

Enhancing Teacher Competence in English Language Teaching Using the Deep Learning Approach

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ABSTRAK

Kompetensi guru sangat penting untuk pembelajaran yang efektif, terutama dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris. Menanggapi tuntutan pendidikan abad ke-21, pendekatan pembelajaran mendalam telah muncul sebagai strategi untuk meningkatkan kualitas pengajaran dengan mempertimbangkan pemahaman konseptual, pemikiran kritis, refleksi, dan penerapan di dunia nyata. Dalam dunia pendidikan, pembelajaran mendalam mendorong pengalaman belajar yang bermakna, penuh perhatian, dan menyenangkan—elemen-elemen yang vital bagi keterlibatan siswa dan pengembangan guru. Studi ini menggunakan tinjauan pustaka untuk mengkaji hubungan antara pembelajaran mendalam dan peningkatan kompetensi guru dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris. Analisis sumber-sumber ilmiah menunjukkan bahwa implementasi yang efektif menuntut guru untuk kreatif dalam merencanakan pembelajaran, meningkatkan keterampilan pedagogis, dan memperkuat profesionalisme. Selain itu, pendekatan ini mendukung pengajaran reflektif dan keterampilan berpikir tingkat tinggi yang penting untuk pengajaran bahasa. Secara keseluruhan, pembelajaran mendalam tidak hanya meningkatkan hasil belajar siswa tetapi juga berkontribusi signifikan terhadap pengembangan kompetensi guru yang komprehensif.

Kata Kunci: Kompetensi Guru, Pendekatan Pembelajaran Mendalam, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris (ELT).

ABSTRACT

Teacher competence is crucial for effective learning, particularly in English language teaching. In response to 21st-century educational demands, the deep learning approach has emerged as a strategy to improve teaching quality by emphasizing conceptual understanding, critical thinking, reflection, and real-world application. Within the educational sphere, deep learning fosters meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning experiences—elements that are vital for both student engagement and teacher development. This study employs a literature review to examine the relationship between deep learning and teacher competence improvement in English instruction. Analysis of scholarly sources shows that effective implementation requires teachers to be creative in lesson planning, enhance pedagogical skills, and strengthen professionalism. Additionally, this approach supports reflective teaching and higher-order thinking skills essential for language instruction. Overall, deep learning not only enhances student outcomes but also significantly contributes to developing comprehensive teacher competence.

Keywords: Teacher Competence, Deep Learning Approach, English Language Teaching (ELT).

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INTRODUCTION

English language teaching in Indonesia still faces various challenges, one of which is the suboptimal competence of teachers in applying effective and innovative teaching methods (Musthafa, 2010). Teacher competence, encompassing pedagogical, professional, and social aspects, is crucial for fostering meaningful learning processes that positively impact student learning outcomes (Cirocki & Puji, 2019). Therefore, efforts to improve teacher competence have become a key priority in addressing the demands of 21st-century education (Marisa, 2024)(Rachmajanti & Anugerahwati, 2019).

One approach that has gained increasing attention in this context is the deep learning approach, which offers promising strategies not only for enhancing student learning outcomes but also for strengthening teacher competence through more reflective, creative, and student-centered teaching practices. By the end of 2024, deep learning had become a prominent topic in the education sector and was proposed as a strategy to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. This approach emphasizes learning through critical analysis, the integration of new information with existing knowledge, and the application of knowledge to real-life situations. The application of deep learning in primary and secondary education is expected to have a positive impact on student outcomes. Research by Jiang (2022) found that students who were deeply engaged in learning demonstrated greater understanding, higher motivation, and improved ability to apply knowledge. Moreover, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in deep learning environments can enhance both access to education and its overall effectiveness. The main rationale for implementing deep learning, centered on developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills is better to prepare students for the challenges of the modern world.

In the context of English language education, strengthening teacher competencies through a deep learning approach can help teachers create a learning environment that is meaningful, mindful, and enjoyable. This aligns with the three foundational pillars of deep learning: meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning, which together promote effective and impactful teaching and learning processes (Puskurjar, 2025). Deep learning, as a pedagogical approach, emphasizes in-depth understanding and the development of critical thinking skills, in contrast to traditional methods that rely heavily on rote memorization. According to Puskurjar (2025), this approach is supported by three key components: (1) Meaningful Learning – where students connect new knowledge with prior experiences or existing knowledge, making it easier to understand and retain; (2) Mindful Learning – which engages students actively in the learning process, making them aware of learning objectives and encouraging reflection; and (3) Joyful Learning – which fosters a positive and supportive learning atmosphere, motivating students to explore and participate actively.

This literature review critically examines the relationship between the deep learning approach and teacher competence in English Language Teaching (ELT), with particular attention to the following key questions: (1) How does the deep learning approach contribute to the development of pedagogical, professional, and social competencies among English teachers?; (2) What are the challenges and opportunities in implementing deep learning strategies for teacher training in Indonesia?; (3) How can policymakers and educators integrate deep learning principles into ELT professional development programs?

Despite growing interest in deep learning within educational discourse, limited research has specifically explored its impact on enhancing teacher competence in English Language Teaching (ELT),

particularly in the Indonesian context. This literature review aims to fill that gap by offering both theoretical and practical contributions toward developing a more reflective, contextual, and transformative pedagogy. Furthermore, it seeks to initiate a broader discussion on how deep learning principles can enrich the language learning process, while inspiring educators and policymakers to align ELT practices with the competencies required for 21st-century education.

METHOD

This study employed a literature review approach to analyze the relationship between deep learning approaches and the improvement of teacher competence in English language teaching (ELT). A literature review was selected as the methodological framework because it enables the collection, critical examination, and synthesis of previous research findings and relevant theoretical works to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic (Snyder, 2019).

The data collection process involved identifying relevant sources, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, and policy documents related to deep learning, teacher competence, and professional development within the context of ELT. Literature searches were conducted through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and institutional digital libraries, using keywords such as “deep learning approaches,” “teacher competence,” “English language teaching,” “teacher professional development,” and related terms.

Once the literature was gathered, a selection and critical evaluation process was carried out, following an adapted PRISMA protocol (Page et al., 2021) to ensure rigor and relevance. The evaluation focused on methodological credibility alignment with the framework of ELT teacher competence (Richards, 2017), and evidence of the pedagogical impact of deep learning in educational settings. Thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2006) was conducted in six structured phases to identify recurring themes and insights.

The analysis highlighted several key areas: the application of deep learning principles in language pedagogy; empirical evidence of its influence on teacher competence development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020); and challenges in implementation across educational contexts. Additionally, the review revealed how deep learning supports the integration of pedagogical and social competencies in teacher development (Johnson & Golombek, 2020), particularly through reflective teaching practices (Farrell, 2024). These findings form a robust theoretical and practical foundation for understanding and enhancing English language teacher competence in the context of 21st-century education.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Teacher Competence in English Language Teaching

The concept of teacher competence in English Language teaching (ELT) has undergone significant development in recent decades. According to Richards (2017), this competence no longer encompasses just language proficiency but has evolved into a multidimensional construct that includes knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes. Shulman (1987) introduced a foundational framework dividing teacher competence into three main domains: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge. In the context of English teaching, this framework has been further expanded to include socio-cultural dimensions, which have become increasingly crucial in today's globalized era. This aligns with the perspective of Trilling and Fadel (2009), who emphasize the importance of integrating 21st-century skills into the framework of modern English teacher competence.

Building on this evolving conceptualization, professional organizations have also outlined comprehensive components of English teacher competence. TESOL International Association (2019), for example, identifies five key elements: language mastery, linguistic knowledge, pedagogical skills, cultural understanding, and professionalism. Celce-Murcia (2001) further highlights the importance of mastering diverse teaching methodologies, ranging from communicative to task-based approaches. Meanwhile, Byram's (2002) intercultural competence framework has gained increasing relevance in multicultural language learning contexts. Recent research by Nurhastuti and Basikin (2022) reinforces this view, demonstrating that integrating cultural competence significantly enhances student engagement and cross-cultural understanding in EFL classrooms. As a result, modern English teachers are expected to function not only as language instructors but also as cultural mediators (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

While these global frameworks offer a clear vision of what English teacher competence entails, their implementation in the Indonesian context presents significant challenges. Lie (2017), for example, highlights systemic obstacles faced by English teachers across the country. Data from UNESCO (2019) reveals that approximately 40% of English teachers in remote areas do not meet the minimum national competency standards. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education (Kemdikbud, 2020) reports a substantial quality gap of up to 30% between teachers in Java and those in other regions. According to the World Bank (2020), major contributing factors include limited access to high-quality training programs, excessive teaching workloads, and inadequate support for continuous professional development. Moreover, as Bjork (2013) notes, frequent curriculum changes in Indonesia are often not accompanied by sufficient training, particularly in developing the socio-cultural aspects of teaching competence that are essential for effective English language instruction.

In response, contemporary competency development strategies have emerged. Darling-Hammond's (2012) model emphasizes reflective practice within professional learning communities, while evidence-based approaches, such as lesson study and tiered mentoring programs, have demonstrated

effectiveness (Hockly, 2018). The OECD (2018) advocates for integrated, classroom-needs-driven development systems. Indonesia's recent initiatives, including the *Guru Penggerak* program and *Merdeka Mengajar* platform (Kemdikbud, 2022), represent promising efforts toward comprehensive teacher upskilling.

Moving forward, ELT teacher development requires more holistic and adaptive approaches. Schleicher (2018) underscores the imperative of preparing educators for digital-age challenges, while Fullan (2007) advocates for cultivating lifelong learning cultures among teaching professionals. The strategic integration of blended learning and AI tools is becoming indispensable (Selwyn, 2019), though Johnson (2009) cautions against technological determinism, emphasizing teachers' central pedagogical role. As Guskey (2002) suggests, future competency frameworks must strike a balance between global standards and local contextualization, incorporating personalized learning approaches that address the diverse needs of learners.

In conclusion, teacher competency in ELT is a dynamic and multidimensional construct, shaped by global standards and local realities. Ensuring its effective implementation requires not only systemic support and adaptive strategies but also a sustained commitment to reflective and contextual professional development.

The Relationship between Deep Learning and ELT Teacher Competence

Deep Learning, developed by PUSKURJAR, offers a mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning approach that aligns with the demands of modern pedagogy in English language teaching (ELT). This approach, as explained in Puskurjar (2025) and reinforced by Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, positions ELT teachers not merely as transmitters of material but as facilitators who create spaces for language exploration relevant to students' lives. Its implementation has proven highly effective in improving teaching quality, where its three main pillars: Meaningful Learning, Mindful Learning, and Joyful Learning. Meaningful Learning is realized by encouraging teachers to connect new knowledge with students' existing knowledge, resulting in a deeper understanding. Mindful Learning is reflected in how students are encouraged to be more active in the learning process with full awareness of learning objectives, while Joyful Learning creates a fun learning environment that increases student motivation and engagement. Research by Mystakidis (2021) shows that this approach not only significantly improves students' motivation and linguistic retention but also develops higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), such as critical thinking and problem-solving, which are crucial in the 21st century.

One critical aspect of implementing Deep Learning is the development of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) through language instruction. Puskurjar (2025) emphasizes the importance of activities such as text analysis, reflective discussions, and problem-based assignments in language learning, requiring teachers to master strategies for designing tasks that are both challenging and appropriate to student characteristics. Findings by Othman and Shah (2013) show that implementing problem-based

tasks can increase students' fluency and critical thinking skills by up to 40%. In practice, this approach requires teachers to develop competencies in designing authentic learning experiences, where English is used in real and meaningful contexts, while simultaneously creating a learning environment that supports creative exploration. The application of the three pillars of Deep Learning in HOTS activities offers dual benefits: improving the quality of learning and enriching students' learning experiences.

The reflection phase of Deep Learning plays a crucial role in developing ELT teachers' formative assessment competencies. Through techniques such as learning journals and self-assessment rubrics, which are part of Mindful Learning, teachers can help students develop metacognitive awareness and learning independence. Puskurjar (2025), in its formative assessment guide, emphasized that reflection is not merely a closing stage of learning but a key process for the holistic development of students' language competencies and character. In this context, teachers are required to develop skills in providing constructive feedback and guiding students through the self-evaluation process, which is an integral part of deep and meaningful learning.

Overall, the integration of Deep Learning and ELT teacher competency development creates a transformative synergy in English language education. Murray's research on Indigenous pedagogies in EFL contexts demonstrates how culturally responsive teaching frameworks enhance teachers' ability to address diversity, showing that structured intercultural activities improve both language acquisition and cross-cultural understanding by 37% compared to traditional methods. This aligns with PUSKURJAR's vision within *Merdeka Belajar* program, which emphasizes a holistic educational approach. Thus, Deep Learning not only enriches ELT teachers' pedagogical competencies in terms of mastering innovative teaching methods and classroom management but also paves the way for creating English learning experiences that are not only functional but also shape students' character and critical thinking. The comprehensive application of this approach addresses the challenges of 21st-century learning while strengthening the role of teachers as agents of change in education.

Challenges and Opportunities for Implementing Deep Learning

The implementation of the Deep Learning approach in education faces conceptual challenges from educators. A study by Fullan & Langworthy (2014) revealed that 60% of teachers struggle to distinguish between Deep Learning and traditional active learning. This is often due to a limited understanding of its three main pillars: meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning. However, opportunities arise when teachers begin to recognize that this approach aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy of "education that guides" (Puskurjar, 2025).

Another practical challenge is the high administrative burden on teachers. Research by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2025) indicates that 72% of teachers struggle to design deep learning experiences due to the burden of non-teaching tasks. However, the Guru Penggerak

program has demonstrated that with proper training, teachers can develop learning tools that integrate this approach without increasing their workload (Puskurjar, 2025)

The greatest opportunity lies in the alignment of Deep Learning with 21st-century needs. Recent research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2023) has shown that an experiential learning approach improves students' problem-solving skills by 38% and collaboration by 42%. These findings are reinforced by a 2023 World Bank report on education in Southeast Asia, which states that education systems that adopt deep learning principles show a 1.5-fold increase in 21st-century skills compared to traditional methods.

As a transformative approach, Deep Learning paves the way for English language education that not only develops communicative competence but also shapes character and 21st-century skills. Consistent and comprehensive implementation will ensure this approach has maximum impact on both students and the national education ecosystem.

CONCLUSIONS

The application of the Deep Learning approach to developing English teacher competencies has been proven to significantly contribute to improving the quality of learning and the professionalism of educators in the 21st century. Based on a literature review, this approach can encourage teachers to be more reflective, creative, and skilled in designing meaningful, conscious, and enjoyable learning experiences. This approach not only strengthens teachers' pedagogical and professional competencies but also creates a learning space that facilitates the development of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in students. Although challenges remain, such as administrative burdens and a lack of in-depth conceptual understanding, various opportunities, such as *Guru Penggerak* program and support for the *Merdeka Belajar* policy, demonstrate that the integration of Deep Learning in English education has great potential for broader development. With consistent implementation and systemic support, this approach can be a transformative strategy in shaping teachers as agents of change and creating an educational ecosystem that is adaptive to global demands.

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