

Fostering Higher-Order Thinking Skills through Deep Learning in EFL Classrooms: A Teacher's Perspective

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Abstract

The cultivation of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) has emerged as a fundamental priority in modern education, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Educational discourse increasingly emphasizes the need for learners to develop analytical, evaluative, and creative capacities that extend beyond the acquisition of linguistic knowledge. Within this framework, deep learning, conceptualized as a pedagogical approach that prioritizes meaningful understanding, inquiry, and active knowledge construction, is widely regarded as an effective pathway for enhancing cognitive engagement. Despite its theoretical appeal, empirical examinations of how deep learning facilitates HOTS in real classroom environments remain relatively scarce, especially when viewed through the lens of teachers' experiences. This study adopted a qualitative descriptive methodology to investigate the enactment of deep learning practices in an EFL classroom at SMA Negeri 7 Denpasar. Data were obtained through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with an English teacher, and analysis of instructional documents. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret recurring instructional patterns and cognitive processes. The findings reveal that deep learning strategies, including student-centered activities, inquiry-based questioning, collaborative interaction, and contextualized tasks, were associated with the development of HOTS. These results underscore deep learning's potential to foster cognitively rich and reflective language learning experiences

Keywords

Deep learning, EFL Classroom, Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)



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INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of education in the twenty-first century has fundamentally reshaped expectations regarding the competencies that learners must develop to succeed in increasingly complex and knowledge-driven societies (Riyanti, 2025). Across global educational discourse, higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), including analysis, evaluation, creativity, and problem-solving, are now widely regarded as essential learning outcomes (Kusumastuti et al., 2019). Contemporary educational frameworks consistently emphasize that students must

progress beyond memorization and procedural knowledge toward deeper conceptual understanding and adaptive reasoning. Despite these aspirations, significant challenges persist across educational systems worldwide (Pahrudin et al., 2025). Many classrooms continue to rely on traditional instructional practices that emphasize content transmission rather than meaningful cognitive engagement. This discrepancy is particularly evident in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where language instruction often prioritizes grammatical accuracy and vocabulary acquisition over critical thinking and reflective learning. Consequently, learners may demonstrate proficiency in linguistic forms while struggling with complex cognitive tasks such as interpretation, argumentation, and knowledge transfer (Fidyanti, 2025).

Regarding students' limited higher-order thinking abilities have intensified alongside the expansion of digital technologies and information-rich environments. The proliferation of accessible knowledge resources has amplified the need for learners capable of critical evaluation, synthesis, and problem-solving (Triana et al., 2025). However, research by (Akbar et al., 2025) indicates that many students remain positioned as passive recipients of information rather than active constructors of understanding. Scholars have attributed this phenomenon to systemic constraints, including standardized assessment pressures, rigid curricular structures, and pedagogical traditions that inadvertently reinforce surface-level learning. In language education specifically, instructional approaches frequently emphasize examination preparation and mechanical practice, which may hinder opportunities for deeper cognitive development. These global trends underscore the importance of pedagogical paradigms that promote meaningful learning experiences, metacognitive engagement, and conceptual understanding.

Within the Indonesian educational landscape similar concerns have emerged regarding the development of students' higher-order thinking competencies. National educational reforms, particularly through the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, explicitly advocate learner-centered instruction, differentiated learning, and the cultivation of critical and creative thinking (Fidyanti, 2025). The curriculum envisions classrooms characterized by active inquiry, reflective engagement, and meaningful knowledge construction. English language education under this framework is expected to foster communicative competence alongside analytical reasoning and critical literacy (Devi Nurhastuti & Ape Segenil, 2025). Nevertheless, the empirical condition, often reveals enduring challenges. Classroom practices may still be dominated by teacher-centered instruction, textbook dependency, and assessment-oriented routines. Such patterns may limit students' opportunities to engage in cognitively demanding learning processes, thereby constraining the development of HOTS.

These broader dynamics are also observable in specific school contexts in SMA Negeri 7 Denpasar. aligned with curricular mandates and contemporary pedagogical principles, EFL classrooms should function as spaces where students actively construct knowledge, critically engage with language, and develop reflective thinking capacities. Teachers are expected to design learning experiences that promote inquiry, collaboration, and conceptual understanding. However, preliminary observations and informal academic reflections suggest that instructional practices may not always fully realize these expectations. Students may exhibit adequate

performance in structured language exercises yet demonstrate difficulties when confronted with analytical, evaluative, or problem-solving tasks. Instructional constraints, including time limitations, examination demands, and varying learner readiness, may influence pedagogical decisions. These conditions highlight the need to examine how deep learning principles are interpreted and enacted within authentic classroom environments, particularly from the teacher's perspective.

The concept of deep learning has gained increasing attention as a pedagogical orientation capable of addressing these educational challenges. Deep learning emphasizes meaningful understanding, knowledge transfer, metacognitive awareness, and sustained cognitive engagement (Pramudya et al., 2025). Unlike surface learning approaches, which focus on memorization and procedural repetition, deep learning encourages learners to connect ideas, question assumptions, and apply knowledge in novel contexts (Nadia et al., 2025). Within EFL education, deep learning holds particular promise for integrating language acquisition with higher-order cognitive development. By engaging students in authentic communicative tasks, reflective inquiry, and collaborative problem-solving, deep learning approaches may foster both linguistic competence and critical thinking capacities (Purwati et al., 2024). However, the successful implementation of such approaches depends significantly on teachers' beliefs, instructional strategies, and contextual adaptations.

Previous studies have explored various dimensions of deep learning within English language education. Indahtriyani (2025) in the study titled *Deep Learning Curriculum in English Language Teaching: A Case Study*, reported that deep learning-oriented instruction enhanced students' conceptual understanding and engagement in language learning. (Agustiany & Koswara, 2026) through their research *Integrating Deep Learning into English Teaching*, found that deep learning strategies contributed to improvements in students' analytical skills and classroom participation. (Benu et al., 2025), in *Implementing Deep Learning in the EFL Classroom*, highlighted that meaningful, mindful and joyful learning environments supported deeper cognitive processing. Telaumbanua et al. (2026) investigating deep learning within elementary English instruction, observed positive effects on students' motivation and comprehension. Sri Utami, examining deep learning integration in reading instruction, demonstrated that cognitively engaging tasks facilitated higher-level interpretative abilities. Collectively, these studies affirm the potential benefits of deep learning for language education.

Many existing studies emphasize student outcomes, instructional models, or technological integration, while comparatively limited attention has been directed toward teachers' lived experiences, pedagogical reasoning, and interpretative perspectives. The teacher's perspective is particularly critical, as pedagogical innovations are ultimately enacted through teachers' decisions, beliefs, and contextual negotiations. Furthermore, empirical investigations within specific secondary school contexts, particularly in Bali, remain scarce. This gap indicates the need for research that foregrounds teachers' voices and examines how deep learning principles are understood, implemented, and experienced in authentic EFL classrooms.

The present study seeks to explore how deep learning practices contribute to fostering higher-order thinking skills in EFL classrooms, viewed through a teacher's perspective. Specifically, the study aims to examine teachers' instructional strategies, perceptions, and reflections regarding the integration of deep learning principles within English language teaching. By investigating classroom practices in SMA Negeri 7 Denpasar, this research aspires to generate contextually grounded insights into pedagogical processes that support HOTS development. Ultimately, the study intends to contribute to theoretical discourse, pedagogical practice, and curriculum implementation by elucidating the role of deep learning in contemporary EFL education.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how deep learning practices foster Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in EFL classrooms from a teacher's perspective. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, interpretations, and instructional practices within their natural classroom context. The study was conducted at SMA Negeri 7 Denpasar, focusing on English language instruction at the secondary school level.

The participant of this study was one English teacher who actively implements instructional strategies aligned with deep learning principles. The participant was selected through purposive sampling based on teaching experience, familiarity with the Kurikulum Merdeka, and willingness to reflect on classroom practices. The teacher served as the primary source of data, as the research aimed to capture pedagogical reasoning, instructional decisions, and reflective insights related to fostering HOTS.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted to examine how deep learning principles were enacted in real instructional settings, particularly in activities promoting analysis, evaluation, creativity, and problem-solving (Nurrisa & Hermina, 2025). Semi-structured interviews were carried out to explore the teacher's perceptions, beliefs, challenges, and strategies in integrating deep learning into EFL instruction (Poltak & Widjaja, 2024). Document analysis included lesson plans, teaching materials, and assessment instruments to identify alignment between planned instruction and classroom implementation.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The process involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Transcribed interviews and observation notes were coded to identify recurring themes related to deep learning practices and the development of HOTS. Triangulation of data sources was employed to enhance credibility and ensure the trustworthiness of findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This study explored how deep learning practices foster Higher-Order Thinking Skills

(HOTS) in EFL classrooms from a teacher’s perspective at SMA Negeri 7 Denpasar. The findings are derived from triangulated data sources consisting of classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The results demonstrate that deep learning principles were reflected not only in observable instructional practices but also in the teacher’s pedagogical reasoning, beliefs, and reflective interpretations. To present the findings coherently, the discussion is structured into three major themes: (1) deep learning-oriented instructional practices, (2) the development of higher-order thinking skills, and (3) challenges and pedagogical adaptations. Each theme integrates observational and interview evidence to provide a comprehensive account of classroom realities.

Table 1. Deep Learning-Oriented Instructional Practices

| Data Source | Key Findings | Representative Evidence |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Classroom Observation | Student-centered tasks emphasizing inquiry, interpretation, and collaboration | Students analyzed texts, discussed meanings, and generated responses |
| Classroom Observation | Teacher functioned primarily as facilitator and cognitive guide | Teacher prompted reflection rather than providing direct answers |
| Interview | Teacher intentionally designed tasks requiring reasoning and contextual understanding | “Students need opportunities to think beyond grammar accuracy.” |
| Interview | Deep learning perceived as fostering meaningful engagement | “Learning becomes more active and reflective when students construct ideas.” |
| Document Analysis | Lesson plans incorporated analytical and discussion-based activities | Objectives emphasized interpretation and critical response |

The convergence of observation and interview data reveals that deep learning principles informed both instructional design and pedagogical intentions. Observational data indicate that classroom activities consistently prioritized student-centered engagement. Tasks frequently required learners to analyze texts, interpret meanings, and negotiate understanding through collaborative discussion. Rather than treating language learning as the passive absorption of rules, instructional activities positioned students as active participants responsible for constructing meaning. These patterns were particularly evident in group-based exercises where learners debated interpretations and justified responses.

Interview data reinforce this interpretation by revealing the teacher’s deliberate pedagogical orientation. The teacher emphasized that deep learning requires instructional tasks capable of stimulating reasoning and reflection. The participant explicitly rejected purely mechanical exercises, arguing that language instruction should cultivate cognitive engagement alongside linguistic competence. This perspective is reflected in the teacher’s statement that students must be encouraged to think beyond grammatical accuracy. Such remarks indicate a pedagogical philosophy aligned with constructivist principles, where understanding emerges through active inquiry.

The teacher's facilitative role further illustrates the operationalization of deep learning. Observations show that instructional interaction patterns minimized extended lecturing. Instead, the teacher employed prompts, probing questions, and scaffolding techniques to guide student thinking. Interview responses clarify that this facilitative stance was intentional rather than incidental. The teacher articulated a belief that knowledge construction is more effective when learners are guided to discover relationships independently. This alignment between observed behavior and stated belief strengthens the credibility of findings.

Document analysis provides additional corroboration. Lesson plans consistently articulated objectives related to interpretation, discussion, and contextual application. Analytical activities were not isolated occurrences but integrated into instructional planning. The coherence between planned instruction and enacted practice indicates that deep learning was embedded systematically within pedagogical processes. Collectively, these findings suggest that deep learning practices were enacted through intentional design, facilitative teaching strategies, and inquiry-oriented learning structures.

Table 2. Manifestations of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

| HOTS Dimension | Observational Evidence | Interview Insights |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Analysis | Students identified implicit meanings and inferred themes | Teacher observed improvement in interpretive abilities |
| Evaluation | Students compared ideas and justified arguments | "Students gradually learn to defend their reasoning." |
| Creativity | Students produced original responses and reformulated ideas | Teacher associated creativity with confidence development |
| Problem-Solving | Students collaboratively resolved comprehension difficulties | "Peer discussion helps students clarify understanding." |
| Reflection | Students articulated learning challenges and strategies | Teacher emphasized importance of metacognitive awareness |

Evidence from classroom observations indicates that deep learning practices contributed to the emergence of higher-order cognitive behaviors. Analytical thinking was visible when students engaged with reading materials requiring interpretation beyond literal comprehension. Learners demonstrated the capacity to infer themes, recognize implicit messages, and analyze relationships within texts. These analytical processes signify cognitive engagement extending into higher-order domains, consistent with HOTS frameworks.

Interview data provide critical contextualization for these observations. The teacher reported perceivable shifts in students' interpretive abilities over time. According to the participant, learners initially exhibited hesitation when confronted with analytical tasks but gradually developed greater confidence. The teacher's reflections highlight that HOTS development is iterative rather than instantaneous. Analytical competence was described as evolving through repeated exposure to cognitively demanding activities.

Evaluative thinking emerged through argumentative and comparative exercises.

Students assessed alternative viewpoints, debated interpretations, and justified conclusions. Observationally, evaluation manifested as reasoned judgment rather than superficial opinion. The teacher’s interview responses affirm this pattern, noting that students progressively acquired the ability to defend reasoning using evidence. This progression illustrates the pedagogical value of sustained inquiry-oriented interaction.

Creativity was reflected in students’ capacity to generate original responses and adapt linguistic resources flexibly. Creative engagement extended beyond lexical variation, encompassing the reformulation of ideas and exploration of alternative expressions. The teacher associated this creativity with increased learner confidence, suggesting that deep learning environments may foster psychological as well as cognitive growth.

Problem-solving behaviors were particularly prominent during collaborative tasks. Students negotiated meaning, resolved ambiguities, and clarified misunderstandings collectively. The teacher attributed these developments to peer interaction, emphasizing that collaborative reasoning facilitated conceptual understanding. Reflection constituted another significant dimension. Learners articulated difficulties, evaluated comprehension, and described strategies for improvement. The teacher underscored that reflection enhances metacognitive awareness, reinforcing deep learning objectives.

Table 3. Challenges and Pedagogical Adaptations

| Identified Challenge | Observational Indicators | Teacher’s Adaptive Response |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Student Readiness | Varied participation and cognitive engagement levels | Differentiated scaffolding and guidance |
| Time Constraints | Limited duration for extended discussion | Selective prioritization of deep tasks |
| Assessment Practices | Conventional tests insufficient for HOTS measurement | Use of performance-based assessment |
| Classroom Dynamics | Uneven engagement during complex tasks | Structured collaborative learning |
| Cognitive Adjustment | Initial student difficulty with analytical thinking | Gradual modeling and guided inquiry |

Despite the positive outcomes associated with deep learning, the findings reveal several implementation challenges. Observations indicate variability in student readiness, particularly regarding participation and cognitive engagement. Some learners readily embraced analytical activities, whereas others required substantial scaffolding. Interview data clarify that such variability necessitated differentiated instructional support. The teacher emphasized the need for adaptive guidance tailored to learners’ cognitive and linguistic capacities.

Time constraints represented another significant challenge. Deep learning activities inherently require sustained discussion, reflection, and inquiry, which may conflict with curricular pacing demands. The teacher described tensions between depth-oriented

instruction and syllabus coverage. To address this limitation, selective prioritization of cognitively impactful tasks was implemented. This strategy reflects pragmatic decision-making within instructional constraints.

Assessment practices posed additional difficulties. Conventional evaluation formats frequently prioritize factual recall and discrete linguistic accuracy, limiting their capacity to capture HOTS development. The teacher addressed this challenge by incorporating performance-based assessments, including presentations and analytical tasks. Interview responses highlight that alternative assessments were perceived as more compatible with deep learning objectives.

Classroom dynamics further influenced implementation. Maintaining equitable engagement during complex tasks required careful structuring of collaborative interactions. Observations show that group-based learning arrangements facilitated participation and distributed cognitive responsibilities. The teacher confirmed that collaborative structures functioned as mechanisms for sustaining engagement.

Cognitive adjustment challenges were evident. Students initially experienced difficulty adapting to analytical and reflective demands. The teacher responded through gradual modeling and guided inquiry, supporting learners' transition into deeper cognitive engagement. These adaptive strategies illustrate that deep learning implementation is a dynamic process requiring pedagogical flexibility and reflective responsiveness.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that deep learning practices play a significant role in fostering Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) within EFL classrooms, particularly when instructional processes prioritize meaning-making, inquiry, and reflective engagement. Classroom observations demonstrated that learning activities structured around problem-based tasks, collaborative discussions, and interpretive exercises created conditions conducive to deeper cognitive processing (Wijnia et al., 2024). Such patterns support the broader theoretical proposition that deep learning shifts learners from surface-level memorization toward conceptual understanding and knowledge construction. This orientation reflects the view that meaningful learning occurs when students actively engage with ideas, question assumptions, and connect knowledge to contextual realities. Prior research has similarly indicated that deep learning environments encourage sustained cognitive engagement and conceptual reasoning, reinforcing the interpretation that instructional design significantly shapes the quality of thinking processes (Alzahrani, 2024). The present findings substantiate this perspective by illustrating how learners engaged in analytical discourse and interpretive reasoning rather than merely completing procedural language exercises.

The observed facilitative role of the teacher further underscores the pedagogical dynamics underpinning deep learning. Instead of functioning primarily as a transmitter of knowledge, the teacher consistently acted as a cognitive mediator who guided inquiry, prompted reflection, and scaffolded reasoning. This instructional stance aligns with constructivist principles emphasizing learner agency and interactive knowledge construction.

Deep learning, in this context, becomes inseparable from the teacher's capacity to design cognitively demanding tasks and orchestrate dialogic interaction. Previous studies have highlighted that inquiry-oriented teaching practices enhance students' analytical and evaluative capacities, suggesting that pedagogical mediation is central to higher-order cognitive development (Al-Thani & Ahmad, 2025). The findings of this study resonate with that conclusion, particularly as students displayed increased participation and reasoning during tasks requiring interpretation and justification. The teacher's strategic use of open-ended questions appeared to function as a catalyst for cognitive engagement, prompting learners to articulate perspectives, evaluate alternatives, and negotiate meaning.

The manifestations of HOTS observed in classroom interactions further reinforce the pedagogical implications of deep learning. Analytical thinking emerged through activities requiring students to infer meanings, identify implicit messages, and examine textual structures. These behaviors indicate that learners were not confined to literal comprehension but engaged in interpretive reasoning processes. Such findings align with the assertion that deep learning facilitates conceptual processing by encouraging learners to explore relationships, patterns, and underlying meanings (Pahrudin et al., 2025). Evaluative thinking likewise became evident as students compared viewpoints and justified conclusions, reflecting cognitive operations associated with critical judgment. These patterns demonstrate that when instructional environments emphasize reasoning and dialogue, learners are more likely to engage in evaluative processes that extend beyond factual recall.

Creativity constituted another salient dimension of higher-order cognition within the observed classrooms. Students demonstrated flexibility in generating responses, reformulating ideas, and constructing original expressions. Creative engagement appeared particularly prominent when learners were encouraged to contextualize language use or propose alternative interpretations. This observation corresponds with prior findings that deep learning environments cultivate intellectual risk-taking and expressive confidence by shifting emphasis from correctness to exploration (Khofifah et al., 2025). Creativity in language learning thus becomes intertwined with opportunities for cognitive divergence, where students are permitted to experiment with ideas rather than reproduce fixed models. Problem-solving behaviors further illustrate the cognitive depth fostered by deep learning practices. Learners collaboratively resolved comprehension challenges, negotiated meanings, and clarified conceptual ambiguities, suggesting that social interaction supported cognitive development. This finding echoes earlier arguments that collaborative learning structures enhance reasoning processes by distributing cognitive responsibilities and facilitating peer-supported inquiry (Santi et al., 2024).

Reflective thinking, as observed in student responses and classroom interaction, represents a particularly significant outcome. Students articulated learning challenges, evaluated their understanding, and described strategies for improvement. Reflection indicates the presence of metacognitive awareness, which is widely recognized as integral to deep learning. The emergence of reflective behaviors suggests that learners were not only

processing information but actively monitoring cognitive processes. Prior investigations have similarly emphasized that reflection strengthens conceptual understanding and cognitive autonomy by encouraging learners to evaluate their own reasoning (Hidayani et al., 2025). The findings of this study reinforce this proposition, as reflective dialogue appeared to enhance learners' capacity to regulate understanding and adapt strategies.

Despite these positive outcomes the findings also reveal structural and pedagogical challenges shaping deep learning implementation. Variability in student readiness emerged as a recurring concern, particularly as learners demonstrated differing levels of confidence and cognitive engagement. Such variability required differentiated scaffolding, highlighting the necessity of adaptive pedagogical strategies (Prihantoro et al., 2025). Previous studies have acknowledged that deep learning practices demand substantial instructional support, especially in contexts where students are accustomed to teacher-centered approaches (Shi & Lan, 2024). The present findings confirm that deep learning cannot be implemented uniformly but requires continuous adjustment to learner needs. Time constraints constituted another significant limitation. Deep learning activities inherently require extended discussion, inquiry, and reflection, which may conflict with curricular pacing expectations. This tension between depth and coverage reflects a systemic challenge rather than an individual instructional issue.

Assessment practices also present notable complexities. Conventional evaluation methods frequently emphasize discrete knowledge recall and procedural accuracy, limiting their capacity to capture higher-order cognitive development. The teacher's reliance on performance-based assessments illustrates an attempt to reconcile pedagogical objectives with evaluative practices. Prior research has similarly argued that assessment alignment is critical to sustaining deep learning, as misalignment may inadvertently reinforce surface-level strategies (Tsai et al., 2022). The findings therefore underscore the importance of assessment reform in supporting cognitive-oriented pedagogy.

Classroom dynamics further illuminate the relational dimensions of deep learning. Collaborative structures were observed to enhance engagement, suggesting that social interaction functions as a mechanism for sustaining cognitive participation. Deep learning environments appear to benefit from dialogic and cooperative arrangements that distribute cognitive engagement across learners. This interpretation aligns with earlier findings emphasizing that interaction-rich contexts stimulate reasoning, reflection, and interpretive exploration (Feriyanto & Anjariyah, 2024). The teacher's adaptive strategies, including gradual cognitive modeling and guided inquiry, highlight the developmental nature of higher-order thinking. Students' initial difficulties with analytical tasks suggest that HOTS development is iterative and requires sustained pedagogical mediation.

These findings affirm that deep learning practices foster HOTS by transforming both instructional processes and learner engagement patterns. The alignment between pedagogical design, teacher mediation, and cognitive outcomes suggests that deep learning represents a comprehensive orientation rather than a discrete technique. Consistent with prior research, the findings demonstrate that inquiry-oriented tasks, collaborative reasoning, and reflective

engagement collectively stimulate higher-order cognition (Kareviati et al., 2025). At the same time, the study highlights contextual constraints that shape implementation, emphasizing that deep learning requires institutional flexibility, assessment alignment, and sustained teacher support. Deep learning in EFL contexts thus emerges as a pedagogical pathway capable of integrating linguistic competence with cognitive complexity, positioning language classrooms as spaces of critical inquiry rather than mere knowledge transmission.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that deep learning practices significantly contribute to fostering Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in EFL classrooms. Instructional strategies emphasizing inquiry, collaboration, contextualization, and reflective engagement were observed to stimulate analytical, evaluative, creative, and problem-solving processes among learners. The teacher's facilitative role and the use of open-ended questioning emerged as critical factors in promoting deeper cognitive participation.

The findings further indicate that deep learning transforms language instruction into a cognitively engaging process where students actively construct meaning rather than passively receive information. Reflective activities and performance-based assessments supported the development of metacognitive awareness and critical reasoning.

Despite structural challenges such as time constraints, assessment alignment, and varied student readiness, adaptive pedagogical strategies enabled the sustained integration of deep learning principles. Overall, deep learning appears to provide a viable pedagogical framework for integrating linguistic competence with higher-order cognitive development in EFL contexts.

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