

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the study. It discusses the research background, research questions and purposes, the significance of the study, the research scope, the conceptual framework, and relevant previous studies.

A. Background

Recent developments in Indonesian education have emphasized the importance of improving learning quality to prepare students for the challenges of the twenty-first century. In response to this goal, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, under the leadership of Minister Abdul Mu'ti, has introduced the deep learning approach as one of the strategies to foster meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning. In this context, deep learning does not refer to artificial intelligence, but rather to a learning approach that emphasizes meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning experiences. Teachers are expected to create learning environments that encourage students to actively participate in the learning process and construct their own understanding. According to Fullan et al. (2018), deep learning refers to the development of students' global competencies, including critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, and character, enabling them to apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations. Furthermore, deep learning encourages students to connect new knowledge with their prior understanding, engage in critical thinking, and transfer what they have learned to different contexts.

To support the implementation of deep learning, particularly in creating meaningful and engaging learning experiences, teachers may use various instructional strategies, one of which is the use of ice-breaking activities. According to Silberman (1996), ice-breaking refers to short and engaging activities used at the beginning or during a lesson to create a relaxed atmosphere, increase students' energy, and encourage active participation in the learning process. In line with this, ice-breaking can also be understood as activities that create a supportive and

enjoyable learning environment, allowing students to participate more actively in classroom interactions. In English language learning, ice-breaking activities are widely used to reduce students' boredom, increase motivation, and support a positive classroom environment (Mahmud et al., 2023). As a result, these activities can support deep learning by encouraging students to be more actively involved in the learning process and by providing opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and communication. Through this engagement, students are not only receiving information but also interacting with the content more meaningfully. Therefore, teachers often implement ice-breaking techniques at the beginning or during lessons to prepare students to participate, share ideas, and interact with others.

The use of ice-breaking activities may provide several advantages when viewed from a deep learning perspective. Deep learning emphasizes meaningful engagement, active participation, and the development of students' competencies through interactive learning experiences (Fullan et al., 2018). In this context, ice-breaking activities may support deep learning by helping to create a learning environment that encourages students to become more actively involved in the learning process. Ice-breaking activities may also help reduce boredom and fatigue and create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere, which can influence students' participation in classroom learning (Maduretno et al., 2021). As a result, some students may be able to focus more effectively on learning tasks and participate more actively in classroom interactions. Furthermore, the implementation of ice-breaking activities may contribute to increasing students' motivation, encouraging active participation, and creating a more enjoyable learning atmosphere in English classrooms (Pranata et al., 2021). Therefore, integrating ice-breaking activities into classroom instruction may support meaningful learning experiences and promote deeper engagement in EFL learning.

Based on preliminary observations conducted in an integrated Islamic junior high school EFL classroom, it was found that students' level of attention may vary depending on the lesson schedule. When English lessons took place in the last period, some students appeared less focused and more fatigued, while in lessons scheduled earlier in the day, some students tended to lose focus in the middle of the

lesson. In these situations, ice-breaking activities were used either at the beginning or during the lesson to help maintain students' attention and create a more engaging classroom atmosphere. The use of these activities seemed to make the classroom more active and encouraged students to participate more in the learning process. Furthermore, based on a discussion with the supervising teacher, the use of ice-breaking was considered acceptable and relatively effective in helping students become more enthusiastic during English lessons. The teacher also suggested that ice-breaking activities may be relevant to deep learning, as they can support student engagement and participation in classroom interactions. However, it was also noted that there may be a common misunderstanding among teachers in perceiving ice-breaking merely as entertaining activities used to reduce boredom. In fact, ice-breaking activities can be designed in alignment with the learning material and may support the principles of deep learning, particularly meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning. Therefore, these preliminary observations indicate that the use of ice-breaking activities may have the potential to support more meaningful and engaging learning experiences in EFL classrooms.

In relation to the previous discussion, ice-breaking activities may be understood as one of the instructional strategies that can support the principles of deep learning in classroom practice. Deep learning emphasizes meaningful engagement, active participation, and the development of competencies such as collaboration and communication (Fullan et al., 2018). In this context, ice-breaking activities may provide opportunities for students to interact, share ideas, and participate more actively in the learning process, which are aligned with these principles. Moreover, such activities may help create a supportive and engaging learning environment, allowing students to become more involved in constructing their understanding. Although ice-breaking activities are often used as short and simple classroom activities, their implementation may contribute to promoting more interactive and meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, it can be suggested that the use of ice-breaking activities has the potential to support the development of deep learning in EFL classrooms, particularly in encouraging student engagement and participation.

Several previous studies are related to this research topic. The implementation of deep learning strategies in EFL classrooms is reported to enhance students' engagement and participation in the learning process. Learning activities such as problem-based learning, collaborative tasks, and critical thinking activities can help students become more actively involved in constructing knowledge and interacting in the classroom, leading to better participation, collaboration, and attention during English learning activities (Aditama et al., 2025). In addition, the use of ice-breaking activities has been widely discussed as a strategy to create a more engaging classroom atmosphere. Ice-breaking activities can help reduce tension, increase students' attention, and encourage interaction between teachers and students, which may support students' participation in learning (Khoirunnisaa' et al., 2024). Similarly, other studies show that ice-breaking activities can improve students' concentration and engagement by creating a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment, allowing students to become more focused and ready to follow the lesson (Latief et al., 2025).

However, most of these studies discuss deep learning strategies and ice-breaking activities separately, and limited research specifically investigates how ice-breaking techniques are implemented in EFL lessons from a deep learning perspective. In other words, the potential contribution of ice-breaking activities in supporting deeper learning processes in English language classrooms has not been widely explored. This study aims to fill the gap by investigating the use of ice-breaking techniques in EFL lessons and examining how these activities can support learning from a deep learning perspective.

B. Research Question

Based on the background that has been explained, the identified problems are organized into research questions below:

1. What ice-breaking techniques are used by EFL teachers in their English lessons at the integrated Islamic junior high school level?
2. How are deep learning principles reflected in the ice-breaking techniques used by EFL teachers?

C. Research Purposes

Referring to the problems formulated in the research questions, the objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To identify the ice-breaking techniques used by EFL teachers in their English lessons in an integrated Islamic junior high school.
2. To analyze the deep learning principles reflected in the ice-breaking techniques used by the teachers.

D. Research Significance

The significance of this study is described as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of English language teaching, especially regarding the use of ice-breaking techniques in EFL classrooms from a deep learning perspective. This research provides insights into how ice-breaking activities can support meaningful learning processes, encourage active student participation, and create interactive learning environments in English lessons.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, this research is expected to provide contributions for several parties. For English teachers, the findings of this study may serve as a basis for reflection and evaluation in implementing ice-breaking techniques, particularly in examining whether these activities are aligned with the principles of deep learning. In addition, this research may provide insights for future researchers who are interested in exploring the relationship between instructional strategies and deep learning processes in EFL contexts, as well as serve as a reference for further studies in this area.

E. Research Scope

This research focuses on investigating the use of ice-breaking techniques in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lessons from a deep learning perspective. The study specifically explores the types of ice-breaking techniques used by EFL teachers during English lessons and identifies the deep learning principles reflected

in those activities. The research is limited to classroom activities related to ice-breaking techniques implemented by the teacher during the learning process. Furthermore, the study focuses on how these techniques reflect deep learning principles such as active participation, interaction, collaboration, and meaningful engagement in learning. Therefore, this research does not examine other teaching strategies or broader aspects of English language teaching, but concentrates only on ice-breaking techniques used in EFL lessons and their relation to deep learning principles.

F. Conceptual Framework

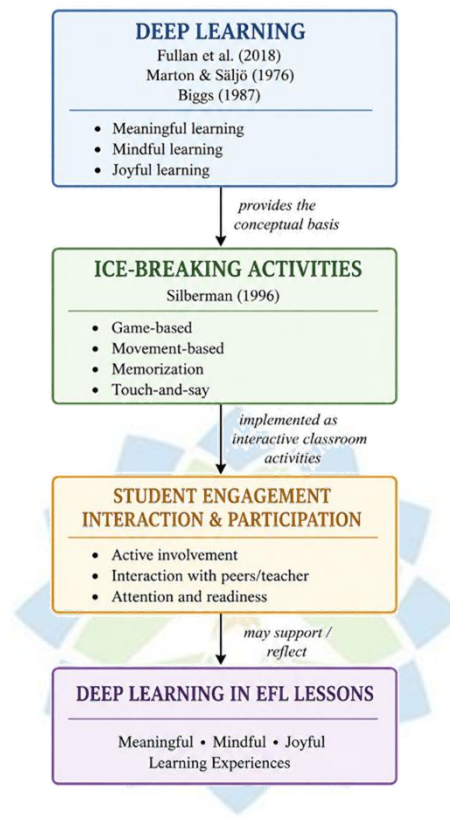
The development of the conceptual framework of this study begins with a discussion of the concept of deep learning from several theoretical perspectives. Deep learning emphasizes the development of students' global competencies, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, and character, through meaningful learning experiences (Fullan et al., 2018). This concept is also supported by Marton and Säljö (1976), in which deep learning is characterized by learners' intention to understand meaning, relate ideas, and engage critically with learning materials. Similarly, according to Biggs (1987), deep learning involves an intention to understand, where students actively engage with learning materials and connect new knowledge with their previous understanding. In this study, deep learning is understood as a learning approach that emphasizes meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning, which can be supported through interactive classroom activities such as ice-breaking techniques, as these activities may help create meaningful, engaging, and enjoyable learning experiences that align with the principles of deep learning.

In relation to the need for interactive instructional strategies, ice-breaking activities are defined as short and engaging classroom activities designed to create a relaxed learning atmosphere, increase students' energy, and encourage active participation in the learning process (Silberman, 1996). These activities are generally implemented at the beginning or during a lesson to help students become more comfortable and ready to engage in learning. In classroom practice, ice-breaking techniques can be implemented in various forms depending on the

learning objectives and classroom situation. Common techniques used in ice-breaking activities are generally aligned with active learning principles. These include simple educational games, short energizing activities, brief interactive discussions, and questioning activities that aim to stimulate students' attention (Silberman, 1996). In addition, movement-based activities, group-based tasks, and fun language exercises are also frequently used to refresh students' focus and encourage interaction among learners. These practices are also supported by experiential learning theory, which emphasizes learning through experience and active engagement in the learning process (Kolb, 1984). Furthermore, communicative language teaching perspectives highlight the importance of interactive and task-based activities that promote student participation in classroom interaction (Richards, 2006). Therefore, ice-breaking activities can be understood as interactive instructional strategies that not only create a positive classroom atmosphere but also encourage active participation and engagement, which are essential in supporting meaningful learning processes.

The use of ice-breaking techniques is expected to influence students' engagement, interaction, and participation during EFL lessons, which are important aspects of deep learning. When students are actively involved, they are more likely

to construct meaningful understanding, connect new knowledge with previous learning, and participate in higher-order thinking processes



G. Previous Study

There are several previous studies related to this research. The first study was conducted by Pratiwi (2026). The focus of this study is to examine the role of ice-breaking activities in shaping the learning environment and enhancing participant satisfaction. This study used a quantitative explanatory design involving 158 participants in training programs, and the data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using PLS-SEM. The findings showed that ice-breaking activities significantly improve the learning environment and positively influence participants' psychological readiness, engagement, and emotional states during the learning process. In addition, the learning environment mediates the

relationship between ice-breaking and participant satisfaction, indicating that well-structured ice-breaking activities contribute to more effective learning experiences.

The second study, conducted by Tokan et al. (2025), investigates teachers' perspectives on the use of icebreakers to enhance a dynamic classroom. The focus of this study is to explore how teachers implement ice-breaking activities and their impact on classroom interaction. This study used a qualitative approach through observations and interviews with English teachers. The findings indicated that teachers apply various ice-breaking activities such as games, songs, and physical movements to increase student participation, reduce boredom, and create a more interactive classroom environment. The study also revealed that ice-breaking strengthens social interaction between students and teachers, although some challenges, such as time limitations and diverse student characteristics, were identified.

The third study was conducted by Yuwono et al. (2024), which focuses on the importance of implementing ice-breaking activities before core learning activities. The study aims to examine how ice-breaking influences classroom readiness and learning conditions. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method using observation and documentation involving secondary school students. The findings showed that ice-breaking activities help students transition from boredom and fatigue into a more relaxed and enthusiastic state, which supports their readiness to engage in learning. In addition, the use of various ice-breaking techniques contributes to a more enjoyable and interactive learning atmosphere, which enhances classroom engagement.

The fourth study was conducted by Feriyanto and Anjariyah (2024), which explores the concept of deep learning through meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning. The focus of this study is to analyze how these three elements support the implementation of deep learning in education. This study used a library research method by analyzing various literature sources related to deep learning. The findings revealed that deep learning enhances students' cognitive and emotional engagement by encouraging them to connect new knowledge with prior understanding, maintain focus, and participate actively in enjoyable learning

activities. These elements also contribute to the development of critical thinking and a deeper understanding of learning materials.

The fifth study was conducted by Nafi'ah and Faruq (2025), which examines the conceptualization and implementation of deep learning in educational contexts. The study aims to analyze how deep learning can be applied effectively through meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning approaches. This study employed a literature review method by analyzing several recent journal articles. The findings indicated that deep learning promotes students' critical, creative, and reflective thinking as well as active engagement in learning. However, the study also identified challenges such as teacher readiness and limitations in learning facilities that may affect the implementation of deep learning in educational settings.

The sixth study, conducted by Mthethwa-Kunene et al. (2022), explores ways to promote deeper learning in higher education through a rethinking of pedagogy. Using a desktop review method, the study unpacking the competencies of deeper learning, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. The findings emphasize that deeper learning provides opportunities for students to achieve high learning outcomes and develop 21st-century skills necessary for their careers. The study suggests that educators must shift from surface learning to pedagogical practices that enhance the acquisition of higher-order skills and engage students more actively in the learning process.

The seventh study, conducted by Weng et al. (2023), examines the effectiveness of the design-based learning (DBL) approach in promoting students' deep learning. This research utilized a comparative study between a control class and an experimental class to measure deep learning status and ability. The findings reveal that the DBL approach significantly stimulates students' motivation and active engagement, leading to enhanced higher-order capabilities such as critical thinking and problem-solving. The study highlights that the iterative and reflective nature of DBL is consistent with the requirements of deep learning, as it encourages students to integrate knowledge and apply skills to real-life challenges.

However, a significant research gap still exists, as most previous studies tend to examine ice-breaking activities and deep learning separately. Research on

ice-breaking activities mainly focuses on classroom atmosphere management and students' readiness to learn at a surface level, while studies on deep learning often emphasize complex curriculum design or higher education contexts without addressing daily classroom interactions. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach, which positions ice-breaking techniques not merely as entertaining activities, but as pedagogical tools to introduce the principles of deep learning, particularly meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning, within the context of English language teaching. In this regard, this study aims to address the gap in the literature by exploring how simple classroom activities can potentially encourage students' cognitive engagement and support deeper knowledge construction.

