

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEEP LEARNING APPROACH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR FOURTH-GRADE STUDENTS AT SDN 3 RANTETAYO

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning for fourth-grade students at SDN 3 Rantetayo, Tana Toraja Regency. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The informants were the principal, the fourth-grade teacher, and a fourth-grade student. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observation, and documentation. The data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that the deep learning approach was implemented through mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. In English learning, the teacher applied contextual strategies, discussion, reflection, simple English practice, formative assessment, and interactive activities. These activities encouraged students to become more active, motivated, confident, and engaged in the learning process. Students also showed greater courage in asking questions, expressing simple ideas, and completing learning tasks. However, several challenges were found, including limited time, lack of facilities and media, different student ability levels, low motivation, and teachers' administrative workload. To overcome these challenges, the teacher used available media, managed time effectively, provided positive reinforcement, collaborated with other teachers, and created a comfortable classroom atmosphere. Overall, the deep learning approach supported meaningful, reflective, and enjoyable English learning for young learners..

Keywords: deep learning approach, English language learning, young learners, elementary school

INTRODUCTION

English language learning at the elementary school level plays an important role in introducing young learners to basic communication, vocabulary, classroom expressions, and confidence in using English. In the Indonesian elementary school context, English is commonly learned as a foreign language, so students have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. Therefore, the classroom becomes the main space where students experience English through interaction, guidance, repetition, and meaningful activities. Teaching English to young learners requires strategies that are appropriate to their cognitive, social, and emotional development because children learn best through concrete examples, visual support, movement, games, songs, stories, and classroom interaction (Butler, 2015).

However, English learning in elementary schools is often still conducted through teacher-centered instruction. Students may be asked to copy vocabulary, repeat words, translate sentences, or answer questions without being actively involved in constructing meaning. Although these activities can help students recognize English words, they do not

always develop deeper understanding, confidence, or communicative ability. English learning should provide opportunities for students to receive meaningful input, practice language in context, and use English for simple communication (Ellis, 2005). In addition, students' motivation is a crucial factor in foreign language learning because motivated learners tend to participate more actively and persist in learning tasks (Dörnyei, 1998). The implementation of English learning for young learners also needs to consider classroom challenges. Teachers often face difficulties in maintaining students' attention, managing different ability levels, selecting suitable materials, and creating enjoyable learning activities. Copland et al. (2014) emphasize that teaching English to young learners requires teachers to balance language objectives with students' developmental needs. Therefore, English learning should not only focus on delivering material but also on creating a learning atmosphere that encourages curiosity, participation, confidence, and interaction.

One approach that can support these needs is the deep learning approach. In this study, deep learning refers to a pedagogical approach that encourages students to understand learning materials deeply, connect new knowledge with prior experience, reflect on their learning, and apply knowledge in meaningful situations. This concept is different from artificial intelligence-based deep learning. In education, deep learning is commonly associated with learning that goes beyond surface memorization. Marton and Säljö (1976) explain that deep learning involves the intention to understand meaning and relationships within learning materials, while surface learning tends to focus only on memorization. Thus, deep learning is relevant to English language learning because language cannot be mastered only by memorizing words or rules.

The deep learning approach is also closely related to constructive alignment in teaching. Biggs (1996) argues that meaningful learning occurs when learning objectives, teaching activities, and assessment are aligned. In English learning, this means that students should not only be assessed on their ability to remember vocabulary but also on their ability to understand, use, and reflect on the language they learn. Warburton (2003) further explains that deep learning helps students develop understanding by connecting knowledge with context and application. Therefore, the deep learning approach can support students in learning English more actively and meaningfully. In the context of this study, the deep learning approach is viewed through three main principles: mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. Mindful learning refers to students' awareness and active attention during the learning process. Langer (2000) states that mindful learning encourages learners to be open to new information, notice differences, and respond flexibly to learning situations. Langer and Moldoveanu (2000) also explain that mindfulness involves creating new distinctions and being sensitive to context. In English learning, mindful learning can be seen when students pay attention to pronunciation, word meaning, classroom instructions, and how English expressions are used in different situations.

The second principle is meaningful learning. Meaningful learning occurs when students connect new information with their previous knowledge and real-life experiences. Mayer (2002) explains that meaningful learning supports knowledge transfer because students understand and apply information rather than merely memorize it. In English language learning, meaningful learning can be implemented through contextual vocabulary

practice, simple dialogues, picture-based activities, storytelling, and questions related to students' daily lives. For example, students can learn vocabulary about family, school objects, animals, and daily activities by connecting the words to things they already know.

The third principle is joyful learning. Joyful learning emphasizes the importance of creating a positive, enjoyable, and motivating classroom atmosphere. Students are more likely to participate when they feel safe, supported, and interested in the lesson. Pekrun (2006) explains that students' emotions influence motivation, engagement, and achievement. In foreign language learning, enjoyment can reduce anxiety and increase students' willingness to communicate. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) found that enjoyment plays an important role in foreign language classrooms because it supports learners' positive emotional experience. Therefore, joyful learning is not merely about fun activities; it is about creating learning conditions that support confidence and participation. Student engagement is one of the important indicators of deep learning implementation. Engagement includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in learning activities. Fredricks et al. (2004) explain that engaged students show participation, interest, effort, and mental involvement in learning. In English learning, engagement can be observed when students listen attentively, respond to questions, practice vocabulary, ask questions, work with peers, and complete learning tasks. Oga-Baldwin et al. (2017) show that classroom support and engagement are closely related to young language learners' motivation. This means that teachers need to build supportive learning environments where students feel encouraged to use English.

Another important element of deep learning is reflection and early metacognitive awareness. Flavell (1979) defines metacognition as awareness and regulation of one's own thinking process. Although fourth-grade students are still young, they can be guided to reflect on simple questions such as what they learned, what words they remember, what activities they enjoyed, and what parts they found difficult. Reflection helps students become more aware of their learning progress and encourages them to take part more actively in the learning process.

The implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning also requires appropriate teaching strategies and media. Teachers can use pictures, flashcards, songs, simple texts, games, role play, real objects, and digital media to make English learning more concrete and interactive. Macaro et al. (2012) explain that technology-supported language learning can be effective when it is aligned with learning goals and students' needs. Similarly, Shadieff and Yang (2020) state that technology-enhanced language learning can support interaction, motivation, and access to language input when used appropriately. However, technology should support teacher-guided learning rather than replace the teacher's role. At SDN 3 Rantetayo, the deep learning approach is relevant because fourth-grade students need English learning that encourages active participation, confidence, and understanding. Students at this level are in a concrete operational stage, so they need learning experiences that are contextual, interactive, and connected to their daily lives. Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2011) emphasize that early foreign language learning is influenced by age, motivation, exposure, and classroom

conditions. Therefore, teachers need to adapt English learning activities to students' developmental characteristics and classroom context.

Based on these considerations, this study focuses on the implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning for fourth-grade students at SDN 3 Rantetayo. The study aims to describe how mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning are implemented in the English classroom. It also seeks to explain how this approach supports students' motivation, engagement, confidence, and reflective awareness. Through this approach, English learning is expected to shift from teacher-centered instruction to a more student-centered, interactive, and meaningful learning process.

METHOD

1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. A descriptive qualitative design was used because the study aimed to describe and interpret the implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning for fourth-grade students at SDN 3 Rantetayo. This design was considered appropriate since the research focused on understanding classroom phenomena naturally, including how teachers planned, implemented, and evaluated English learning through the principles of mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning.

The study did not attempt to test a hypothesis or measure the effect of a treatment statistically. Instead, it explored how the deep learning approach was applied in the classroom, how students responded to the learning process, and what challenges were faced by the teacher. Therefore, descriptive qualitative research allowed the researcher to obtain detailed information about the learning process, teacher strategies, student engagement, and classroom interaction.

2. Participants

The research was conducted at SDN 3 Rantetayo, located in Madandan Village, Rantetayo District, Tana Toraja Regency. This school was selected because it had implemented the deep learning approach in the teaching and learning process. The participants of this study were selected purposively because they were directly involved in the implementation of the deep learning approach in the fourth-grade classroom.

Table 1. Research Participants

No.	Participant	Role in the Study	Information Collected
1	Principal	School leader	School policy and support for deep learning implementation
2	Fourth-grade teacher	Main classroom practitioner	Planning, implementation, challenges, and strategies in English learning

3	Fourth-grade student	Learning participant	Student experience, motivation, engagement, and response to English learning
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The participants were considered relevant because they could provide information about the implementation of the deep learning approach from different perspectives. The principal provided information about school policy and support, the teacher explained classroom practices, and the student described the learning experience.

3. Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study consisted of an observation sheet, interview guidelines, and documentation checklist. These instruments were used to collect data related to the implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning.

Table 2. Research Instruments

No.	Instrument	Purpose
1	Observation sheet	To observe the English learning process, teacher activities, student participation, and classroom interaction
2	Interview guidelines	To obtain information from the principal, teacher, and student regarding the implementation of the deep learning approach
3	Documentation checklist	To collect supporting data such as lesson plans, teaching materials, photographs, and school documents

The observation sheet was used to record how mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning appeared during English classroom activities. The interview guidelines were used to explore participants' opinions, experiences, challenges, and efforts related to the implementation of the deep learning approach. Documentation was used to strengthen the data obtained from observation and interviews.

4. Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. First, the researcher conducted classroom observation during English learning activities in Grade IV. The observation focused on how the teacher implemented the deep learning approach, including the use of contextual strategies, discussion, reflection, formative assessment, and student-centered activities. Second, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the participants. The interviews were carried out to obtain deeper information about the implementation of the deep learning approach, the benefits

perceived by the participants, and the obstacles faced during the learning process. The teacher was asked about lesson planning, teaching strategies, classroom management, and assessment. The student was asked about motivation, participation, confidence, and learning experience. Third, documentation was collected to support the findings. The documents included lesson plans, teaching materials, students' tasks, photos of learning activities, and other relevant school documents. These data helped the researcher validate and enrich the information obtained from observation and interviews. This structure follows the original study context, which used observation, interviews, and documentation to examine the implementation of deep learning at SDN 3 Rantetayo.

5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting, simplifying, and focusing on important information related to the implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning. Irrelevant data were eliminated, while relevant data were grouped based on the research focus.

Data display was conducted by presenting the data in descriptive narrative form and tables. The researcher organized the findings based on the principles of deep learning, namely mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. After the data were displayed, the researcher drew conclusions by interpreting the patterns, similarities, and important meanings found in the data.

Table 3. Data Analysis Process

Stage	Description
Data Reduction	Selecting and focusing data related to English learning, teacher strategies, student responses, and implementation challenges
Data Display	Presenting findings in narrative descriptions and tables
Conclusion Drawing	Interpreting the data to explain how the deep learning approach was implemented in English learning

Through this analysis process, the researcher was able to describe the implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning and identify its contribution to students' motivation, engagement, confidence, and classroom participation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

This study describes the implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning for fourth-grade students at SDN 3 Rantetayo. The findings were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results show that the

deep learning approach was implemented through several main stages, namely planning, implementation, reflection, and evaluation. In the English classroom, this approach was directed toward creating learning that was mindful, meaningful, and joyful. The teacher attempted to move the learning process from teacher-centered instruction to a more student-centered classroom, where students were encouraged to participate actively, express ideas, connect English materials with their daily experiences, and reflect on what they had learned. This section is redesigned from the uploaded research findings on deep learning implementation at SDN 3 Rantetayo.

Before implementing the deep learning approach, the teacher prepared learning activities by considering students' needs, characteristics, and classroom conditions. The planning stage was important because it determined how English materials could be delivered in a contextual, reflective, and enjoyable way. The teacher designed activities that connected English vocabulary, simple expressions, and classroom communication with students' real-life experiences.

Table 1. Implementation Stages of the Deep Learning Approach in English Language Learning

Stage	Implementation in English Learning	Main Focus
Planning	Preparing lesson plans, materials, simple English tasks, media, and contextual activities	Designing mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning
Implementation	Applying discussion, question-and-answer activities, simple English practice, group tasks, and games	Encouraging active participation and language use
Reflection	Asking students to reflect on what they learned, what they understood, and what they found difficult	Developing awareness and metacognitive skills
Evaluation	Conducting formative assessment through questions, oral responses, observation, and feedback	Assessing students' understanding and learning progress

The table shows that the implementation of the deep learning approach was not limited to classroom activities but began from careful planning. In the planning stage, the teacher prepared English materials that were close to students' daily lives, such as vocabulary related to school, family, friends, objects, activities, and simple expressions. The teacher also planned verbal questions that allowed students to answer based on their own experiences. This helped students feel involved in the learning process and made English learning more meaningful.

During the implementation stage, the teacher used several strategies such as explanation, question-and-answer activities, group discussion, simple games, and project-based or cooperative activities. Although the teacher still used explanation, it was combined with interactive activities to encourage student participation. In English learning, question-and-answer activities were used to help students practice simple expressions, respond to teacher prompts, and connect the lesson with their personal experiences. For example, students were encouraged to answer simple questions, mention familiar objects in English, or express ideas related to the lesson topic.

The implementation of the deep learning approach in this study was based on three main principles: mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. These three principles supported each other in creating an English learning environment that was more active, reflective, and enjoyable.

Table 2. Deep Learning Principles in English Language Learning

Deep Learning Principle	Classroom Implementation	Student Response
Mindful Learning	Students were guided to pay attention, think before answering, ask questions, and reflect on their understanding	Students became more aware of what they learned and showed courage to respond
Meaningful Learning	English materials were connected to students' daily experiences, familiar objects, and classroom situations	Students found the lesson easier to understand because it was related to their real life
Joyful Learning	The teacher used simple games, icebreakers, guessing activities, and positive classroom interaction	Students became more enthusiastic, motivated, and less afraid of making mistakes

The findings indicate that mindful learning appeared when students were encouraged to be mentally and emotionally present during English learning. The teacher did not only ask students to memorize vocabulary but also guided them to think about the meaning and use of the words. Students were given opportunities to answer questions, ask for clarification, and express their understanding in their own words. This process helped students develop early reflective awareness in learning English.

Meaningful learning was implemented by connecting English materials with students' real experiences. The teacher used familiar examples from students' surroundings to explain lesson content. In English learning, this could be seen when the teacher related vocabulary or simple expressions to daily classroom situations, family, school objects, friends, and students' activities. This strategy made English learning more relevant because students could connect new language input with what they already knew.

Joyful learning was reflected in the teacher's effort to create a comfortable and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. The teacher used simple icebreakers and guessing games to attract students' attention before or during the lesson. Students responded enthusiastically because the learning process was not stressful. They felt more comfortable participating, answering questions, and making mistakes as part of the learning process. This condition supported students' motivation and confidence in learning English.

In addition to the implementation of the three principles, the findings also show several obstacles faced by the teacher. These obstacles influenced the effectiveness of the deep learning approach in the English classroom.

Table 3. Obstacles and Teacher's Efforts in Implementing the Deep Learning Approach

Obstacles	Teacher's Efforts
Limited learning time	Managing time more effectively and focusing on essential materials
Limited facilities and learning media	Using simple and available media in the classroom
Differences in students' English ability	Applying differentiated support and guiding students according to their needs
Low motivation among some students	Giving encouragement, appreciation, and positive reinforcement
Teacher's administrative workload	Collaborating with other teachers and preparing practical learning strategies

The table shows that the implementation of deep learning in English language learning was not free from challenges. Limited time made it difficult for the teacher to conduct all planned activities optimally. Differences in students' ability levels also became a challenge because some students were more active and confident, while others needed more guidance. To overcome this, the teacher provided questions not only to active students but also to less active students. The teacher also walked around the classroom, guided students directly, and gave positive reinforcement.

Another challenge was the limited availability of media and facilities. Since English learning for young learners requires visual and concrete support, media are important to help students understand the lesson. To overcome this limitation, the teacher used simple media available in the classroom and created activities that did not fully depend on advanced technology. This effort showed that deep learning can still be implemented even with limited resources, as long as the teacher is creative in designing meaningful activities. Besides obstacles, the implementation of the deep learning approach was also supported by several factors. These supporting factors helped the teacher create a better learning environment.

Table 4. Supporting Factors in the Implementation of Deep Learning

Supporting Factor	Contribution to English Learning
Teacher readiness	Helped the teacher design and implement meaningful English learning activities
Student enthusiasm	Encouraged active participation and classroom interaction
Curriculum flexibility	Allowed the teacher to adapt learning strategies to students' needs
School support	Provided motivation and support for innovative learning
Positive classroom climate	Made students feel safe, valued, and confident to participate

The supporting factors show that deep learning implementation depends not only on teaching methods but also on the learning environment. Teacher readiness became the main foundation because the teacher needed to understand how to design English learning that was mindful, meaningful, and joyful. Student enthusiasm also supported the process because students became more active when the classroom atmosphere was positive and interactive. In addition, curriculum flexibility allowed the teacher to adapt learning strategies based on students' needs and classroom conditions.

The implementation of the deep learning approach had several positive impacts on students. The most visible impacts were increased student activity, better conceptual understanding, and improved learning motivation. Students were no longer only passive listeners but became more involved in classroom activities. They showed courage to ask questions, answer teacher prompts, work with friends, and complete learning tasks.

Table 5. Impact of the Deep Learning Approach on Students' English Learning

Aspect	Observed Impact
Student activity	Students became more active in asking, answering, and participating in classroom tasks
Confidence	Students were more willing to express simple ideas and respond to teacher questions
Understanding	Students understood English materials better when connected to daily experiences
Motivation	Students showed more enthusiasm during games, discussions, and group activities
Classroom interaction	The classroom became more interactive and student-centered

Overall, the findings indicate that the deep learning approach contributed positively to English language learning for fourth-grade students at SDN 3 Rantetayo. Through

mindful learning, students were encouraged to focus, think, and reflect. Through meaningful learning, English materials became more relevant because they were connected to students' real-life experiences. Through joyful learning, the classroom atmosphere became more enjoyable, which increased students' motivation and confidence.

The implementation of this approach also helped transform the classroom atmosphere. Learning became less teacher-centered and more interactive. The teacher acted not only as a source of knowledge but also as a facilitator who guided students to construct understanding, participate actively, and reflect on their learning. Although several obstacles were found, such as limited time, facilities, varied student ability, and administrative workload, the teacher made efforts to overcome them through effective time management, simple media, positive reinforcement, collaboration, and classroom management. Thus, the implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning for fourth-grade students at SDN 3 Rantetayo can be considered beneficial. It supports students' active engagement, motivation, confidence, and understanding of English materials. The approach is also relevant for young learners because it provides learning experiences that are meaningful, reflective, enjoyable, and connected to students' daily lives.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning for fourth-grade students at SDN 3 Rantetayo supported a more active, meaningful, and student-centered learning process. The teacher implemented the approach through planning, classroom activities, reflection, and formative evaluation. This finding is in line with Feriyanto and Anjariyah (2024), who explain that deep learning can be developed through the integration of meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning to strengthen students' engagement and comprehension.

The implementation of mindful learning was reflected in students' awareness during the learning process. Students were encouraged to pay attention, think before responding, ask questions, and reflect on what they had learned. This condition supports the idea that language learning engagement is not only behavioral but also cognitive, emotional, and reflective (Hiver et al., 2024). In this study, mindful learning helped students become more aware of English vocabulary, classroom instructions, and simple expressions used during learning activities. Meaningful learning was seen when the teacher connected English materials with students' daily experiences. The teacher used familiar examples, simple questions, and contextual classroom situations to help students understand English more easily. This finding is relevant to Ishida et al. (2023), who emphasize that school, home, and media influences contribute to elementary students'

motivation to learn English. When English materials are connected to students' real-life experiences, students are more likely to see English as useful and meaningful.

Joyful learning also played an important role in increasing students' motivation and confidence. The teacher used simple games, icebreakers, guessing activities, and positive reinforcement to create an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. A positive classroom climate can support interaction and improve students' engagement in EFL learning (Qiu, 2022; Ye, 2024). In this study, joyful learning made students less afraid of making mistakes and more willing to participate in English learning activities. The findings also show that students became more active in asking questions, answering teacher prompts, working in groups, and completing learning tasks. This supports Liu et al. (2024), who state that cooperative language learning supported by appropriate strategies can improve language performance, communication skills, motivation, and self-reflection. Similarly, Lu et al. (2022) found that students' perception of the learning environment and motivation influenced situational engagement. Therefore, the teacher's effort to create a supportive and interactive classroom contributed to students' active participation. Teacher support was another important factor in the success of the deep learning approach. The teacher provided guidance, feedback, motivation, and opportunities for students to express their ideas. Pishghadam et al. (2021) found that teachers' positive behaviors can influence EFL learners' motivation and teacher success. This is also supported by Hennebry-Leung and Hu (2023), who highlight the important roles of both teachers and learners in language learning motivation.

The use of simple media and contextual strategies also supported English learning. Although the school faced limitations in facilities and learning media, the teacher tried to use available resources creatively. Technology-enhanced and media-supported language learning can support English instruction when aligned with learning goals and classroom needs (Shadiev & Yang, 2020; Hasumi & Chiu, 2024). However, the findings also show that successful implementation depends not only on media but also on teacher creativity, classroom management, and students' readiness. Overall, the deep learning approach helped transform English learning from teacher-centered instruction into a more interactive and reflective process. Students showed better motivation, confidence, participation, and awareness in learning English. These findings support Wang et al. (2021), who argue that positive psychology in second or foreign language learning can strengthen motivation, emotion, and learning quality. Thus, the implementation of the deep learning approach through mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning is relevant for improving English language learning among fourth-grade students at SDN 3 Rantetayo.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of the deep learning approach in English language learning for fourth-grade students at SDN 3

Rantetayo was carried out through planning, classroom implementation, reflection, and evaluation. The teacher applied the principles of mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning to create a more active, contextual, and enjoyable English learning process. The implementation of mindful learning encouraged students to be more attentive, reflective, and confident in responding to questions. Meaningful learning helped students connect English materials with their daily experiences, making the lesson easier to understand and more relevant to their lives. Meanwhile, joyful learning created a comfortable classroom atmosphere through simple games, icebreakers, discussion, and positive interaction, which increased students' motivation and participation. The deep learning approach also shifted the classroom atmosphere from teacher-centered learning to a more student-centered process. Students became more active in asking questions, answering teacher prompts, working with peers, and completing learning tasks. However, several challenges were found, such as limited time, limited facilities and media, differences in students' ability levels, low motivation among some students, and teachers' administrative workload. To overcome these challenges, the teacher managed time effectively, used available media, provided positive reinforcement, collaborated with other teachers, and created a conducive classroom environment. Overall, the deep learning approach supported meaningful, reflective, and enjoyable English learning for young learners at SDN 3 Rantetayo.

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