

Evaluating Formative Assessment in the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

Fajar Imam Murifqi¹, Issy Yuliasri²

Corresponding author Fajar: fajarimammurifqi@gmail.com

Semarang State University, Indonesia

DOI: [10.35974/acuity.v10i2.4177](https://doi.org/10.35974/acuity.v10i2.4177)

Abstract

Formative assessment plays a critical role in supporting student learning by providing continuous feedback throughout the instructional process. However, many teachers have yet to implement formative assessment effectively, particularly in English language instruction under the Emancipated (Merdeka) Curriculum in Indonesia. This qualitative study investigates the implementation of formative assessment in an English class at SMP Daarul Qur'an Ungaran, a junior high school located in West Ungaran District. Data were collected through preliminary observations, classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis involving one English teacher and 28 eighth-grade students. Findings indicate that the teacher partially implements formative assessment strategies, including quizzes, oral questioning, and student reflections. However, certain aspects such as grammar and pronunciation assessments were found to be underutilized. Students generally responded positively to the feedback they received, though some formative techniques were inconsistently applied. The study highlights both the potential and the challenges of implementing formative assessment under the Emancipated Curriculum. It offers practical insights for educators and policymakers on how to improve assessment literacy and better integrate formative strategies into classroom practices to support student learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Emancipated Curriculum, English Foreign Language, Formative Assessment, Learning English*

INTRODUCTION

In learning, especially language learning, assessment is an essential component and holds an important role (Black & Wiliam, 2009). According to Cowie and Bell (1999), assessments are crucial for educational purposes and for enhancing both students' and teachers' teaching and learning processes. Through precise and suitable assessment implementation, teachers can identify appropriate learning strategies, give feedback on students' learning outcomes, and classify and group students according to their abilities (Tosuncuoglu, 2018). Assessments are used in language learning to evaluate students' development and interpretation

of meaning through text and context analysis, in addition to their knowledge of syntax, vocabulary, and English communication skills (Panjaitan, 2004).

In 2019, Indonesia's Minister of Education, Nadiem Makarim, created "Emancipated Learning" as a new program to address the country's educational issues. The emancipated curriculum was created to ease students' learning without adding unnecessary burdens and allow learning specific to each student's needs and characteristics. The Emancipated Curriculum prioritizes student-centered learning and responsible technology use in the classroom, enhancing its flexibility and responsiveness to student needs (Muhammad Rafi Zidan & Zaitun Qamariah, 2023).

The Emancipated Curriculum represents a transformative shift in Indonesian education, emphasizing holistic and flexible learning approaches (Latifa et al., 2023). As a key component of Indonesia's educational reform, this curriculum aims to equip students with essential 21st-century skills and competencies (Latifa et al, 2023, cited from Ingias, 2022).

Contrasting traditional educational models focused on rote learning and standardized testing, the Emancipated Curriculum encourages a student-centred approach, fostering critical thinking and creativity. Furthermore, the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum is guided by the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 56 of 2022, which outlines guidelines for implementing the curriculum in the context of learning recovery, known as 'Kurikulum Merdeka.' This decree complements the existing curriculum framework (Nugraheni & Siswanti, 2022, as cited from Latifa et al, 2023). The emancipated curriculum introduces several policy changes and new terminologies, although its core concepts bear similarities to those found in the 2013 Curriculum. This article aims to delineate and explain the policy transitions from the 2013 Curriculum to the emancipated curriculum, shedding light on the evolution and rationale behind these educational reforms (Puspita & Atikah, 2023, as cited from Latifa et al, 2023).

The advantages of the emancipated curriculum include a greater emphasis on core subjects such as literacy and numerical skills, and adaptability for teachers to adapt the lesson plans based on the needs of individual students. Project-based learning also helps students build up their soft skills and personalities based on the Pancasila Students Profile. The principles of the Pancasila Students Profile apply to the workforce requirements. It is comprehensive, contextual, student-centered, and inquisitive. The primary goals of the Pancasila Students Profile are to uphold the nation's high morals and values, to prepare people to become global citizens, to embody social justice, and to develop 21st-century skills (Rohmah et al., 2024). The transition to the Emancipated Curriculum marks a departure from traditional approaches to education. It demands a significant change in classroom dynamics, assessment procedures, and instructional strategies. Schools are essential in fostering a culture that supports the curriculum's guiding principles and ensuring that teachers and students get the help they need to succeed in this new system (Rohmah et al. 202).

One effective tactic in the Emancipated Curriculum to address the various characteristics of students is differentiated instruction (Rahayu et al., 2024, as cited in Halimah, 2023). In differentiated instruction, teachers adjust resources, methods, and evaluations according to their students' learning styles and needs (Tomlinson, 2017). The teacher will implement differentiated assessments following differentiated instruction. Since the learning instructions and the characteristics of the students differ, the assessments cannot be the same.

Assessments and instruction should ideally be customized to each student's particular requirements (Dewi et al., 2024, as cited from Ihalon & C, 2022). Differentiated assessment aims to meet learning objectives in accordance with student learning differences (Dewi et al., 2024, as cited in Koshy, 2013).

According to Varsavsky and Rayner (2013), differentiated assessment is an educational framework that strives to accommodate student differences by providing flexibility to students regarding the types of assessment items they complete and the level of skills and knowledge they acquire. Through the implementation of various tools and techniques, teachers can gather data on students' progress throughout the learning period and provide students from a range of academic backgrounds with the opportunity to successfully demonstrate their learning (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

The latest learning curriculum, namely the emancipated curriculum, certainly changes all the tools and assessments used. According to (Astari et al., 2023), as cited in Al-Dabbus (2020) & Maysuroh et al (2023), assessments measure how well students are doing in reaching certain learning goals and show how well they know certain skills. According to Anne Lou M (2025), as cited from William (2018), said: "Through assessment, we can find out whether students have learned what they have been taught, so that we can make appropriate adjustments to our teaching." To figure out what a student has learned. In an emancipated curriculum, assessment is divided into diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. Diagnostic assessment is implemented at the beginning of the academic year before the teacher designs the learning instruction. This assessment was implemented to know the students' characteristics, needs, weaknesses, and strengths. Formative assessment is implemented to know the students' improvement in learning, and the teacher uses the result of this assessment to give the students feedback (Astari et al., 2023). In addition, the summative assessment is carried out to assess the achievement of learning objectives. Summative assessment is carried out at the end of the learning process, such as daily tests, midterm tests, and final semester tests (Treve, 2021; Heath et al., 2021; Menendez et al., 2019).

From the statement before the researcher interested in researching formative assessment in the independent curriculum which is carried out in public schools, especially at Daarul Qur'an Ungaran Middle School, in this study it is hoped that readers can find out how the assessment process is carried out by a teacher using an emancipated curriculum and this research is expected to provide benefits to students and teachers in preparing for summative assessment.

METHODS

Research Design

The research method used is a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. Descriptive research is conducted to describe a situation systematically, factually, and accurately about certain phenomena. Furthermore, the selection of a qualitative approach is useful in producing a more comprehensive study of the phenomenon, and the results of this study cannot be generalized. In addition, primary data will be collected through a survey method using an instrument in the form of a questionnaire for each respondent. The questionnaire aims to find out the form of formative assessment implementation that has been carried out by the

teacher, and the feedback provided. Open-ended interview questions were modified based on Fonseca Morales (2020) to support a comprehensive investigation of the research questions.

Research Participants and Sampling Procedures

Participants in this research were 28 students from Class VIII of SMP Daarul Qur'an, West of Ungaran District. The researcher conducted preliminary observations to determine whether teachers use formative assessment for English language learning in the classroom. The researcher conducted preliminary observations at one of the junior high schools, especially at the 8th-grade students in Kebumen Regency, precisely in West Ungaran District. Based on the preliminary observation, several conclusions about implementing the formative Assessment were reached. The data will be taken from class eight of SMP Daarul Qur'an, and there are 28 students and one teacher in the English subject lesson, after evaluating the implementation of formative assessment in the classroom.

The sampling technique in this research used purposive sampling, where each member of class VIII had the same opportunity to become a subject. Sampling was carried out in one step when the researcher took data for observation.

Population and Sample Size

The study was conducted at SMP Daarul Qur'an located in keji regency, precisely in West Ungaran District. The general English curriculum provided includes learning English speaking, reading, listening and writing and the school has used emancipated curriculum. The participant in this study were 28 students and 1 teacher of class VIII.

Measures

By focusing on a single school, the study emphasized a contextual understanding of formative assessment practices. A case study method is particularly effective in exploring the alignment of these practices with curriculum goals. This design also accommodated the collection of multiple data sources, such as teacher interviews, classroom observations, and document reviews.

The role of the researcher in this study is both as an observer and an active participant in the data collection process. According to Suswandi (2024), as cited from Sugiyono (2013), the researcher's role can range from being an impartial observer to an involved participant, depending on the research methodology. In this study, the researcher collected data through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, while also interacting with teachers and students to gain a comprehensive understanding of how formative assessment is implemented. The researcher's responsibility is to remain objective and ensure that the data collected is valid and accurately represents the experiences and practices within the context of the Emancipated Curriculum.

The procedures for collecting data in this study are designed to ensure accuracy and validity. Sugiyono (2017) outlines a systematic process for data collection, which involves the following steps:

1. Preparation Phase: The first step in data collection is preparing the necessary instruments, such as interview guides, observation checklists, and documentation forms. Sugiyono (2017) stresses the importance of obtaining necessary permissions and ensuring ethical standards, including obtaining informed consent from participants before starting the data collection process.
2. Data Collection: In this phase, data was collected used a combination of methods: interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews was conducted with teachers and students to explore their experiences with formative assessments. Observations was focused on the real-time implementation of assessments in classrooms, while document analysis was involved reviewing lesson plans, student performance records, and other related materials. Sugiyono (2017) notes that these varied methods help provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.
3. Data Recording and Management: The collected data was carefully recorded and managed. Sugiyono (2017) highlights that maintaining proper documentation is essential to ensure that all data is accurately captured and can be easily accessed for later analysis. The data was categorized and stored systematically for efficient processing.

Table 1 Research Instrument and Method Data Collection

Research Questions	Stages	Method of Data Collection	Instruments	Method of Data Analysis
What are the needs of students and teacher in designing and developing an instrument as a formative assessment in english subject in emancipated curriculum to assess eighth grade of junior high school student?	Analysis	Observation, Interview, Document Analysis	Teacher and Student Interview guide, Guiding Theory for Preliminary Observation, and Document Analysis	Qualitative

Data analysis in this study will follow qualitative research procedures as outlined by Sugiyono (2017), focusing on interpreting and identifying patterns in the collected data. The steps in data analysis are as follows:

1. Data Reduction: The first step in data analysis is reducing the data to its essential elements. Sugiyono (2017) explains that data reduction involves sorting, organizing, and simplifying the collected data to focus on key themes that address the research questions. This step ensures that only the most relevant and significant data is retained for further analysis.

2. Data Display: The next step is to display the reduced data in a format that makes it easier to understand and analyze. Sugiyono (2017) emphasizes the importance of presenting data clearly and in an organized manner, such as through matrices or charts. This visualization helps identify relationships and patterns crucial for answering the research questions.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: The final step is concluding the displayed data and verifying the findings. Sugiyono (2017) notes that conclusions must be drawn based on the data patterns, and these conclusions must be verified to ensure their reliability. Further analysis or data collection may be necessary to validate the results if discrepancies arise.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher used observation and interviews to determine research question number one. Those interview questions and observation points were based on the theory of Bell and Cowie (2009) about the process of implementing formative assessment in teaching and learning English.

The interview was conducted using structured interviews. In this case, the researcher interviewed English teachers to gain data about the process implementation of formative assessment that teachers used in teaching English at SMP Daarul Qur'an Ungaran Semarang.

Table 2. Observation Sheet for Preliminary Observation

Number	Observation	Yes	No	Notes
1	The 8 th grade has Implemented the Emancipated Curriculum			
2	The English lesson plan is designed in accordance with the demands of the curriculum and syllabus			
3	The English learning process in the 8th-grade uses Emancipated Curriculum.			
4	The teacher uses modules or books in the English learning process.			
5	The learning process is in accordance with the lesson plan and syllabus			
6	The teacher conducts an assessment in the teaching and learning process.			
7	The assessment that has been conducted in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum.			
8	The implementation of the assessment in class uses a certain method.			
9	The teacher uses authentic assessment in the learning/teaching process.			

10	The teacher provides comments or feedbacks to students in the teaching and learning process.
11	The teacher uses assessment instrument in conducting the assessment.
12	The teacher uses assessment rubric in conducting the assessment
13	The assessment conducted by English teacher is able to measure learning objectives
14	The teacher uses technology in conducting the learning process and assessment.

An interview was also conducted with class eight to learn how the implementation of formative assessment was done in the classroom. As presented, the transcription of the observation was displayed and supported by the transcription of the interview, which served as the description.

From the observations and interviews given to teachers, it can be concluded that teachers provide formative assessments a week after providing material. Formative assessments are very important for the development of student learning because, with this assessment, students can identify deficiencies and also what needs to be relearned, so that students can understand and master the material well, and make it easier for them to continue with further learning.

Table 3. Teacher Interview Guide

No	Questions	Responses
1	What are the characteristics of 8th-grade English learners?	
2	What are students' needs in learning English?	
3	What competencies do students need to achieve English learning outcomes?	
4	What English learning objectives are designed by the teacher to achieve Learning Outcomes?	
5	What modules, books, or resources are used in the English learning process in class?	
6	Do you use the 21st-century learning methods recommended in the Independent Curriculum, such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, and discovery-based learning in the teaching and learning process?	
7	How is the teaching and learning process in the classroom using 21st-century learning methods?	

-
- | | |
|----|--|
| 8 | What assessment methods do you often use in the teaching and learning process in class? |
| 9 | How is the assessment process that you do in the teaching and learning process? |
| 10 | Do you use authentic assessments (journals, projects, observations, etc.) in the teaching and learning process? How? |
| 11 | What are the obstacles experienced during the use of authentic assessment? |
| 12 | What are the stages of scoring student assessment results? |
| 13 | What assessment instruments are used to conduct the assessment? |
| 14 | Do you provide comments or feedback to students in the teaching and learning process? If yes, how? |
| 15 | Do you think the feedback can measure students' abilities and improve their abilities and understanding? |
| 16 | Do you use technology to carry out assessments? If yes, how? |
-

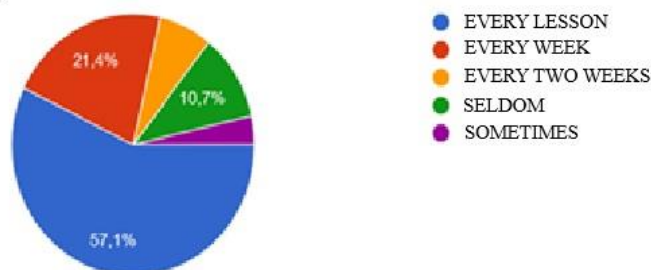
Teachers are aware of shortcomings in delivery in providing daily material due to limited knowledge and media to support children's abilities. These shortcomings can be used as an evaluation for teachers, in particular, to improve English language learning even further.

From the interviews with students, it can be concluded that assessments are indeed conducted by teachers every week after the material is presented, and these opinions align with those expressed by previous teachers. Teachers provide more direct feedback after this formative assessment. This direct feedback allows students to receive direct input and suggestions from teachers to encourage them to be more active in their learning.

Graph 1. Formative assessment questionnaire results from teachers

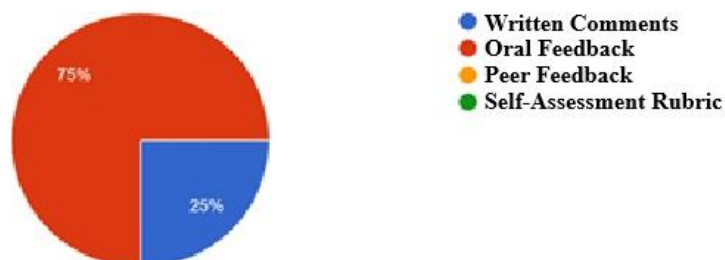
1. HOW OFTEN DO YOU RECEIVE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT FROM YOUR ENGLISH TEACHER?

28 ANSWERS



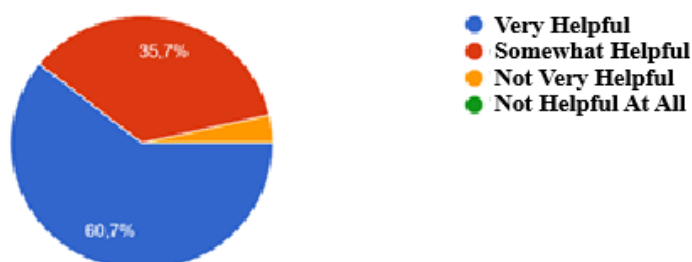
Graph 2. Questionnaire results on feedback from teachers that is useful for students

3. What kind of feedback from your teacher was most helpful to you?
 28 Answer



Graph 3. Questionnaire results on the importance of feedback for students

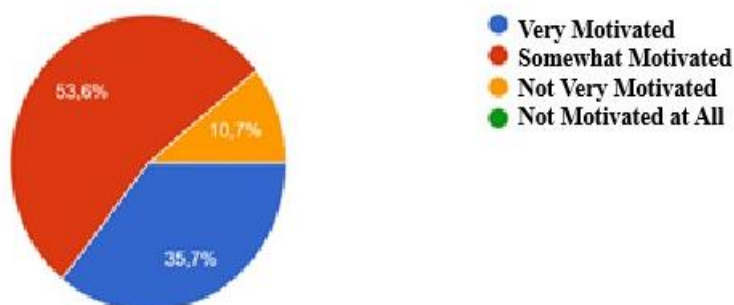
4. How helpful did you find the feedback given by your English teacher?
 28 Answers



After being provided with comprehensive material and receiving positive assessments, the students were motivated to improve their learning due to the engaging learning experience, excellent assessments, and post-assessment feedback. Students expressed their strong motivation to learn English better. The results of students' motivation to learn English can be seen in the following pie chart:

Graph 4. Results of the Questionnaire on Students' Motivation to Learn English before being given Formative Assessment

5. How motivated are you to learn English in class?
 28 Answers

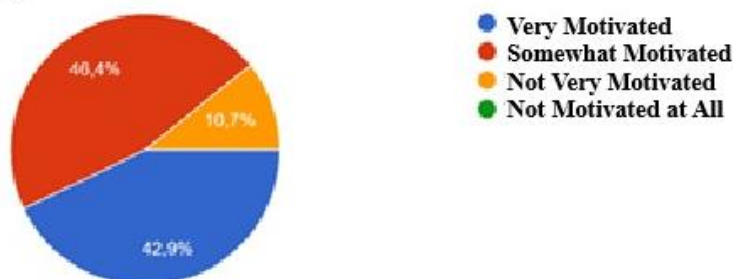


The results of students' motivation to learn English after carrying out the Formative Assessment can be seen in the following pie chart:

Graph 5. Results of the Questionnaire on Students' Motivation to Learn English before being given Formative Assessment

10. How would you rate your level of motivation to learn English after receiving the formative assessment?

28 Answer

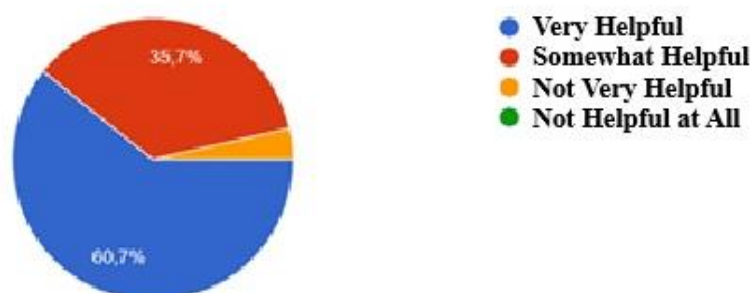


Research has shown that students' motivation to learn English stems not only from engaging learning but also from clear delivery and immediate feedback after formative assessments, enabling them to assess their own abilities and further improve their learning. These results can be seen in the following table:

Graph 6. Questionnaire Results Importance of feedback for student

4. How helpful did you find the feedback given by your English teacher?

28 Answers



The results of this study concluded that teachers implemented formative assessments effectively. This was evident in the assessments given at the end of each lesson, the teachers' excellent monitoring of students, and the clear presentation of assessment results and feedback. Therefore, the researchers concluded that this study was very successful.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that it is known that the teacher has been teaching English very well and giving formative assessments every week after completing the material. The students implement formative assessments very well without any problems. However, we can find a

weakness in implementing the lesson in the classroom, which is caused by the teacher's lack of scientific ability and the limited literacy obtained by students, especially in the ability to improve English learning.

During the formative assessment, teachers gave questions appropriate to their abilities and the material provided, and students could answer them correctly. However, there were several evaluations related to the formative assessment in eighth grade. Teachers never provided specific assessments on grammar and pronunciation, due to their lack of expertise in these areas and the limited availability of teaching aids. According to Fajria (2025), grammar teachers should incorporate effective teaching strategies in their classroom practice. For example, using games, aids, context, and involving students in assessment activities through self-assessment (SA) or peer assessment (PA)

It is hoped that teachers will provide some assessments that have not been given by teachers, such as pronunciation and grammar assessments, in the future. Teachers must also be able to increase their insight and literacy to add English learning materials so that all can carry out assessments, students can maximize their understanding, and their English learning can improve.

References

- Astari, D. A. M. J., Padmadewi, N. N., & Dewi, N. L. P. E. S. (2023). The implementation of assessment in teaching English in Merdeka Curriculum. *Journey: Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, 6(2), 411–420.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(1), 5–31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9068-5>
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2018). *Assessment and classroom learning revisited*. Springer.
- Cowie, B., & Bell, B. (1999). A model of formative assessment in science education. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 6(1), 101–116.
- Cowie, B., & Moreland, J. (2009). Methodological considerations in studying classroom interactions in technology education. In A. L. Hernandez (Ed.), *International handbook of research and development in technology education* (pp. 625–635). Brill.
- Dewi, N. K. A. Y., Budiarta, L. G. R., & Utami, I. A. M. I. (2024). Need analysis in developing differentiated assessment instrument for 7th grade junior high school students based on learning style in Emancipated Curriculum. *Journal of English Language Learning*, 8(1), 542–557.
- Fajria, F., Thamrin, N. S., Maghfira, M., & Nadrun, N. (2025). Leveraging self-assessment to enhance students' simple past tense skills at MTs Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu. *Acuity: Journal of English Language Pedagogy, Literature and Culture*, 10(3), 34–45.
- Hendriks, A. L. (2025). Influencers of students' English language speaking proficiency: A structural equation modeling study. *Acuity: Journal of English Language Pedagogy, Literature and Culture*, 10(3), 146–174.
- Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. (2022). *Pedoman implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka*. Kemendikbud.

- Latifa, H., Ratih, K., & Maryadi, M. (2023). Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching: A study of teacher learning steps. *Voices of English Language Education Society*, 7(3), 640–651. <https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v7i3.24049>
- Monib, W. K. (2025). Determinant factors influencing English speaking skill among undergraduates: Challenges and remedial strategies. *Acuity: Journal of English Language Pedagogy, Literature and Culture*, 10(1), 72–85.
- Muhammad Rafi Zidan, & Qamariah, Z. (2023). A literature study on the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Ilmu Bahasa*, 2(2), 153–167. <https://doi.org/10.55606/jurribah.v2i2.1576>
- Panjaitan, M. O. (2004). *Penilaian pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris SMP*. Depdiknas. <https://imadesujana.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ing-d-penilaian-pembelajaran-bahasa-inggris.pdf>
- Rahayu, N. K. E., Budiarta, L. G. R., & Utami, I. A. M. I. (2024). The development of English learning materials for 7th-grade students of junior high school based on Emancipated Curriculum. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Indonesia*, 12(2), 138–147.
- Rohmah, Z., Hamamah, H., Junining, E., Ilma, A., & Rochastuti, L. A. (2024). Schools' support in the implementation of the Emancipated Curriculum in secondary schools in Indonesia. *Cogent Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2300182>
- Sugiyono. (2017). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode penelitian pendidikan*. Alfabeta.
- Sugiyono. (2019). *Statistika untuk penelitian*. Alfabeta.
- Suswandi, D., & Hasanah, L. N. (2024). The effect of the leaderless group discussion (LGD) method on the value of professional ethics as a result of the internship program at SEAMEO RECFON. *Enrichment: Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 2(8).
- Tomlinson, C. A., & Moon, T. R. (2013). *Assessment and student success in a differentiated classroom*. ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2017). Differentiated instruction. In C. A. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Fundamentals of gifted education* (pp. 279–292). Routledge.
- Tosuncuoglu, I. (2018). Importance of assessment in ELT. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 6(9), 163. <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v6i9.3443>
- Varsavsky, C., & Rayner, G. (2013). Strategies that challenge: Exploring the use of differentiated assessment to challenge high-achieving students in large enrollment undergraduate cohorts. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(7), 789–802.