

Is It A New Path? Or A New Problem?: An Explorative Study Of Deep Learning In Indonesian EFL Secondary Classroom

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Abstract

This exploratory study investigates the understanding and implementation of deep learning based on three core principles mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning in EFL classrooms at secondary schools in Manado, North Sulawesi. Through in-depth online interviews and focus group discussions with four English teachers across two schools, the research uncovers varying levels of conceptual awareness and practical application of these principles. Findings reveal that while teachers acknowledge the pedagogical value of fostering student mindful, meaningful, and joyful in learning, they face substantial challenges related to limited instructional time, rigid curriculum demands, and classroom management constraints. Opportunities emerge in the form of integrating collaborative activities and digital technologies that enhance student engagement and contextualize learning to real-life situations. The study identifies a significant gap between educators' aspirations for deep learning and systemic barriers in school settings. It highlights the crucial role of teacher preparedness, institutional support, and policy flexibility to facilitate sustainable implementation. Future research is recommended to include student perspectives and longitudinal assessments to better understand the impact and scalability of deep learning pedagogies in diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: Deep Learning, Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, Joyful Learning, Critical Thinking.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation in English teaching in the 21st century has demanded an approach that goes beyond just the transfer of linguistic knowledge to the creation of learning spaces that are able to produce meaningful experiences for learners. Liando et al., (2023) mentioned that in the global realm, the wave of pedagogical innovation has highlighted the need for technology integration, critical thinking, and personalization of learning in an effort to strengthen students' language literacy and communicative competence. However, amid these advances, the reality of EFL classrooms in many developing countries shows fragmentation in learning practices that tend to be static, teacher-centric, and fail to arouse students' enthusiasm and emotional engagement (Ramadana et al., 2025; Silvania et al., 2025; Sumarni & Yona Okyanida, 2025). Previous studies, such as Benu et al., (2025), have highlighted the importance of a learning environment that can stimulate students' autonomy and confidence in using a foreign language. On the other hand, Jiang, (2022) show that cognitive and affective engagement simultaneously contribute to the quality of learning processes and outcomes; however, the integration of these two aspects is still not optimal in many EFL contexts. This is where the presence of the Professor Mu'ti (Minister of Primary and Secondary Education of Indonesia)'s version of the deep learning concept offers a new paradigm that has the potential to overcome this pedagogical stagnation.

According to Prof Mu'ti, deep learning in learning is rooted in three main principles, namely, mindful learning (full awareness in the learning process), meaningful learning (relevance of authentic meaning for students), and joyful learning (joy and emotional comfort in learning), supported by (Andayanie et al., 2025; Nafi'ah & Faruq, 2025). This approach demands a shift from traditional praxis oriented towards achieving curriculum targets towards cultivating learning experiences that are more reflective, contextual, and oriented towards student happiness. Studies from (Ramadhan, 2025; Silvania et al., 2025) confirm that mindful learning is central in shaping students' self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and meta-cognitive abilities, factors that are factually necessary in foreign language learning but often overlooked in conventional teaching models. The emphasis on meaningful learning is also empirically supported; This is in line with Zheng et al., (2024) who stated that the process of deep interpretation of language inputs triggers the creation of long-term connections in memory and increases knowledge transfer to real-world contexts. Meanwhile, joyful learning through game-based activities or collaboration is known to be able to eliminate linguistic anxiety while increasing student retention and motivation to

learn (Andayanie et al., 2025).

Although the prospects for applying deep learning principles in learning in education are promising, much of the literature focuses only on the application of deep learning to numeracy and science classes (Jiang, 2022). Not only that, other recent studies have also recorded the inconsistency and variety of challenges faced by educators in practice. For example, Ramadana et al., (2025) research shows that the implementation of mindful learning in EFL classrooms is often hampered by the burden of teacher administration and the lack of specific professional training. In terms of the relevance of meaning, (Sumarni & Yona Okyranida, 2025) reveal that the pressure to follow national standards is often the opposite of creating an authentic and meaningful learning process for learners. This fact is reinforced by the findings of (Ramadhan, 2025) regarding joyful learning, where recreational learning activities are often considered less serious and not in line with the targets of formal academic evaluation in many institutions.

Through the implication, these studies highlight the gap between theory and practice and raise the critical question, Does the application of deep learning in the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) really offer a new path to pedagogical transformation or does it add complexity and burden of problems in the classroom? This debate is relevant, especially in the secondary classroom environment which socially and academically bears great expectations in shaping the identity and literacy of the younger generation. The study from (Silvania et al., 2025) specifically looked at the practice of deep learning integration in secondary school classrooms in Indonesia and found variations in outcomes based on social, cultural, and educational infrastructure readiness. Students at this level are faced with a complex phase of psychological transition, so the mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning model faces greater challenges than at the basic education level. (Benu et al., 2025) describe the need for pedagogical flexibility and collaboration between teachers, students, and parents to ensure the success of the deep learning approach in the context of secondary EFL classrooms.

Various challenges in the aspects of curriculum alignment, assessment policy, and the dynamics of the relationship between digital technology and traditional pedagogy have been reviewed in the studies of (Jiang, 2022) and (Singh, 2024), which emphasized the need for more exploratory and contextual research, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia where the integration of pedagogical innovation is still in the transitional stage. Based on the theoretical foundation and empirical evidence above, doubts and enthusiasm arose about the concept of deep learning in EFL secondary classroom. On the one hand, (Andayanie et al., 2025) claimed that this concept can open up new opportunities that are more humane, reflective and fun in learning foreign languages. Besides, the complexity of implementation and the pressure of the formal education system can cause new problems that are not light for educators and students (Nafi'ah & Faruq, 2025).

This exploratory research is designed to delve deeply into the dynamics, opportunities, and challenges of applying Mu'ti-style deep learning to EFL learning in secondary schools. Where does this research want to answer the related question, How do English teachers in secondary schools understand and implement the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning in EFL learning? and What are the opportunities and challenges faced by teachers in implementing Mu'ti-based deep learning in secondary school EFL classrooms?. This research is expected to enrich the literature by highlighting the reality of practice while criticizing myths or over-expectations of contemporary learning paradigms, as well as identifying adaptive strategies for educators in integrating mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning in a unique and dynamic context.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Concept and Evolution of Deep Learning in the Context of EFL

The concept of deep learning in education basically marks a shift from surface learning, which is oriented towards repetition and memorization, towards a more meaningful and in-depth construction of knowledge (Marton & Säljö, 1976). In learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), this approach is evolving in line with the increasing demands of 21st-century literacy, the need for critical thinking, and the ability to communicate across cultures. Empirical studies underline that the deep learning approach not only improves cognitive achievement, but also fosters students' activeness, reflection, and independent learning (Ramadana et al., 2025). Research by Nafi'ah & Faruq, (2025) confirms that deep learning strategies such as problem-based learning, team collaboration, and reflective questioning have been proven to increase students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement in EFL classrooms. Similar findings were revealed by Silvania et al., (2025), who showed that strengthening critical thinking

and creativity in EFL learning fosters students' readiness to face real-world challenges. However, the effectiveness of deep learning implementation is largely determined by teacher readiness, curriculum design, and school policy support.

The Principles of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning according to Prof Mu'ti

Prof Abdul Mu'ti adapts the deep learning approach to be relevant to the character of Indonesian students through three main principles, mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning, discussed in (Ramadhan, 2025). These three principles form a pedagogical framework that is humanist and contextual.

- Mindful learning emphasizes the importance of students' mental presence during the learning process; Sensitivity and reflection to learning activities are believed to strengthen intrinsic concentration and motivation.
- Meaningful learning connects teaching materials with students' real-life experiences, thereby strengthening meaning and knowledge transfer from the classroom to the outside world. This principle is in line with Piaget's theory of constructivism and research that emphasizes the importance of the connection between learning and personal relevance.
- Joyful learning puts the emotional dimension as the main driver; Fun learning atmosphere and activities encourage creativity, activeness, and reduce learning anxiety.

The literature showed that the collaboration of these three principles can create a more dynamic, democratic, and empowering classroom or learning process for students while accelerating the achievement of learning competencies (Andayanie et al., 2025; Ramadana et al., 2025; Sumarni & Yona Okyranida, 2025), this does not rule out the possibility of learning English in EFL classes so that the targeted language learning competencies can be achieved. However, consistency in its implementation in practice is still a challenge in various secondary school settings (Silvania et al., 2025).

Implementation, Challenges, and Opportunities in High School

The implementation of deep learning with its mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning principles in high school EFL classes is colored by a number of opportunities and challenges. In terms of opportunities, students are more active, reflective, and enthusiastic in the learning process when strategies such as group collaboration, project-based learning, and authentic assessments are applied consistently (Cubio, 2025; Faranda et al., 2021). Teachers who are open to pedagogical change report a more participatory classroom atmosphere as well as a healthy and supportive psychological climate (Nafi'ah & Faruq, 2025).

However, the main challenge is found in the aspect of teacher readiness and the limited time, infrastructure, and assessment culture that still deifies the results of conventional exams. The studies of Jiang, (2022) highlight that teachers' mastery of planning and evaluation of deep learning activities is still limited, both in terms of activity design and monitoring of complex learning outcomes. Administrative pressure and curriculum burden also often limit the space for pedagogical innovation (Sumarni & Yona Okyranida, 2025).

In addition, the variation in student readiness and motivation forces teachers to continue to adapt differentiation, namely adjusting the learning model to the needs, readiness, and backgrounds of students who are very heterogeneous. Other research has found that teachers often face a dilemma between completing teaching materials and delivering meaningful learning that takes longer (Ramadhan, 2025; Yazid Mubarak et al., 2024). Despite the constraints, recent studies highlight the importance of institutional support through professional training, the provision of creative learning resources, and school policies that provide space for innovative experimentation.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study uses an exploratory study design, which aims to gain an initial understanding and in-depth insight related to the phenomenon of applying deep learning (mindful, meaningful, joyful learning) in EFL learning at the secondary school level. The exploratory study was chosen because the phenomenon studied is relatively new and there is still a lack of previous research, especially in the context of secondary schools in Indonesia. This approach enables researchers to explore teachers' perceptions, challenges, and experiences through flexible and reflective hands-on interactions (Stebbins, 2001).

Setting and Participants

The research was carried out in two public high schools (SMA) in Manado City, North Sulawesi, especially those that have applied deep learning in English language learning. The main subjects of the

study were four English teachers who actively taught in the two schools. Teachers are selected using purposive sampling techniques considering experience, direct involvement in the learning innovation process, and readiness to participate in research. This selection ensures that the data obtained is correct-properly represent hands-on experience of applying deep learning in the context of EFL.

Data Collection

The main data of the research was collected through online-based in-depth interviews and virtual Focus Group Discussions (FGD) via Zoom meetings. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured manner using a question guide that has been developed based on the formulation of the problem and the purpose of the research, and each interviewee was given a G1-G4 code to facilitate analysis. The interview instrument was adapted and developed from (Silvania et al., 2025; Yazid Mubarak et al., 2024). In addition, this interview instrument has been evaluated and validated by two English education experts before being applied to the subject, so that it is able to capture the spectrum of teachers' experiences, understanding, and perceptions. Interview sessions lasted 45–60 minutes per participant, recorded with the participant's consent, and supplemented with verbatim recordings. Furthermore, the FGD session was conducted to deepen the initial findings, explore interactions between teachers, and collaboratively examine the challenges and opportunities for the implementation of deep learning in the EFL classroom.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study follows the thematic model of analysis from (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, the researcher familiarizes himself with the data by reading and reviewing interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding. Second, researchers began to generate initial codes, which is to label or code meaningful pieces of data according to the focus of the research. Third, the codes are then grouped into a broader pattern in the search for themes stage, where researchers begin to compile potential themes and subthemes. Furthermore, at the theme review stage, the researcher reviews the suitability of the theme with the data, modifies, combines, or deletes irrelevant themes so that a consistent theme map is formed. Fifth, the researcher enters the defining and naming themes stage, which is defining the essence of each theme while providing a clear, concise, and descriptive name. Finally, the researcher compiles the findings in the producing the report stage, which presents a narrative of the analysis results that is reinforced with direct quotes from the data and relates them to relevant research questions and literature, resulting in a comprehensive, transparent, and accountable analysis report.

Research Ethics

This study pays attention to the ethical standards of social research. Informed consent is given prior to the interview and FGD process, ensuring the confidentiality of identity and the freedom of participants to answer or withdraw from the research at any time. All data obtained is only used for scientific purposes and will not be informed to third parties outside of the informant's consent. In addition, the limitations of this study lie in the number of samples (four teachers in two schools) that do not represent the entire population, as well as the focus on the context of high schools in one city. However, the exploratory assumptions of this study are still able to provide insights and the basis for further research development in a broader context.

RESULTS

The findings challenge the linear predigima of learning innovation; The implementation of deep learning in EFL classrooms is clearly non-uniform, often even full of ambiguity, negotiation, and compromise between the demands of the curriculum structure, institutional expectations, and the real needs of students. This complexity is reflected in the elaboration of teachers' experiences that illustrate the clash between the idealism of learning transformation and the reality of limited resources, time, and school culture's resistance to change. However, in the midst of this situation, this study succeeded in recording a number of innovative adaptation strategies, such as task differentiation, cross-subject collaboration, and exploration of digital learning media, which gradually succeeded in reconstructing the meaning of "Deep Learning" in the context of EFL. This part of the findings begins with an analysis of the understanding and implementation of deep learning principles in English language learning. Then, it was continued by promoting opportunities and declarations of challenges from deep learning itself in English language learning. Finally, this study is expected not only to summarize qualitative data descriptively, but also to present as an epistemic critique that builds a new framework for understanding the dynamics of deep learning learning, with specifics focusing on the position, role, and agency of teachers at the level of praxis in secondary school classrooms in Indonesia.

Understanding and Implementation of the Principles of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning by EFL Teachers

Based on the results of interviews and FGDs, it was found that English teachers' understanding of the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning varies, ranging from conceptual awareness to diverse practical applications. Some teachers stated that they understood the principle of mindful learning as an effort to invite students to focus fully and consciously engage in learning activities. One of the teachers said:

"I try to make students aware of what they are learning and why it is important, so that they not only memorize but also think critically. I want them to really experience the learning process, not just complete a meaningless task" (Interview, G2).

Another teacher reinforces this with his experience:

"Mindfulness is important because I have to keep students focused in class which is often full of distractions. But sometimes the rigorous learning time makes it difficult for me to practice mindfulness the way I want" (Interview, G3).

In the FGD, the teachers also agreed that:

"Practicing mindful learning is challenging, especially when students are used to the fast, exam-grade-oriented learning model. However, we try to include reflective moments so that students are more aware and actively engaged" (FGD, G1 and G4).

However, time constraints and curriculum burdens sometimes hinder the consistency of the application of mindfulness in depth. In the aspect of meaningful learning, teachers try to relate English material to the student's real-world context, such as the use of current topics and relevant daily experiences. A teacher said,

"In practice, the limited learning time makes it difficult for me to apply mindful learning consistently. In fact, I want students to really experience the learning process consciously and reflectively, not just carrying out formal activities without full awareness" (Interview, G1).

Another teacher expressed challenges related to the curriculum load, *"Lack of time is the main problem. Many times I have to focus on completing the material so that sessions to give space for mindfulness such as reflection and deep discussions are trimmed"* (Interview, G4).

In the aspect of meaningful learning, teachers try to relate English material to the student's real-world context, such as the use of current topics and relevant daily experiences. A teacher said,

"I often associate learning with situations they might be in, such as creating an email or presentation that can be used in real life. This helps them see the relevance and practical usefulness of the English language" (FGD, G3).

However, the challenges are not small due to the variation in student needs. One of the teachers shared his experience,

"Not all students have the same background and needs, so designing meaningful materials that are personalized for all students is quite challenging. Often I have to balance between standard material and learning context that is relevant to students" (Interview, G2).

Furthermore, another teacher added, *"Sometimes the biggest difficulty is how to package the material so that it is meaningful for students with diverse abilities, especially when it comes to adjusting to an already strict curriculum"* (Interview, G3).

From the group discussion, similar voices were revealed about the difficulty, *"We agree that meaningful learning is very important, but to implement it in a system that still prioritizes traditional curriculum and assessments, there are still many obstacles to be faced"* (FGD, G1 and G4).

But in fact, not all teachers are able to optimally design materials that are truly meaningful personally for each student due to the heterogeneity of students' needs and backgrounds. The principle of joyful learning is implemented through language game activities, casual discussions, and the use of multimedia that enhance the classroom atmosphere to be more enjoyable. The data showed teachers recognized the importance of joy in learning to reduce students' anxiety, *"When they had fun and laughed together, English felt lighter and easier to understand"* (Interview, G1). However, challenges arise when classroom management is less supportive of this atmosphere and the pressure to complete curriculum materials limits teachers' flexibility.

One of the teachers said,

"Joyful learning makes the classroom atmosphere lively and interactive. For example, with role-playing and the use of songs, students are more free to express themselves and reduce tension when learning English. However, managing students' energy to stay focused on fun activities is not easy, especially with limited lesson time" (Interview, G2).

Another teacher argued,

"Practicing joyful learning has a positive impact on student motivation. They become more enthusiastic and not afraid to make mistakes. But sometimes this atmosphere is difficult to maintain when the schedule is tight and there is pressure to complete the curriculum" (Interview, G3).

In the FGD, teachers underlined the importance of good classroom management: *"We agree that joyful learning is most effective when teachers can create a safe and supportive environment. Unfortunately, often the pressure of evaluation and administrative responsibility shackles teachers' creativity in managing the classroom"* (FGD, G1 and G4).

Another teacher added,

"The use of multimedia and casual discussions helps create joyful learning, but it must be balanced with strict classroom management so as not to be chaotic. This is a challenge when there are learning targets that must be achieved" (FGD, G2 and G3).

From each of the above statements, it can be understood that although the understanding of these three principles is quite strong conceptually, the difficulties of implementation occur due to external factors such as limited time, school policies, and diverse student readiness. This illustrates the inconsistency of deep learning practices in EFL classrooms, where the integration of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning is often partial and situational.

Opportunities and Challenges in the Application of Deep Learning in Secondary School EFL Classrooms

In addition, in terms of opportunities, teachers see deep learning with the 3Ful principle as explained by Prof. Mu'ti opens up innovative opportunities to bring English learning closer to students' lives and stimulate their overall engagement. One teacher stated, *"With deep learning, students are more active in asking questions, discussing, and trying to use language in a context that is close to them"* (FGD, G2). Collaborative activities and the use of technology in the classroom are effective means to implement the principle of joyful learning that increases learning motivation.

Statement in FGD, G1, *"In our classroom practice, deep learning opens up many new opportunities, especially through cross-subject collaboration and the use of digital media. Students are not only passive listeners, but can debate, work on projects together, and apply English in situations that are relevant to their daily lives. This makes learning more meaningful and fun"* (FGD, G1).

In addition, another teacher stated that *"We found that the use of technology such as videos, interactive applications, and online platforms was very helpful in arousing students' interest. They can explore English in a contextual and fun way, as well as train themselves in collaboration. Deep learning makes students actively engaged and more motivated to learn"* (FGD, G3)

In line with the statement above, FGD 4, *"One of the advantages of the deep learning approach is that it provides space for students to try and experiment with English without fear of making mistakes. With a supportive and interactive learning atmosphere, we can build students' intrinsic motivation that has been difficult to achieve in conventional learning"* (FGD, G4)

Another teacher argued that, *"Deep learning gives us the opportunity to take English outside the textbook framework and connect it with real student experiences, such as simulated everyday situations and digital project assignments. This makes students more engaged and active"* explained (G2).

In addition, G4 added, *"We try to process learning so that students not only receive the material but also participate in creative and collaborative processes. This approach brings a new nuance that makes students more enthusiastic and confident in speaking English"*

Each statement in the FGD above proves and strengthens data about the opportunities and positive impact of deep learning in EFL learning in secondary school. However, a series of significant challenges were also reported. Teachers face the main obstacle in the form of a dense curriculum load and a traditional assessment system, so that it does not provide space for the application of reflective and fun learning. *"Sometimes we are forced to pursue target material for exams, so mindful and joyful learning is somewhat neglected"* (Interview, G3). Limited technology facilities and lack of professional training related to deep learning are also real obstacles.

In addition, the resistance of some students who are used to conventional learning models makes teachers have to continue to adjust deep learning strategies to remain effective. Psychological factors such as language anxiety and low motivation are also challenges in activating mindful and joyful learning patterns. One teacher said, *"There are students who find it difficult to actively participate because of fear of being wrong and embarrassed"* (FGD, G4).

The challenge of classroom management, especially in managing group dynamics and ensuring a balance between meaningful learning and academic achievement, is also an experience that teachers face repeatedly. However, pragmatically, teachers try to develop creative adaptation by using a differentiation approach and the use of digital media, even though the availability of resources is still inadequate consistently.

Based on these findings, it can be affirmed that the application of deep learning in secondary school EFL classrooms is a multidimensional and dynamic process, containing opportunities for the development of a more contextual and humanist pedagogy, while facing various complex structural and cultural challenges. Teachers play an important role in navigating these opportunities and constraints to maximize the potential of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning principles in English education practices at the secondary level.

DISCUSSION

This study succeeded in uncovering the understanding, implementation, opportunities, and challenges of English teachers in implementing deep learning based on the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning in EFL high school classrooms, as stated in two main research questions.

Understanding and Implementing 3Ful Principles in Deep Learning

First, findings related to the understanding and application of the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning show that there is a gap between theory and practice, which is in line with the findings of (Sumarni & Yona Okyanida, 2025) that conceptual awareness does not always directly imply consistent implementation in the field. The teachers in this study have a good understanding of the essence of mindful learning as full awareness in the learning process, but time constraints and a dense curriculum are the main obstacles. This is in line with (Ramadhan, 2025)'s report which reveals the challenges of teachers' administrative burdens in implementing reflective learning.

A quote from G2 that states "*I am trying... so that they not only memorize but also think critically*" represents the aspirations of teachers who want to move from a knowledge transfer model to more meaningful and in-depth learning. However, Teacher 3's recognition of the difficulty of consistently implementing mindfulness shows the existence of a practical reality that needs to be anticipated in curriculum design and teacher training (Benu et al., 2025).

In the aspect of meaningful learning, the teacher's efforts to connect the material with the student's real-world context shows an awareness of the relevance of learning. This reinforces the findings of (Ramadana et al., 2025), that meaningful learning facilitates the transfer of knowledge to actual contexts. However, the heterogeneity of the needs and backgrounds of students indicates the need for more planned differentiation and the involvement of adaptive technologies (Jiang, 2022). In the FGD, the teacher stated that the implementation of meaningful learning requires a balance between standard materials and relevant contexts, emphasizing that the success of deep learning is highly dependent on the flexibility of learning design.

The principle of joyful learning is recognized as very important in reducing anxiety and increasing student motivation, in line with research by (Andayanie et al., 2025). Less supportive classroom management and curriculum pressure are obstacles as expressed in the experiences of Teacher 1 and Teacher 2. This condition confirms that joyful learning is not just a matter of methods, but requires management and supportive institutional policies. This is consistent with the study of (Nafi'ah & Faruq, 2025) which highlights the tension between pedagogical innovation and a culture of formal academic evaluation.

Opportunities and Challenges in the Implementation of Mu'ti-Based Deep Learning

Teachers participating in this study widely recognize deep learning, grounded in Mu'ti's 3Ful principles, as a vital conduit for fostering holistic learner engagement in the EFL classroom. They emphasize the irreplaceable role of collaborative pedagogies and digital technologies in actualizing the joyful learning component, as also highlighted by (Cubio, 2025). The testimony of Teacher 1, who underscores cross-disciplinary collaboration alongside the integration of digital media, exemplifies how such multidimensional approaches facilitate not only active participation but also constructive knowledge-building processes. This aligns with (Cubio, 2025), who advocate that educational technologies can significantly enhance student motivation, paving the way for deeper engagement and sustained learning outcomes. These findings underscore the potential of the 3Ful framework to transform conventional language instruction into a dynamic and student-centered learning environment.

Despite these optimistic prospects, the study reveals persistent systemic and practical challenges

that complicate the full realization of deep learning in secondary EFL classrooms. Central among these obstacles is the rigidity of the existing curriculum coupled with high-stakes traditional assessments, which collectively constrain teachers' pedagogical flexibility. This finding mirrors (Halim et al., 2023) analysis of cultural and institutional resistance in school environments, where the pressure to "cover" prescribed material often leads teachers to prioritize content delivery over meaningful engagement. The discussions in the focus groups further underscore the stress educators face in balancing curriculum mandates with innovative teaching aspirations, revealing an entrenched tension between reformist ideals and operational realities within the educational system.

Beyond systemic constraints, the study highlights micro-level challenges intrinsic to individual educators, particularly concerning their preparedness and classroom management competencies. Teacher 3's remarks on minimizing distractions and maintaining student focus illuminate a critical but oft-overlooked aspect of the deep learning implementation, the nuanced art of classroom orchestration. This micro-pedagogical challenge resonates with (Budiman & Ganap, 2024; Karabulut & Dollar, 2022; Nooralam & Sakhiyya, 2022) call for sustained professional development programs that empower teachers to effectively serve both as facilitators of active learning and as managers of diverse and dynamic classrooms. Such dual roles necessitate ongoing support for teachers to cultivate skills that bridge the gap between theory and classroom praxis.

Student-centered challenges cannot be ignored, notably the psychological factors influencing engagement such as language anxiety and varying motivational levels. These variables demand that teachers exercise creative differentiation strategies to ensure learning remains relevant and accessible to all students, reflecting the pedagogical flexibility emphasized by (Liando et al., 2022, 2025) in diverse multicultural classrooms. The study's findings thus validate the importance of adaptive teaching models tailored to heterogeneous learner profiles to mitigate affective barriers and promote equitable learning opportunities. This adaptability becomes particularly important in EFL contexts, where linguistic apprehension can significantly hinder participation and achievement.

In sum, while Mu'ti-based deep learning principles offer promising avenues for revolutionizing EFL pedagogy, their implementation is hampered by entrenched educational structures, limited teacher readiness, and complex learner needs. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, multi-level approach encompassing policy reform, targeted professional development, and classroom-based innovations that collectively nurture an ecosystem conducive to mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning. Such efforts are essential to unlock the full potential of deep learning as both a pedagogical philosophy and a practical instructional paradigm within Indonesian secondary education.

These findings confirm that the implementation of deep learning in EFL learning in secondary schools is not just the adoption of a new pedagogical model, but a complex and multidimensional transformative process, involving the management of time, resources, teacher competence, and school evaluation culture. This research also highlights the importance of alignment between learning philosophy and formal policy, so that deep learning does not become just rhetoric without meaningful implementation. On this basis, strategic recommendations include, improving teacher training that focuses on mindful, meaningful, joyful learning techniques; curriculum reform that provides flexibility for innovation; and the development of classroom management that is supportive of a holistic learning approach. In addition, strengthening the teacher's learning community can be a forum for sharing best practices and solutions to obstacles.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the application of deep learning based on the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in secondary school offers significant potential to improve student engagement and learning quality. The teachers interviewed showed a deep understanding of these principles, but in practice full implementation was often hampered by time constraints, curriculum burdens, and less supportive classroom management conditions. This is in accordance with the findings of previous research which noted that there is a gap between pedagogical aspirations and the reality of learning in the field which is full of administrative pressure and demands for formal evaluation. The principle of mindful learning that requires full awareness of students in the learning process contributes to improving critical thinking skills, but requires adequate time support and teacher training so that it can be applied consistently. At the same time, meaningful learning opens up opportunities for teachers to contextualize learning into students' real experiences, although the challenge of heterogeneity of student needs still demands complex differentiation. The implementation of joyful

learning has proven to be effective in creating a more positive classroom atmosphere and reducing learning anxiety, although it still faces obstacles in classroom management and curriculum pressure. This research also highlights the great opportunities in cross-subject collaboration and the use of digital technology that can strengthen the deep learning process, increase motivation, and engage students holistically. Key challenges revolve around the need for curriculum policy reform, improved training and support for teachers, and the development of adaptive classroom management. The overall findings confirm that deep learning is not just a new method, but a pedagogical paradigm that requires systemic transformation and a shared commitment in order to be optimal and sustainable. Advanced research is encouraged to expand scope by involving direct student participation, using interviews, classroom observations, and study journals to gain a holistic perspective. Longitudinal research is also needed to map the long-term impact of the application of deep learning on the achievement of English language competencies and students' cognitive, affective, and social development. In addition, a more in-depth exploration of the integration of adaptive educational technology and teacher professional training will be crucial to ensure the continuity of the implementation of deep learning in various secondary school contexts in Indonesia.

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