STUDENT INSIGHTS ON ENGLISH TEACHING STYLES: A *KURIKULUM MERDEKA* APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the alignment between students' perceptions of their lecturers' teaching styles and their expectations in English language education under Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka. Using a quantitative research design, data was collected from 200 undergraduate students through two instruments: the Teaching Style Perception Scale (TSPS) and the Student Expectations Scale (SES). The results reveal strong alignment in student-centered and inquiry-based learning areas, where students valued active participation and critical inquiry. Lecturers were perceived as knowledgeable facilitators, with the Expert (mean: 4.2) and Facilitator (mean: 4.1) dimensions receiving the highest scores. However, a mismatch was identified between students' expectations for less control and autonomy and their perception of lecturers' adherence to more traditional, teacher-centered methods, particularly in the Formal Authority dimension (mean: 3.8). A significant correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) was found between students' perceptions of facilitators and their expectations for student-centered learning. These findings highlight the need for further adaptation toward inquiry-based and collaborative learning approaches to meet students' evolving preferences better. The study underscores the relevance of Kurikulum Merdeka in fostering a more dynamic, student-driven learning environment while encouraging lecturers to reduce reliance on formal authority and increase opportunities for independent learning.

Key Words: English education, Kurikulum Merdeka, student perception, teaching styles

INTRODUCTION

The *Kurikulum Merdeka*, introduced in Indonesia, signifies a fundamental change in the national educational system, emphasizing greater flexibility, student autonomy, and teacher creativity. Designed to foster critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning, the curriculum encourages educators to adopt innovative teaching styles that cater to diverse student needs and preferences. Central to this framework is the role of the teacher in creating dynamic learning environments, where students can actively participate and engage in the learning process. In English language education, which is integral to communication and global participation, the teaching style adopted by lecturers plays a crucial role in achieving these goals *(Kementerian*

Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020). Teaching style refers to the methods, techniques, and attitudes that educators use in facilitating learning. It has been extensively studied about student performance and engagement. A growing body of research suggests that a teacher's ability to adapt their teaching style to meet student expectations is one of the most critical factors for success in the classroom (Brown, 2007). In the context of language education, effective teaching requires approaches that promote interaction, creativity, and critical thinking skills that are central to the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). However, students' expectations of how English should be taught may vary based on prior learning experiences, personal learning styles, and cultural contexts, making it essential to explore these perceptions.

Several studies have explored the impact of teaching styles on student outcomes, with many finding a strong correlation between teaching style and student motivation, engagement, and achievement. Felder and Silverman (1988) developed a widely recognized model of learning and teaching styles in engineering education, emphasizing the importance of matching instructional strategies to student learning preferences. Though focused on engineering, the principles are broadly applicable, including in language learning contexts. Studies by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) also highlight how language learners' motivation is closely linked to the teaching methods employed, suggesting that teaching styles can either foster or hinder language acquisition.

In Indonesia, research has begun to investigate the alignment of teaching styles with student expectations under the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Kusumaningrum and Wijaya (2021) found that students responded more positively to learner-centered teaching styles, such as collaborative and inquiry-based learning, compared to more traditional teacher-centered methods. Similarly, Supriyadi (2022) examined how different teaching styles influenced student engagement in English classes and concluded that methods promoting active learning and student autonomy were most effective under the new curriculum framework.

Moreover, students' expectations about how they are taught are shaped by a variety of factors, including previous experiences, cultural norms, and individual learning preferences (Harmer, 2007). In an Indonesian context, traditional educational practices often emphasize teacher authority and

rote learning, creating a potential gap between the innovative, student-centered methods advocated by *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the expectations of students accustomed to more didactic instruction. Exploring this gap is essential to ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum, particularly in English education, where language acquisition relies on interactive and communicative teaching approaches (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Research conducted by Wijaya and Santosa (2020) on implementing student-centered learning in Indonesian higher education revealed that while students appreciated the autonomy and active participation encouraged by these approaches, many still preferred structured guidance from lecturers. This finding suggests that there may be a mismatch between the intended teaching styles under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the actual expectations of students, particularly in the transition to more learner-centered methods. Understanding these expectations is critical to bridging the gap and ensuring that lecturers can effectively meet students' needs.

Despite the increasing advocacy for student-centered teaching approaches, there remains a significant gap in understanding how well these methods align with student expectations in the context of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Previous research has often focused on student outcomes without thoroughly exploring the expectations students hold for their lecturers' teaching styles. Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence on whether students' perceptions of their lecturers' teaching align with their preferences for more autonomy, particularly in Indonesian higher education. This gap is particularly evident in language education, where traditional, teacher-centered approaches still prevail in many classrooms.

The primary aim of this study is to explore the alignment between students' perceptions of their lecturers' teaching styles and their expectations in English language classes. It seeks to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the teaching methods employed under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and student preferences for learner autonomy, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative activities. Through this exploration, the study aims to provide recommendations for educators on how to better align their teaching styles with the evolving needs and expectations of students in a modern, dynamic educational environment.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between students' perceptions of their lecturers' teaching styles and their expectations within the framework of Kurikulum Merdeka. Quantitative research allows for the collection of numerical data and facilitates an objective analysis of the relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method is well-suited for studies seeking to identify patterns and relationships between measurable factors, such as teaching styles and student expectations.

Research design

A descriptive survey design was adopted, as it is one of the most effective methods for collecting data on perceptions and experiences from large groups (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). Descriptive surveys are widely used in educational research to gather data that reflects participants' attitudes and behaviors in a structured format. The survey collected data from students enrolled in English language courses at higher education institutions that implemented Kurikulum Merdeka. Structured questionnaires were used to gather data on students' perceptions of their lecturers' teaching styles and to assess whether these styles aligned with students' expectations.

Research site and participants

The research was conducted across several universities in Indonesia that had adopted Kurikulum Merdeka. The sample consisted of 200 undergraduate students from these universities, with stratified random sampling employed to ensure diversity among participants (Field, 2018). Stratified sampling ensures that different subgroups are represented, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the population being studied.participants, their characteristics and their selection methods are described in detail and justified.

Data collection and analysis

Data was collected using two instruments: the Teaching Style Perception Scale (TSPS), adapted from Grasha's (1996) Teaching Style Inventory, and the Student Expectations Scale (SES), which used a 5-point Likert scale to measure students' expectations regarding teaching styles. The data collection process included distributing the questionnaires online, following ethical protocols, including informed consent and anonymity of participants. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were calculated to

summarize the data, while inferential statistics, including t-tests and correlation analysis, were conducted to examine relationships between students' perceptions and expectations (Pallant, 2020). The analysis was performed using SPSS, with significance set at $p < 0.05$.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The analysis of data gathered from 200 participants provided insightful findings about students' perceptions and expectations of their lecturers' teaching styles in English language courses, particularly within the framework of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The results present an engaging

narrative about how teaching styles align with modern pedagogical expectations and student-centered learning preferences. The data reflects their responses to each scale.

Teaching Style Perception Scale (TSPS)

Participants rated their perceptions of their lecturers' teaching styles across the five dimensions: Expert, Formal Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator, and Delegator. The scores are averaged for each dimension based on a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 1. Teaching Style Perception Scale (TSPS)

Dimension	Average Score (Mean)	Standard Deviation
Expert	4.2	0.45
Formal Authority	3.8	0.50
Personal Model	3.9	0.48
Facilitator	4.1	0.40
Delegator	3.7	0.52

Students provided feedback on how they perceive their lecturers' teaching styles, focusing on five key dimensions: Expert, Formal Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator, and Delegator. The data reveals that: Expertise is a Strong Point: Students gave their lecturers high marks in the Expert dimension, with an impressive average score of 4.2. This suggests that students

strongly believe their lecturers are knowledgeable and capable of delivering complex material with clarity. The high level of preparation and subject mastery was something students highly valued. Facilitators in Action: Another area where students felt satisfied was the Facilitator dimension, averaging 4.1. Lecturers were seen as enabling student participation, providing constructive

feedback, and encouraging critical thinking. This reflects the shift in higher education towards more engaging and interactive classes, a hallmark of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Furthermore, in Delegation: The Delegator dimension, which focuses on lecturers empowering students to take responsibility for their learning, received a more moderate score of 3.7. This indicates that while students appreciate some level of independence, they still prefer a certain amount of structure and guidance. Traditional Authority Persists: With an average score of 3.8 in the Formal Authority dimension, it appears that some lecturers still maintain a more traditional, teacher-centered role in the classroom. Although this isn't the preferred method for all students, it reflects the ongoing balance between maintaining control and promoting autonomy in the classroom.

Student Expectations Scale (SES)

Participants rated their expectations regarding teaching styles they believe are most effective in English language education, reflecting various approaches. The results are presented as averages.

Table 2. Teaching Style Perception Scale (TSPS)

Dimension	Average Score (Mean)	Standard Deviation
Teacher-Centered Approach	3.6	0.55
Student-Centered Approach	4.3	0.42
Collaborative Learning	4.0	0.50
Inquiry-Based Learning	4.2	0.46

The data on Student Expectations tells an interesting story about the changing preferences of learners in modern education. Across four teaching approaches Teacher-Centered, Student-Centered, Collaborative Learning, and Inquiry-Based Learning students' expectations reveal a preference for more modern, interactive methods. Students expressed the highest expectations for Student-Centered Approaches, with an average score of 4.3. This confirms that students want more active participation in their education, where they have a say in their learning process and engage directly with the material. Following closely, Inquiry-Based Learning scored an average of 4.2. Students are eager to be challenged with thought-provoking questions, research projects, and problem-solving activities. They want to explore topics on their own, with the lecturer serving more as a guide than a

provider of answers. Collaborative Learning also scored well, with an average of 4.0, indicating that students value group projects and peer interaction as part of their learning journey. This preference reflects the emphasis on teamwork and communication skills that are critical in today's educational and professional environments. Interestingly, the lowest expectations were for the more traditional Teacher-Centered Approach (average: 3.6). This suggests that students are gradually moving away from passive listening and note-taking, seeking more dynamic and participatory ways of learning.

Alignment Between Perception and Expectation

A strong alignment was observed between the Facilitator dimension and Student-Centered Learning, where lecturers' roles as facilitators closely matched what students expected from them. This confirms that many lecturers have already adapted their teaching styles to the evolving expectations of modern learners. Mismatch in Teacher-Centered Methods: The data shows a slight misalignment between students' expectations for Teacher-Centered Approaches and their actual classroom experiences. Students reported that some lecturers still employed more structured and authoritative methods (Formal Authority: 3.8) than what they

expected (Teacher-Centered: 3.6). This suggests that while traditional methods are still in place, students increasingly prefer less rigidity and more autonomy.

Correlation Insights

A significant positive correlation was found between students' perceptions of their lecturers as Facilitators and their expectations for Student-Centered Learning (r = 0.72, p < 0.01). This indicates that students who perceive their lecturers as facilitators are more likely to have higher expectations for autonomy and active participation in the learning process.

Similarly, students who rated lecturers higher on the Delegator scale (encouraging independence) also expressed stronger preferences for Inquiry-Based Learning (r = 0.65, p < 0.01). This confirms that students who appreciate more freedom in learning activities tend to favor inquiry-based methods that allow them to explore topics independently.

Discussion

The results of this study provide valuable insights into students' perceptions of their lecturers' teaching styles and their expectations for effective teaching within the context of English language education under the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. By comparing these perceptions and expectations, the study

highlights both areas of alignment and mismatch, offering suggestions for improving teaching practices in higher education.

Alignment between Perceptions and Expectations: Facilitator and Student-Centered Approaches

The findings show a strong alignment between students' perceptions of their lecturers as Facilitators and their expectations for Student-Centered Approaches. Students rated the Facilitator dimension highly, with an average score of 4.1, indicating that lecturers often encourage active participation, provide feedback, and promote student engagement in the learning process. This aligns well with students' expectations for Student-Centered Learning (average score: 4.3), where they prefer to be involved in classroom activities and have a say in their learning journey. This alignment is consistent with the goals of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which emphasizes flexibility, autonomy, and student engagement in learning (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan,* 2020). As educational theory increasingly shifts toward learner-centered paradigms, the role of lecturers as facilitators has become critical to fostering an environment where students take ownership of their learning (Richards &

Rodgers, 2014). The strong correlation between the Facilitator dimension and Student-Centered Approaches ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) reinforces this notion, suggesting that when lecturers embrace a more interactive, participatory teaching style, students feel more engaged and satisfied with the learning experience.

Mismatch: Teacher-Centered Approaches vs. Formal Authority

A notable mismatch emerged between students' perceptions of their lecturers' use of Formal Authority and their expectations for Teacher-Centered Approaches. While students rated Formal Authority moderately high at 3.8, their expectations for Teacher-Centered Approaches were significantly lower, averaging 3.6. This suggests that students perceive a stronger emphasis on control, structure, and discipline in the classroom than they prefer. This finding reflects the broader shift in educational preferences away from traditional, teacher-centered methods, which have long dominated the educational landscape (Felder & Silverman, 1988). As students increasingly expect more autonomy and active participation, traditional authority-driven teaching styles are becoming less desirable. Students appear to want their lecturers to

relinquish some control and provide more opportunities for independent and collaborative learning (Harmer, 2007). This mismatch highlights a key challenge for lecturers: balancing the need for maintaining authority and structure with the increasing demand for more flexible, student-centered approaches. While Formal Authority is sometimes necessary to ensure discipline and academic rigor, over-reliance on this approach may hinder student engagement and creativity, especially in language education where interaction and collaboration are essential (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Inquiry-Based Learning: High Expectations but Lower Perceptions

Students expressed strong expectations for Inquiry-Based Learning, with an average score of 4.2, reflecting their desire for more opportunities to explore topics independently, engage in research, and develop critical thinking skills. However, their perceptions of their lecturers' willingness to delegate responsibility for learning were somewhat lower, as indicated by the Delegator dimension's average score of 3.7. This gap suggests that while students value inquiry-based approaches, they may feel that their lecturers are not providing enough opportunities for them to take charge of

their learning. This finding resonates with current educational research, which highlights the importance of fostering inquiry-based learning to encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity (Brown, 2007). Inquiry-based learning allows students to ask questions, conduct research, and explore multiple perspectives, making it an ideal approach for developing higher-order thinking skills, especially in English language education (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). The moderate score for the Delegator dimension suggests that some lecturers may still be reluctant to fully adopt inquiry-based methods, possibly due to a preference for more structured, teacher-centered approaches. However, as the *Kurikulum Merdeka* emphasizes student autonomy and critical inquiry, there is a clear need for lecturers to shift toward a more inquiry-driven teaching style to meet students' expectations and foster deeper learning.

Collaborative Learning: A Moderate Match

The results also show a moderate alignment between students' perceptions and expectations for Collaborative Learning. Students rated Collaborative Learning highly, with an average score of 4.0, reflecting their desire to engage in group work, peer

discussions, and teamwork. Similarly, the Facilitator dimension received a high score, indicating that many lecturers are already incorporating collaborative activities into their teaching. Collaborative learning has long been recognized as an effective strategy for promoting social interaction, communication skills, and cooperative problem-solving (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In the context of language education, collaboration is particularly important as it provides students with opportunities to practice language skills in real-world, communicative settings (Harmer, 2007). By fostering an environment where students learn from each other, lecturers can enhance the learning experience and meet the collaborative expectations of their students.

Implications for the *Kurikulum Merdeka*

The results of this study provide important insights into the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in higher education, particularly in English language education. The findings suggest that while many lecturers have successfully adopted student-centered and facilitative teaching styles, there is still room for improvement, particularly in areas such as inquiry-based learning and reducing the emphasis on formal authority. As the *Kurikulum Merdeka* continues to promote flexibility, autonomy, and critical thinking, lecturers must be willing to shift further toward more student-driven and inquiry-based approaches. This will require embracing new teaching strategies that foster independent learning, encourage critical inquiry, and reduce reliance on traditional, teacher-centered methods (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020).

By aligning their teaching styles more closely with students' expectations, lecturers can not only improve student satisfaction but also enhance learning outcomes, particularly in a dynamic and evolving educational landscape where critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration are essential skills for the 21st century (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

This study has revealed significant insights into the alignment between students' perceptions of their lecturers' teaching styles and their expectations in English language education under the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The findings highlight a general satisfaction with lecturers' expertise and facilitation, with high scores in the Expert and Facilitator dimensions. Students appreciate when lecturers actively involve them in the

learning process, which aligns with the principles of student-centered learning that *Kurikulum Merdeka* advocates. However, there is a clear preference for more inquiry-based and collaborative learning approaches, where students seek autonomy, critical thinking opportunities, and deeper engagement through group activities. The results also show a gap between students' expectations for flexible, autonomous learning environments and the perceived reliance on more traditional, teacher-centered practices, particularly in the Formal Authority dimension. This mismatch suggests that while students respect authority, they increasingly prefer a learning environment that grants them more independence and opportunities to explore and interact. The findings support the need for a continued shift towards modern, learner-driven pedagogies that emphasize flexibility, collaboration, and inquiry.

Acknowledgments

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