Journal of Authentic Research
https://journal-center.litpam.com/index.php/jar/index

August 2026 Vol. 5, No. 3
e-ISSN: 2828-3724
pp. 5850-5858

From Policy to Pedagogy: English Teachers' Lesson Planning and Classroom Enactment of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning

[1*] Muhammad Romzi, [1] M. Junaidi Marzuki, [1] Ahmad Yusri, [1] Zahratul Fikni

[1]*English Education Study Program, Universitas Hamzanwadi, Lombok, Indonesia*

*Corresponding Author e-mail: muhammadromzi74@gmail.com

Received: May 2026; Revised: June 2026; Published: July 2026

Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning (MMJL) principles within the Merdeka Curriculum framework in English language teaching at SDN 01 Pijot Utara. The research subjects consisted of a sixth-grade English teacher who served as both the designer of the Teaching Module and the classroom practitioner, along with sixth-grade students as secondary participants. Adopting a qualitative descriptive case study design grounded in Policy Enactment theory, data were collected through document analysis of the Teaching Module and systematic classroom observations. The findings reveal that while the MMJL principles are thoroughly embedded in the macro-structural design of the Teaching Module and successfully enacted during foundational and receptive instructional phases, a significant divergence occurs during productive phases. Activities demanding student autonomy, such as independent writing, reflection, and collaborative summarization, were only partially enacted, largely due to a lack of anticipatory scaffolding in the written plan and the persistence of teacher-centered norms intended to manage classroom silence. The study concludes that although MMJL principles effectively support classroom management and emotional well-being, their potential to drive higher-order intellectual engagement remains constrained by the gap between policy intentions and classroom realities. Practically, this research contributes to curriculum development and teacher training by recommending that Teaching Modules evolve into dynamic pedagogical instruments, supplemented by anticipatory scaffolds and differentiated strategies, to bridge the distance between curriculum vision and practice.

Keywords: English for Young Learners, Joyful Learning, Lesson Planning, Meaningful Learning, Mindful Learning, Policy Enactment

How to Cite: Romzi, M., Marzuki, M. J., Yusri, A., & Fikni, Z. (2026). From Policy to Pedagogy: English Teachers' Lesson Planning and Classroom Enactment of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning. *Journal of Authentic Research*, *5*(3), 5850–5958. https://doi.org/10.36312/jar.v5i3.6209

https://doi.org/10.36312/jar.v5i3.6209

Copyright© 2026, Romzi et al.
This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-SA License.

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of English language teaching in Indonesia is currently undergoing a significant pedagogical transformation following the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which shifts the instructional paradigm toward more flexible, student-centered, and context-responsive approaches (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Within this reform framework, the government promotes the implementation of Deep Learning, anchored in three foundational pillars: mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning (MMJL) (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). Conceptually, mindful learning cultivates students' full awareness and focus during the learning process (Bishop et al., 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Meaningful learning facilitates the assimilation of new knowledge into students' cognitive structures and real-life contexts (Ausubel, 1963;

Bryce & Blown, 2024). Meanwhile, joyful learning is designed to create a positive classroom climate to reduce anxiety and enhance motivation (Liu & Zhou, 2024). For young learners, integrating these three pillars is essential to facilitate cognitive needs while providing emotional security during foreign language acquisition (Cameron, 2001).

Although the MMJL framework promises an ideal learning ecosystem, the transition from policy to classroom practice is rarely linear; rather, it is a process laden with interpretation and negotiation (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012). Previous studies have highlighted the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*; however, the majority of research has focused on teachers' perceptions, readiness, and challenges at the secondary school level (Reza, Rohmah, & Abdullah, 2023; Tatipang et al., 2026), or relied heavily on self-reported data (Isnaeni et al., 2024). While a quantitative study by Santosa, Kusuma, and Budiarta (2026) did examine MMJL, their research focused exclusively on student learning outcomes within an artificial intelligence (AI)-based environment. There is a distinct gap in the literature regarding how MMJL principles are procedurally translated from planning documents (*Teaching Modules*) to the enactment of classroom interactions in regular primary school settings.

Analyzing the gap between written plans and actual instructional practices holds high theoretical and practical urgency. The quality of teacher-student interactions and the emotional climate are determining factors in successful language acquisition for young learners (Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2023). In reality, elementary-level English teachers often struggle to formulate and execute instructional strategies that accommodate heterogeneous student needs and higher-order thinking demands (Grecu, 2023; Mubarok, Herdiawan, & Nurhidayat, 2024). If the application of MMJL remains confined to managerial routines or formal planning documents without deep scaffolding during the language production phase, the essence of deep learning will not be achieved. Therefore, direct observation of this policy enactment is urgently needed to evaluate pedagogical realities at the grassroots level.

Driven by this research gap and urgency, this study aims to comprehensively describe the extent to which the principles of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning are implemented in English language teaching at SDN 01 Pijot Utara. Specifically, this study traces the manifestation of these three principles through two crucial stages: instructional design in the Teaching Module and its realization (classroom enactment) during the teaching and learning process. This research is not designed to measure instructional effectiveness or student learning outcomes, but rather to uncover the dynamics of how policy intentions are articulated and adapted by teachers when confronting complex classroom realities.

This article is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of English language education. Theoretically, this study extends the empirical reach of the Policy Enactment theory by grounding it in the primary education context, presenting an in-depth description of how macro-policies are adapted into micro-pedagogical practices. Practically, the findings offer a reflective and evaluative foundation for educators, administrators, and curriculum developers to position the Teaching Module not merely as a formal administrative requirement, but as a dynamic pedagogical instrument equipped with anticipatory scaffolding to support higher-order cognitive engagement in young learners.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018). This design was deliberately selected as it allows for a holistic, in-depth, and contextual investigation of the implementation of learning principles without variable manipulation or statistical intervention, aligning with the theoretical lens of Policy Enactment (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012). Data collection was conducted at SDN 01 Pijot Utara, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year.

Given the qualitative nature of the study, participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on considerations of administrative accessibility and contextual suitability. The primary subject (informant) was a sixth-grade English teacher who served a dual role as both the designer of the Teaching Module and the classroom practitioner. Meanwhile, the sixth-grade students acted as secondary participants whose observable behaviors provided context regarding the climate of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning (MMJL) during the lessons. The primary object of analysis during the planning stage was the English Teaching Module document formulated by the teacher.

The researcher acted as the primary instrument (human instrument) to ensure flexibility and depth of interpretation (Sugiyono, 2017). To maintain systematic data collection, two supplementary instruments were employed: a structured document analysis sheet and a semi-structured observation checklist accompanied by field notes. All indicators within the instruments were deductively derived from the theoretical constructs of Mindful Learning (Bishop et al., 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003), Meaningful Learning (Ausubel, 1963; Bryce & Blown, 2024), and Joyful Learning (Liu & Zhou, 2024). The instrument grid was developed in detail to ensure that each indicator was measurable and relevant to the three MMJL pillars, encompassing aspects such as student awareness during learning, the relevance of materials to real-life contexts, and a classroom atmosphere that is enjoyable and free from anxiety. The validity and reliability (trustworthiness) of the data were ensured through the application of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria: (1) credibility was established through methodological triangulation and member checking with the teacher; (2) transferability was facilitated through thick description; (3) dependability was maintained via an audit trail; and (4) confirmability was applied using a bracketing technique to preserve the neutrality of the researcher's interpretations.

Data collection was carried out through two complementary main procedures. First, document analysis was applied to the Teaching Module to identify the presence of MMJL indicators across the pre-teaching, while-teaching, and post-teaching stages. Second, direct non-participant classroom observations were conducted over several regular English learning sessions. These observations utilized a criterion-referenced coding system to evaluate activities based on three categories: Implemented (T), Partially Implemented (TS), and Not Implemented (TT).

All raw data from the document review and observation notes were analyzed using the Interactive Model of Data Analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). This process occurred continuously through three stages: data reduction to filter and categorize findings into the three MMJL clusters, data display in the form of narrative texts and thematic matrices (cross-source triangulation), and conclusion drawing to

evaluate the extent of convergence or divergence between the planned documents and the realities of classroom execution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The triangulation results between document analysis (Teaching Module) and classroom observation (classroom enactment) revealed a polarized implementation pattern of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning (MMJL) principles based on the level of cognitive complexity of the activities. Documentarily, the Teaching Module comprehensively integrated the three MMJL pillars across all learning stages (Pre, While, and Post-teaching). In the implementation phase, the majority of activities demonstrated a "Convergent" status (Fully Implemented), particularly in the pre-teaching stage and receptive/guided phases, such as opening prayers (Mindful), contextual apperception (Meaningful), material presentation, and the use of visual media and group work (Joyful).

Although the instructional foundation was strongly established, observational data identified significant divergence ("Partially Implemented" status) in three crucial activities: Independent Writing Practice, Deep Reflection, and Lesson Summary. These three activities demand independent linguistic production and high-level metacognitive participation from students. The teacher appeared adept at managing managerial routines and presenting initial input, but encountered a bottleneck when required to facilitate student autonomy and higher-order intellectual engagement.

The triangulation results between document analysis (Teaching Module) and classroom observation (classroom enactment) revealed a polarized implementation pattern of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning (MMJL) principles based on the level of cognitive complexity of the activities. Documentarily, the Teaching Module comprehensively integrated the three MMJL pillars across all learning stages (Pre, While, and Post-teaching). In the implementation phase, the majority of activities demonstrated a "Convergent" status (Fully Implemented), particularly in the pre-teaching stage and receptive/guided phases, such as opening prayers (Mindful), contextual apperception (Meaningful), material presentation, and the use of visual media and group work (Joyful).

Although the instructional foundation was strongly established, observational data identified significant divergence ("Partially Implemented" status) in three crucial activities: Independent Writing Practice, Deep Reflection, and Lesson Summary. These three activities demand independent linguistic production and high-level metacognitive participation from students. The teacher appeared adept at managing managerial routines and presenting initial input, but encountered a bottleneck when required to facilitate student autonomy and higher-order intellectual engagement.

To facilitate reader comprehension, the following summary table presents a comparison between the planned activities in the Teaching Module and their classroom implementation:

Table 1. Comparison between Teaching Module Planning and Classroom Implementation of MMJL Principles

MMJL Principle	Learning Stage	Planned in Teaching Module	Classroom Implementation	Status
Mindful Learning	Pre-teaching	Opening prayer and ice-breaking	Implemented as planned	I

Mindful Learning	While-teaching	Focus on teacher instructions	Students paid good attention	I
Mindful Learning	Post-teaching	Independent reflection	Only some students responded	PI
Meaningful Learning	Pre-teaching	Contextual apperception (daily life)	Implemented with concrete examples	I
Meaningful Learning	While-teaching	Material presentation with visual media	Media used effectively	I
Meaningful Learning	Post-teaching	Independent writing practice	Students struggled without intensive guidance	PI
Joyful Learning	Pre-teaching	Games and songs	Pleasant classroom atmosphere	I
Joyful Learning	While-teaching	Group work and discussion	Active student collaboration	I
Joyful Learning	Post-teaching	Collaborative summarization	Teacher dominated the summary	PI

Note: I = Implemented (Convergent), PI = Partially Implemented (Divergent), NI = Not Implemented

The findings above uncover the complex reality of curriculum policy implementation at the grassroots level, which can be analyzed through three main pedagogical and theoretical dimensions:

Implementation Polarization: Between Routines and Cognitive Escalation

The implementation of Mindful Learning and Meaningful Learning proved highly effective at the procedural level, yet faltered at the productive level. The teacher successfully established cognitive presence and psychological safety through routines (mindful), aligning with the concepts of Bishop et al. (2004) and Brown & Ryan (2003). Similarly, the connection between English materials and students' real lives through apperception confirmed Ausubel's (1963) assimilation theory. However, the failure to fully execute reflection and independent writing activities indicates an absence of anticipatory scaffolding. This confirms the findings of Mubarok, Herdiawan, and Nurhidayat (2024) and Grecu (2023) that the transition from material presentation to higher-order thinking activities and independent language production remains a primary weakness for elementary EFL teachers. On the other hand, Joyful Learning was fully implemented (100% convergent) as an affective scaffold that reduced anxiety (Liu & Zhou, 2024), but its utilization stopped as a classroom management instrument rather than serving as a driver for complex cognitive stimulation.

Cultural Negotiation and the Reality of Policy Enactment

The gap between the Teaching Module and classroom execution, particularly in the Lesson Summary and reflection sessions, does not merely reflect pedagogical incompetence, but rather an intelligent yet dilemmatic form of cultural negotiation (policy enactment) (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012). Observations showed that students tended to be passive and anxious when faced with open-ended questions. To avoid classroom silence and protect students from embarrassment—a crucial emotional factor according to Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2023)—the teacher opted to take control and dominate the summary. This practice highlights the clash between a

student-centered curriculum vision and a traditional teacher-centered learning culture (Rahmawati et al., 2026; Isnaeni et al., 2024).

Redefining the Role of the Teaching Module

The divergence in independent writing practice proves that the current Teaching Module functions more as an administrative document containing declarations of intent (Richards, 2017), rather than as a dynamic pedagogical instrument. The module planned for student autonomy but failed to design process differentiation pathways when students encountered difficulties. The absence of alternative routes (anticipatory scaffolds) in the written document forced the teacher to make reactive and spontaneous adaptations in the classroom, leading to partial execution.

Implications for Teacher Professional Development

These findings have important implications for teacher professional development. First, teacher training should be directed not only toward conceptual understanding of MMJL, but also toward developing practical skills in designing anticipatory scaffolding that can anticipate student difficulties during the language production phase. Second, teachers need to be equipped with differentiation strategies that allow them to adjust the level of support based on students' cognitive readiness. Third, the development of Teaching Modules should involve teachers collaboratively so that the document is not merely administrative, but truly becomes an operational and adaptive guide to classroom dynamics. Fourth, schools and policymakers need to provide space for reflection and professional discussion among teachers to share best practices in implementing MMJL principles.

Theoretically, this study contributes to extending the empirical application of the Policy Enactment theory (Ball et al., 2012) into the micro-context of English language teaching at the primary education level, proving that policy is articulated through an adaptive compromise between curriculum design and students' cognitive/affective readiness. Practically, this study highlights the urgency for curriculum designers and schools to shift the focus of teacher training from mere administrative preparation to the development of skills in designing anticipatory scaffolding and instructional differentiation.

Nevertheless, this research is limited by a single case study design using qualitative techniques that rely on document analysis and observation; thus, it cannot statistically measure the impact of MMJL on learning outcomes and has not incorporated in-depth interviews regarding teachers' cognitive justifications. Therefore, future research is recommended to utilize a mixed-methods approach across multiple sites and comprehensively investigate the direct correlation between the implementation of differentiated MMJL strategies and metrics of students' language acquisition achievement.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the principles of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning (MMJL) are meticulously embedded in the structural design of the Teaching Module at SDN 01 Pijot Utara, yet their enactment reveals a critical fracture between policy intentions and classroom realities. While the teacher successfully operationalizes these principles during procedural and receptive instructional phases, the implementation falters during activities necessitating higher-order cognitive engagement and independent linguistic production. This research confirms that the

transition from policy to pedagogy is not a mechanical process, but an adaptive negotiation influenced by the teacher's agency, students' cognitive readiness, and prevailing teacher-centered instructional norms.

The implications of these findings are twofold. Theoretically, this study extends the empirical reach of the Policy Enactment theory by illustrating how national-level curriculum mandates are filtered and adapted within the micro-context of primary education. Practically, these results suggest that the efficacy of the Merdeka Curriculum relies less on strict adherence to planning documents and more on the teacher's ability to design anticipatory scaffolds. Consequently, the Teaching Module must evolve from a static administrative requirement into a dynamic pedagogical instrument that anticipates classroom contingencies and accommodates diverse learning needs.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on educational reform by providing a descriptive account of how Deep Learning principles manifest in routine, non-experimental settings. It shifts the academic focus from assessing learning products to understanding the pedagogical processes that define the classroom experience. Furthermore, this study makes a significant contribution to the development of English language education at the primary school level by presenting empirical evidence on the gap between curriculum policy and classroom practice, thereby offering a foundation for more context-responsive teacher training and instructional design.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed for different stakeholders. For teachers and curriculum developers, the Teaching Module must be transformed from a static administrative document into a dynamic pedagogical instrument equipped with anticipatory scaffolding and differentiated strategies that can be activated to accommodate students' diverse readiness levels and emerging difficulties during the language production phase, ensuring that higher-order thinking and independent linguistic production are systematically supported rather than merely prescribed. For schools and policymakers, it is essential to provide continuous training and mentoring programs that focus not merely on conceptual understanding of MMJL, but on developing practical skills for bridging the persistent gap between planning and classroom execution, alongside creating collaborative professional spaces where teachers can engage in reflective discussions, share best practices, and collectively problem-solve implementation challenges. For future researchers, this study suggests utilizing mixed-methods designs across multiple sites, incorporating in-depth teacher interviews to uncover the cognitive dimensions of pedagogical decision-making, and investigating the longitudinal correlation between differentiated MMJL implementation and student language acquisition outcomes, as well as exploring how institutional cultures and professional support systems shape the trajectory of policy enactment in diverse educational contexts.

REFERENCES

Ausubel, D. P. (1963). *The psychology of meaningful verbal learning*. Grune & Stratton.

Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Braun, A. (2012). *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools*. Routledge.

Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., Segal, Z. V., Abbey, S., Speca, M., Velting, D., & Devins, G. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 11*(3), 230–241. https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy/bph077

Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*(4), 822–848. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822

Bryce, T. G. K., & Blown, E. J. (2024). Ausubel's meaningful learning re-visited. *Current Psychology, 43*(5), 4579–4598. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04482-4

Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge University Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Isnaeni, L., Suwartono, T., Dewi, I. A. S., & Rininggayuh, E. (2024). From policy to practice: How English teachers bridge the gap in the classroom. *Indonesian Journal of Research in Education (IJRE), 4*(2). https://doi.org/10.26877/ijre.v4i2.795

Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia. (2025). *Pembelajaran mendalam: Menuju pendidikan bermutu untuk semua* [Naskah akademik].

Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia. (2022). *Kurikulum operasional di satuan pendidikan*.

Grecu, Y. V. (2023). Differentiated instruction: Curriculum and resources provide a roadmap to help English teachers meet students' needs. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *125*, 104064. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104064

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.

Liu, Q., & Zhou, W. (2024). The impact of teachers' emotional support on EFL learners' online learning engagement: The role of enjoyment and boredom. *Acta Psychologica, 250*, 104504. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104504

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Mubarok, Y., Herdiawan, R. D., & Nurhidayat, E. (2024). Mindful, meaningful, and joyful approaches: Challenges and potential solutions as perceived by EFL teachers at the primary school level. *Papanda Journal of English Education, 3*(2), 61–72. https://doi.org/10.56916/pjee.v3i2.1818

Nikolov, M., & Mihaljević Djigunović, J. (2023). Studies on pre-primary learners of foreign languages, their teachers, and parents: A critical overview of publications between 2000 and 2022. *Language Teaching, 56*(4), 451–477. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444823000095

Rahmawati, Y., Herlina, H., Lapasere, S., Gagaramusu, Y. B. M., Mas'adi, M., & Surahman, S. (2026). Teachers' understanding and implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian elementary schools. *Journal of Innovation and Research in Primary Education, 5*(1), 1094–1107. https://doi.org/10.56916/jirpe.v5i1.2966

Reza, F., Rohmah, Z., & Abdullah, N. N. (2023). Challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka for EFL teachers. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies), 10*(2), 439–469. https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v10i2.1899

Richards, J. C. (2017). *Curriculum development in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Santosa, M. H., Kusuma, I. P. I., & Budiarta, L. G. R. (2026). Investigating the role of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning in promoting deep learning in AI-based language learning. *Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 9*, 103446. https://doi.org/10.29140/ajal.2026.103446

Sugiyono. (2017). *Metode penelitian pendidikan: Pendekatan kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.

Tatipang, D. P., Dollah, S., Mahmud, M., Asrifan, A., & Lengkoan, F. (2026). EFL teachers' understanding and readiness for the deep learning approach: A qualitative insight into Indonesian secondary schools. *Research and Innovation in Applied Linguistics (RIAL) Journal, 4*(1). https://doi.org/10.31963/rial.v4i1.5997

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.