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Research Article

EFL Teachers' Understanding and Readiness for Deep Learning Approach: Insight from Indonesian Secondary School

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the understanding and readiness of EFL Indonesian secondary school teachers in implementing Mu'ti's concept of deep learning, with three principles that consisted of mindful, meaningful. and joyful learning. A descriptive qualitative design was employed, involving five English teachers from a locally-situated context in Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that teachers demonstrate positive attitudes and willingness to adopt the approach, but their conceptual understanding is still limited. Meanwhile, mindful learning was often interpreted merely as student focus, meaningful learning was inconsistently practiced due to curriculum demands and reliance on textbooks, and joyful learning was mostly implemented through brief game-based activities rather than strategies that support emotional and cognitive engagement. Furthermore, a clear gap emerged between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices, influenced by exam pressure, administrative workload, and a lack of professional development. The study highlights the need for a systematic needs analysis to identify teachers' actual challenges in understanding and applying deep learning principles. These findings offer significant insights into the challenges faced by teachers and highlight the need for institutional support and sustained professional development to ensure the effective integration of deep learning in Indonesian secondary schools

Keywords: *Deep Learning Approach, EFL, Mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning*

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INTRODUCTION

Primary and secondary education in Indonesia is in a phase of transformation that requires a paradigm shift in learning from a superficial, mechanical, and teacher-centered approach to more in-depth, reflective, and student-centered learning (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). This change is in line with the direction of the -kurikulum merdeka policy which emphasizes competence, learning independence, and active involvement of students in the learning process. However, the success of this transformation is highly dependent on the readiness and competence of teachers in understanding and implementing learning approaches that are able to develop students' intellectual capacity and character holistically (Nafi'ah & Faruq, 2025). In this context, the concept of Deep Learning (henceforth (DL) 3 Full developed by Professor Abdul Mu'Ti (minister of primiary and secondary education) which includes mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning offers relevant pedagogical perspectives to strengthen the quality of learning in Indonesia (Sumarni & Okyranida, 2025; Tatipang et al., 2025).

DL places teachers as the main facilitators responsible for creating a learning ecosystem that fosters awareness, meaning, and joy. Mindful learning emphasizes the importance of full awareness in the learning process, both on the part of teachers and students (Feriyanto & Anjariyah, 2024). When teachers apply mindful teaching, they are aware of the learning objectives, the context of the students, and the cognitive and emotional dynamics that occur in the classroom. Previous studies have shown that mindful approaches improve focus, emotion regulation, interaction quality, and student engagement (Ramadana et al., 2025; Sumarni & Okyranida, 2025). In the Indonesian context, the practice of mindful teaching is still limited because most teachers focus on delivering material rather than awareness of the learning process itself .

"Write something here about what you want the readers to know"

The second component, meaningful learning, emphasizes that learning must be relevant to students' experiences, needs, and realities. According to Ausubel (1963), meaningful learning occurs when new information is associated with the knowledge structure that students already have, resulting in a continuous in-depth understanding. Research by Mubarok et al. (2024) also confirms that meaningful learning involves authentic tasks, problem-solving, and connection with the real world. However, in learning practice in Indonesia, there are still many teachers who apply the surface learning approach through memorization, drill exercises, and lecture models that have minimal opportunities for high-level thinking (Mawardi et al., 2025; Mubarok et al., 2024). Teachers' lack of understanding of meaningful learning design causes students to fail to achieve essential competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, and reflective skills (Rosyad & Kabir, 2025; Yasid, 2025).

The third principle, joyful learning, emphasizes that learning should create an enjoyable, safe, and motivating experience for students. Joyful learning does not mean just play, but a psychological atmosphere that is conducive, full of curiosity, and free from excessive pressure (Ramadhan, 2025). Studies by Alrabai (2022), Hsu (2025) and Madkur et al. (2022) stated that a positive learning environment improves students' intrinsic motivation, active participation, and emotional well-being. In the Indonesian context, the report of IAARD (2021) shows that students' academic stress levels are still high due to exam pressure, assignment load, and monotonous learning approaches (Liando et al., 2022, 2023). This shows that joyful learning has not yet become a strong pedagogical culture in high school.

Although the concept of DL has high relevance to Indonesia's educational vision, its implementation in the field faces significant challenges, especially in the aspects of teacher understanding and teacher readiness. Teachers are the main actors who determine how mindful, meaningful, and joyful values are translated into classroom practice (Nafi'ah & Faruq, 2025; Ramadana et al., 2025; Sumarni & Okyranida, 2025). However, some studies show that many teachers do not yet have an adequate understanding of DL approach. For example, research by Mawardi et al., (2025) found that most teachers only understand meaningful learning theoretically but have not been able to design learning activities that are truly relevant and authentic. Similarly, a study by Silvania et al. (2025) noted the low ability of teachers to create an inclusive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere due to the limitations of professional training and lack of institutional support.

In addition to the aspect of knowledge, teacher readiness is also a crucial issue. Readiness includes pedagogical readiness, psychological readiness, technological readiness, and environmental readiness (Khan et al., 2024; Nafi'ah & Faruq, 2025). Many teachers feel that they are not ready to innovate learning because they are used to traditional patterns that are oriented towards material completion and exam preparation. Structural challenges such as administrative burden, large class sizes, and limited facilities also affect teachers' ability to consistently implement mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning (Andayanie et al., 2025; Benu et al., 2025; Salong & Ansiska, 2025). Therefore, it is necessary to map the in-depth needs of the extent to which teachers understand and are ready to implement DL 3 Full. Based on this reality, this study aims to explore qualitatively how teachers interpret and understand DL with the 3 core principles of learning, how they are ready to implement it, and what needs are needed to support the implementation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Deep Learning (DL) Concept and Development

Deep learning in education represents a paradigm that transcends the mere accumulation of factual knowledge and prioritizes conceptual understanding that is reflective, transferable, and grounded in real-life contexts (Fullan et al., 2018). It challenges traditional, exam-oriented practices by positioning learners as active constructors of meaning and by

foregrounding critical, creative, and collaborative engagement with knowledge. Rooted in constructivism and social constructivism, deep learning views knowledge as something that is actively built through personal experience and meaningful social interaction, rather than simply transmitted from teacher to student (Jiang, 2022). The classic distinction between the surface and deep approaches introduced by Marton and Säljö confirms that intrinsic motivation and meaningful processing strategies are the main markers of learning depth (Marton & Säljö, 1976).

Philosophically, in Indonesia, DL requires mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning as a unit of the learning ecosystem (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). Mindful learning emphasizes full awareness and reflection in processing information; Meaningful learning requires a close connection between the material and the real-life context; While joyful learning ensures a positive atmosphere that fosters intrinsic motivation and curiosity. In its framework, DL rests on four pillars: pedagogical practices, learning partnerships, the use of digital technology, and an inclusive and adaptive learning environment (Telaumbanua et al., 2025). This transformation demands a shift in focus from standardized tests and memorization to systemic, collaborative, and morally purpose-driven learning to improve social and humanitarian life (Canagarajah, 2011; Freeman et al., 2015; Lantolf, 2000). In the Indonesian context, the idea of DL has gained local articulation through the Merdeka curriculum and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile which emphasizes character, diversity, and social concern (Candira et al., 2025).

EFL Teachers' Understanding of DL Concepts

According to Silvania et al. (2025), the concept of DL, which emphasizes mindful learning, meaningful, and joyful, has high relevance in the context of EFL. This approach is relevant because it can increase student motivation and teaching effectiveness in an educational environment that is often rigid and exam-oriented. Its significance lies in the potential to address global challenges such as the low critical thinking skills and creativity of EFL students, which are often reported in UNESCO and OECD reports (Ramadana et al., 2025).

Key studies on EFL teachers' understanding of learning innovation show a growing trend of interest in constructivist approaches. For example, research by Brea-Spahna & Bauler (2023) groups learning theories chronologically, from behaviorism to constructivism, and highlights how deep learning complements these models by emphasizing emotional experiences. Thematically, the literature can be grouped into three: (1) conceptual understanding, (2) implementation challenges, and (3) impact on students. However, there are gaps in research specific to the EFL context in developing countries, where teachers are often less exposed to concepts such as mindful learning (Mawardi et al., 2025; Nafi'ah & Faruq, 2025; Sumarni & Okyranida, 2025). Research by Mubarok et al. (2024) found that EFL teachers tend to understand innovation theoretically but lack it in practical application, creating a debate about whether understanding alone is enough without professional support.

A critical evaluation of previous studies reveals strengths and weaknesses. The strength of qualitative research such as the one conducted by Tatipang et al. (2025) lies in the in-depth analysis of how teachers build understanding through reflection, but the weakness is the small sample size that limits generalization. Inconsistency appears in quantitative studies, such as the research by Ramadana et al. (2025), which shows variations in understanding based on experience, but often ignores aspects of local culture. The survey and interview methods in this study are relevant to measure understanding, but are limited by subjectivity bias.

The conceptual framework used is Prof. Mu'Ti's deep learning model as depicted in Kemendikdasmen (2025), which integrates the mindfulness theory of Langer (1989) with the meaningful learning concept of Ausubel (1963) and joyful learning from Csikszentmihalyi (1990). This framework is appropriate because it provides a holistic guide to analyzing teacher understanding, with a focus on cognitive, affective, and social integration. The logical argument from this literature suggests that a strong teacher understanding of deep learning is needed to address the gap, so this study aims to answer, how EFL teachers understand this concept.

EFL Teachers' Readiness to Implement the Deep Learning Approach

The relevance of this topic lies in the challenges of educational globalization, where EFL teachers need to be prepared to deal with diverse students. This context is significant because low readiness can hinder the adoption of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning, all of which have the potential to improve language retention and communicative skills (Ramadana et al., 2025). A synthesis of related studies shows a trend of increasing emphasis on teacher competence, with debate over whether readiness is more influenced by training or experience (Sumarni & Okyranida, 2025). For example, research by Fullan et al. (2018) identified chronological trends of education reform, highlighting gaps in EFL teachers' readiness for innovations such as deep learning, especially in schools with limited resources. A key gap is the lack of research on specific readiness for joyful learning aspects, which is often overlooked in the EFL literature.

Previous studies conducted by Nafi'ah and Faruq (2025); Rafi and Morgan (2024) were strong in measuring readiness through a stage model, but weak in considering cultural context, so the results were inconsistent in non-Western countries. Inconsistency was seen in a study by Alda et al. (2020); Khan et al. (2024); Pratama et al., (2023), who found variations in readiness based on the type of training, but the observation method was limited by the subjectivity of the observer. The theoretical framework applied is the readiness for change model by Armenakis et al. (1993), which is combined with Prof. Mu'Ti's deep learning concept. This framework is appropriate because it allows for multidimensional analysis, including psychological and structural aspects. A logical argument from the literature establishes that teacher readiness is a key predictor of success, so this study asks, how prepared are EFL teachers to implement this approach? The contribution of this study is to expand the literature with empirical data from Indonesian teachers, addressing the gap through a more inclusive and in-depth perspective.

METHOD

Research Design and Context

This study employs a a case study by Yin (2018) , focusing on capturing detailed narratives from teachers about how they understand and respond to Prof. Mu'ti's deep learning approach. The descriptive design is used because deep learning approach is still relatively new in the Indonesian context, and empirical evidence on teacher readiness remains limited. This approach also allows the researcher to explore nuances in teachers' knowledge, their practical considerations, and any structural or instructional barriers that may affect their implementation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants

The participants involved five senior high school English teachers from public school in Manado, North Sulawesi. These teachers were selected using purposive sampling, a technique recommended by Patton (2015) for qualitative studies that require information-rich cases. The criteria for participant selection include: (1) having at least three years of teaching experience; (2) actively teaching English at the secondary level; and (3) being familiar with the current curriculum reforms that promote higher-order thinking, character development, and student-centered pedagogy. Although the sample size is small, the focus of qualitative research is depth, not breadth. In the context, this study was framed within a locally-specific context of Manado, therefore, five teachers are considered sufficient because the goal is to obtain detailed narratives, uncover patterns, and achieve conceptual saturation (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018). Each participant represents a different perspective, shaped by variations in teaching backgrounds, school environments, and professional development experiences

Data Collection

Data collection relies on two main techniques: (1) semi-structured interviews, an (2) classroom observation field notes. Semi-structured interviews are used to explore teachers' understanding and readiness toward the implementation of deep learning's three core principles, mindful learning (reflective and critical thinking), meaningful learning (contextual, authentic, and value-driven tasks), and joyful learning (engaging, supportive, and emotionally positive environments). The interview format allows the researcher to prepare guiding questions while still giving flexibility for participants to elaborate on their thoughts, in this section, the interviewees were coded (T1-T5).

Each interview lasts approximately 45–60 minutes and covers topics such as: teachers' understanding of deep learning concepts, classroom practices related to student engagement and reflection, challenges in applying the three principles, and the support both institutional and pedagogical they require. Interviews are conducted in Indonesian to ensure clarity and comfort for participants, then transcribed and translated into English during analysis.

To complement interview data, classroom observations are conducted to capture teachers' actual practices and check alignment between claimed knowledge and real classroom behavior. The observation focuses on indicators of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning, such as, opportunities for students to reflect and think critically; integration of real-world contexts or values; and emotional climate, student engagement, and interaction patterns. Field notes are used rather than structured checklists, as recommended by Merriam and Tisdell, (2016), to allow more natural and flexible documentation of classroom events.

Data Analysis

Data are analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step framework: (1) the researchers read the data multiple times to understand its content; (2) key points were identified and coded; (3) similar codes were grouped into broader themes. (4) these themes were carefully examined and refined, (5) clearly defined and labeled, and (6) organized into a coherent final report. This method is chosen because it allows the researcher to identify patterns that reflect teachers' conceptual understanding, classroom practices, and levels of readiness for implementing deep learning approach. Ethical approval is obtained prior to data collection. Participants are informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time. All names of teachers and schools are anonymized to protect confidentiality. Data are securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

FINDINGS

Teachers' Understanding of DL Approach

The findings of this study are organized into three major themes that reflect Prof. Mu'ti's Deep Learning approach, which consists of the learning principles of mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning." These themes emerged through thematic analysis of interview transcripts and classroom observation field notes. In addition, the results show that teachers understand of the value of deep learning yet demonstrate varying levels of readiness due to conceptual gaps, instructional constraints, and institutional pressures. The following sections narrate these findings in a coherent and evidence-driven manner.

Mindful Learning

Across interviews, most teachers demonstrated a partial understanding of mindful learning, primarily associating it with "making students focused" or "paying attention in class." For example, one teacher (T2) stated

> *"Mindful learning is about keeping students concentrated and not distracted. If they listen, the learning becomes deeper."* (T2)

This view reflects a surface-level interpretation that focuses on discipline and attention rather than reflective and critical thinking. Observation data reinforced this gap. In two classrooms, the teacher began lessons by asking students to repeat textbook phrases without prompting reflection or encouraging alternative viewpoints. Field notes noted:

> *"Students followed instructions mechanically; no reflective questions or prompts for critical thinking were observed".*

This suggests that although teachers value attentiveness, they have not fully integrated reflective inquiries, self-assessment activities, or dialogic questioning core elements of Mindful Learning.

However, there were isolated moments that indicated potential readiness. For instance, T4 encouraged students to relate an English reading text to their personal experiences. When asked why he used this approach, he explained,

> *"I try to make them think about why the text matters to them maybe that helps them reflect."(T4)*

This indicates an intuitive awareness, even if the teacher does not explicitly identify it as mindful practice. Overall, the findings regarding teachers' knowledge and practice reveal a conceptual gap. Teachers recognize the importance of mental engagement but lack a deeper conceptualization of Mindful Learning as reflective, critical, and self-aware thinking. Their readiness is therefore moderate at best supported by willingness, but constrained by limited theoretical grounding.

Meaningful Learning

Meaningful learning as defined by Prof. Mu'ti involves contextual, value-based, and authentic activities connected to real-world purposes. Interviews suggest that teachers strongly support contextual learning. T1 stated

> *"Students learn better when the material relates to their life. They must feel the lesson is useful."(T1)*

> *"English is meaningful when students use it to express their identity or solve problems." (T5)*

Despite this positive intention, classroom observations revealed inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices. In three observed lessons, teachers relied heavily on textbook activities, grammar drills, and controlled exercises. The researcher's field notes wrote:

> *"Teacher-centered instruction dominated the lesson; students were rarely involved in tasks that connect with real-life situations".*

When asked about this mismatch during follow-up interviews, T3 admitted,

> *"We want to make learning meaningful, but the curriculum pressure and exam demand push us back to traditional methods".*

This indicates structural barriers that hinder the implementation of authentic tasks, such as project-based learning, problem-solving tasks, or community-linked activities. Nevertheless, there were noteworthy examples of meaningful integration. T4 used local cultural stories as reading materials and asked students to compare them with global narratives. T2 incorporated a mini-presentation where students described environmental issues in their hometown. These activities demonstrated attempts to connect learning with students' identities, values, and local contexts aligning with Prof Mu'ti's idea of meaningful learning. Thus, teachers show a strong positive orientation toward meaningful learning but lack systematic strategies and institutional support to consistently implement it. Their readiness is uneven: conceptually supportive but operationally constrained.

Joyful Learning

Joyful learning in deep learning emphasizes engagement, emotional safety, and supportive classroom interaction not merely "fun activities." When teachers discussed Joyful Learning, many associated it with "games," "fun activities," or "making students happy." For instance, T1 noted,

> *"If students enjoy the lesson, they will not get bored. That's joyful learning for me." (T1)*

In two sessions, teachers used games such as vocabulary races and guessing activities. Students appeared enthusiastic, and the classroom atmosphere was lively. Field notes indicated, "*Students showed high energy; they were laughing and interacting actively.*" These practices reflect teachers' ability to create positive emotional climates, which is an important foundation for Joyful Learning.

However, the deeper dimension of creating emotionally supportive environments where students feel valued, confident, and safe to express ideas was less evident. During a reading lesson, for example, the teacher corrected student errors abruptly, leading one student to remain silent for the rest of the session. When asked about emotional support, T3 responded,

> *"I try to encourage them, but sometimes we need to correct mistakes quickly so the lesson moves on." (T3)*

This shows a potential conflict between traditional teacher authority and the interpersonal warmth required in Joyful Learning. Additionally, teachers rarely linked joyful activities with cognitive engagement. Games were often inserted as fillers rather than as integral tools for learning. Joyfulness, therefore, was treated as episodic rather than embedded in the entire learning process. Finally, teachers demonstrate readiness to create enjoyable and supportive learning experiences, but their understanding remains superficial, focusing on entertainment rather than holistic emotional engagement and student empowerment. Their readiness for Joyful Learning is thus partial and requires substantial pedagogical enrichment.

Teachers' Readiness for Deep Learning Approach

Based on data from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations of five English teachers at the high school level, their readiness was seen as a mix of intrinsic potential and structural barriers. Overall, teachers show partial readiness: they have a positive orientation towards these concepts but are limited by superficial understanding, inconsistent practices, and external constraints such as curriculum and exam pressure. This analysis reveals that readiness is not a static state but rather a dynamic process that requires professional support and continuous reflection. Here is an in-depth evaluation based on the three main components of Deep Learning, with an emphasis on strengths, weaknesses, and practical implications.

First, readiness for mindful learning involving reflection, critical thinking, and self-awareness looks moderate but is hampered by surface interpretation. The majority of teachers associate mindful learning with focus and attention, as stated by T2:

> *"Mindful learning is about keeping students concentrated and not distracted. If they listen, the learning becomes deeper." (T2)*

It reflects a basic understanding of discipline, but fails to capture the deeper reflective essence, such as critical dialogue or self-assessment. Classroom observation reinforces this gap; in two sessions, teachers begin the lesson by asking students to repeat phrases from the textbook without encouraging alternative reflection. Field notes note:

> *"Students followed instructions mechanically; no reflective questions or prompts for critical thinking were observed".*

This shows that although teachers value mental engagement, they have not fully integrated core elements such as dialogical questions or self-assessment activities, which are the foundation of mindful learning according to Prof. Mu'Ti. However, there are potential moments, such as when T4 encourages students to relate reading texts to personal experiences, for the reasons:

> *"I try to make them think about why the text matters to them maybe that helps them reflect."(T4)*

This indicates intuitive awareness, but their readiness remains limited by a lack of theoretical grounding. Critically, this readiness reflects a common dilemma in EFL education, teachers are motivated ready, but poorly trained to transform surface understanding into deep reflective practice, which can hinder students' critical thinking development in the context of globalization.

Second, readiness for meaningful learning that emphasizes contextual, value-based, and authentic activities shows positive orientation but operational inconsistencies. Teachers strongly support real-life relevant learning, as expressed by

> *"Students learn better when the material relates to their life. They must feel the lesson is useful." (T1)*

Similarly, T5 states:

> "*English is meaningful when students use it to express their identity or solve problems.*"

It demonstrates a strong conceptual understanding of the connection between the subject matter and the student's context. However, classroom observations reveal inconsistencies between beliefs and practices; In three sessions, teachers rely on textbook exercises and teacher-centered grammar drills. Field notes noted,

> "*Teacher-centered instruction dominated the lesson; students were rarely involved in tasks that connect with real-life situations*".

When asked about this gap in a follow-up interview, T3 confesses:

> "*We want to make learning meaningful, but the curriculum pressure and exam demand push us back to traditional methods.*"

It highlights structural barriers, such as curriculum and exam pressures, that prevent the implementation of authentic tasks such as project-based learning or community-related activities. Nonetheless, positive examples emerge, such as T4 which uses local cultural stories as reading material and compares them to global narratives, or T2 which integrates mini-presentations on environmental issues in students' hometowns. This practice is in line with Prof. Mu'Ti's idea of meaningful learning, which emphasizes connection with students' identities and values. Critically, this readiness is uneven, where conceptually supportive, but operational constraints are limited by institutional constraints. This implies the need for more flexible curriculum reforms, so that teachers can transition goodwill into consistent practice, so that EFL students can develop authentic and value-based language skills.

Third, readiness for joyful learning involving emotional engagement, psychological safety, and supportive interactions appears partial, with a focus on entertainment rather than holistic engagement. Many teachers associate joyful learning with games or fun activities, as T1 puts it:

> "*If students enjoy the lesson, they will not get bored. That's joyful learning for me.*" *(T1)*

In two observation sessions, teachers used games such as vocabulary and guessing competitions, which created a lively atmosphere; field notes indicate that, "students showed high energy; they were laughing and interacting actively." It demonstrates the basic ability to build a positive emotional climate, which is the foundation of joyful learning. However, deeper dimensions such as a supportive environment where students feel valued, confident, and safe to argue are less visible. For example, in one reading lesson, the teacher corrected a student's mistake suddenly, causing one student to be silent throughout the session. T3 explains:

> "*I try to encourage them, but sometimes we need to correct mistakes quickly so the lesson moves on.*"

It reveals the conflict between the teacher's traditional authority and the necessary interpersonal warmth. Additionally, games are often used as time fillers, rather than as integral tools for cognitive engagement, so that joy becomes episodic rather than embedded in the learning process. Critically, this readiness reflects a surface understanding that emphasizes entertainment, not emotional empowerment of students. This has the potential to reinforce the stereotype that language learning should be superficially fun, but fails to build students' emotional resilience, which is important in EFL contexts where students often face language anxiety. From the findings, EFL teachers' readiness for deep learning was partial and uneven, with the greatest strength in the conceptual orientation of meaningful learning, but significant weakness in the practical integration of mindful and joyful learning.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that English teachers at the high school level show partial understanding and uneven readiness for the deep learning approach according to Prof. Mu'Ti, which emphasizes mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). Overall, teachers have a positive orientation towards these concepts, but are limited by superficial interpretations, inconsistent practices, and structural barriers such as curriculum pressures. This discussion then examined these findings in depth by linking them to previous literature, evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, and highlighting the theoretical and practical implications for EFL education.

First, teachers' understanding of mindful learning is seen as a mixture of basic awareness and conceptual gaps. Teachers often associate mindful learning with focus and attention, as reflected in T2's statement, "mindful learning is about keeping students concentrated and not distracted". This is in line with the study of Andayanie et al. (2025), which found that EFL teachers tend to understand innovation theoretically but lack in practical application. However, these findings point to a deeper gap, where critical reflection and self-assessment the core elements of mindful learning are rarely integrated, as observed in classroom observations in which students follow instructions mechanically without reflective questions. This confirms Kirschner et al. (2006) critique of constructivist approaches that often do not reach depth, as teachers are poorly trained to encourage critical dialogue. Critically, this partial understanding can hinder students' critical thinking development, which is important in the context of global EFL where students need to think reflexively to deal with cultural and linguistic challenges.

Second, readiness for meaningful learning shows a strong conceptual orientation but operational inconsistencies. Teachers support learning that is relevant to real life, as T1 states, "Students learn better when the material relates to their life". This supports trends in the literature, such as the research of Mubarok et al. (2024) and Ramadana et al. (2025), which emphasize the shift from behaviorism to constructivism, where meaningful learning is key to student engagement. However, observations reveal a mismatch between belief and practice, with the dominance of traditional methods such as grammar drills, as T3 acknowledges, "Curriculum pressure and exam demand push us back to traditional

methods." These findings are in line with the study of Alim et al. (2025) and Jiang (2022), which highlights variations in understanding based on experience, but adds structural dimensions that are rarely explored, such as curriculum barriers. Critically, these inconsistencies suggest that readiness is not just an individual, but a systemic one, which can reinforce the gap between theory and practice in EFL education in developing countries.

Third, understanding and readiness for joyful learning looks superficial, with a focus on entertainment rather than deep emotional engagement. Teachers associate joyful learning with play, as T1 says: "If students enjoy the lesson, they will not get bored". It reflects the power in creating a positive climate, but fails to capture aspects of psychological safety and student empowerment, as observed in sudden error corrections. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) study of flow and joyful learning supports this finding, emphasizing that joy should be embedded in the process, not episodic. However, these findings criticize a superficial approach, which is in line with criticism of the fun learning model in the EFL literature, as discussed by Maknun and Niswar (2025); Silvania et al. (2025); Tatipang et al. (2025), where readiness variations are influenced by training that takes less into account the cultural context. In depth, this implies the risk of amplifying students' anxiety if joyful learning is not balanced with emotional support.

These findings expand the literature by showing that EFL teachers' readiness for deep learning is a dynamic process, influenced by individual and structural factors. The strength of this study lies in the triangulation of interview and observation data, which increases the validity, in line with Nafi'ah and Faruq (2025) recommendation for a stage-based evaluation of readiness. However, weaknesses include a small sample size (5 teachers), which limits generalization, and a focus on the context of Indonesian high schools, which may not represent regional variations. A major contribution is to fill in the gaps in EFL's research on deep learning, by emphasizing the need for the integration of theory and practice. Practical implications include recommendations for intensive professional training, such as workshops based on Prof. Mu'Ti's concept, and more flexible curriculum reforms to support consistent implementation. Theoretically, these findings support the argument of Armenakis et al. (1993) that readiness requires multidimensional support, including psychological and structural. Thus, this study contributes to the EFL educational discourse by suggesting that increased teacher readiness can encourage more meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning, which ultimately improves the effectiveness of English teaching in secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that teachers exhibit an incomplete understanding and varying levels of readiness for deep learning principles. Although they generally recognize their importance, classroom practices show limited application due to superficial interpretations, inconsistent implementation, and external barriers like curriculum pressures and exam-focused teaching. Mindful learning is often reduced to sustaining student attention, overlooking critical awareness and reflection. Meaningful learning is conceptually acknowledged but rarely operationalized through authentic, context-relevant tasks. Likewise, joyful learning is

equated with fun activities, with minimal focus on emotional engagement and intrinsic motivation. Overall, teacher readiness is moderate, marked by positive attitudes yet hindered by shallow theoretical grasp and inadequate institutional support. This study enriches the Indonesian EFL landscape by filling research gaps via data triangulation from interviews and classroom observations, yielding a fuller view of teacher readiness. Theoretically, it reinforces that deep learning demands integration of cognitive, affective, and social dimensions. Practically, it underscores the urgency of systemic reforms to bolster English language teaching efficacy. Recommendations include intensive professional development aligned with Prof. Mu'ti's framework, curriculum overhaul to ease exam burdens and embrace authentic assessment, and expanded studies with larger samples for enhanced generalizability.

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