

The Contribution of the Merdeka Curriculum to Students' Creativity in Indonesian Language Learning at SMP Negeri 1 Peusangan Selatan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of the Merdeka Curriculum on students' creativity in Indonesian language learning at SMP Negeri 1 Peusangan Selatan, Bireuen Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. A quantitative pre-experimental approach was employed, using the One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. The sample consisted of 29 students from class VIII.2, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through a poetry writing creativity test administered before and after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, and scored using a validated rubric assessing originality, diction, imagery, and structural coherence. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, the Paired Sample t-Test, and Normalized Gain (N-Gain) analysis, with normality testing conducted via the Shapiro-Wilk test using SPSS version 25. The results revealed a significant improvement in students' creativity scores, with the mean rising from 61.52 in the pretest to 76.28 in the posttest. The paired sample t-test yielded a significance value of .000 ($p < 0.05$), confirming a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores. Furthermore, the N-Gain analysis produced a mean score of 0.8049 (80.49%), categorized as high effectiveness. These findings demonstrate that the Merdeka Curriculum, through its project-based learning framework and the Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5), significantly and effectively enhances students' creative expression in Indonesian language learning. The study contributes empirical evidence to the emerging literature on Merdeka Curriculum implementation and offers practical implications for teachers, curriculum designers, and educational policymakers in diverse regional contexts.

Keywords:

Merdeka Curriculum; student creativity; Indonesian language learning; poetry writing; pre experimental design

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INTRODUCTION

Creativity has become one of the most critical competencies in 21st-century education, recognized globally as a foundation for innovation, adaptability, and meaningful participation in modern society ([Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023](#)). Educational systems worldwide are increasingly being called upon to move beyond knowledge transmission and instead cultivate students who can think divergently, produce original ideas, and approach problems with imagination and flexibility (OECD, 2019). In this context, creativity is no longer seen as an exclusive trait of artists or gifted individuals, but as a learnable and teachable disposition that schools must actively foster ([Lassig, 2021](#)). The challenge, therefore, lies in how educational institutions can design environments and curricula that genuinely promote creative development across all learners.

Within the domain of language learning, creativity occupies a particularly vital role. Language, as a system of symbolic expression, is inherently a creative medium through which individuals construct meaning, articulate experience, and engage with culture ([Aliyeva, 2023](#)). In Indonesian language education (Bahasa Indonesia), creativity manifests in students' ability to compose expressive texts, engage in imaginative storytelling, conduct thoughtful textual analysis, and use language purposefully across diverse communicative contexts ([Aliyeva, 2023](#)). Research consistently demonstrates that students who are creatively engaged in language learning develop stronger literacy skills, deeper reading comprehension, and more nuanced writing abilities compared to those in conventional, passive learning settings ([Sadiqzade, 2025](#)). Thus, nurturing creativity in language classrooms is not only pedagogically sound but also essential for students' overall academic and communicative development.

Despite its recognized importance, fostering creativity within formal schooling has long remained a significant challenge. Traditional educational models, characterized by teacher-centered instruction, rigid curriculum structures, and emphasis on standardized testing, have often suppressed rather than stimulated creative expression ([Ghaleb, 2024](#)). In many Indonesian schools, this tension is particularly evident: the pressure to cover extensive curriculum content within limited timeframes leaves little room for open-ended exploration, inquiry, or student-initiated projects ([Ma, 2025](#)). Students are frequently positioned as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active co-creators of learning, which constrains their opportunities for creative thinking and expression ([Kholid & Supriyadi, 2026](#)). Addressing this structural tension requires deliberate curriculum reform that places creativity at the center of educational design.

In recognition of these limitations, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology introduced the Merdeka Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) as a major educational reform aimed at improving the quality and relevance of national education ([Fauzan et al., 2023](#)). The Merdeka Curriculum differs from previous curriculum frameworks by providing greater flexibility in learning, reducing the burden of mandatory content, and emphasizing the development of essential competencies such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and character building. Inspired by the educational philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara, the father of Indonesian education, this curriculum views learning as a process that enables students to develop their potential, talents, and individuality in a meaningful way rather than merely fulfilling standardized academic requirements ([Dewi et al., 2025](#)). Through this humanistic and student-centered approach, the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to create a learning environment that supports innovation, independence, and lifelong learning while remaining aligned with contemporary global educational trends.

A defining feature of the Merdeka Curriculum is the *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5), a cross-disciplinary project-based learning initiative embedded across all grade levels ([Purwanti et al., 2025](#)). Through P5, students engage with realworld themes such as environmental sustainability, local cultural wisdom, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy, designing projects that require them to apply knowledge creatively and collaboratively. This approach reflects well-established findings in educational research that project-based learning significantly enhances student motivation, deep understanding, and creative output ([Omelianenko & Artyukhova, 2024](#); [Rehman et al., 2026](#)). In the context of Indonesian language learning, P5 opens new avenues for students to produce diverse creative texts, engage in communication that is relevant to their communities, and develop a strong sense of authorial identity. These experiences contribute significantly to the development of meaningful creativity and encourage students to express their ideas in original, relevant, and reflective ways ([Hadi et al., 2025](#)).

Since its rollout, scholars have begun to examine the implementation and impact of the Merdeka Curriculum across various educational contexts. Several studies have explored teachers' readiness and perceptions of the new curriculum ([Clayback et al., 2023](#); [Fundi et al., 2024](#)), while others have investigated its influence on student learning outcomes in specific subjects such as mathematics and natural sciences ([Kossybayeva et al., 2022](#); [Wang et al., 2022](#)). Research has also highlighted the curriculum's potential to foster more inclusive and differentiated learning environments, particularly for students with diverse learning needs ([Zulaiha, 2025](#)). These studies collectively point to the Merdeka Curriculum as a promising reform

with measurable positive effects on various dimensions of student learning, though findings are still emerging and context dependent.

However, a notable gap remains in the existing literature: empirical studies that specifically examine the Merdeka Curriculum's contribution to student creativity within Indonesian language learning contexts are still scarce. While creativity has been discussed as a general outcome of the curriculum ([Patston et al., 2021](#)), few studies have rigorously investigated how curriculum structures, instructional strategies, and project activities under the Merdeka Curriculum framework translate into observable creative outcomes in language classrooms ([Athifah et al., 2026](#)). This gap is particularly significant given that Bahasa Indonesia is a compulsory subject at all school levels and serves as a primary medium through which students develop literacy and communicative creativity. Without targeted research in this area, educators and policymakers lack the empirical grounding needed to optimize language teaching practices under the new curriculum.

This research gap is further deepened when viewed through the lens of regional educational contexts. South Peusangan, located in Bireuen Regency, Aceh Province, presents a distinctive setting in which national curriculum policies intersect with local sociocultural, linguistic, and infrastructural realities. Students in this region often navigate between their local dialect, Acehnese, and the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, which creates a unique dynamic in language learning that may both challenge and enrich creative expression ([Faturrohman & Kusrini, 2025](#)). Furthermore, the availability of educational resources, teacher professional development opportunities, and school infrastructure in this area may differ from those in urban centers, potentially affecting the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum's creative potential is realized in practice ([Kartika, 2024](#)). Understanding how the curriculum operates within this specific local context is therefore essential for producing locally relevant and actionable insights.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to investigate the contribution of the Merdeka Curriculum to students' creativity in Indonesian language learning at SMP Negeri 1 Peusangan Selatan. Specifically, the study seeks to identify how the curriculum's instructional frameworks, project-based activities, and assessment approaches foster creative thinking and expression among eighth-grade students.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on the Merdeka Curriculum by providing empirically grounded insights into its influence on student creativity in Indonesian language learning, an area that has received relatively limited scholarly attention. The findings are expected to offer valuable implications for teachers, school administrators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, particularly in understanding how the Merdeka Curriculum supports creativity

development in diverse educational contexts. Furthermore, the study highlights both the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing the curriculum, thereby offering a comprehensive perspective that may inform future curriculum improvement efforts and professional development programs for teachers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental research design, specifically the One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. This design was selected because the study aims to examine the influence of the Merdeka Curriculum on students' creativity in Indonesian language learning by measuring changes in student performance before and after the treatment was administered ([Sugiyono, 2017](#)). In this design, a single group of participants was observed twice: once before the intervention (pretest) and once after (posttest), allowing the researcher to determine whether a statistically significant improvement in creativity occurred as a result of the curriculum implementation. It is acknowledged that the absence of a control group is a limitation of this design, as it may reduce the internal validity of causal claims; this limitation is discussed further in the concluding section of the study.

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Peusangan Selatan, located on Jalan SP. Tanjong, Desa Uteuen Gathom, Kecamatan Peusangan Selatan, Kabupaten Bireuen, Provinsi Aceh. The school was selected as the research site because it has formally implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, making it an appropriate and relevant context for investigating the curriculum's influence on student creativity. The study was carried out during the even semester (Semester Genap) of the 2024/2025 academic year, providing a timeframe that aligned with the regular implementation of the curriculum and allowed sufficient opportunity to observe and measure its effects on student learning outcomes.

The population of this study consisted of all students enrolled at SMP Negeri 1 Peusangan Selatan, totaling 248 students across all grade levels. The sample was determined using purposive sampling technique, in which the researcher deliberately selected a specific class based on relevant considerations, including the class's active engagement with Merdeka Curriculum activities and the availability of complete teaching documentation. Based on these criteria, class VIII.2, consisting of 29 students, was selected as the research sample. This sample size is considered adequate for the statistical analyses employed in this study, particularly given the use of the ShapiroWilk normality test, which is recommended for small samples ($n < 50$) (Field, 2018).

Data collection in this study was carried out using two methods: a creativity test and documentation. The creativity test was the primary instrument, administered in the form of a poetry writing task designed to assess students' creative expression

in Indonesian language learning. Poetry writing was chosen as the test medium because it directly engages dimensions of creativity including originality, fluency, elaboration, and flexibility, four core indicators of creative thinking widely used in educational creativity assessment ([Kristiantari et al., 2023](#)). The test was administered twice: as a pretest prior to the Merdeka Curriculum treatment and as a posttest following the treatment. Student responses were scored using a validated rubric encompassing indicator of poetic creativity, including diction, imagery, originality of ideas, and structural coherence. Documentation was used as a supplementary method to gather supporting data such as lesson plans, student attendance records, and curriculum implementation documents.

The primary hypothesis proposed in this study is that there is a positive and statistically significant influence of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation on students' creativity in Indonesian language learning. Specifically, it is hypothesized that students' creativity scores in the posttest will be significantly higher than those in the pretest, indicating that the instructional approach embedded in the Merdeka Curriculum, including project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and creative text production activities, effectively enhances students' creative capacities. This hypothesis is formally stated as: H_1 : There is a significant difference between students' pretest and posttest creativity scores following the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum ($\mu_{\text{pretest}} \neq \mu_{\text{posttest}}$).

Data analysis in this study was conducted through two complementary approaches: descriptive statistical analysis and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the pretest and posttest scores, including the calculation of mean scores, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values, and score distributions. These descriptive measures provide an initial picture of students' creativity levels before and after treatment. Inferential statistics were then applied to test whether the observed differences between pretest and posttest scores were statistically significant and to determine the magnitude of improvement.

Prior to conducting inferential tests, a normality test was performed to determine whether the research data were drawn from a normally distributed population, a prerequisite assumption for parametric statistical testing (Pallant, 2020). The normality test was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test via SPSS version 25, with a significance level (α) of 0.05. The Shapiro-Wilk test was selected over the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test because it is statistically more appropriate and powerful for small sample sizes such as the present sample of 29 students (Razali & Wah, 2011). If the significance value obtained exceeds 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the data are normally distributed and parametric testing can proceed.

Following the normality test, the Paired Sample t-Test (uji-t) was employed to compare the mean pretest and posttest scores and determine whether the difference between the two was statistically significant. This test is suitable for designs involving a single group measured at two time points (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The decision criterion used was: if the significance value (p) < 0.05 , then H_1 is accepted, indicating a significant influence of the Merdeka Curriculum on students' creativity. In addition to the t-test, the Normalized Gain (N-Gain) score was calculated to measure the magnitude and effectiveness of the improvement in student creativity scores. The N-Gain formula proposed by Hake (1999) was used: $N\text{-Gain} = (\text{posttest score} - \text{pretest score}) / (\text{maximum score} - \text{pretest score})$. N-Gain values are interpreted as follows: $N\text{-Gain} > 0.70$ indicates high effectiveness, $0.30 \leq N\text{-Gain} \leq 0.70$ indicates moderate effectiveness, and $N\text{-Gain} < 0.30$ indicates low effectiveness.

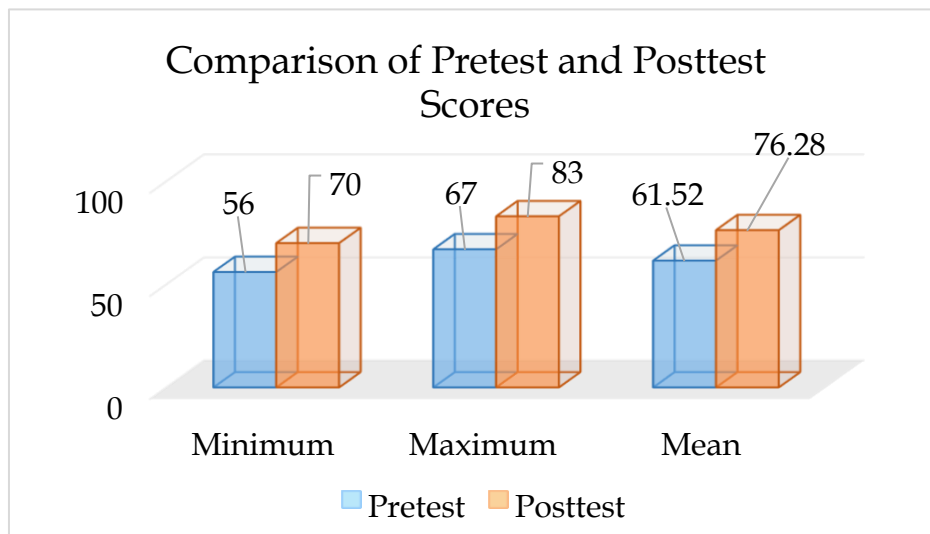
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the influence of the Merdeka Curriculum on students' creativity in Indonesian language learning at SMP Negeri 1 Peusangan Selatan, with a particular focus on the development of students' creative writing skills, the improvement of creativity scores through pretest and posttest results, and the effectiveness of instructional approaches such as project-based learning and creative text production activities in fostering students' creative thinking and expression.

Result

1. The Influence of the Merdeka Curriculum on Students' Creativity in Indonesian Language Learning

The following bar chart shows a clear improvement in students' creativity scores after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning. The data indicate differences in the minimum, maximum, and mean scores between the pretest and posttest results, reflecting positive development in students' creative abilities.



Picture 1. Comparison of Students' Creativity Pretest and Posttest Scores

In terms of minimum scores, students' performance increased from 56 in the pretest to 70 in the posttest. This shows that even the lowest-performing students experienced a significant improvement after the learning intervention. The maximum score also increased from 67 in the pretest to 83 in the posttest, indicating that high-achieving students further enhanced their creativity, particularly in generating more original and well-structured ideas in writing tasks.

Furthermore, the mean score also showed a notable increase from 61.52 in the pretest to 76.28 in the posttest. This indicates an overall improvement in students' creativity levels after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The consistent increase in minimum, maximum, and mean scores demonstrates that the curriculum not only supports high-achieving students but also helps lower-performing students develop their creative skills more effectively.

2. Statistical Analysis of Students' Creativity Improvement

Statistical Analysis of Students' Creativity Improvement was conducted to determine the significance of the effect of the Merdeka Curriculum on students' creativity in Indonesian language learning. Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were first examined using normality and homogeneity tests. The results indicated that the data were normally distributed and homogeneous, meaning that the requirements for parametric testing were fulfilled. Therefore, a paired sample t-test and N-gain analysis were appropriately applied to measure the significance and effectiveness of the improvement in students' creativity scores between the pretest and posttest results.

The following table presents the results of the paired sample t-test, which was used to determine the significance of the difference between students' pretest and posttest creativity scores after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning. This analysis aims to examine whether there is a statistically significant effect of the instructional intervention on students' creativity improvement. Based on the test results, the significance value is used as the basis for determining the research hypothesis decision.

Table 1. Table titles should be above the table.

Pair	Comparison	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)
1	Result - Class	67.39655	7.65240	67.074	57	.000

Source: The data were processed in 2026.

Table 1 presents the results of the paired sample t-test used to examine the significance of the difference between students' pretest and posttest creativity scores after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning. The table shows that the mean difference between the two tests is 67.39655, with a standard deviation of 7.65240. The t-value obtained is 67.074 with 57 degrees of freedom, and the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is .000, which is lower than 0.05.

This result indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between students' creativity scores before and after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Merdeka Curriculum has a significant effect on improving students' creativity in Indonesian language learning.

The N-gain test was conducted to measure the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in improving students' creativity by comparing the normalized gain between pretest and posttest scores. This analysis aims to determine the level of learning improvement achieved by students after the instructional treatment, as well as to classify the effectiveness of the learning intervention into categories such as low, medium, or high effectiveness.

Table 2. N-Gain Analysis of Students' Creativity Improvement

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ngain	29	.71	.90	.8049	.05379
Ngain_Persen	29	71.11	89.74	80.4950	5.37901

Valid N (listwise)	29				
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Source: The data were processed in 2026.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the N-Gain analysis used to measure the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in improving students' creativity in Indonesian language learning. The results show that the number of respondents (N) is 29 students. The N-Gain scores range from a minimum of 0.71 to a maximum of 0.90, with a mean score of 0.8049 and a standard deviation of 0.05379. In percentage form, the mean N-Gain is 80.4950%, with values ranging from 71.11% to 89.74%, indicating a relatively high level of improvement in students' creativity after the learning intervention.

Based on the N-Gain classification criteria, the average score of 0.8049 is categorized as high ($g \geq 0.70$). This indicates that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is highly effective in enhancing students' creativity in Indonesian language learning. The high mean score, along with the relatively small standard deviation, also shows that the improvement is consistent among students, meaning that most learners experienced significant and relatively similar gains in their creative abilities after the instructional treatment.

Discussion

1. Improvement in Students' Creativity Scores

The findings of this study demonstrate a clear and consistent improvement in students' creativity scores following the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning. The mean score increased from 61.52 in the pretest to 76.28 in the posttest, while the minimum score rose from 56 to 70 and the maximum score from 67 to 83. This pattern of improvement across all score indicators suggests that the curriculum's instructional approach had a broadly positive effect, benefiting not only high-achieving students but also those who initially performed at lower levels. These results align with the foundational argument presented in the introduction of this study, where creativity was identified as a learnable and teachable disposition that schools must actively cultivate ([Lassig, 2021](#)). The consistent gain observed across diverse student performance levels supports the view that well-designed curriculum frameworks can serve as a powerful lever for democratizing access to creative learning experiences.

The significant improvement recorded in this study can be meaningfully connected to the distinctive pedagogical features of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly its emphasis on project-based learning (PjBL) through the *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5). As highlighted in the background of this study, P5 engages students with real-world themes and requires them to apply knowledge creatively and collaboratively ([Purwanti et al., 2025](#)). In the context of Indonesian language learning, this was reflected in poetry writing tasks that encouraged students to draw on personal experiences, cultural awareness, and imaginative language use, activities that directly stimulate the core dimensions of creativity including originality, fluency, elaboration, and flexibility. This finding is consistent with Omelianenko and Artyukhova ([2024](#)) and Rehman et al. ([2026](#)), who found that project-based learning significantly enhances student motivation and creative output. The poetry writing task in this study functioned not only as an assessment tool but also as a creative platform through which students could develop and express their authorial identity, a process identified by Hadi et al. ([2025](#)) as central to meaningful creativity development under the Merdeka Curriculum.

2. Statistical Significance and Curriculum Effectiveness

The results of the paired sample t-test further substantiate these observations. The obtained significance value of .000, which is well below the threshold of 0.05, confirms that the difference between pretest and posttest scores is statistically significant. The mean difference of 67.39655 and the t-value of 67.074 reflect a strong and meaningful effect of the instructional intervention on students' creative performance. This statistical evidence supports the research hypothesis that the Merdeka Curriculum has a significant positive influence on students' creativity in Indonesian language learning. From a broader educational perspective, these results resonate with studies cited in the introduction that documented the Merdeka Curriculum's measurable positive effects across various subjects and learning dimensions ([Kossybayeva et al., 2022](#); [Wang et al., 2022](#)). While those studies focused on mathematics and natural sciences, the present findings extend this body of evidence to the domain of language and literacy, demonstrating that the curriculum's benefits are not confined to STEM disciplines but are equally applicable in humanistic and communicative subjects such as Bahasa Indonesia.

Beyond statistical significance, the N-Gain analysis provides a more nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum as an instructional intervention. The mean N-Gain score of 0.8049, equivalent to 80.4950%, falls within the high effectiveness category ($g \geq 0.70$), indicating that the curriculum implementation produced not only a statistically significant but also a practically

meaningful improvement in students' creativity. Importantly, the relatively small standard deviation of 0.05379 reveals that this improvement was consistent across students, suggesting that the curriculum's benefits were experienced broadly rather than being concentrated among a select few learners. This finding directly addresses one of the central concerns raised in the introduction, that traditional educational models tend to favor high-achieving students while leaving lower-performing ones behind ([Ghaleb, 2024](#); [Ma, 2025](#)). The Merdeka Curriculum's student-centered and differentiated approach appears to have mitigated this inequity by providing learning structures flexible enough to support students at varying levels of creative ability.

3. Philosophical and Contextual Dimensions

The effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum observed in this study is also reflective of its foundational philosophical orientation. As noted by Dewi et al. ([2025](#)), the curriculum is inspired by Ki Hajar Dewantara's vision of education as a process that enables students to develop their potential, talents, and individuality in meaningful ways, rather than merely fulfilling standardized academic requirements. This philosophy is particularly resonant in the context of creative writing, where individual voice, personal expression, and imaginative exploration are paramount. When students are given the freedom to select their own themes, experiment with poetic form, and express their lived experiences through language, they are engaging in precisely the kind of learning that Ki Hajar Dewantara envisioned, learning that honors the uniqueness of each student and cultivates their inner creative resources. The high N-Gain scores recorded in this study may therefore be understood not only as a product of effective instructional techniques, but also as evidence that a humanistic curriculum philosophy, when implemented with fidelity, can generate genuine and measurable creative growth.

The results of this study also carry particular significance when situated within the local context of South Peusangan. As discussed in the introduction, students in this region navigate a distinctive linguistic landscape, moving between Acehnese as their local dialect and Bahasa Indonesia as the national language of instruction ([Faturrohman & Kusrini, 2025](#)). Rather than constituting a barrier to creative expression, this multilingual reality may have enriched students' poetic writing by providing a broader repertoire of cultural references, imagery, and linguistic sensibilities. Furthermore, as Kartika ([2024](#)) observed, schools in regional areas often face resource limitations that can constrain curriculum implementation. The fact that significant and high-category creativity gains were achieved at SMP Negeri 1 Peusangan Selatan despite these contextual challenges suggests that the Merdeka Curriculum's flexibility and student-centered design are sufficiently robust to

produce meaningful outcomes even in settings with limited educational infrastructure. This finding contributes an important regional dimension to the literature, demonstrating that the curriculum's positive effects are not exclusive to well-resourced urban schools.

4. Theoretical and Practical Implications

More broadly, the findings of this study reinforce the theoretical proposition that creativity is not a fixed innate trait but a competency that can be systematically developed through intentional instructional design ([Lassig, 2021](#); [Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023](#)). The observable gains in students' poetry writing creativity, across originality, diction, imagery, and structural coherence, demonstrate that when students are provided with meaningful creative tasks, collaborative learning opportunities, and a curriculum framework that values imagination and personal expression, their creative capacities can grow significantly within a relatively short instructional period. This has important implications for Indonesian language teachers, who have historically operated within curriculum frameworks that emphasized grammatical correctness and textual comprehension over creative production ([Kholid & Supriyadi, 2026](#)). The Merdeka Curriculum's reorientation toward creative text production represents a substantive and welcome shift in how language learning is conceptualized at the junior high school level.

Finally, this study addresses the research gap identified in the existing literature. As noted in the introduction, empirical studies specifically examining the Merdeka Curriculum's influence on student creativity within Indonesian language learning contexts remain scarce ([Athifah et al., 2026](#); [Patston et al., 2021](#)). The present study fills this gap by providing quantitative evidence through pretest-posttest comparison, paired sample t-test, and N-Gain analysis, that the Merdeka Curriculum produces significant and highly effective improvements in students' creative writing abilities. These findings offer a foundation upon which future research can build, particularly studies employing larger samples, control groups, or mixed methods designs that can further deepen our understanding of the mechanisms through which the Merdeka Curriculum fosters creativity. For practitioners, the results suggest that sustained and high-fidelity implementation of Merdeka Curriculum activities, particularly P5 projects centered on creative language production, holds genuine promise as a strategy for enhancing students' creative competencies in Indonesian language education across diverse school contexts in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the influence of the Merdeka Curriculum on students' creativity in Indonesian language learning at SMP Negeri 1 Peusangan Selatan, and the findings provide clear and compelling evidence that the curriculum has a significant and highly effective impact on students' creative development. The pretest and posttest results revealed a consistent improvement across all score indicators, with the mean score rising from 61.52 to 76.28, demonstrating that the curriculum's student-centered and project-based instructional approach successfully fostered creative growth among eighth-grade students. This improvement was confirmed statistically through the paired sample t-test, which yielded a significance value of .000, well below the 0.05 threshold, and further validated by the N-Gain analysis, which produced a mean score of 0.8049, categorized as high effectiveness. Together, these results affirm that the Merdeka Curriculum, through its emphasis on creative text production, differentiated learning, and the *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5), provides a pedagogical framework that meaningfully stimulates students' originality, imaginative expression, and authorial voice in Indonesian language learning. Notably, the gains were consistent across students of varying ability levels, suggesting that the curriculum's flexible design is capable of supporting diverse learners rather than exclusively benefiting high achievers. These findings contribute empirical grounding to an underexplored area of curriculum research and carry practical implications for teachers, school administrators, and policymakers seeking to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language classrooms, particularly in regional school contexts. Future research is recommended to explore similar questions using larger and more diverse samples, experimental designs with control groups, and mixed-methods approaches that can illuminate the qualitative dimensions of creativity development under this curriculum.

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