pertinent and appropriate to their lives. Ability and willingness in implementing action was one of the topics in learning English that captured high interest among students due to its practical relevance and empowering nature. Students are naturally drawn to subjects that directly impact their ability to apply what they learn and showcase their skills. Students are inherently motivated when they see the direct application of what they are learning.

4. Topic 4: Command, Invitation, and Asking for Permission

The average score for topic 4 is 3.12. The students had high interest in it. Command, invitation, and asking for permission often involve interactive and communicative activities, such as role-playing or simulated scenarios. This practical approach made the learning process engaging and enjoyable for students. Furthermore, students could envision themselves using these language skills in diverse settings, from casual conversations to more formal situations. Students recognized the immediate applicability of learning how to give commands, invitations, and ask for permission in everyday conversations, making the topic relevant to their daily lives.

5. Topic 10: Past Activities

The material in topic 10 is simple past tense or circumstances/actions/activities/events that happened in the past. The students had high interest in this topic. Describing past activities involves developing narrative skills. The students are often intrigued by the storytelling aspect, where they can express themselves by recounting events, experiences, and anecdotes in English. In order to increase the students' interest in learning English within this topic, the teacher can do things like encouraging students to reflect on and sharing their own past experiences. Create opportunities for them to talk about memorable events, fostering a sense of personal connection to the topic. It piques students' curiosity.

6. Topic 8: Current Activities

Topic 8 is about the state/action/activity/event that is being done/going on when spoken or namely as present continuous tense. The students had high interest in topic 8 with 3.08 as the average score. The constant desire to pay attention to and do something interesting that would be paid attention to constantly and with pleasure by someone is referred to as interest (Sulaiman, 2019). Current activities form the basis of everyday conversations. The students are eager to learn and practice language that enables them to discuss their daily routines, hobbies, and ongoing events with others. This topic allows students to connect language learning to their own experiences and interests.

CONCLUSIONS

English topics in English courses are also one of the prerequisites for taking and progressing in English competency. These rules apply to all junior high school students, including those in grade 8. In this research, the researcher had done the research regarding students' topic interest in learning English based on Kurikulum Merdeka at 8th grade of SMPN 7 Kota Bengkulu and SMPN 10 Kota Bengkulu. The researcher used questionnaire in the research and from the data of the research that

had been done, it could be concluded that, first, topic 13 is students most interested in with 3.30. Second, the average for each students' topic interest is 3.20 for topic 1 (high interest), topic 2 is 3.18 (high interest), topic 3 is 3.14 (high interest), topic 4 is 3.12 (high interest), topic 5 is 3.15 (high interest), topic 6 is 3.15 (high interest), topic 7 is 3.14 (high interest), topic 8 is 3.08 (high interest), topic 9 is 3.15 (high interest), topic 10 is 3.11 (high interest), topic 11 is 3.17 (high interest), topic 12 is 3.15 (high interest), and topic 13 is 3.30 (very high interest).

SUGGESTION

From this research, the teachers should know which topic students most interested in and which topics are students less interested in so that they can plan to enhance or to optimize students' topic interest in learning English. The teachers can vary their teaching style in the class so that students can be motivated and interested to the materials which are taught in the class. The teacher can choose activities or ways of teaching that match what the students enjoy. The teacher can use different methods to make the class more interesting. Furthermore, in this study, the researcher aware and know that there still lacks so that other researchers in the future can make this research as reference for their research that related to this research. For future studies, the researcher recommends other researchers to explore alternative sources.

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