

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES OF DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT  
IN IMPLEMENTING MERDEKA CURRICULUM  
(A CASE STUDY OF ENGLISH CHANGE AGENT TEACHERS  
OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN GROBOGAN, CENTRAL JAVA)**

Rakhmawati<sup>1</sup>, Suwandi<sup>2</sup>, Dias Andris Susanto<sup>3</sup>

<sup>123</sup>UPGRIS Semarang

<sup>1</sup>rahma.dhafin@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>suwandi2@yahoo.com

<sup>3</sup>diasandris@upgris.ac.id

**ABSTRACT**

*In order to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, this study sought to understand how teachers perceived diagnostic assessment and how their perceptions and practices related to each other. In this case, the researcher combined a qualitative and quantitative methodology. This study presents the results and analysis of the information acquired through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The researcher separated the study into several sections in order to collect data on teachers' perception, such as their perceptions about the concept, preferred techniques, benefits, challenges, and strategies for using diagnostic assessments. Based on the research findings, it was determined that the teachers who joined the English change agent teacher batch-4 from Grobogan regency had successfully completed the diagnostics assessment. Teachers have good perception about diagnostic assessments as they found that the assessments are beneficial, which encourages them in conducting the learning process better.*

*Key words: Teachers' perception, practices, diagnostics assessment, Merdeka Curriculum*

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Merdeka Curriculum is the newest curriculum programmed by the Minister of Education The Minister of Education's. It is a replacement for the prototype curriculum that was proposed to address the learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum has brought about a number of adjustments and

difficulties for both teachers and pupils. The Minister instructed that the curriculum have to be implemented in all schools by 2024, educational staff members must also be proficient in it. In actuality, the government does not provide as much offline coaching or training as it did in the prior curriculum. Any information on this curriculum is shared via the Guru Penggerak

(Change Agent Teachers) program and the PMM application or Learning Management System (LMS).

The objectives, principles, goal and essential components of language teaching and learning have undergone numerous substantial modifications in the Merdeka Curriculum. The phases of learning planning, execution, and evaluation have undergone numerous modifications. Among these are teaching module, diagnostics assessment, student's reflection and teacher reflection are designed to improve the proficiency of both teachers and students (Shadri et al., n.d.).

Students' educational experiences are greatly influenced by their teachers, and a major component of their teaching strategies is evaluating students' progress in learning (Fitriani, 2019). According to Shadri et al., n.d., assessment is a process used to gauge students' learning results. It is used by the government to formulate educational policies and sought to assess and track procedures, learning outcomes, and ongoing enhancement of students' education. In line with Shadri, (Wiggins, 1993)

stated assessment is considered important to improve students' performance as well as to contribute to the teaching improvement and effective learning. It is an essential part of educational process. Considering the essential role of assessments in education, teachers' ability to conduct classroom assessment is crucial, because all the processes start from the classroom setting (Fitriani, 2019).

In Merdeka Curriculum, there are three types of assessments: formative, summative, and diagnostic. Based on those assessments, the researcher will focus on the diagnostics assessment as the study's subject. Since it is a new term that was utilized in both the Merdeka and prior curricula. It is anticipated to be the study's novelty.

Merdeka curriculum also gives some alternatives to teachers to empower students in gaining knowledge towards English language strategies (Faqih et al, 2023; Pramesti et al, 2023; Maemunah et al, 2023; Khalifisati et al, 2023). It remains to explore anything about as well as technology used in English Education (Wulandari et al, 2024; Susanto et al, 2024; Kurniawan et al,

2024). some experts explain that Curriculum Merdeka might elaborates anything about students' enhancing language skills and language components (Winanta et al, 2024; Naim et al, 2023; Khasanah et al, 2023). Through those reviews, Curriculum Merdeka frequently needs an assessment to measure students' mastery in certain skills or topics which is defined as diagnostic assessment.

Diagnostics assessment is a method of extracting the initial data of students to obtain information in the form of understanding, strength, weaknesses ranging from knowledge and skills as well as the behaviour character of students (Yulianto, 2022). It must be carried out before learning to categorize student conditions in psychological and cognitive terms (Mulinda, 2022)

Diagnostic Assessment is divided into non-cognitive diagnostic Assessment and cognitive diagnostic assessment (Kemdikbud, 2020a; Mustika & Isnaini, 2022; Nasution, 2022). Later, according to Coughlan et al. (2019), diagnostic evaluations comprise both non-cognitive and cognitive-diagnostic tests (Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia et al., 2018). The

purpose of the diagnostic evaluation was to identify the pupils' present conditions and diagnose their fundamental skills (Nasution, 2022). This kind of assessment can be done before the development of Merdeka teaching modules, at the start of a class, or at the start of an academic year. It is closely related to students' ability and readiness to receive learned knowledge (Kemdikbud, 2022) The diagnostics assessment expected to help teachers in determining the strengths and weaknesses of their students and to modify their lessons to suit each student's needs.

Hopefully, by identifying teachers' perception and practice, this study can contribute to the professional development of teachers. Teachers can find areas for development and improve their teaching methods by analysing their diagnostic assessment implementation strengths and weaknesses. This study is expected to offer significant perspectives on the use of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in the context of English language teaching, and to enhance diagnostic assessment procedures within the curriculum.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

To gather the data about teacher's perceptions and practices in utilizing diagnostics assessment, the researcher used a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach. Firstly, nine English teachers who joined in Change Agent Teacher Batch-4 from Grobogan Regency was surveyed. Then, an interview and class observation was carried out in order to gather more detailed information regarding teachers' perceptions and practices of diagnostic assessment. In this case, three teachers were interviewed and two teachers were observed.

Secondly, the gathered information was examined independently. The information gathered from the questionnaire was coded, categorized, tabulated, and described. In the meantime, reading or memoing, characterizing, and categorizing were used to examine the qualitative data from the interview, classroom observation, and document analysis (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011).

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this part the results were explained from the findings of teachers' perception and practice. It explained on how teachers' perceptions and practices was investigated through questionnaire, interview, and class observation.

### **Teachers' perception on Diagnostics Assessments**

To gather the data, nine teachers asked to fill the survey. Then three of them were interviewed. From the survey, it showed that teachers have perceived diagnostics in positive way. They agree and strongly agree about the perception of diagnostics assessment as drawn in the table below:

Statements	SA	A	NAD	D	SD	Total
a. Diagnostics assessment is used to determine students' basic abilities	6 66,7%	3 33,3%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
b. Diagnostics assessment aims to determine the initial condition of the students	7 77,8%	2 22,2%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
c. Diagnostics assessment provides an obvious competency achievement of the students	5 55,6%	4 44,4%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
d. Diagnostics assessment can be designed according to the diverse conditions of the students	5 55,6%	3 33,3%	1 11,1%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
e. Diagnostics assessment can be used to map the abilities of all students quickly and accurately	6 66,7%	3 33,3%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
f. Diagnostics assessment used to adjust classroom learning to the average competency of the students at the time	4 44,4%	5 55,6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%

**Table 1: Teachers' perception of Diagnostics Assessment**

It was strengthened by the results of the answer of their questionnaire as follow:

“Diagnostics assessment is an assessment conducted before the learning process to identify students' abilities, characteristics and interests” (Teacher 1)

“Diagnostics assessment is an assessment conducted at the beginning of the learning process to identify the interests, learning styles and characteristics of the students” (Teacher 3)

In applying the assessments, teachers applied some technique according to their preference.

**Table 2: Teachers' perception of technique preference in Diagnostics Assessment**

The simple questions in written form used to be their most preferred to do. Direct oral test, Observation, one-and-one interview also did by the teachers to assess their students. Others were application like: padlet, jamboard, bitly, google doc, google spreadsheet, any learning style test, emotional test, etc. Those helped teacher to be easily known the result after doing the diagnostics assessment.

From the technique they preferred, teachers confirmed that many benefits they took as we can see from the table below:

Assessment Techniques	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	9	0	0	0	0
a. Written Test	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
b. Spoken test (Orally)	7	2	0	0	0
	77,8%	22,2%	0%	0%	0%
c. Observation	4	4	1	0	0
	44,4%	44,4%	26,7%	20%	0%
d. Interview	6	3	0	0	0
	66,7%	33,3%	0%	0%	0%
e. Others (aptitude, learning style,		3			
	6		0	0	0
	13.3%	20%	0%	0%	0%

Statements	SA	A	NAD	D	SD	Total
a. I can easily understand students' psychological condition, learning style, character and students' interest	4 44,4%	4 44,4%	1 11,1%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
b. I can assess students' learning achievement in certain topic	2 22,2%	7 77,8%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
f. I can figure out students' strengths and weaknesses in learning	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
g. The diagnostics assessments enhance my students' autonomy, motivation and self-confidence	3 33,3%	4 44,4%	2 22,2%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
h. Diagnostics assessment help me to know how to following up students with difficulties	5 55,6%	4 44,4%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
i. Diagnostics assessments help me deciding the best steps to do in teaching	5 55,6%	4 44,4%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%

**Table 3: Teachers' perception of benefits in Diagnostics Assessment**

The strongly agree and agree' answers dominated the result. It meant that all teachers have good perception on how diagnostics assessment was beneficial for them.

"Diagnostics assessment is very beneficial because by understanding their initial abilities using this system, we don't just aim to group the students into categories like those who are good, those who are average, and those who are struggling. In fact, I prefer if the students with higher abilities act as peer tutors. So, students who may

have challenges can ask their peers for help or seek additional knowledge from them. This way, it creates a more comfortable and collaborative environment among the students." (Teacher 01).

Although from the interview teachers claimed that the diagnostics assessment was applied effectively in their class, they also found many problems happened as follows:

Statements	SA	A	NAD	D	SD	Total
a. I have insufficient knowledge about Diagnostic assessments	0 0%	1 11,1%	0 0%	6 66,7%	2 22,2%	9 100%
b. I don't really understand about the stages in Diagnostics Assessments	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 66,7%	3 33,3%	9 100%
c. I don't get used to do diagnostics assessment in my class	0 0%	1 11,1%	0 0%	4 44,4%	4 44,4%	9 100%
d. The diagnostics assessments is hardly applied in my class	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 66,7%	3 33,3%	9 100%
e. Diagnostics Assessment is hardly applied in a big classes	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	8 88,9%	1 11,1%	9 100%
f. Some students do not involve in assessment process	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%

**Table 4: Teachers' perception of problems in Diagnostics Assessment**

The answer of the question was varied in this part. According to them:

"It is frustrating when students are too lazy to respond, and no

honest answer come in because they've copied from their peers. In such cases, we can't accurately map their true abilities" (Teacher 4)

Another problem was related to the students' who didn't involve in the assessment process:

"There haven't been any problems or obstacles for me. The only common challenge for teachers is managing the classroom" (Teacher 1)

In order to tackle the problems, teachers did some strategies as drawn in the table below:

Statements	Always	Often	sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
a. I discuss with other teachers to solve the problems with my fellow teachers	0 0%	2 22,2%	7 77,8%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
b. I discuss with other teachers to solve the problems with my fellow teachers	2 22,2%	5 55,6%	2 22,2%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
c. I observe other teachers implementin diagnostics assessment	0 0%	4 44,4%	5 55,6%	0 0%	0 0%	9 100%
d. I attend conference, workshop, training or seminar dealing with the assessment diagnostics	0 0%	1 11,1%	6 66,7%	1 11,1%	1 11,1%	9 100%
e. I learn autonomously through reading books and the internet	4 44,4%	4 44,4%	1 11,1%	0 11,1%	0 11,1%	9 100%

**Table 5: Teachers' perception of strategies in Diagnostics Assessment**

From the table above, the researcher found that discussing to other teacher placed as the first strategies done by teacher. They were more often did it than joined in

conference, observed another teacher or autonomously learn through reading books or internet.

### **Teachers' practices**

Cohen (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison K, 2008) at al as cited from Aliningsih (Aliningsih & Sofwan, 2015) describes that as assessment uses real evidence from real situation rather than through the use of test. Here, in investigating the teachers' practices, a class observation and document analysis were done. From the class observation, it was seen that both of the change agent teachers had practiced diagnostics assessment well. They knew the appropriate time to use cognitive or non-cognitive assessment, completed with its technique and media. They also knew the stages should been done. Those are preparatory, implementation, and follow- up stage (Kezia, A, & Budi, 2023).

The researcher observed the differences in practice between two teachers: one used direct question that were converted into physical activities to assess cognitive assessment, while the other used a more traditional method that involved sharing papers. Based on both

practical, students who participated in physical activities appeared happier and more enthusiastic than those who did not; the only lack was the large number of students in the classroom, so the researcher might recommend grouping the students before engaging in such an activity.

Related to document analysis, it was found that both of the teacher didn't make the document of scoring analysis of the cognitive assessment result they got. It drew her into a conclusion that there was no significant difference between private and public-school teachers in terms of documenting learning activities. It also revealed that teachers' professional status also did not take much effect in the assessment practice.

The differentiation also found in the term they used in teaching module. Since the change agent program was held in the year of 2022, by 2024, there has been a shift in the terminology used by teachers in their teaching modules. The term "diagnostic assessment" has been replaced with "initial formative assessment."

### **The Relationship between Teachers' Perceptions and Their Practices of Diagnostics Assessment**

The results of the study showed a connection between the perceptions and practices of teachers. Teachers had a favourable opinion of diagnostic evaluations because of the numerous advantages they received from using them.

They both felt that using diagnostic tests in their teaching wasn't difficult at all. Since there was no expense or time involved, it was simple to complete. Indeed, they believe that diagnostic assessment helped teachers build stronger relationships with their students and gained a deeper understanding of them.

They developed a positive opinion of the diagnostics assessment as a result of the advantages of practicing it. The researcher noticed that teachers' perspectives on how to properly apply the diagnostics assessment in their classrooms varied as a result of completing them. Diagnostic assessment was seen as a way to evaluate teachers as well as students in order to determine their own



strengths and weaknesses. because it can be used to gauge whether or not the diagnostics fulfilled the expectations of the teachers. Teachers who had a positive perception of diagnostic assessments strived to worked better themselves, which implied that they also tried to advance in their own learning process.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

It can be inferred from the results of the data interpretation and discussion in the preceding chapter that teachers have favourable opinions of the diagnostics assessment since they concur that there are many advantages in applying it. Diagnostic tests have an impact on how they conducted the learning process since they tended to assist them better understand of their students.

The primary issue with using diagnostic assessments in the Merdeka Curriculum, however, was that the teachers thought the results were biased due to the huge number of diverse children and kids who did not participate in the testing. In order to resolve the issues, they typically address them in a group setting with

other educators, a guidance tutor, a homeroom teacher, and another English change agent teacher.

Next, from the analysis of classroom observation showed that teachers had applied the non-cognitive and cognitive diagnostics assessment in their class. Before class, both teachers helped the students to express their emotions. However, students were more eager to participate in other class activities when participants engaged in physical activities during diagnostic assessments.

Finally, this study revealed that the teachers' perceptions towards diagnostics assessment played a significant effect in their practices. Teacher were positively opinion towards diagnostics assessment after they felt the beneficial of it. They strived to improve themselves, so they could conduct a better diagnostics assessment to adjust their learning tools to be suitable to students' condition and need.

#### **References**

- Aliningsih, F., & Sofwan, A. (2015). English Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Authentic Assessments . *Journal of*

- Language and Literature X/I*, 19-27.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison K. (2008). *A Guide to Teaching Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Faqih, W. M., Susanto, D. A., & Nurani, M. W. B. (2023). The Implementation Of Social Learning Strategy For Learning English Foreign Language In Vocational High School. *MARAS: Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin*, 1(2), 84-92.
- Fitriani, D. (2019). Assessment Practices: Challenges and Opportunities faced by EFL teachers. *Lingua, Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, Vol.2 No.1.
- Gay, L., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. W. (2011). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications (10th ed)*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Kemdikbud. (2022). *Panduan Pembelajaran Dan Asesmen Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, Badan Standar, Kurikulum dan Asesmen Dasar*. Retrieved from <https://kurikulum.kemdikbud.go.id/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Panduan-Pembelajaran-dan-Asesmen.pdf>
- Kezia, N. N., A. G. T., & Budi, T. C. (2023). Implementation of diagnostics assessments as one of the steps to improve learning in the implementation of the independent curriculum. *JISAE (Journal Of Indonesian Student Assessment and Evaluation)*, Vol. 9 No.1.
- Khasanah, M. U., Susanto, D. A., & Rahayu, D. B. (2023). Peningkatan Kemampuan Siswa Menulis Bahasa Inggris Dengan Metode Problem Based Learning Di Sekolah Menengah Atas. *MARAS: Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin*, 1(2), 61-69.
- Khalifasati, A., & Susanto, D. A. (2023). The Students' Memory Language Learning Strategy In Mastering English Materials At Vocational School Level. *PRIMER: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, 1(4), 374-385.
- Kurniawan, B. A., Susanto, D. A., & Affini, L. N. (2024). High School Students'perspective On Using Dungeons & Dragons For English Speaking Practice. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 10(2).
- Maemunah, R., & Susanto, D. A. (2023). Students' Cognitive Language Learning Strategy In Mastering English Material At Vocational School Level. *PRIMER: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, 1(4), 363-373.
- Mulinda, U. (2022). Pengembangan Modul Ajar berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka . *semanticscholar.org*.
- Mustika, I., & Isnaini, H. (2022). Workshop dan Penyuluhan asesmen kognitif dan non kognitif kurikulum prototipe kepada guru-guru di kabupaten subang. *Adimas Siliwangi*, 527-542.
- Naim, A., & Susanto, D. A. (2023, September). The Improvement Of Student's Reading Comprehension Through Scanning Techniques in SMA N 1 Gemuh Kendal (An experimental research of tenth grade students in academic year 2021/2022). In Undergraduate Conference on Applied Linguistics, Linguistics,

and Literature (Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 199-204).

Pramesti, E. A. D., & Susanto, D. A. (2023). Empowering English Language Learning Through Social Learning Strategies In Vocational School. *MARAS: Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin*, 1(2), 70-83.

Susanto, D. A., Priyolistiyanto, A., Pinandhita, F., KA, A. P., & Bimo, D. S. (2024). Utilizing ChatGPT on Designing English Language Teaching (ELT) Materials in Indonesia: Opportunities and Challenges. *Celt: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching & Literature*, 24(1), 157-171.

Wiggins, G. (1993). *Assessing student performance : Exploring the purpose and limits of testing.* . San Fransisco: CA: Jossey-Bass Publisher.

Winanta, A. A., Susanto, D. A., & Sodik, J. (2024). Teachers' Production of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Spoken Short Functional Texts at SMP N 10 Semarang. *Jurnal Nasional Holistic Science*, 4(3), 390-396

Wulandari, W., Susanto, D. A., & Hawa, F. (2024). Exploring Bamboozle As Games-Based Learning Media To Support Students' Vocabulary: It's Application In The Classroom. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 4(2), 6542-6551

Yulianto, H. (2022). An implementation of Learning Assessment Model on the Curriculum of Merdeka Belajar. *Technical and Vocational Education International Journal*, Vol.2.

#### **Buku :**

Agustin, M, & Syaodih. (2008). *Bimbingan konseling untuk anak usia dini*. Jakarta: Universitas Terbuka.\

Brabender, V., & Fallon, A. (2009). *Group development in practice: guidance for clinicians and researchers on stages and dynamics of change*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

#### **Artikel in Press :**

Lyznicki, J. M., Young, D. C., Riggs, J. A., Davis, R. M., & Dickinson, B. D. (2001). Obesity: Assessment and management in primary care. *American Family Physician*, 63(11), 2185-2196.

#### **Jurnal :**

Hodgson, J., & Weil, J. (2011). Commentary: how individual and profession-level factors influence discussion of disability in prenatal genetic counseling. *Journal of Genetic Counseling*, 1-3.

Fariq, A. (2011). Perkembangan dunia konseling memasuki era globalisasi. *Pedagogi*, II Nov 2011(Universitas Negeri Padang), 255-262.