

ANALYSIS OF DEEP LEARNING STRATEGIES IN INDONESIAN LANGUAGE LEARNING PHASE D OF *KURIKULUM MERDEKA*

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First Received: June 24, 2026

Final Proof Received: July 16, 2026

Abstract

The transformation of education in Indonesia through the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* has brought about a significant shift in the learning paradigm. The focus of learning is no longer solely on mastery of material, but rather on developing students' overall competencies. This study aims to analyze deep learning strategies in Indonesian language learning under Phase D of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The study used a qualitative approach with a content analysis of learning documents. The results indicate that the strategies identified include critical thinking, collaborative learning, communicative learning, contextual learning, project-based learning, and metacognitive reflection. Critical thinking strategies are the most dominant because they encourage students to analyze, evaluate, and interpret information. These findings indicate that Indonesian language learning under Phase D has implemented deep learning principles that are oriented towards meaningful, active, and student-centered learning.

Keywords: Deep learning, Indonesian language, *Kurikulum Merdeka*

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of education in Indonesia under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (the Merdeka Curriculum) era has brought about a fundamental shift in the learning paradigm. Learning is no longer solely focused on mastering material but rather on developing students' competencies holistically through meaningful, contextual, and student-centered learning experiences (Hadi & Ramdhani, 2025). The *Kurikulum Merdeka* provides teachers with the flexibility to design learning tailored to the needs, characteristics, and potential of students, making the learning process more flexible and adaptive to changing times. This paradigm shift demands learning strategies that encourage students to think critically, creatively, collaboratively, and reflectively as essential 21st-century competencies (Nabila et al., 2026).

One approach currently receiving attention in the development of learning within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is deep learning. Deep learning emphasizes strong conceptual understanding, connecting knowledge to real-world experiences, and students' ability to construct knowledge independently (Isnayanti et al., 2025). Through this approach, students not only memorise information but also analyse, evaluate, reflect, and apply it in various life contexts. Therefore, in-depth learning is seen as relevant to the goals of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which places students as the primary subjects in the learning process.

In the context of learning Indonesian, the application of deep learning strategies is becoming increasingly important because this subject not only functions as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for developing literacy, critical thinking, and students' reasoning abilities (Hasan et al., 2026). Indonesian language learning in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is directed at developing listening, speaking, reading, viewing, and writing skills in an integrated manner, enabling students to understand, process, and convey information effectively. Therefore, the learning strategies used must facilitate students' meaningful and in-depth learning experiences (Agustina, 2023).

Phase D of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, intended for junior high school/Islamic junior high school students in grades VII to IX, is a crucial stage in developing literacy and higher-order thinking skills. In this phase, students begin to be exposed to more complex text types, including informational, narrative, argumentative, and multimodal texts (Wulandari et al., 2023). These conditions require teachers to implement learning strategies that are not only oriented toward achieving basic competencies but also capable of developing students' analytical, interpretive, and reflective abilities. Therefore, deep learning strategies have significant potential to support the achievement of Indonesian language learning outcomes in Phase D (Hartati et al., 2024).

Deep learning strategies in Indonesian language learning can be realized through various activities such as reflective discussions, problem-based learning, critical text analysis, literacy projects, group collaboration, and activities that link learning materials to students' real lives (Hidayat et al., 2025). Through this strategy, students are encouraged to develop a deeper understanding of the learning material and develop higher-order thinking

How to cite this article: Putri, A. L., Angesti, S., Ramadani, N., Helty, & Wilyanti, L. S. (2026). Analysis of Deep Learning Strategies on Indonesian Language Learning Phase D of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. *Global Expert: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 14(1), 45-52

skills necessary to face future challenges. This learning approach also aligns with the principle of active learning, a key characteristic of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

However, the implementation of deep learning strategies in Indonesian language learning still faces various challenges. By offering a methodical content analysis of Phase D learning documents to determine how deep learning methodologies are integrated into curriculum implementation, this study builds on earlier research on deep learning, the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and Indonesian language learning. This research maps the explicit and implicit depiction of deep learning indicators throughout official learning materials and discusses their compatibility with the *Kurikulum Merdeka*'s tenets, in contrast to earlier studies that either explore deep learning philosophically or concentrate on classroom activities. As a result, the study provides both conceptual and practical support for improving the use of document-based curricula in Indonesian language instruction. (Anjariyah et al., 2025).

In this study, deep learning refers to a method of instruction that allows students to build conceptual understanding via critical thinking, contextual problem solving, introspection, teamwork, and real-world application of knowledge. Deep learning incorporates all of these aspects into a cohesive process that fosters long-lasting comprehension, transferable knowledge, and metacognitive awareness, in contrast to meaningful learning, which emphasizes connecting new knowledge with prior knowledge; active learning, which focuses on student participation; student-centered learning, which emphasizes learner autonomy; or higher-order thinking, which primarily concerns cognitive processes (Anwar & Hairus Sodik, 2025).

Research on deep learning strategies in Phase D Indonesian language learning is crucial because it can provide insight into the extent to which deep learning principles have been applied in the learning process. The research findings are expected to contribute to the development of more innovative, contextual Indonesian language learning practices that are oriented toward developing students' holistic competencies. Furthermore, this research can serve as evaluation material for teachers and policymakers in improving the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in schools.

Based on this description, an analysis of deep learning strategies in Indonesian language learning in Phase D of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a relevant and important study. This study not only seeks to identify the forms of learning strategies implemented but also examines their suitability to the principles of deep learning and their contribution to achieving Indonesian language learning objectives. Therefore, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of deep learning strategies as an effort to realize meaningful, conscious, and enjoyable learning within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with content analysis. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study aimed to deeply understand the deep learning strategies applied in Indonesian language learning in Phase D of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This approach allows researchers to examine various learning phenomena naturally through analysis of the learning documents that serve as the object of the study. Content analysis was used to identify, categorize, and interpret various forms of learning strategies that reflect the characteristics of deep learning in Indonesian language learning. This method is relevant because the focus of the research lies not in statistical measurements, but rather in the meaning and interpretation of the data found in the learning documents (Ahmad, 2019).

This research is a qualitative descriptive study. It aims to systematically, factually, and accurately describe the characteristics of learning strategies found in Phase D of Indonesian language learning. Through descriptive research, researchers can uncover how deep learning principles are implemented in learning activities, from developing critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity to metacognitive reflection. Thus, the research results are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of learning strategies in the context of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Rahayu et al., 2022).

The research data sources were Indonesian language learning documents from Phase D of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which included the main textbook, learning outcomes, learning objectives, learning modules, and learning activities contained within the teaching materials. These documents were selected because they are the primary sources used in implementing Indonesian language learning in schools. Furthermore, these documents contain various learning activities that can be analyzed to determine the existence of deep learning strategies implemented in the learning process.

The research focused on learning strategies containing elements of deep learning. The aspects analyzed included critical thinking, collaborative learning, communication, creativity, contextual learning, project-based learning, metacognitive reflection, and strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile. These aspects were chosen because they represent the main characteristics of deep learning, which is currently a crucial approach in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

The data collection technique was conducted through documentation studies. Documentation studies were used to obtain data from various learning documents that were the focus of the research. During the data collection process, researchers thoroughly read the documents and then noted sections that demonstrated the implementation of deep learning strategies. The obtained data was then classified based on predetermined indicators, facilitating data analysis and interpretation (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).

The research instrument used was the researcher herself (human instrument), supported by a document analysis sheet. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument, directly collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data. The analysis sheet serves as a guideline for identifying various indicators of deep learning strategies contained in the learning documents. The purpose of using the analysis sheet is to ensure a systematic and directed data collection process.

The analysis indicators in this study were compiled based on deep learning theory, which emphasizes meaningful, reflective, contextual, and student-centered learning. These indicators include critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, communication, collaboration, creativity, learning reflection, authentic learning experiences, and the relevance of the material to students' real lives. Through these indicators, researchers can assess the extent to which the learning strategies identified align with the characteristics of deep learning in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Wathon, 2024).

The data analysis technique used an interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, researchers select and focus on data relevant to the research objectives. Next, the reduced data is presented in descriptive form and analytical tables for easier understanding. The final stage is drawing conclusions based on the patterns of findings that emerged during the analysis process (Ahmad & Muslimah, 2021).

The validity of the data in this study was achieved through theoretical triangulation. Theoretical triangulation was conducted by comparing the research findings with various theories and previous research related to deep learning, learning strategies, and the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This technique aims to increase the credibility and validity of the research results so that the resulting interpretations have a strong theoretical basis and can be scientifically justified. Two specialists in Indonesian language instruction peer-checked the coding results to increase their credibility. Throughout the analysis, an audit trail detailing category development and coding choices was kept. By contrasting each identified technique with accepted deep learning theories and earlier empirical research, theoretical triangulation was carried out. The findings' credibility was reinforced and coding uniformity was assured through repeated review of the papers (Ilhami et al., 2014).

In addition to theoretical triangulation, researchers also re-examined the collected data through re-reading and matching with research indicators. This step was taken to minimize misinterpretation and ensure that all analyzed data truly aligns with the research focus. Thus, the research results are expected to reflect the actual conditions regarding the implementation of deep learning strategies in Indonesian language learning in Phase D of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

The analysis results were then interpreted to determine the level of alignment of the identified learning strategies with the deep learning principles in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This interpretation was conducted in-depth by linking the research findings to the concepts of meaningful learning, contextual learning, reflective learning, and 21st-century competency development. Through this process, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective, innovative Indonesian language learning that aligns with the demands of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that the deep learning strategy in Indonesian language learning in Phase D of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* reflects the principles of meaningful, contextual, collaborative, and reflective learning. However, its implementation still needs to be strengthened through the development of more complex critical thinking activities, strengthening metacognitive reflection, and improving the quality of project-based learning. Thus, Indonesian language learning becomes not only a means of mastering language skills but also a vehicle for character development and 21st-century competencies.

Table 1. Results of Identification of Deep Learning Learning Strategies in Indonesian Language Learning Phase D of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*

No.	Learning strategies	Forms of Implementation in Indonesian Language Learning	Characteristics of Deep Learning
1.	Critical thinking	Text analysis, information evaluation, interpretation of implied meaning.	Analysis, evaluation, reflection.
2.	Collaborative	Group discussions, presentations, collaboration to complete assignments.	Social interaction and knowledge construction.
3.	Communicative	Presentation of discussion results, debates, and delivery of opinions.	Effective communication.
4.	Contextual	Relating material to everyday life.	Meaningful learning.
5.	Project-Based Learning	Preparation of reports, written works, literacy projects.	Authentic learning experiences.
6.	Metacognitive Reflection	Reflection journal, self-evaluation, learning feedback	Awareness of the learning process.

Based on Table 1, the deep learning strategies found in Phase D of Indonesian language learning include critical thinking, collaborative learning, communicative learning, contextual learning, project-based learning, and metacognitive reflection. These six strategies demonstrate that learning is not solely oriented toward mastery of material but also toward developing 21st-century competencies, the primary objective of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. According to the data, critical thinking was most prevalent in all document kinds, especially in learning objectives, text analysis exercises, and assessment tasks. While metacognitive reflection only surfaced indirectly through evaluation tasks, collaborative and communicative methods were expressly incorporated into training modules. Critical thinking and contextual learning exhibited strong implementation, collaborative and project-based learning showed moderate implementation, and metacognitive reflection remained at a relatively low level, according to the intensity of indication occurrence.

Furthermore, deep learning strategies are closely linked to strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile. Critical thinking strategies support critical reasoning, collaborative strategies strengthen mutual cooperation, and project-based learning fosters student creativity. These findings demonstrate that the implementation of deep learning in Indonesian language learning not only contributes to the achievement of academic competencies but also supports the development of student character in accordance with the objectives of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. Suitability of Deep Learning Strategy with Pancasila Student Profile

No.	Deep Learning Strategy	Dimensions of the Developed Pancasila Student Profile	Form of Reinforcement
1.	Critical thinking	Critical Reasoning	Analyze and evaluate information.
2.	Collaborative	Mutual Cooperation	Cooperation in groups.
3.	Communicative	Global Diversity	Convey ideas and respect opinions.
4.	Contextual	Independent	Connecting learning with real experiences.
5.	Project-Based Learning	Creative	Producing innovative works and solutions.
6.	Metacognitive Reflection	Independent	Evaluate the learning process independently.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of deep learning strategies in Indonesian language learning in Phase D of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* demonstrates a shift in the learning paradigm, no longer focused solely on knowledge transfer but on developing deep and meaningful understanding. Indonesian language learning in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is designed to develop students' literacy, critical reasoning, communication, and creativity skills through a variety of contextual learning experiences. Therefore, the learning strategies implemented must encourage students' active involvement in constructing their own knowledge. According to Rahayu et al., the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* emphasises flexible, student-centred learning and provides space for balanced competency and character development (Rahayu et al., 2022).

The analysis results show that the dominant learning strategy in Phase D of Indonesian language learning is one oriented towards developing critical thinking skills. Students are guided to understand, analyze, and evaluate various types of texts studied. Activities such as identifying important information, finding implied meanings,

comparing text content, and responding to social issues are essential parts of the learning process. These activities demonstrate that learning requires students not only to memorize information but also to develop higher-order thinking skills, a key characteristic of deep learning.

Strengthening critical thinking skills in Indonesian language learning is highly relevant to the demands of 21st-century education. Mohammad Mohan et al. explain that deep learning aims to build in-depth conceptual understanding through contextual analysis, reflection, and problem-solving activities (Mohan et al., 2026). Therefore, learning strategies that emphasize critical thinking skills can help students develop the ability to understand information more comprehensively and use it in various life situations.

In addition to critical thinking, collaborative learning strategies are also a form of deep learning implementation found in Phase D Indonesian language learning. Group discussions, collaboration in completing assignments, and group presentations provide opportunities for students to learn together and exchange ideas. Collaborative learning helps students understand that knowledge can be built through social interaction and collaboration with others.

Diana Rosiyati et al. stated that in-depth learning is not solely oriented toward individual learning outcomes but also emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the learning process. Through collaboration, students can develop communication, tolerance, and cooperation skills, which are essential components of 21st-century competencies. Therefore, the application of collaborative learning strategies in Indonesian language learning significantly contributes to the development of students' overall competencies (Rosiyati et al., 2025).

Discussion activities found in Indonesian language learning demonstrate efforts to actively involve students in the learning process. Students are given the opportunity to express opinions, present arguments, and respond to the views of their peers. These activities can increase students' courage in communicating and develop reflective thinking skills regarding various issues discussed in the learning process.

Communicative learning strategies are also a crucial component in the implementation of deep learning. Learning Indonesian naturally provides ample scope for developing communication skills through speaking, discussions, presentations, and writing. Good communication skills are an indicator of learning success because they demonstrate students' ability to convey their ideas effectively.

Communicative learning in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* aims not only to improve language skills but also to help students build confidence in interacting with their social environment. Through presentations and class discussions, students learn to express their opinions logically and systematically. These skills are essential for facing the challenges of education and the workplace in the future.

Research findings also indicate that contextual learning strategies play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of deep learning. Indonesian language learning materials are often linked to students' daily experiences, social phenomena, local culture, and emerging issues in their environment. This approach makes it easier for students to understand the material because they can see the connection between learning and real life.

According to A. Wathon, contextual learning is one of the main characteristics of deep learning because it allows students to construct meaning from their experiences. When students are able to connect the subject matter to real-life situations, learning becomes more meaningful and more memorable (Wathon, 2024). Therefore, the use of contextual learning strategies in Indonesian language learning is very much in line with the principles of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

In addition to contextual learning, project-based learning (PBL) is also a strategy that supports the implementation of deep learning. Through projects, students have the opportunity to apply the knowledge they have learned in more realistic and complex situations. Project-based learning also encourages students to think creatively, collaborate, and solve problems independently.

Paryoga et al. (2025) emphasized that reflection is an integral component of in-depth learning because it helps students understand how they learn and how to improve the quality of that learning. Therefore, strengthening reflection activities in Indonesian language learning needs to be continuously carried out so that students not only understand the material but also the thinking processes they use during learning.

Critical Thinking Learning Strategy in Indonesian Language Learning Phase D

The analysis results show that the most dominant learning strategy in Phase D of Indonesian language learning is the development of critical thinking skills. Students are directed to identify important information, compare various sources of information, evaluate arguments in texts, and draw conclusions based on the facts found. These activities demonstrate that learning is not only oriented towards mastery of material but also towards students' ability to understand and process information in depth. According to Rosidin et al., deep learning emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills through the process of analysis, evaluation, and reflection on learning materials so that students are able to build a more meaningful understanding (Rosidin et al., 2026).

In Indonesian language learning, critical thinking skills are crucial because students are exposed to various types of texts that require interpretation and reasoning skills. Students are not only asked to understand the text's content but also to identify the author's point of view, assess the accuracy of the information, and relate it to real-

life contexts. Activities like these demonstrate that learning has led to the development of higher-order thinking skills.

Strengthening critical thinking skills also aligns with the objectives of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which positions students as active subjects in learning. Students are allowed to explore various learning resources and develop arguments based on observations and studies. Thus, learning not only produces students who understand the material but also can use that knowledge to solve various problems they encounter.

These findings demonstrate that the implementation of critical thinking strategies in Indonesian language learning supports the principles of deep learning, which emphasize meaningful learning and a focus on conceptual understanding. The more frequently students are involved in analysis and evaluation activities, the more their ability to think logically and systematically develops.

Collaborative Learning Strategies in Supporting Deep Learning

Collaborative learning strategies are one of the approaches commonly found in Phase D Indonesian language learning. Group discussions, presentations of work results, and collective completion of assignments demonstrate efforts to build knowledge through social interaction. Collaborative learning allows students to exchange ideas, provide feedback, and build a shared understanding of the material being studied (Yuliani et al., 2026).

According to Asy'arie et al. (2025), *Kurikulum Merdeka* provides more space for students to actively engage in learning through various collaborative activities that encourage participation and creativity. Collaborative learning is one means of developing 21st-century competencies, particularly the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively. In the context of Indonesian language learning, collaboration not only helps students understand the material but also improves their ability to express ideas both orally and in writing. Through group discussions, students learn to respect differences of opinion, build arguments, and find solutions to various problems discussed in the lesson.

Collaborative learning also supports the strengthening of the cooperation dimension within the Pancasila Student Profile. When students work together to complete tasks, they learn responsibility, value the contributions of group members, and build positive social relationships. Thus, collaborative strategies contribute not only to academic achievement but also to the development of students' character (Saputro & Pritasari, 2025).

Contextual Learning Strategy as a Form of Meaningful Learning

Research findings indicate that Phase D Indonesian language learning has significantly integrated students' real-life contexts into the learning process. Various texts used in the learning relate to social, cultural, environmental, and everyday experiences relevant to the students' lives. This demonstrates the application of contextual learning strategies, one of the key characteristics of deep learning.

In-depth learning requires connecting learning materials with students' real-life experiences to make the learning process more meaningful and not simply memorizing information. Contextual learning helps students understand the relevance of the material to their lives, thus increasing their motivation to learn (Widagdo, 2025). In Indonesian language learning, using texts that are close to students' real-life contexts allows them to understand the material more deeply. Students can connect their personal experiences to the content of the texts they are studying, making the learning process more lively and meaningful.

In addition to enhancing understanding, contextual learning also helps students develop problem-solving skills. When students are asked to analyze events occurring in their environment, they learn to use their existing knowledge to understand and provide solutions to various problems they face in everyday life.

Project-Based Learning Strategies in Developing Creativity

Project-based learning (PBL) is a form of deep learning implementation found in Phase D Indonesian language learning. Through this strategy, students not only learn theory but also produce tangible products related to the learning material. These products can be observation reports, written works, video presentations, or other literacy projects. Zhafira Nurazizah et al. stated that the project-based learning model is an effective strategy in supporting deep learning because it provides authentic and meaningful learning experiences for students. Through projects, students learn to integrate various concepts, develop creativity, and apply knowledge in real situations (Mubarak et al., 2025).

Project-based learning also helps students develop systematic thinking and problem-solving skills. During the project process, students must plan activities, collect information, process data, and present the results. This entire process encourages active student engagement. Furthermore, projects related to the local environment and culture can increase the relevance of learning to students' lives. Thus, learning is not only oriented towards academic outcomes but also provides meaningful and sustainable learning experiences.

Metacognitive Reflection Strategy in Deep Learning

Metacognitive reflection is a crucial component of deep learning. Research shows that reflection activities are beginning to be implemented in Phase D Indonesian language learning, although their implementation still needs improvement. Reflection is generally conducted at the end of the lesson through questions that encourage students to evaluate their learning experience.

According to Wathon (2024), reflection is an important part of in-depth learning because it helps students understand how they learn, the difficulties they encounter, and the strategies they can use to improve their learning outcomes in the future. Reflection also plays a role in building metacognitive awareness, which forms the basis for lifelong learning. In Indonesian language learning, reflection can be conducted through learning journals, learning experience notes, and reflective discussions. These activities help students recognize the development of their skills and determine necessary improvement steps.

Strengthening metacognitive reflection is crucial because in-depth learning emphasizes not only learning outcomes but also the learning process experienced by students. Through reflection, students become more aware of how they acquire knowledge, enabling them to learn more independently and effectively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that Indonesian language learning in Phase D of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* has implemented various deep learning strategies, namely critical thinking, collaborative, communicative, contextual, project-based learning, and metacognitive reflection strategies. Critical thinking strategies are the most dominant strategy because they encourage students to analyze, evaluate, and interpret information in depth. The implementation of these various strategies shows that learning has led to meaningful, active, reflective, and student-centered learning, thus supporting the development of 21st-century competencies and strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile in accordance with the objectives of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. In order to discover deep learning techniques in Indonesian language acquisition under the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, this study adds to the body of literature by offering a document-based analytical approach. In practical terms, the results provide Indonesian language instructors with direction for creating learning exercises that more methodically incorporate critical thinking, teamwork, contextual learning, and reflective practice. Additionally, the findings help legislators and curriculum designers increase the application of deep learning principles in official teaching texts.

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