BUILDING STUDENTS' CHARACTER THROUGH EXPOSITION TEXTS: A TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS

Tuty Prasetya Ningasih
Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia
Email: tutyningasih@gmail.com

Abstract
This study identifies how exposition texts in Grade XI English textbooks contribute to character building using the 4C paradigm. Curriculum Merdeka is the guideline for promoting student autonomy and a pedagogical shift towards the 21st-century soft skills framework. This study employed qualitative case study analysis and interviews to evaluate the exposition texts of Ministry of Education-approved textbooks, assessing their capacity to enhance character building in eleventh-grade students. The case study analysis reveals that exposition texts primarily address ethical issues and social concerns, providing several opportunities for character education. However, the associated learning activities demonstrated the consistency of the 4C paradigm, with critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity regularly included in the process of character development during the teaching-learning process. Expository text should be used to improve moral reasoning, perspective-taking abilities, and ethical awareness for eleventh-grade students at school. English textbooks provide students with the selection and use of exposition texts to maximize their contribution to overall character building in secondary education. The implementation of 4C in the activities included in the English textbook enables students to be more aware of their environment in a wise manner.

Keywords: Textbook, Grade XI, Curriculum Merdeka, Exposition Text, 4C, Character Building.

INTRODUCTION

As Indonesia advances towards the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045, the nation faces an array of challenges requiring the adaptation and transformation of its youth to ensure they are equipped to thrive in the global arena. One of the most significant catalysts for this transformation is education, particularly in the realm of English language instruction, which plays a crucial role in preparing the younger generation for participation in the increasingly interconnected world. The integration of Emancipated Learning (Curriculum Merdeka) with digital media in English education stands at the forefront of these efforts, helping to bolster not only linguistic capabilities but also critical 21st-century skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. By aligning these educational strategies with global insights, the youth of Indonesia are empowered to navigate forthcoming challenges and seize opportunities with greater competence.

The educational landscape in Indonesia has undergone considerable transformation with the introduction of the Emancipated Curriculum, which places a strong emphasis on student-centered, flexible learning methods. The vision of the Merdeka Curriculum is grounded in the belief that education should enable students to develop their independence, creativity, and critical thinking while preparing them for both local and global challenges. The focus on personalized learning experiences and greater flexibility in the delivery of education offers a promising pathway for addressing the diverse needs of students and ensuring that they are equipped to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

English, as a global lingua franca, is indispensable for communication in the fields of business, science, diplomacy, and international relations. As globalization continues to shape the dynamics of global interaction, the ability to communicate effectively in English is becoming ever more critical for students across the world, including those in Indonesia. To this end, it is imperative that Indonesian students not only gain proficiency in English but also develop an appreciation for the cultural nuances that accompany global communication. Through a well-structured English language curriculum, students can be empowered to not only acquire language skills but also foster a deeper understanding of different cultures and global perspectives.

The integration of digital media in English instruction is an essential component of this transformation. With the rapid advancement of technology, digital tools are increasingly becoming integral to the teaching and learning process. Digital media offers teachers innovative ways to engage students, enrich learning experiences, and provide access to a vast array of resources that extend beyond traditional textbooks. These resources, when used effectively, can enhance students' comprehension, provide immediate feedback, and create interactive learning environments that foster greater participation and motivation.

Moreover, digital media aligns with the goals of the Emancipated Curriculum by providing opportunities for differentiated learning. Through digital platforms, teachers can tailor instruction to meet the individual needs of students, allowing them to learn at their own pace and in ways that suit their learning styles. This is particularly crucial in a country as diverse as Indonesia, where students come from varied backgrounds and have different educational needs. By incorporating digital tools, educators can create more inclusive learning environments where all students, regardless of their background or ability, have access to high-quality educational experiences.

Character education, which is another cornerstone of the Emancipated Curriculum, plays an equally vital role in shaping the future of Indonesia's youth. Character education is not limited to the development of academic knowledge; it also seeks to cultivate ethical values such as accountability, empathy, respect, and honesty. These values are essential for the growth of individuals who will contribute positively to society. By integrating character education into English language instruction, students not only improve their language proficiency but also internalize moral values that will guide their actions and decisions in both personal and professional spheres.

The educational materials used in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, such as textbooks and supplementary resources, are pivotal in fostering these educational goals. The "Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Lanjut XI" textbook by Rahmah (2024) serves as a prime example of how resources can be aligned with the principles of Curriculum Merdeka. This textbook, which adheres to the goals of independent learning, incorporates both linguistic content and character-building elements, thereby supporting the development of students' academic and ethical competencies. Through the use of well-designed resources, educators can effectively teach students not only the mechanics of the English language but also the values that will shape their character and actions.

A key aspect of the Curriculum Merdeka is its focus on preparing students with the skills necessary for success in the 21st century. In this context, the 4C skills—critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity—are emphasized as essential competencies for students to master. Exposition texts, a common feature of the English curriculum, provide an excellent medium for fostering these skills. By analyzing and producing exposition texts, students engage in higher-order thinking, collaborate with peers, and develop their communication skills—all of which are critical for their future success. Furthermore, the integration of digital media and technology into these activities allows students to engage with content in new and innovative ways, enhancing their ability to think critically and creatively while working collaboratively.

In conclusion, the alignment of Emancipated Learning with digital media in English instruction presents a promising avenue for enhancing the quality of education in Indonesia. By focusing on both language proficiency and character education, this integrated approach ensures that students are not only equipped with the necessary skills to succeed in a globalized world but also grounded in the ethical values that will guide them in their personal and professional lives. As Indonesia continues to progress towards its vision for Golden Indonesia 2045, it is crucial that the education system continues to adapt, embracing innovative approaches that prepare students for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Through the effective integration of Curriculum Merdeka and digital media, Indonesia's youth will be empowered to lead with competence, confidence, and integrity.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Competence within the Merdeka Curriculum

The concept of competence within the Merdeka Curriculum goes beyond the mere acquisition of academic knowledge. It integrates both hard and soft skills, creating a balanced educational experience that prepares students to face global challenges. This approach emphasizes the development of moral principles, ethical standards, and practical abilities, all of which are crucial for success in the modern world (Liu, 2024). The Merdeka Curriculum is thus not only a framework for academic achievement but also for the cultivation of responsible, well-rounded individuals who can thrive in the global landscape.

As part of the broader vision for educational transformation, the Merdeka Curriculum seeks to build a knowledgeable and culturally competent society. This approach aligns with the global educational paradigm, which increasingly prioritizes the holistic development of students, incorporating intellectual, ethical, and social growth. It provides a foundational platform to foster students who are both intellectually capable and ethically grounded, ready to confront the challenges of the future.

The Role of the Independent Curriculum in Shaping Education

The Merdeka Curriculum, also known as the Independent Curriculum, introduces a paradigm shift in Indonesia's education system. This change is not just about modifying learning materials but also about transforming teaching methodologies, pedagogical approaches, and evaluative processes within schools (Maulidya, 2024). The introduction of

the Independent Curriculum represents a profound transformation aimed at providing students with the freedom to navigate their educational paths, empowering them to become independent thinkers and problem solvers.

This shift towards more flexible and student-centered learning environments is a response to the need for an education system that can adapt to the rapidly changing demands of society. By giving students more agency in their learning, the curriculum encourages deeper engagement, exploration, and critical thinking. It also allows teachers to be more innovative in their approaches, tailoring the educational experience to meet the unique needs and abilities of each student.

Personal Development: Mental, Physical, Social, and Emotional Growth

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes personal development, which encompasses not only academic growth but also the mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of a student's life. Gribincea and Ciulei (2024) highlight that personal development is crucial for leading productive and fulfilling lives within societal norms and regulations. By focusing on this holistic growth, the curriculum aims to produce well-rounded individuals who can contribute positively to their communities and society at large.

Personal development within the Merdeka Curriculum is intended to help students develop life skills such as emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience. These skills are vital for adapting to the complexities of modern society, where individuals are often required to manage multiple roles and responsibilities. The curriculum encourages students to become more self-aware, socially responsible, and capable of managing their emotions and relationships in a constructive manner.

The Role of Educational Resources in Pedagogical Success

Educational resources, including textbooks, play a pivotal role in the pedagogical process within the Merdeka Curriculum. Textbooks are not just repositories of knowledge but tools that structure the learning experience, guiding students and teachers through the curriculum. Rizal (2023) underscores the importance of textbooks as educational resources that facilitate various instructional methods. They serve as the foundation for the educational process, providing students with both content and the means to engage with that content in meaningful ways.

Textbooks within the Merdeka Curriculum are carefully designed to be interactive and relevant to students' lives, enabling them to see the practical applications of what they are learning. They are not merely instructional tools but instruments that promote critical thinking, ethical reflection, and personal growth. By aligning textbooks with the goals of the curriculum, educators can ensure that students not only gain academic knowledge but also develop the moral and ethical values that are central to their overall development.

Integration of Character Education in Textbooks

One of the key features of the Merdeka Curriculum is the integration of character education within textbooks. Rahmah (2022) discusses the incorporation of eleven key values

related to character development into educational materials. These values, such as respect, responsibility, and integrity, are woven throughout the curriculum, ensuring that students develop both intellectually and morally.

Character education in the Merdeka Curriculum is not limited to a separate subject but is integrated into the overall learning experience. Textbooks, as central resources, play a crucial role in delivering these values. They present ethical dilemmas, real-world scenarios, and thought-provoking questions that encourage students to reflect on their actions and decisions. By embedding character education within the curriculum, students are encouraged to internalize moral principles and apply them in their daily lives.

The Relationship Between Teachers, Textbooks, and Students

The success of the Merdeka Curriculum depends on the interaction between textbooks, teachers, and students. Textbooks provide the structure and content, while teachers guide students through the material, helping them make connections, engage with complex concepts, and apply their learning. Teachers are instrumental in facilitating the development of both intellectual and moral competencies, using textbooks as a tool to foster a dynamic, interactive learning environment.

Rizal (2023) highlights that the teacher-student relationship, facilitated by the use of textbooks, is essential in creating a conducive learning environment. Teachers not only impart knowledge but also serve as role models, demonstrating the values and ethical principles that students are expected to learn. This dynamic relationship, supported by well-designed textbooks, helps create a holistic learning experience that promotes both academic and moral development.

The Role of Parental and Community Involvement in Character Development

Character education in the Merdeka Curriculum is strengthened by the involvement of parents and the wider community. Research by Elvin Nadhiroh et al. (2025) emphasizes that parental involvement plays a significant role in reinforcing the moral values learned in school. The curriculum encourages students to participate in community-based projects, extracurricular activities, and collaborative learning, all of which help students understand and apply moral values in real-world contexts.

By involving parents and the community, the Merdeka Curriculum creates a supportive network that reinforces the values taught in the classroom. This collaborative approach ensures that students not only learn ethical principles but also see them modeled and reinforced in their daily interactions with family and community members.

Character Education Through the Pancasila Student Profile

The Merdeka Curriculum places a strong emphasis on character development through the Pancasila student profile, which embodies values such as faith, piety, respect for diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, and creativity. Saidah (2025) discusses how the Pancasila profile is integrated into the curriculum, ensuring that students develop not only intellectual capabilities but also a strong moral foundation.

The Pancasila student profile serves as a guide for educators, providing clear principles for character education. By incorporating these values into every aspect of the curriculum, from classroom instruction to extracurricular activities, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to produce students who are not only academically competent but also ethically responsible and capable of contributing positively to society.

The Integral Role of Textbooks and Character Education

In conclusion, the Merdeka Curriculum represents a comprehensive approach to education that emphasizes the development of both academic skills and moral values. Textbooks play a central role in this process, serving as both content providers and tools for fostering character development. By integrating character education into the curriculum and utilizing textbooks that support this goal, the Merdeka Curriculum ensures that students are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world. The role of teachers, parents, and the community in reinforcing these values is also critical to the success of this educational transformation. Through this integrated approach, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to produce well-rounded individuals who are not only academically successful but also ethically responsible and capable of contributing to the global community.

METHOD

The research is included in qualitative research since it aims to provide a portrait of the role of both Exposition text and English textbook information in strengthening students' behavior. Asserts that descriptive qualitative research prioritizes the delivery of a comprehensive and nuanced portrayal of participants' experiences and perceptions, which is crucial for understanding the intricacies of educational practices. This highlights the importance of descriptive research in understanding educational phenomena (Creswell, 2018).

Asserts that in qualitative research, the principal instrument is the researcher; however, once the research focus is clarified, it is possible to develop straightforward research tools that are intended to augment the data and facilitate comparisons with information obtained through observations and interviews (Sugiyono, 2019).

Emphasized the importance of conducting case studies in research to understand the complexities of real-world contexts (Smith, 2020). This case study aims to explore the critical role of textbooks in fostering character development among students through the study of exposition texts, thereby contributing to the enhancement of their four-character competencies, with a specific focus on the integration of character education in the instruction of exposition texts for grade XI at SMA YPPK Agustinus Kota Sorong.

According to (Moleong, 2020), an interview constitutes a dialogue between two individuals aimed at exchanging information and ideas via inquiries and responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The methodologies employed for data collection serve as a reflection of the research process as it progresses from the selection of subjects to the acquisition of the necessary data

for the study (Kusmawan, 2025). In this research, the data collection procedure employs various research instruments, including observations, questionnaires, and interviews (Lahiya, 2025).

According to Meda in (Arifudin, 2025), methodological triangulation involves combining multiple data collection methods, such as observation, interviews, and questionnaires, to validate findings and gain a richer, more trustworthy understanding of the studied topic. This method helps to eliminate biases inherent in single approaches and increases the validity and dependability of study outputs by confirming convergence across multiple data sources. Triangulation serves as a methodological approach for researchers to enhance comprehension and analysis by having multiple evaluators assess data across various contexts.

Validity and reliability in case study method the triangulation procedure (Judijanto, 2025).

Herein lies the triangulated data collected by the researcher.
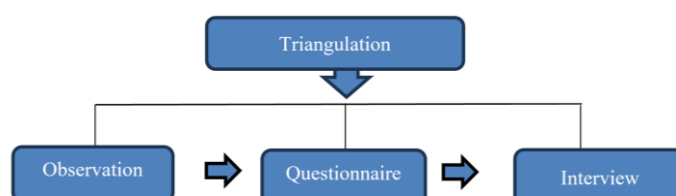
The class observation is given to the two classes i.e XI A4 Sam Ratulangi and XI A3. Pattimura.

The questionnaires for 141 informants who are the students learns about Exposition text. The researchers only take around 141 students from 5 classes (XI A1.1 Teuku Umar. XI A1.2. Cut Nyak Dien, XI A2 Diponegoro, XI A3. Pattimura and XI A4 Sam Ratulangi)

The interviews are given to the five informants from various class. The interviews for teachers are also given to the school principal and three English teachers.

"Classroom observation should be understood not just as a means of assessing teaching and learning, but as a vital process for developing teachers' skills, knowledge, and professional identity. When structured, transparent, and reflective, observation fosters a culture of continuous learning and improvement within educational organizations." (O'Leary, 2020).

Based on classroom observations, elaborating exposition texts utilizing the 4C skills revealed various patterns in how characters were generated and used within the texts. This systematic method provided students with a disciplined framework for character development, which improved both the quality of the expository texts and students' engagement with the reading process. The observation in the class is held on the two classes, XI A4 Sam Ratulangi and XI A3 Pattimura.

"Questionnaires offer researchers a standardized method for gathering data about instructional techniques and materials in a variety of scenarios. When investigating the use of exposition texts, appropriately constructed questionnaires can capture both the frequency and character of text usage, pedagogical methodologies used, and perceived educational outcomes across varied educational settings" (Creswell, J. W, 2024).
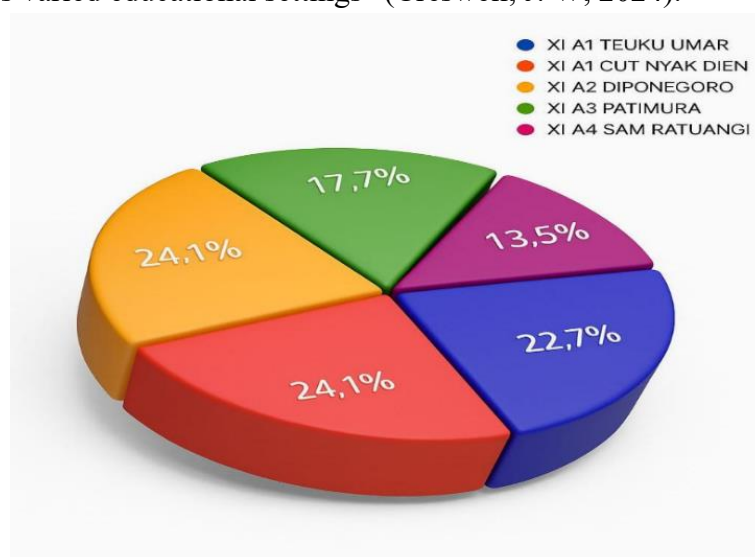
The questionnaires have already been shared through Google Forms with the students. The reason for choosing the five classes is that from various classes, disciplines, science, social, and language classes, the number of students is approximately 141.

In the interview part, the researcher explores the students' perspective through a comprehensive discussion section that examines students' perceptions of how character development is implicated in the teaching-learning process, based on text analysis of exposition and interview data. The section covers several key themes: students' recognition of character values embedded in exposition texts, how analyzing exposition texts develops critical thinking as a character trait, the role of classroom discussions in developing communication skills for moral discourse, how collaborative analysis fosters community values like respect and empathy, creative engagement with texts that develops moral imagination. Throughout the section, direct quotations from student interviews are used to illustrate their perspectives. These statements demonstrate how students perceive the connection between academic work with exposition texts and character development across the 4C framework. Interview with five students, a school principal, and three English teachers

CONCLUSION

After conducting the study, the researcher draws conclusions that answer the problems formulated in Chapter I. The analysis provides the answer to the research question posed in the first chapter: First, to identify the characters depicted in the Exposition Text within the Grade XI English Textbook at SMA YPPK Agustinus, based on the research conducted with XI-grade students at SMA YPPK Agustinus. This study investigated the positive effects of exposition texts on character development, with a specific emphasis on building students' character through the 4Cs, which are critical competencies for encouraging 21st-century soft skills. It examined the existence of the textbook Bahasa Inggris Lanjut Grade XI through classroom observation. Second, to explain the ways the utilization of Exposition Text in the classroom contributes to the character development of students during the teaching-learning process. The implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka underlined how exposition texts help to character development using the 4Cs paradigm through develop critical thinking as a moral inclination by assessing statements and evidence, improve communication skills that promote ethical discourse and respect for different opinions, encourage teamwork that fosters empathy and mutual respect via collective analysis, and promote creative moral reasoning and ethical problem-solving. The researcher conducted interviews with the school principal and English teachers. Third, to report the perceptions of students at SMA YPPK Agustinus Kota Sorong towards the implications of the characters in the teaching-learning process. The researcher gives questionnaires and conducts interviews with selected students. By using this method of collecting data, the researcher obtains valid information about the importance of this exposition text for XI students in developing their character competencies and preparing themselves for the 21st-century soft skills.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, the researcher provides suggestions for future research, including recommendations for teachers, students, and the publisher.

REFERENCES

Arifudin, O. (2025). Application Of Steam Learning Methods To Increase Student Creativity And Innovation. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning (INJOTEL)*, *3*(1), 97–108.

Creswell. (2018). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach. Sage publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2024). Understanding Study Case as Research Design. Binus University Press.

Gribincea, T., & Ciulei, F. (2024). Personal development in the school organization in the context of new educational paradigms. Moldoscopie, 2(99), 103–112. https://doi.org/10.52388/1812-2566.2023.2(99).10

Judijanto, L. (2025). Ethics And Security In Artificial Intelligence And Machine Learning: Current Perspectives In Computing. *International Journal of Society Reviews (INJOSER)*, *3*(2), 374–380.

Kusmawan, A. (2025). The Relationship Between Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development and Student Learning Outcomes. *International Journal of Educatio Elementaria and Psychologia*, *2*(1), 1–12.

Lahiya, A. (2025). Education Administration Reform: A Case Study On The Implementation Of The Merdeka Curriculum. *INJOSEDU: International Journal of Social and Education*, *2*(2), 29–37.

Liu, J. (2024). A Review of Research on the Concept of Global Competence. Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media, 70(1), 95–99. https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/70/20241030.

Maulidya. (2024). Apakah Kurikulum Merdeka Mampu Memfasilitasi Pengembangan Karakter Siswa. *Indonesian Research Journal on Education*, 4(3), 721-731. https://doi.org/10.31004/irje.v4i3.868

Moleong. (2020). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Cet. 40). Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

O'Leary. (2020). *Classroom Observation: A Guide to the Effective Observation of Teaching and Learning*. 2nd ed., Routledge.

Rahmah, N. F. (2022). The The Readability Of Junior's Level In Mentari's Textbooks: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Study. *JEPAL (Journal of English Pedagogy and Applied Linguistics)*, *3*(1), 56–64.

Rahmah, N. F. (2024). The Textual Features In Persuading Student on School Advertisement: A Textual Analysis. *JIIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, *7*(12), 14082–14089.

Rizal, D. (2023). Textbook As A Medium of Interaction and Learning In English Language Learning; Qualitative Systematic Review. Journal of English Language Studies, 8(1), 101. https://doi.org/10.30870/jels.v8i1.18622

Sugiyono. (2019). Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D. Bandung: Alfabeta.

Smith, J. (2020). *Understanding Contextual Analysis in Case Study Research*. Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2020.01.001