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The Implementation of Constructivist-Based Deep Learning on Students' Mindsets in Writing Argumentative Essays at SMP Negeri 1 Sesenapang

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Abstract

Students' mindsets in writing argumentative essays greatly influence the quality of their written work; therefore, a learning approach capable of constructing and developing students' thinking patterns is needed to produce high-quality writing. The implementation of constructivist-based deep learning serves as a strategic alternative to improve the quality of argumentative essay writing instruction at SMP Negeri 1 Sesenapadang. This study was motivated by students' low ability to construct logical and critical arguments in argumentative essays. Students' mindsets tended to remain at a superficial level of understanding, making it necessary to introduce innovative learning approaches that encourage more meaningful comprehension. This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of constructivist-based deep learning and its influence on the transformation of students' mindsets in writing argumentative essays at SMP Negeri 1 Sesenapadang, Mamasa Regency. This study employed a quasi-experimental method using a Pretest–Posttest Control Group Design. The research instruments consisted of argumentative essay writing tests, student activity observation sheets, and interview guidelines to explore the depth of students' thinking patterns. Data were analyzed quantitatively to measure improvements in writing scores and qualitatively to map changes in students' mindsets based on constructivist indicators. The findings revealed that: (1) the implementation of constructivist-based deep learning was effectively carried out through stages of independent knowledge reconstruction and critical discussion; (2) there were significant changes in students' mindsets, as students became able to connect concepts multidimensionally and develop arguments based on valid evidence; and (3) students' argumentative essay writing skills improved, as indicated by the increase in average scores from the "Fair" category to the "Good/Very Good" category. In conclusion, the constructivist approach within the framework of deep learning is highly relevant for enhancing students' critical literacy and the quality of argumentative writing at the junior high school level.

Keywords: *Deep Learning, Constructivism, Mindset, Argumentative Essay, Sesenapadang*

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INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Curriculum directs Indonesian language learning toward the development of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and the cultivation of reflective and critical mindsets. Deep learning has emerged as one of the relevant approaches to address these challenges. Deep learning emphasizes meaningful understanding, the interconnectedness of concepts, and students' ability to transfer knowledge into new contexts (Muh Dliyaul Haq & Nova Tri Prasetiyo, 2025). This approach is in line with the demands of 21st-century education, which emphasize character building, creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

One of the topics in Indonesian language learning at the junior high school level is essay writing. According to Dinda Selviani Dewi, essays are categorized into six types: descriptive essays, critical essays, argumentative essays, editorial essays, reflective essays, and personal essays (Dinda Selviani Dewi, 2024). Essays present information, ideas, arguments, and the writer's emotional expressions toward a particular object or issue. Essay writing is inherently individual and depends greatly on the writer's perspective.

Argumentative essay writing is a learning topic that requires critical thinking skills and is taught at the junior high school level. An argumentative essay is a type of writing intended to convince readers of a particular position or claim regarding a debatable issue by using logical evidence, facts, and strong data rather than merely personal opinions or emotions. It should also present counterarguments to strengthen its credibility. The basic structure of an argumentative essay includes an introduction (background and thesis statement), body paragraphs (supporting arguments with evidence, counterarguments, and rebuttals), and a conclusion.

Students' mindsets greatly determine the quality of the essays they produce. Students with a growth mindset tend to be more open to feedback, willing to try new ideas, and persistent when facing difficulties. In contrast, students with a fixed mindset tend to avoid challenges and perceive writing as a difficult and burdensome activity. The implementation of constructivist-based learning in argumentative essay writing allows students to explore contextual issues, engage in discussions, ask questions, and critically test arguments. Thus, the writing process is no longer viewed as a mechanical task but rather as a meaningful and in-depth thinking process.

Deep learning has emerged as a relevant approach to address these educational challenges. It emphasizes meaningful understanding, conceptual interconnectedness, and students' ability to transfer knowledge into new situations (Muh Dliyaul Haq & Nova Tri Prasetiyo, 2025). This approach aligns with the goals of 21st-century education, which emphasize character development, creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills. The implementation of constructivist-based deep learning is believed to shape positive student mindsets in argumentative essay writing because students are actively involved in the learning process, given opportunities to explore, and appreciated for their thinking processes. Eka Selvi Handayani, Ferry Fernando, Sherly Gaspersz, Ridwan, Ahmadin, and Euis Kusumarini (2025) explained that deep learning serves as a pedagogical strategy oriented toward conceptual understanding, critical thinking skills, and interdisciplinary connections.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, which combines qualitative (in-depth) and quantitative (numerical/statistical) data within a single study to obtain a richer and more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon while overcoming the limitations of using only one method. The purpose of this approach is integration, triangulation, and validation of findings, often using sequential or concurrent designs for data collection and analysis (Samsu, 2021: 161). According to Aramo-Immonen, mixed-methods research is an approach that combines quantitative and qualitative forms within one research process, providing researchers across disciplines with broader opportunities to investigate research problems. Faisal Hakim Nasution, Risnita, M. Syahran Jailani, and Roni Junaidi (2024) concluded that mixed-methods research is an appropriate approach for studying the implementation of constructivist-based deep learning toward students' mindsets in writing argumentative essays at SMP Negeri 1 Sesenapadang.

Quantitative data were collected through surveys, experiments, and statistical measurements, while qualitative data were gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Observational data collection was conducted continuously from January to March 2026. The experimental process involved conducting pretests and posttests. The results of the pretests and posttests were averaged to obtain quantitative data. Both quantitative and qualitative findings were then integrated to produce comprehensive conclusions regarding the results of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of constructivist-based deep learning represents a learning approach that constructs active, creative, and innovative student mindsets in writing argumentative essays. Writing argumentative essays is no longer perceived by students as a burdensome activity; instead, it becomes a challenge that increases their curiosity and motivation to learn. Students become motivated to explore new contextual issues, engage in discussions, ask questions, and critically evaluate arguments.

The implementation of constructivist-based deep learning in teaching argumentative essay writing focuses on the active role of students in constructing their own understanding and skills through authentic experiences and social interaction. The implementation stages are as follows:

1. **Designing a Supportive Learning Environment**
   a. Creating a learning community by encouraging collaboration through classroom discussions, peer groups, and peer reviews to exchange ideas and feedback.
   b. Providing authentic resources by using real argumentative essays from reliable sources such as articles, opinion pieces, newspapers, or academic journals for analysis and discussion.

2. **Project-Based and Discovery Learning Activities**
   a. Identifying real-world problems by allowing students to select argumentative topics that are relevant and meaningful to them, thereby fostering a sense of ownership in learning.

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b. Collecting evidence and analysis by independently conducting research to gather supporting evidence, validate information sources, and rely on factual data.
c. Organizing arguments and drafting essays by focusing on students' understanding of argumentative essay structures, including thesis statements, supporting arguments, counterarguments, and conclusions through repeated writing exercises.
d. Applying iterative feedback cycles through repeated writing processes, where initial drafts are reviewed by teachers and peers, followed by in-depth revisions by students.

3. The Teacher's Role as Facilitator

a. Teachers act as facilitators rather than mere providers of facts by guiding the process, asking open-ended questions (Socratic questioning), challenging assumptions, and providing scaffolding when necessary.
b. Building the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by identifying what students can already accomplish independently and providing appropriate support to help them achieve higher levels of competence.

4. Authentic Assessment

a. Focusing on both process and product, meaning that assessment evaluates not only the final essay but also the research process, initial drafts, and students' reflections on feedback.
b. Encouraging self-assessment by teaching students to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their own arguments and writing using clear rubrics.

The stages of implementing constructivist-based deep learning in argumentative essay writing described above can be illustrated through a conceptual framework.

CONCLUSION

Changes in students' mindsets toward becoming active, creative, and innovative thinkers with curiosity about emerging issues are essential in meeting the demands of the 21st century. A constructivist mindset encourages a proactive approach to learning. Individuals do not merely memorize facts but actively engage in experimentation, collaboration, and reflection. This process enables continuous adjustment of thinking patterns based on new evidence and experiences. Such a mindset views challenges as opportunities to develop stronger understanding rather than threats to existing abilities. Challenges instead become triggers for discovering alternative solutions.

Writing argumentative essays requires a growth mindset to develop ideas and analyze various contextual issues in order to identify causes and effects of a topic. Constructivist-based deep learning encourages students to think actively, experiment, and construct their own concepts so that understanding becomes meaningful through learning by doing. As noted by Oktona Erwin (2018), writers can learn how successful authors initiate writing activities and develop their ideas. Therefore, it can be concluded that the implementation of constructivist-based deep learning is appropriate for transforming students' mindsets into more developed patterns in writing argumentative essays at SMP Negeri 1 Sesenapadang.

After undergoing several stages of learning and practice guided by subject teachers, improvements could be observed in both students' mindsets and writing outcomes. During the pretest stage, only about 20 out of 70 ninth-grade students achieved good scores in argumentative essay writing. This means that 50 students, or approximately 71.43%, had not yet mastered argumentative essay writing skills. However, after the implementation of constructivist-based deep learning, the number of students achieving good scores increased to 45 students, while only 25 students still had not achieved satisfactory performance. These findings indicate that constructivist-based deep learning plays a significant role in transforming students' mindsets in argumentative essay writing, enabling students to develop better argumentative writing skills, which had previously been perceived as difficult.

Several factors still contributed to students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays, including: (a) irregular class attendance; (b) limited comprehension abilities; and (c) the less-than-optimal implementation of constructivist-based deep learning due to limited school facilities and infrastructure.

The findings of this study may serve as a reference for improving students' argumentative essay writing skills as well as other competencies. Implementing constructivist-based deep learning can help construct more organized mindsets, enabling students to produce more meaningful and developed work. Furthermore, this study may serve as a reference for teachers to maximize instructional practices and technology integration in learning in accordance with the demands of educational development in the modern era.

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