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**CONAPLIN18**  
**Empowering Voices in a**  
**Superdiverse World:**  
**Applicable Linguistics for**  
**Liberation and Innovation**

**Universitas Pendidikan**  
**Indonesia, Bandung, 29-30**  
**September 2025**

**Pursuing trends or looking for  
problems? Being useful in the  
current education crisis in  
Indonesia**

## **Definitions**

**Our job as *applied linguists* is simple: ‘to investigate real-world problems in which language is a central issue’ (Brumfit 1995, 27).**

**‘*Appliable linguistics* is an approach that takes everyday real-life language-related problems ... in diverse social, professional and academic contexts as a starting point’ (Mahboob & Knight 2020, 1).**



**Part 1**  
**Fashions in education**

**Fashions in education change over time.  
Especially in English language education.**

**This happens on an international scale. See these books  
about English language teaching published by Oxford  
University Press and Cambridge University Press in 1979,  
1998 and 2025.**

## ***The Communicative Approach***

(English language teaching.  
Oxford University Press. 1979.)



## ***ESP***

(English language teaching,  
Cambridge University Press.  
1998.)



## ***Learner Agency***

(English language teaching.  
Oxford University Press. 2025.)





**In Indonesia, fashions in education also change over time.**

**- RSBI (Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional), 2003-2013**

**- Kurikulum Merdeka, 2020-2025?**

**<https://www.kurikulum-merdeka.id/>**

**- deep learning, 2024-**

**- Sekolah Rakyat, 2025-**

**- PKGSD-MBI (Peningkatan Kompetensi Guru Sekolah Dasar dalam Mengajar Bahasa Inggris), 2027-?**

**<https://gurudikdas.dikdasmen.go.id/pkbi>**

## ***Deep learning* according to Wikipedia** **([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep\\_learning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep_learning))**

Most modern ***deep learning*** models are based on multi-layered [neural networks](#) such as [convolutional neural networks](#) and [transformers](#), although they can also include [propositional formulas](#) or latent variables organized layer-wise in deep [generative models](#) such as the nodes in [deep belief networks](#) and deep [Boltzmann machines](#).

Fundamentally, ***deep learning*** refers to a class of [machine learning algorithms](#) in which a hierarchy of layers is used to transform input data into a progressively more abstract and composite representation.

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## ***Deep learning* in Indonesian education contexts:**

... emphasises not just knowledge transfer but also critical thinking, meaningful engagement and the development of student agency. ... The introduction of English into the primary sector further amplifies the need for innovative, inclusive and context-sensitive pedagogies. Early English education, when guided by ***deep learning*** principles, can move beyond rote memorisation to cultivate genuine language proficiency, critical literacy and respect for multilingual identities. By integrating ***deep learning*** with English instruction, teachers can create learning environments that value students' backgrounds.



## **Part 2**

**A major problem in  
Indonesia's education  
system**

# Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

## Average reading skills in Bahasa Indonesia of 15 year olds

| 2000                                        | 2022                                        |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 41 participating nations                    | 81 participating nations                    |
| Indonesia mean score 371                    | Indonesia mean score 359                    |
| Indonesia ranked 39 from 41 nations         | Indonesia ranked 76 from 81 nations         |
| 93% of nations scored higher than Indonesia | 93% of nations scored higher than Indonesia |

## **OECD's conclusion**

*Indonesia is still far from the objective of equipping all students with the minimum level of reading skills that enables further learning and participation in knowledge-based societies. (OECD 2016, p 164)*

## **UK universities' perceptions**

*Challenges remain in terms of quality ... Students performance in international assessments, such as PISA, remain below global averages. (British Council 2025, p 22)*

## Government responses

*Jika dilihat kenaikan peringkat Indonesia sepanjang 2006-2015, kita meningkat 69 point. ... OECD mencatat, Indonesia adalah negara nomor 3 dengan perkembangan terpesat di dunia.*

*Pencapaian Indonesia dalam ... PISA 2015 menggembirakan. Ada kemajuan yang dihasilkan oleh pembangunan pendidikan di Tanah Air.*

*Peringkat PISA Indonesia 2022 menjadi capaian paling tinggi ... sepanjang sejarah PISA mulai 2000.*

*Untuk literasi membaca, peringkat Indonesia di PISA 2022 naik 5-6 posisi dibanding 2018. Peningkatan peringkat ini menunjukkan ketangguhan sistem pendidikan Indonesia dalam mengatasi learning loss akibat pandemic.*

(Fero, Coleman & Madani, forthcoming)

**With more than 700 languages, Indonesia is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most multilingual nation in the world (Zein 2020).**

**Yet language is rarely mentioned as an issue (for example, in the *Kajian Akademik Kurikulum Merdeka*, Kemendikbudristek, 2024).**

**Compare with Canada, Sri Lanka, wilayah Patani in Thailand, etc etc.**



## **Part 3**

# **Conclusions and recommendations**

## **Fashions in education:**

- top down, often from a charismatic individual**
- built around a simple word or phrase**
- not an organic development from the current education system**
- unrelated to previous innovations**
- not based on a needs analysis**
- not clear what problem they are intended to solve**
- no evaluation or analysis of impact**
- disappear eventually (for example, after the 'founder' leaves the system or because of public protests)**

## Pursuing trends

- 1. Be sceptical about fashions in applied/appliable linguistics.**
- 2. Be sceptical about fashions in education.**
- 3. Be sceptical about what *pejabat* say about serious problems.**

## Looking for problems

- 1. Identify the most serious problems in education in Indonesia at the moment (for example, the inability to read at age 15 - the outcome of a colonial-era centralised monolithic language policy).**
- 2. Applied/appliable linguistics can help here: introduce a mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB MLE) policy (Wisbey 2013).**
- 3. Be useful!**



**Hatur nuhun**

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# Batik

|               |                                                                   |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title page:   | Garut, 2008 ( <i>pola ubin</i> )                                  |
| Part 1:       | Batik Kumar, Bandung, 2025                                        |
| Intermediate: | Batik EDU Heritage Centre, UPI, 2025 ( <i>pola Lereng Isola</i> ) |
| Part 2:       | Tasikmalaya, 2014                                                 |
| Conclusions:  | Trusmi, 1999                                                      |
| Hatur nuhun:  | Indramayu, 1999                                                   |