



## Accounting Vocational Students' Perception Towards the English Project in Curriculum Merdeka

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**Abstract:** The project-based learning used in the curriculum merdeka to help students improve their soft skills in line with the traits of the Pancasila Student Profile is one of the features that sets it apart from the previous curriculum the most. This study will discuss how accounting students at Semarang's vocational schools experienced project-based learning in an English class initiated during the second semester of the 2022–2023 academic year. This study, conducted on accounting students in the tenth grade at a vocational high school in Semarang that was implementing the curriculum merdeka for the first time, included 36 students as subjects. Using survey from quantitative research, this study used a Likert scale with 13 questionnaires to determine their feelings about project-based learning in the curriculum merdeka for English class. We can conclude from this study's findings that all accounting students positively perceive English lessons with project-based learning. So, teachers can consider using Project-Based Learning in the curriculum merdeka according to students' perceptions. The scope of accounting students at Semarang's vocational schools was the subject of this study.

**Keywords:** project-based learning; curriculum merdeka; accounting vocational students.

### Persepsi Siswa SMK Akuntansi terhadap Proyek Bahasa Inggris dalam Kurikulum Merdeka

**Abstrak:** Pembelajaran berbasis proyek yang digunakan dalam kurikulum merdeka untuk membantu siswa meningkatkan soft skill mereka sesuai dengan ciri Profil Siswa Pancasila adalah salah satu hal yang paling membedakannya dari kurikulum sebelumnya. Dalam penelitian ini, akan dibahas bagaimana siswa akuntansi di sekolah kejuruan Semarang mengalami pembelajaran berbasis proyek di kelas bahasa Inggris yang dimulai selama semester kedua sekolah tahun ajaran 2022–2023. Penelitian yang dilakukan pada siswa akuntansi kelas X di sebuah sekolah menengah kejuruan di Semarang yang pertama kali mengimplementasikan kurikulum merdeka ini, melibatkan total 36 siswa sebagai subjek. Dengan menggunakan survei pada penelitian kuantitatif, penelitian ini menggunakan skala Likert dengan 13 kuesioner untuk mengetahui apa yang mereka rasakan tentang pembelajaran berbasis proyek dalam kurikulum merdeka untuk kelas bahasa Inggris. Dapat disimpulkan dari temuan penelitian ini bahwa pelajaran bahasa Inggris dengan pembelajaran berbasis proyek dipersepsikan secara positif oleh semua mahasiswa akuntansi. Jadi, guru dapat mempertimbangkan untuk menggunakan Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek dalam kurikulum merdeka sesuai dengan persepsi siswa. Ruang lingkup siswa akuntansi di SMK Semarang menjadi subjek penelitian ini.

**Kata kunci:** project-based learning; kurikulum merdeka; siswa SMK akuntansi.

#### 1. Introduction

Teaching English in vocational schools has not been spared from the onslaught of implementing the curriculum merdeka. The application of this curriculum itself is a continuation of the emergency curriculum implemented during COVID-19 (Solehudin et al., 2022). This was carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture in its efforts to restore learning in Indonesia, which has been chaotic due to COVID-19, by implementing a curriculum with

various intra-curricular learning activities (Khoirurrijal et al., 2022).

The curriculum merdeka is a curriculum with various intracurricular learning opportunities where the content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competence. Teachers have the flexibility to choose various teaching tools so that learning can be adapted to the needs and interests of students (Kemdikbud, 2022). As we know, the implementation of the curriculum merdeka is planned nationally for

2024 because systemic changes to the curriculum certainly cannot happen in an instant. It is hoped that step-by-step changes in the curriculum will provide sufficient time for all key elements so that the foundation for the transformation of our education can be firmly entrenched.

One of the things that most distinguish the curriculum merdeka from the previous curriculum is project-based learning to develop students' soft skills according to the characteristics of the Pancasila Student Profile (Rohimajaya et al., 2022). The project is not directed to achieve certain learning achievement targets, so it is not tied to subject content (Hamidah et al., 2020). Therefore, there are many studies that have been conducted to see how effective project-based learning in this curriculum is.

In addition to teaching students knowledge, project-based learning also teaches them essential life skills necessary for them to survive as individuals in our society. These life skills include developing critical thinking, communication, and teamwork abilities (Goodman & Stivers, 2010). Especially for students in vocational schools who have higher career adaptability than general high school students (Mardiyati & Yuniawati, 2021; Wibowo, 2022), which requires them to have various kinds of soft skills, especially for accounting students in vocational high schools who still face job competition due to their low ability to speak English (Umatin & Andayani, 2022). There has been much evidence from several studies showing that the use of projects in learning English can help students improve their soft skills such as discussing, collaborating, and critical thinking (Kusumawati, 2021). Therefore, the project is also recommended to increase students' interest in learning English (Susanti & Trisusana, 2017).

In previous research, it has been found that the implementation of the curriculum merdeka is generally very good with several methods, one of which is Project-Based Learning (Mayasari et al., 2023). For this reason, this research will focus more on the application of Project-Based Learning.

This study will discuss what the perceptions of accounting students at vocational schools in Semarang are about the English learning project in the curriculum merdeka that they have implemented at school. Students' perceptions are very important because the method used by the teacher greatly influences the learning achievement of vocational students (Ramadhan & Soenarto, 2015). Therefore, this research focuses

on the perceptions of vocational high school accounting students about projects in English class, whether the project implemented in the curriculum merdeka has a much better impact on the learning process, and whether this can be well received by them.

From this study, teachers can consider using Project-Based Learning in the curriculum merdeka according to students' perceptions, especially accounting students. If the application is lacking, the teacher is expected to be able to find solutions to improve it. If it is enough, the teacher is expected to be able to maintain or improve the performance by using this Project-Based Learning.

Through this research, they may enhance their comprehension of best practices for project application and expand their knowledge of education and learning. They can use this information to develop and carry out more productive classroom activities. Especially to prepare themselves to face the implementation of the curriculum merdeka in the future.

## 2. Research Methodology

In this study, surveys and questionnaires will be used as instruments along with quantitative research. Quantitative approaches refer to gathering, evaluating, interpreting, and documenting study data. In order to identify a sample and population, specify the strategy of inquiry, collect and analyze data, present the results, make an interpretation, and write the research in a way that is consistent with a survey or experimental study, there are specific methods for both survey and experimental research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With the help of a survey, this study uses numbers to describe how accounting vocational students perceive the English project, which is based on the curriculum merdeka. It involves a cross-sectional study that collects data using questionnaires with the goal of generalizing from a sample to the general population.

Using a Likert scale, a questionnaire with 13 statements was utilized to determine what accounting students at vocational school felt about project-based learning in the curriculum merdeka for English class. One of the most fundamental psychometric instruments is the Likert scale, which tends to be used in research in education and the social sciences (Joshi et al., 2015). Likert scaling assumes that there are underlying (or latent or natural) continuous variables with values that correspond to respondents' attitudes and opinions (Chakrabarty, 2019).

The study was carried out to examine the students' views of learning during the second semester of the 2022–2023 academic year. A total of 36 students participated as subjects for this study, which was done on accounting students in the tenth grade at a vocational high school in Semarang that was implementing the curriculum merdeka for the first time. Questionnaires were delivered to students via Google Forms with a submission period of June 10–16, 2023.

### 3. Finding And Discussion

Validity and reliability tests were first performed before data analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was checked using Cronbach alpha, and the validity of the questionnaire's results was examined using the Pearson product moment in SPSS.

The results found that the thirteenth questionnaire was valid because the  $r_{count}$  analyzed was  $> r_{table}$  0.329 (N = 36).

The instrument's reliability was determined using the Cronbach alpha test. Based on Nunnally, if the Cronbach alpha value is more than 0.7, the questionnaire is considered reliable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The Cronbach alpha of the questionnaire value is 0.967, indicating that this questionnaire is reliable.

There are thirteen statements in the questionnaire that was distributed to accounting students regarding their perceptions of learning English using project-based learning in this curriculum. After collecting their perceptions, the following table can be presented:

Table 1. Accounting Vocational Students' Perception towards the English Project in Curriculum Merdeka

	N	MIN	MAX	Mean	SD
<b>S.1</b>	36	1	5	3,75	0,996
<b>S.2</b>	36	1	5	3,81	1,091
<b>S.3</b>	36	1	5	3,83	1,082
<b>S.4</b>	36	1	5	3,75	0,937
<b>S.5</b>	36	1	5	3,69	0,856
<b>S.6</b>	36	1	5	3,86	0,961
<b>S.7</b>	36	1	5	3,86	1,018
<b>S.8</b>	36	1	5	3,83	0,910
<b>S.9</b>	36	1	5	3,69	0,951
<b>S.10</b>	36	1	5	3,67	0,986
<b>S.11</b>	36	1	5	3,92	0,967
<b>S.12</b>	36	1	5	3,72	0,974
<b>S.13</b>	36	1	5	3,92	0,967
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	36				

Based on the table 1 above, it can be seen that from statements 1 to 13, all of them received high scores (3.41–4.20). This shows that English lesson with project-based learning is positively perceived by all accounting students.

Table 2. Statement 1 “I know what project-based learning is for learning English”

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	2	5,6	5,6	5,6
2	2	5,6	5,6	11,1
3	5	13,9	13,9	25,0
4	21	58,3	58,3	83,3
5	6	16,7	16,7	100,0
Total	36	100,0	100,0	

In the table 2, statement 1, 'I know what project-based learning is for learning English', 5.6% of students strongly disagree, 5.6% of students disagree, 13.9% are unsure, 58.3% of students agree, and 16.7% of students strongly agree.

It can be said that the majority of students already know what project-based learning is. This is, of course, because project-based learning was already done before the curriculum merdeka existed. Since 2004, PjBL has been officially introduced by the Directorate of High School Development (SMA) and the Directorate of Vocational High School Development (SMK) in the Indonesian national education curriculum. PjBL is included as one of the recommended learning strategies in the implementation of productive subjects such as engineering, health, and business subjects at the SMA and SMK levels.

Table 3. Statement 2 “I have participated in project-based learning activities to learn English”

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	2	5,6	5,6	5,6
2	2	5,6	5,6	11,1
3	7	19,4	19,4	30,6
4	15	41,7	41,7	72,2
5	10	27,8	27,8	100,0
Total	36	100,0	100,0	

For the table 3, statement 2, 'I have participated in project-based learning activities to learn English', 5.6% of students strongly disagree, 5.6% of students disagree, 19.4% are unsure, 41.7% of students agree, and 27.8% of students strongly agree.

Over fifty percent of the students believe they have contributed fully to this project-based English learning. This strengthens the case for project-based learning's ability to maximize student involvement in the learning process, such as responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and integrity. As a result, students get to practice communicating with their group members, dealing with, and appreciating various viewpoints (Gai Mali, 2016; Yacob, 2021).

Table 4. Statement 3 "I was enjoying the project given to me to learn English"

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	2	5,6	5,6	5,6
2	2	5,6	5,6	11,1
3	6	16,7	16,7	27,8
4	16	44,4	44,4	72,2
5	10	27,8	27,8	100,0
Total	36	100,0	100,0	

As we can see for statement 3 in the table 4 above, 'I was enjoying the project given to me to learn English', 5.6% of students strongly disagree, 5.6% of students disagree, 16.7% are unsure, 44.4% of students agree, and 27.8% of students strongly agree. It appears that the majority of students favor project-based English learning.

Table 5. Statement 4 "The use of projects in learning English really makes it easier for me to understand the material"

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	1	2,8	2,8	2,8
2	2	5,6	5,6	8,3
3	9	25,0	25,0	33,3
4	17	47,2	47,2	80,6
5	7	19,4	19,4	100,0
Total	36	100,0	100,0	

For statement 4 in the table 5, 'The use of projects in learning English really makes it easier for me to understand the material', 2.8% of students strongly disagree, 5.6% of students

disagree, 25% are unsure, 47.2% of students agree, and 19.4% of students strongly agree.

Table 6. Statement 5 "My friends and I were very enthusiastic about the project"

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	1	2,8	2,8	2,8
2	1	2,8	2,8	5,6
3	11	30,6	30,6	36,1
4	18	50,0	50,0	86,1
5	5	13,9	13,9	100,0
Total	36	100,0	100,0	

And in the table 6 for statement 5, 'My friends and I were very enthusiastic about the project', 2.8% of students strongly disagree, 2.8% of students disagree, 30.6% are unsure, 50% of students agree, and 13.9% of students strongly agree.

Statement 4 and 5 has something to do with statement 3, where the majority of students enjoy learning. Enthusiasm and the ease of grasping the subject can be significantly influenced by how enjoyable one feels while learning. A person will learn more effectively if they are at ease and unwind while studying.

Enjoyment of learning can enhance memory formation and recall. When someone enjoys the learning process, the brain releases neurotransmitters and hormones associated with positive emotions, which can strengthen memory consolidation (Tyng et al., 2017). This facilitates better retention and recall of the learned material.

Table 7. Statement 6 "I found the time I spent on the project a lot of fun"

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	2	5,6	5,6	5,6
3	7	19,4	19,4	25,0
4	19	52,8	52,8	77,8
5	8	22,2	22,2	100,0
Total	36	100,0	100,0	

Based on table 7 for statement 6, 'I found the time I spent on the project a lot of fun', 5.6% of students strongly disagree, 0% of students disagree, 19.4% are unsure, 52.8% of students agree, and 22.2% of students strongly agree.

Table 8. Statement 7 “The use of projects motivates me to study English materials”

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	5,6	5,6
	2	1	2,8	8,3
	3	6	16,7	25,0
	4	18	50,0	75,0
	5	9	25,0	100,0
	Total	36	100,0	100,0

As we can see in the table 8 for statement 7, ‘The use of projects motivates me to study English materials’, 5.6% of students strongly disagree, 2.8% of students disagree, 16.7% are unsure, 50% of students agree, and 25% of students strongly agree.

Table 9. Statement 8 “I feel that the project of learning English is better than usual”

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	2,8	2,8
	2	2	5,6	8,3
	3	6	16,7	25,0
	4	20	55,6	80,6
	5	7	19,4	100,0
	Total	36	100,0	100,0

In the table 9, statement 8, ‘I feel that the project of learning English is better than usual’, 2.8% of students strongly disagree, 5.6% of students disagree, 16.7% are unsure, 55.6% of students agree, and 19.4% of students strongly agree.

Due to the link between these six claims, statements 6, 7, and 8 are used to verify students' responses to statements 3, 4, and 5 where there was not a significant distinction between the ratio of students who agreed and those who strongly agreed. It implies that they accept these arguments.

Then, in the table 11 for statement 10, ‘My friend participates responsibly in this project’, 5.6% of students strongly disagree, 2.8% of students disagree, 27.8% are unsure, 47.2% of students agree, and 16.7% of students strongly agree.

Table 10. Statement 9 “I hope other topics also use the project”

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	5,6	5,6
	3	11	30,6	36,1
	4	17	47,2	83,3
	5	6	16,7	100,0
	Total	36	100,0	100,0

For statement 9 in the table 10, ‘I hope other topics also use the project’, 5.6% of students strongly disagree, 0% of students disagree, 30.6% are unsure, 47.2% of students agree, and 16.7% of students strongly agree.

Table 11. Statement 10 “My friend participates responsibly in this project”

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	5,6	5,6
	2	1	2,8	8,3
	3	10	27,8	36,1
	4	17	47,2	83,3
	5	6	16,7	100,0
	Total	36	100,0	100,0

We can observe that students evaluated both themselves and their friends in this statement. Peer evaluations can be a useful method for tracking on and grading project-based learning students (Van Den Bogaard & Saunders-Smiths, 2007). Students evaluate and comment on their peers' work as part of peer evaluations.

Table 12. Statement 11 “The discussions I had improved my communication skills”

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	2,8	2,8
	2	2	5,6	8,3
	3	6	16,7	25,0
	4	17	47,2	72,2
	5	10	27,8	100,0
	Total	36	100,0	100,0

Statement 11 in the table 12, ‘The discussions I had improved my communication skills’, 2.8% of students strongly disagree, 5.6% of students disagree, 16.7% are unsure, 47.2% of students agree, and 27.8% of students strongly agree.

The fact that using PjBL may enhance skills that people cannot improve while using other techniques of learning English has been discovered in numerous earlier studies (Beckett & Slater, 2018; KAVLU, 2016; Ngadiso et al., 2021; Supe & Kaupuzs, 2015). Where the abilities can include reading (Imbaquingo & Cárdenas, 2023), speaking (Dewi, 2016), self-confidence, creativity, teamwork (Astawa et al., 2017), and English proficiency in real-world environments (Poonpon, 2017).

Table 13. Statement 12 “The products I make have been fairly judged”

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2,8	2,8	2,8
	2	8,3	8,3	11,1
	3	22,2	22,2	33,3
	4	47,2	47,2	80,6
	5	19,4	19,4	100,0
Total	36	100,0	100,0	

Based on table 13 for statement 12, ‘The products I make have been fairly judged’, 2.8% of students strongly disagree, 8.3% of students disagree, 22.2% are unsure, 47.2% of students agree, and 19.4% of students strongly agree.

Table 14. Statement 13 “The product evaluation of my project is well done”

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2,8	2,8	2,8
	2	5,6	5,6	8,3
	3	16,7	16,7	25,0
	4	47,2	47,2	72,2
	5	10	27,8	27,8
Total	36	100,0	100,0	

Table 14 for statement 13, ‘The product evaluation of my project is well done’, shows that 2.8% of students strongly disagree, 5.6% of students disagree, 16.7% are unsure, 47.2% of

students agree, and 27.8% of students strongly agree.

Statements 12 and 13 are used to determine student self-evaluations. It can be seen that most of them agree with these statements.

Self evaluation, in addition to peer evaluation, is a great technique to track and assess group skills in project-based design work. Because self evaluation is a crucial component of project-based learning, students are empowered to evaluate their own progress, reflect on their learning, and take responsibility for their academic development (Hearn & McMillan, 2008).

#### 4. Conclusion And Suggestion

Regarding the data presented above, it can be said that all accounting students have a positive perception of English lessons that implement project-based learning in the curriculum merdeka because there is no significant distinction between any two statements.

But it is crucial to remember that perspectives can differ between students depending on their prior English competence, interests, and learning preferences.

Yet it's also important to take into account the number of students who are unsure. These students responded to more than 20% of the statements with uncertainty due to the 13 existing statements.

Considering the limits of this study, it is possible to verify students' backgrounds and reasons for why they chose to answer "I'm not sure" to these questions so that teachers can choose the best way to advance project-based English learning in the future.

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