

ARTICLE

Teachers' PCK and Pedagogical Decisions in English Materials Design at Junior High School Tahfidz Entrepreneur Khairunnas Tuban

Alfi Az Zuhriyah,* Irmayani , Buyun Khulel, and Syifa Khuriyatuz Zahro

English Education Department, Darul Ulum Islamic University, Lamongan, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: alfizuhriyah.2022@mhs.unisda.ac.id

(Received: 01 December 2025; Accepted: 07 January 2026; Published: 30 April 2026)

Abstract

In the context of rapidly evolving educational demands and increasing integration of digital technologies, teachers are required to make informed and adaptive pedagogical decisions in designing effective learning materials. Understanding how these decisions are shaped is essential to improving English language teaching at the junior secondary school level. This study aims to explore and describe teachers' Pedagogical Decision Making in designing English learning materials through the perspective of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study collected data through in-depth interviews with English teachers, which were further triangulated with students' perceptions to ensure data validity and richness. The findings reveal that teachers' pedagogical decisions in material design are not simple tasks but complex processes shaped by their knowledge of learners' characteristics, curriculum demands, available resources, sociocultural context, and the growing integration of educational technology. Teachers consistently adjust the linguistic complexity of texts, select contextually relevant topics, and apply various scaffolding strategies to support students in overcoming linguistic limitations. In addition, teachers must balance the use of standardized textbooks with the need to modify materials to align with core competencies and students' profiles. The study also highlights that emotional and motivational factors play an essential role in decision-making, particularly in maintaining students' engagement and confidence. These results suggest that teachers' PCK is dynamic and continuously evolving through reflection, teaching experience, and responsiveness to classroom realities. Therefore, the study recommends the implementation of more systematic and sustained professional development programs focusing on material design, PCK enhancement, and digital literacy. Such initiatives are crucial to empower teachers in creating English learning materials that are contextual, innovative, and responsive to the diverse needs of contemporary learners.

Keywords: English Learning Materials; Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK); Pedagogical Decision Making.

1. Introduction

The development of English language education worldwide, including in Indonesia, has undergone significant transformation influenced by the demands of global communication, rapid technological advancement, and evolving educational paradigms [1]. English is widely recognized as an international language and plays a crucial role in facilitating cross-cultural communication. In the Indonesian context, English as a foreign language (EFL) has a significant role in the learning process, where students are expected to develop proficiency for communicative purposes, particularly in interacting with native speakers. As stated in [2], “learning a second language is defined as acquiring the ability to use its structure within a general vocabulary under essentially the conditions of normal communication among native speakers at conversational speed.”

Furthermore, English is no longer perceived merely as a school subject, but rather as an essential competency required for academic mobility, professional advancement, and active participation in a globalized world. These developments place teachers in a pivotal role, as they are responsible for ensuring that classroom instruction remains effective, adaptive, and responsive to learners’ needs [3]. Within this context, Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) emerges as a central component of teachers’ professional practice, particularly in the design and selection of learning materials that align with learners’ characteristics, curriculum objectives, and contextual demands [4].

Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) is a concept introduced by Lee S. Shulman in the 1980s. Shulman argued that effective teaching requires more than mastery of subject matter or general pedagogical skills alone. Rather, effective instruction depends on the teacher’s ability to integrate content knowledge with appropriate pedagogical strategies. According to Shulman, teachers must understand how to present specific subject matter in ways that are accessible and comprehensible to learners. This specialized form of knowledge is referred to as Pedagogical Content Knowledge. PCK encompasses a teacher’s ability to transform subject matter into forms that facilitate student learning, including the selection of appropriate instructional strategies, anticipation of common student misconceptions, and the use of suitable examples, explanations, and conceptual representations.

Furthermore, Shulman emphasized that PCK constitutes the core of professional teaching, as it directly links what teachers know with how they enact that knowledge in classroom practice. In summary, Shulman’s framework highlights that effective teaching is not merely about mastering content or pedagogy in isolation, but about integrating both dimensions to enhance student understanding [5].

The historical development of English Language Teaching (ELT) reflects a series of methodological shifts that have significantly reshaped teachers’ roles and responsibilities. Early instructional practices in the nineteenth century were dominated by the Grammar Translation Method, which emphasized the explicit teaching of grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary, and the translation of literary texts [6]. Within this paradigm, instructional materials were largely rigid, and teachers’ pedagogical decision-making was limited, as teaching relied heavily on prescribed textbooks and standardized content [7].

The mid-twentieth century witnessed the emergence of the Audio-Lingual Method, which was strongly influenced by structural linguistics and behaviorist psychology. This approach emphasized repetitive drills, pattern practice, and the formation of language habits. Although it required a greater degree of pedagogical planning compared to earlier methods, the teacher’s role largely remained that of an instructor responsible for delivering predetermined instructional materials [8].

With the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1970s and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the 1980s and subsequent decades, the focus of language instruction shifted from the mastery of linguistic forms to the development of communicative competence. Within

these approaches, teachers are expected to design meaningful learning experiences, select authentic materials, and facilitate interactive communication rather than merely transmit knowledge. This transformation represents a significant paradigm shift, positioning teachers as designers of learning who are responsible for creating and adapting instructional materials that promote real-world communication [8].

Despite ongoing curriculum reforms and the increasing emphasis on learner-centered pedagogy, several challenges persist in English language classrooms in Indonesia [9]. One prominent issue is the continued reliance on government-issued textbooks and commercially produced materials, which often fail to align with learners' actual proficiency levels, sociocultural contexts, and interests. For example, many secondary school students encounter difficulties in comprehending reading texts that exceed their linguistic capabilities. Such challenges frequently arise because standardized instructional materials tend to overlook the diversity of learners across different regions and educational settings [10].

Additionally, the rapid development of technology has shaped students' learning preferences and exposure to multimodal content such as videos, online articles, podcasts, and social media [11]. However, many existing English learning materials fail to incorporate culturally relevant, digital, and interactive elements that resonate with contemporary learners [12]. Teachers, therefore, face the challenge of designing materials that not only fulfill curricular requirements but also appeal to digitally oriented students. Their pedagogical decisions must take into account factors such as accessibility, technological resources, student readiness, and instructional goals [13].

The situation became even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when online learning required teachers to redesign materials suitable for digital platforms [14]. Materials used in face-to-face classrooms could not simply be transferred to online settings without significant adaptations [15]. Many teachers realized that students struggled to engage with text-heavy worksheets or static PDFs, prompting the need for materials that were visually appealing, interactive, and cognitively manageable [3]. This phenomenon highlights the crucial role of teacher decision making in material design, particularly in unprecedented or rapidly changing educational contexts [16].

Based on the historical overview, observed classroom phenomena, and theoretical perspectives discussed above, it is evident that pedagogical decision - making in the design of learning materials — particularly when examined through the lens of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) — constitutes a highly significant area of inquiry. The design of instructional materials lies at the core of teaching practice, and the quality of teachers' decisions directly influences the effectiveness of English language instruction.

However, existing studies indicate a persistent gap between the theoretical framework of pedagogical decision-making and its practical implementation in classroom contexts. Many teachers have not fully operationalized these principles in designing instructional materials due to limited conceptual understanding, time constraints, and insufficient access to sustained professional development.

The ongoing transformation of English language education, together with the theoretical emphasis on Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) as conceptualized by Lee S. Shulman, underscores that the design of instructional materials is not a peripheral task but a central professional responsibility of teachers. Despite extensive theoretical discourse on PCK and learner-centered pedagogy, empirical studies continue to reveal a persistent gap between pedagogical theory and its implementation in classroom practice, particularly within the Indonesian educational context. Teachers frequently encounter structural, contextual, and technological challenges that complicate the effective integration of content knowledge and pedagogical strategies in material development.

Accordingly, a systematic investigation into teachers' pedagogical decision-making in the design and

adaptation of English learning materials is both timely and necessary. Such an inquiry is essential not only for bridging the divide between theory and practice but also for strengthening teacher professionalism and enhancing the overall effectiveness of English language instruction.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative research approach utilizing a case study methodology. A qualitative approach was selected as the study aims to explore and gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and their pedagogical decision-making processes in designing English learning materials [17].

The study adopts a descriptive qualitative design, which seeks to provide a rich and comprehensive portrayal of how teachers interpret their pedagogical roles and how pedagogical decision-making informs their choices in developing or selecting English learning materials [18]. This design enables the researcher to investigate real-life practices and to examine the meanings that teachers construct regarding their instructional decisions. Through descriptive analysis, the study aims to identify patterns, themes, and insights that reflect teachers' pedagogical knowledge and reasoning [19].

Junior High School Tahfidz Entrepreneur Khairunnas Tuban was purposively selected as the research site based on several academic and contextual considerations. The school represents a unique educational setting that integrates formal junior high school education with Tahfidz (Qur'an memorization) and entrepreneurship-based character education. This integration creates a distinctive learning environment in which English teachers are required to design instructional materials that align not only with language learning objectives but also with religious values and entrepreneurial mindsets. Such a context provides valuable opportunities to examine how teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) informs their pedagogical decisions in material design [20].

The participants in this study consist of English teachers who are actively involved in designing or adapting learning materials. They are selected using purposive sampling, whereby participants are chosen based on specific criteria, such as teaching experience, involvement in curriculum planning, and willingness to share their professional practices. This sampling technique ensures that the participants possess the necessary knowledge and experience to provide relevant and meaningful insights aligned with the research objectives.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

Ms. Novia explained that designing learning materials is one of the most challenging aspects of her teaching practice. She emphasized that the textbook provided by the government is useful, but often too generalized and not fully aligned with her students' proficiency levels. She stated

"Many reading texts in the textbook are too long or contain vocabulary that my students rarely encounter. I often need to simplify or shorten the texts so they can understand the main ideas."

When asked about her decision-making process, she highlighted the importance of understanding her students' background knowledge. She mentioned that students in her school, which is located in a rural area, have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. This influences her choice of materials:

"I try to choose topics that relate to their daily lives. For example, instead of using texts about international tourism, I use texts about local traditions or farming activities because those topics are familiar to them."

Regarding Pedagogical Decision-Making, Ms. Novia acknowledged that although she understands the language content well, she sometimes struggles to find the best pedagogical strategies to present the content. She admitted that her Pedagogical Decision-Making improved mostly through experience rather than formal training

“Honestly, we rarely receive specific training on material development. Much of what I do now is based on trial and error over the years.”

Mr. Rusli, who has fewer years of teaching experience, shared that digital tools play a significant role in his decision-making. He often incorporates videos and online texts into his lessons, but finds that selecting appropriate digital materials is not always easy.

“Students enjoy learning with videos, but not all videos match the learning objectives. I have to edit or cut parts of the video so it fits the lesson.”

He described that Pedagogical Decision-Making helps him decide how to adjust the difficulty level of the material

“I need to consider not only the content but also how the students will process it. If the vocabulary is too difficult, I usually provide pre-teaching activities. If the grammar is complex, I simplify the structure.”

One major challenge he mentioned is time limitation:

“Designing materials takes a lot of time. Sometimes I want to create better worksheets, but I end up using the textbook because of my workload.”

Mr. Rusli responses highlight the struggle young teachers face between ideal pedagogical practices and practical constraints. Ms. Ariana emphasized curriculum alignment as her primary concern in designing materials. She elaborated that the school requires teachers to follow competency-based outcomes, so deciding what type of materials to use must always relate to the intended learning goals.

“When I design a worksheet or adapt a text, I always check whether it supports the main competencies. Sometimes teachers choose interesting materials, but they don’t necessarily help students achieve the learning objectives.”

She explained that her Pedagogical Decision Making is essential when selecting which grammar or vocabulary points to emphasize

“I know which parts of the material students usually find difficult, so I highlight those sections and provide additional exercises. This helps them understand the content more effectively.”

She also mentioned the importance of cultural sensitivity in material design

“Not all English materials from the internet are appropriate for our students. Some topics may contradict local values, so I always filter the content carefully.”

This student highlighted that they often struggle when the teacher uses English exclusively without explanations in Bahasa Indonesia. For them, well-designed materials with examples and pictures are very helpful.

“Materials that have pictures or examples make the lesson easier. Sometimes the teacher gives us tasks that are too long, and we don’t know what to do.”

The student also mentioned that worksheets with step-by-step instructions help them learn better.

"Worksheets that give steps, like first read, then answer, then discuss, are easier to follow."

This student described English learning as interesting but challenging. They noticed that different teachers use different materials, which affects their motivation.

"Some teachers use interesting materials like articles about teenagers or videos. But some teachers only use the textbook, and it becomes boring."

The student emphasized that they prefer learning materials that are updated and connected to real issues:

"I enjoy materials about social media, the environment, or daily life. It feels more relevant."

According to the student, materials that are too academic or outdated feel disconnected from their experiences.

3.2 Pedagogical Decision Making

One of the central insights emerging from the study is that teachers' decisions regarding the design and adaptation of English learning materials are not made in isolation; rather, they are shaped by a constellation of cognitive, contextual, and pedagogical factors. This finding reflects Lee Shulman's conception of teaching as a process that requires continual judgment and reasoning [21].

Furthermore, the findings indicate that material design extends beyond the mere selection of texts or exercises. Instead, teachers engage in a complex process that involves evaluating relevance, interpreting students' needs, balancing curriculum expectations, and anticipating potential learning challenges [22]. This dynamic interplay underscores that pedagogical reasoning constitutes a form of professional thinking that becomes increasingly sophisticated with accumulated teaching experience [23].

In practical terms, the design of instructional materials can be understood as a process of negotiation between what is pedagogically ideal and what is practically feasible, between curriculum demands and learners' readiness, and between instructional aspirations and institutional constraints [24]. Consequently, this perspective highlights that Pedagogical Decision Making is not a static body of knowledge; rather, it is continuously mobilized, adapted, and reconstructed through the decisions teachers make in practice [25].

Across the analysis, a prominent theme is the central role of teachers' knowledge of learners. This observation aligns with Lee Shulman's emphasis on understanding students' prior knowledge, misconceptions, and readiness. It also resonates with Pam Grossman's assertion that knowledge of learners constitutes a core dimension of Pedagogical Decision Making. In the context of this study, teachers demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to students' linguistic limitations, cognitive load, level of exposure to English, and socio-cultural backgrounds [26]. This awareness informs and shapes nearly every stage of the material design process:

- (a) Teachers modify the complexity of reading passages because they understand the students' vocabulary limitations.
- (b) They contextualize topics to reflect students' lived experiences, recognizing the importance of relevance.
- (c) They provide scaffolding strategies to ensure students can approach unfamiliar content without feeling overwhelmed [27].

This finding suggests that knowledge of learners is not merely a theoretical construct but serves

as the anchoring principle underlying teachers' instructional decisions. Teachers who demonstrate strong learner-related Pedagogical Decision Making are consequently better positioned to make pedagogical choices that enhance comprehension, foster motivation, and promote student engagement [28].

At the same time, while the curriculum functions as a foundational guideline that directs instructional goals, it also operates as a constraint that shapes Pedagogical Decision Making [29]. This dual role reflects Pam Grossman's conceptualization of "curriculum knowledge," wherein teachers are required not only to understand curricular requirements but also to interpret and enact them meaningfully in classroom practice.

The teachers in this study exhibit a nuanced understanding of curriculum intentions. They demonstrate an awareness that instructional materials must be aligned with targeted learning competencies, including reading comprehension, grammatical structures, and communicative objectives [30]. However, they simultaneously encounter pressures to adhere strictly to curriculum pacing and assessment demands, which can at times constrain their creativity in the design of learning materials [31].

This tension indicates that material design is shaped not simply by teacher autonomy but also by institutional expectations, standardized materials, and time constraints [32]. Teachers attempt to balance curriculum fidelity with pedagogical flexibility, navigating what Kennedy (2005) calls "curriculum enactment" rather than mere implementation. In this sense, their Pedagogical Decision Making involves an interpretative ability, the skill of translating curriculum goals into classroom realities through purposeful material decisions [33].

Material design does not occur in a vacuum; it is intricately tied to the sociocultural and institutional context of the school. This study reveals that teachers' decisions are profoundly influenced by contextual realities such as:

- (a) Students' limited exposure to English outside school. This shapes how much scaffolding teachers build into materials.
- (b) School infrastructure and resource availability. Teachers with access to technology incorporate digital materials, while those without such access rely more on printed materials.
- (c) Time limitations due to workload. Teachers often must choose between ideal pedagogical choices and pragmatic shortcuts.
- (d) Cultural considerations. Teachers must filter materials to ensure they remain appropriate for local norms [34].

These contextual forces echo the argument advanced by Kathleen Cochran et al. (1993) that Pedagogical Decision Making is not a universal construct; rather, it should be understood as "Pedagogical Content Knowing," a form of knowledge that evolves within specific teaching contexts. Accordingly, instead of conceptualizing contextual constraints merely as obstacles, this study recognizes them as integral components of teachers' decision-making frameworks [35]. The findings also highlight the importance of teachers' evolving professional identity in shaping pedagogical decisions. Teachers who see themselves as material creators rather than textbook deliverers demonstrate a higher degree of ownership and creativity. This aligns with modern ELT paradigms, where teachers are expected to assume roles such as:

- (a) Material Developers
- (b) Instructional Designers
- (c) Curriculum Negotiators
- (d) Classroom Researchers [36]

This expanded identity, however, depends heavily on teachers' confidence and sense of agency.

Teachers with greater experience develop stronger intuitions and pedagogical reasoning, reflecting Shulman's claim that Pedagogical Decision Making is cultivated over years of reflective practice. On the other hand, novice teachers demonstrate enthusiasm for innovation but often lack the experience or time to fully implement their ideas. This finding supports previous research that teacher identity and Pedagogical Decision Making grow interdependently [36].

An important insight from the data is that material design becomes a space where teachers' content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and curricular knowledge converge. Teachers do not simply choose materials; they reason through how content should be presented, how learning should be facilitated, and how objectives should be achieved. This reflection process often involves determining:

- (a) Which vocabulary is essential for comprehension? This reflects content knowledge.
- (b) How should complex ideas be broken down? This reflects pedagogical knowledge.
- (c) How does this support the required competency? This reflects curriculum knowledge [37].

The interplay of these decisions illustrates Shulman's vision of Pedagogical Decision Making as the "amalgam of content and pedagogy," demonstrating that material creation is a manifestation of professional thinking.

The findings show that teachers' practices mirror historical shifts in English language teaching. Whereas teachers in the GTM era relied heavily on prescribed textbooks, modern teachers operate in a landscape shaped by CLT and TBLT principles [38]. This theoretical shift manifests in several ways in the study, emphasizing meaning-making rather than grammar translation. Teachers prioritize comprehension of texts that students find relatable. Integration of real-world materials, Newspaper articles, social media content, and videos, these are all contemporary multimodal texts. Focus on communicative outcomes. Materials are designed to encourage discussion, sharing, and interaction. Adaptation rather than adoption of learning resources, Teachers no longer take textbooks at face value but evaluate and modify them. This demonstrates that teachers' material decisions reflect not only personal choices but also the broader evolution of language pedagogy [39].

Students' perceptions offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of teachers' decisions. When students find materials relatable, accessible, and clearly structured, it suggests successful Pedagogical Decision-Making enactment. Conversely, when materials feel difficult or irrelevant, it reflects gaps in teachers' pedagogical reasoning. Students in this study indicate that they learn best when materials are contextualized, scaffolded, visually supported, multimodal, step-by-step, and connected to real-life issues [40].

These observations resonate strongly with contemporary educational psychology, which emphasizes meaningfulness, cognitive accessibility, and multimodality as key drivers of learning. Students' responses, therefore, function as real-time feedback on the quality of teachers' Pedagogical Decision-Making enactment. Their voices confirm that Pedagogical Decision Making is not an abstract theory but a lived reality that shapes their motivation, comprehension, and engagement.

Despite strong theoretical grounding, the study reveals a significant gap between Pedagogical Decision Making theory and its practical enactment. Teachers understand what good materials should look like, but often struggle to implement theory-based decisions due to constraints such as limited time, limited training in material design, institutional textbook dependence, varied learner proficiency, resource limitations, and large class sizes. This confirms earlier research suggesting that teacher expertise is shaped not only by knowledge but also by structural and institutional conditions. Thus, the gap is not simply a matter of competence but of conditions.

One of the deeper implications of the findings is the understanding that teachers' professional growth does not occur through isolated training events, but through a sustained and cumulative process of decision making, reflection, and trial-and-error experiences [41]. This resonates with

Cochran et al.'s concept of Pedagogical Content Knowing, which positions teacher knowledge as dynamic and continuously shaped by the interplay of context, content, pedagogical strategies, and learner feedback [42].

In this study, teachers demonstrate that their ability to design effective materials emerges from repeated cycles of experimenting, evaluating, and revising their instructional choices. Over time, this iterative cycle strengthens their intuition about what works and what does not. For example, seasoned teachers naturally anticipate which vocabulary items students might struggle with, how long a text might take to process, or which types of tasks will generate engagement.

These anticipations are not merely guesses but are grounded in accumulated professional memory shaped by years of teaching. This evolving nature of knowledge implies that Pedagogical Decision Making cannot be viewed as a one-time acquisition. Instead, it is a professional habitus, continuously updated as teachers encounter new challenges, new cohorts of students, changes in curriculum, and shifts in educational technology. The implication is clear: effective material design is as much a product of experience as it is of formal knowledge.

Related to the growth of Pedagogical Decision Making is the role of reflective practice. Teachers in the study demonstrate implicit forms of reflection even if they do not label it as such. Their descriptions reveal constant self-questioning about material suitability, student comprehension, and instructional effectiveness. This reflection can be categorized into three forms:

- (A) Reflection-in-action. Occurs during teaching, when teachers adjust tasks spontaneously based on student reactions. Example forms observed in the findings:
 - (a) simplifying explanations mid-lesson
 - (b) adding more examples
 - (c) extending the time spent on a task
- (B) Reflection-on-action. Occurs after the lesson, when teachers evaluate what worked and what needs modification. Teachers often described redesigning worksheets or adapting texts because earlier versions did not achieve the desired outcomes. This form of reflection contributes significantly to long-term Pedagogical Decision-Making development.
- (C) Reflection-for-action. Forward-looking reflection, where teachers intentionally plan future lessons with anticipated challenges in mind. This reflective foresight aligns with the contemporary idea of teachers as "researchers" of their own classrooms. Taken together, reflection is a powerful mechanism that connects theory and practice. Reflection transforms content knowledge into actionable Pedagogical Decision Making [43].

Teachers' material design emerges not as a mechanical procedure but as an inherently creative and reflective pedagogical craft. Rather than simply following predetermined steps, teachers engage in a process of synthesizing ideas based on their pedagogical vision, contextual awareness, and professional judgment. In this craft-like process, teachers carefully consider topics that are most relevant to their students' lives, ensuring that learning materials reflect the experiences, interests, and realities familiar to learners [44].

They consistently evaluate which themes will resonate with students so that the content becomes more meaningful and accessible. In addition to choosing appropriate topics, teachers also adjust the linguistic difficulty of the materials. They simplify vocabulary, shorten sentence structures, or reorganize textual information whenever necessary to match students' proficiency levels. These linguistic adjustments are not arbitrary, but grounded in a deep understanding of students' cognitive readiness and their limited exposure to English [45].

Teachers also construct tasks in a sequence that supports comprehension and reduces cognitive overload. They design activities that begin with simpler, preparatory tasks, such as activating back-

ground knowledge or introducing key vocabulary, before moving into more complex tasks that require deeper engagement with the text. After these steps, teachers often include reflective or integrative activities to consolidate learning [46].

This progression demonstrates a deliberate pedagogical reasoning that integrates knowledge of learners with knowledge of content and instructional design. Many teachers enhance their materials by integrating multimodal elements, such as images, diagrams, or videos, to support students' understanding. The addition of visual and auditory elements helps learners grasp meaning more easily, especially when the content is unfamiliar or conceptually demanding [47].

Cultural responsiveness also plays a significant role in the creation of materials. Teachers must filter or adapt content to ensure that it aligns with local cultural norms, values, and sensitivities. They remove content that may conflict with community principles, adjust examples to better reflect students' social and cultural environments, and occasionally incorporate local stories or community issues to strengthen relevance. In doing so, teachers demonstrate an awareness that effective pedagogy must not only address linguistic and cognitive demands but also respect cultural identities. This contextual sensitivity reflects an important expansion of traditional Western Pedagogical Decision Making frameworks, which often do not emphasize cultural literacy as a central component. In the Indonesian context, the integration of cultural awareness becomes an essential dimension of Pedagogical Decision Making [48].

The process of designing materials also requires teachers to maintain a careful balance between relying on official textbooks and incorporating innovative modifications. Textbooks provide structure, alignment with curriculum standards, and administrative consistency, yet they often fail to fully meet students' needs. For this reason, teachers do not abandon textbooks entirely; instead, they use them as primary references and then adapt, extend, or replace content as needed [49].

This balanced approach reflects a global trend in English language teaching where teachers are increasingly viewed as reflective and critical users of textbooks rather than passive consumers. Maintaining this balance requires teachers to weigh multiple considerations simultaneously, including their professional judgment about students' needs, the expectations of school administrators, the time available to prepare lessons, and the resources accessible in their environments. Innovation and structure coexist within this dynamic negotiation, shaping teachers' instructional choices daily [50].

Scaffolding emerges as one of the most prominent features of teachers' pedagogical reasoning. Teachers understand that students cannot fully comprehend complex English texts without receiving structured support. To bridge this gap, they implement various forms of scaffolding, such as simplifying sentences, emphasizing key vocabulary, providing definitions, offering guiding questions, and using graphic organizers. They also design pre-learning activities that activate prior knowledge and reduce the cognitive burden placed on students [vandePol2010].

In addition to linguistic and cognitive scaffolding, teachers offer emotional support by selecting topics that are interesting or familiar to students, thereby reducing anxiety and enhancing engagement. Teachers further support learning by giving clear, step-by-step instructions to help students navigate tasks more confidently. This layered approach to scaffolding reflects a deep operationalization of Pedagogical Decision Making in practice, demonstrating how teachers connect complex content with learners' actual ability levels. The approach also aligns with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, highlighting how teachers guide students from their current level of competence toward their potential level of mastery [vandePol2010].

The cultural dimension further enriches the complexity of material design. Because English learning materials often originate from foreign cultural contexts, teachers must continually assess the cultural

appropriateness of texts. They remove or revise content that conflicts with local norms, integrate examples that reflect students' cultural backgrounds, and ensure that the learning environment remains respectful and inclusive. This cultural responsiveness illustrates how Pedagogical Decision Making in Indonesia must encompass a dimension of cultural literacy that ensures learning materials are not only pedagogically sound but also culturally aligned. Such responsiveness demonstrates the broader, context-bound nature of Pedagogical Decision Making in practice.

Alongside cultural awareness, the increasing integration of digital tools in education has expanded the boundaries of Pedagogical Decision Making in contemporary teaching. Teachers now frequently incorporate digital resources such as videos, online articles, interactive applications, and multimedia presentations. Their ability to select appropriate digital content, edit videos to suit learning purposes, and understand the cognitive load associated with multimedia materials reflects a growing intersection between Pedagogical Decision Making and technological pedagogical knowledge. In the 21st-century classroom, mastery of pedagogy and content alone is insufficient; teachers must also develop technological literacy to meet the demands of modern learners. The incorporation of digital tools not only enhances engagement but also diversifies the ways students access and process information, making learning more interactive and multimodal.

Finally, teachers' decisions are shaped not only by cognitive or professional considerations but also by emotional ones. Teachers consistently demonstrate a desire to protect students from feelings of discouragement, confusion, or failure. They choose topics that are relatable to minimize anxiety, simplify materials to prevent frustration, and incorporate enjoyable tasks to sustain motivation. They also avoid materials that may be excessively difficult, recognizing that such content can diminish students' confidence. These emotional considerations reveal that Pedagogical Decision Making involves not only intellectual knowledge but also emotional literacy. Teachers do not merely teach language; they shape students' emotional experiences, build confidence, and nurture a supportive learning environment.

4. Conclusion

The findings indicate that teachers' pedagogical decision-making in designing English learning materials is a complex and context-sensitive professional process. Rather than merely following textbooks, teachers make deliberate judgments based on their knowledge of content, pedagogy, learners, curriculum, culture, and technology. This reflects the essence of Pedagogical Content Knowledge as introduced by Lee S. Shulman.

The study shows that understanding students' linguistic abilities, backgrounds, and emotional needs is central to material design. Teachers adapt language, topics, and tasks to ensure accessibility while maintaining curriculum alignment. Their decisions are further shaped by contextual realities such as limited resources, time constraints, and diverse learning environments, requiring flexibility and creativity.

Additionally, cultural responsiveness and digital integration emerge as essential components of contemporary material development, underscoring the increasing significance of technological and contextual considerations in English language teaching. Moreover, emotional and motivational factors are shown to influence instructional choices, indicating that effective pedagogy must address not only cognitive but also affective dimensions of learning.

Overall, the study concludes that material design represents a dynamic enactment of Pedagogical Content Knowledge, shaped by professional judgment and real classroom conditions. Accordingly, strengthening teachers' competencies in material design, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, and digital literacy is essential for enhancing the quality and relevance of English language instruction.

References

- [1] S. Zein, D. Sukyadi, F. A. Hamied, and N. S. Lengkanawati. "English language education in Indonesia: A review of research (2011–2019)". In: *Lang. Teach.* 53.4 (Oct. 2020), pp. 491–523. doi: 10.1017/S0261444820000208.
- [2] I. Irmayani, A. D. Hapsari, and B. R. B. Paradieshta. "Strengthening Classroom Language to Enhance English Language Exposure in Class: Training Results for Non-Native English Teachers in Lamongan Regency". In: *Glob. Sustain. Community Engagem.* 1.4 (Oct. 2025), pp. 321–327. doi: 10.62568/GSCE.V1I4.490.
- [3] L. Fatmawati, D. Sofeny, and S. K. Zahro. "IJECA International Journal of Education & Curriculum Application Students' Attitudes Toward The Transformation of Online to Offline Learning in EFL Classroom". In: 4.3 (2021). doi: 10.31764/ijeca.v4i3.5818.
- [4] I. Gandana and G. Parr. "Professional identity, curriculum and teaching intercultural communication: An Indonesian case study". In: *Lang. Cult. Curric.* 26.3 (Nov. 2013), pp. 229–246. doi: 10.1080/07908318.2013.833620.
- [5] A. D. HAPSARI. "Contextual Assessment Models in Islamic Education: A Study of Pre-Service Teacher Projects". In: *Bliss J. Broadening Linguist. Lit. Educ. Study Learn. Media* 1.2 (Aug. 2025), pp. 1–15. URL: <https://e-jurnal.unisda.ac.id/index.php/BlissJournal/article/view/10677>.
- [6] H. Cahyani, M. de Courcy, and J. Barnett. "Teachers' code-switching in bilingual classrooms: Exploring pedagogical and sociocultural functions". In: *Int. J. Biling. Educ. Biling.* 21.4 (May 2018), pp. 465–479. doi: 10.1080/13670050.2016.1189509.
- [7] S. Dardjowidjojo. "Strategies for a successful national language policy: The Indonesian case". In: *Int. J. Soc. Lang.* 130.130 (1998), pp. 35–47. doi: 10.1515/ijsl.1998.130.35.
- [8] K. Adaskou, D. Britten, and B. Fahsi. "Design decision on the cultural content of a secondary English course for Morocco". In: *ELT J.* 44.1 (Jan. 1990), pp. 3–10. doi: 10.1093/elt/44.1.3.
- [9] A. Dewi. "The English(es) to teach after study and life in Australia: A study of Indonesian English language educators". In: *Asian Englishes* 19.2 (2017), pp. 128–147. doi: 10.1080/13488678.2017.1279762.
- [10] F. Furaidah, A. Saukah, and U. Widiati. "Washback of English national examination in the Indonesian context". In: *TEFLIN J.* 26.1 (Sept. 2015), pp. 36–58. doi: 10.15639/teflinjournal.v26i1/36-58.
- [11] Y. G. Butler. "English language education among young learners in East Asia: A review of current research (2004–2014)". In: *Lang. Teach.* 48.3 (July 2015), pp. 303–342. doi: 10.1017/s0261444815000105.
- [12] S. Hawanti. "Implementing Indonesia's English language teaching policy in primary schools: The role of teachers' knowledge and beliefs". In: *Int. J. Pedagog. Learn.* 9.2 (2014), pp. 162–170. doi: 10.1080/18334105.2014.11082029.
- [13] I. N. Hidayati. "Evaluating the role of L1 in teaching receptive skills and grammar in EFL classes". In: *Indones. J. Appl. Linguist.* 1.2 (2012), pp. 17–32. doi: 10.17509/ijal.v1i2.82.
- [14] K. Huda. "A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES IN ENGLISH AND INDONESIAN LANGUAGE". In: *Dar el-Ilmi J. Stud. Keagamaan, Pendidik. dan Hum.* 5.2 (Oct. 2018), pp. 37–49. doi: 10.52166/DAR.
- [15] C. S. Santiago Jr, M. P. Leah Ulanday, Z. R. Jane Centeno, M. D. Cristina Bayla, and J. S. Callanta. "Flexible Learning Adaptabilities in the New Normal: E-Learning Resources, Digital Meeting Platforms, Online Learning Systems and Learning Engagement". In: *Asian J. Distance Educ.* 16.2 (Dec. 2021), p. 38. URL: <https://asianjde.com/ojs/index.php/AsianJDE/article/view/580>.
- [16] J. F. Ewing, G. F. Jeanie Gresham, and B. F. Dickey. "Pre-Service Teachers Learning to Engage All Students, Including English Language Learners, in Productive Struggle". In: *Issues Undergrad. Math. Prep. Sch. Teach.* 2 (Feb. 2019). URL: www.k-12prep.math.ttu.edu.
- [17] P. J. C. John Scott. *Qualitative Approach*. London: Sage Publisher, 2011.

- [18] H. Kim, J. S. Sefcik, and C. Bradway. "Characteristics of Qualitative Descriptive Studies: A Systematic Review". In: *Res. Nurs. Heal.* 40.1 (Feb. 2017), pp. 23–42. doi: 10.1002/NUR.21768.
- [19] J. Herrington and R. Oliver. "An instructional design framework for authentic learning environments". In: *Educ. Technol. Res. Dev.* 48.3 (2000), pp. 23–48. doi: 10.1007/BF02319856.
- [20] K. Gravemeijer and D. Van Eerde. "Design Research as a Means for Building a Knowledge Base for Teachers and Teaching in Mathematics Education". In: *Elem. Sch. J.* 109.5 (May 2009), pp. 510–524. doi: 10.1086/596999.
- [21] K. S. Von Esch and S. S. Kavanagh. "Preparing Mainstream Classroom Teachers of English Learner Students: Grounding Practice-Based Designs for Teacher Learning in Theories of Adaptive Expertise Development". In: *J. Teach. Educ.* 69.3 (May 2018), pp. 239–251. doi: 10.1177/0022487117717467.
- [22] M. Fasheh. "Reprint: Community Education: To Reclaim and Transform What Has Been Made Invisible". In: *Harv. Educ. Rev.* 95.2 (Sept. 2025), pp. 314–332. doi: 10.17763/1943-5045-95.2.314.
- [23] J. Loughran. "Pedagogical reasoning: the foundation of the professional knowledge of teaching". In: *Teach. Teach.* 25.5 (July 2019), pp. 523–535. doi: 10.1080/13540602.2019.1633294.
- [24] J. Krajcik, K. L. McNeill, and B. J. Reiser. "Learning-goals-driven design model: Developing curriculum materials that align with national standards and incorporate project-based pedagogy". In: *Sci. Educ.* 92.1 (Jan. 2008), pp. 1–32. doi: 10.1002/SCE.20240.
- [25] R. Vatrupu, C. Teplovs, N. Fujita, and S. Bull. "Towards visual analytics for teachers' dynamic diagnostic pedagogical decision-making". In: *ACM Int. Conf. Proceeding Ser.* 2011, pp. 93–98. doi: 10.1145/2090116.2090129.
- [26] S. Malik, H. Qin, and I. Oteir. "Perceived Psychological, Linguistic and Socio-Cultural Obstacles: An Investigation of English Communication Apprehension in EFL Learners". In: *Int. J. Instr.* 14.4 (Oct. 2021), pp. 733–752. doi: 10.29333/iji.2021.14442a.
- [27] I. Ahmad, A. Farid, and M. S. Hussain. "Teacher cognition and English as a foreign language context: potential challenges". In: *Psychol. Educ.* 58.5 (2021), pp. 382–395.
- [28] K. L. McNeill, R. Affolter, and B. J. Reiser. "ANCHORING SCIENCE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN CURRICULUM MATERIALS ENACTMENT: Illustrating Theories in Practice to Support Teachers' Learning". In: *Teach. Learn. Chang. Context. Perspect. from Learn. Sci.* Jan. 2022, pp. 47–68. doi: 10.4324/9781003097112-5.
- [29] A. J. Romiszowski. *Designing instructional systems: Decision making in course planning and curriculum design*. Routledge, Jan. 2016, pp. 1–415. doi: 10.4324/9780203063446.
- [30] B. Khulel. "TEACHING ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS IN RUSTIC AREA: TEACHERS' CHALLENGES". In: *Lingua* 17.2 (2021). doi: 10.34005/lingua.v%vi%i.1558.
- [31] K. F. Oliviant. "I am not a format: Teachers experiences with fostering creativity in the era of accountability". In: *J. Res. Child. Educ.* 29.1 (Jan. 2015), pp. 115–129. doi: 10.1080/02568543.2014.978920.
- [32] K. Nehrbass, T. Murcray, and E. Morris. "Flexibility Within Structure: Factors contributing to Faculty Perceptions of Autonomy and Standardization in Course Design and Delivery". In: (). doi: 10.59668/378.10316.
- [33] B. Harn, D. Parisi, and M. Stoolmiller. "Balancing Fidelity with Flexibility and Fit: What do we Really Know about Fidelity of Implementation in Schools?" In: *Except. Child.* 79.2 (Apr. 2013), pp. 181–193. doi: 10.1177/0014402913079002051.
- [34] F. Herman and J. Tondeur. "Untangling the sociomateriality of the classroom: biographies of school spaces (c. 1960–2014)". In: *Oxford Rev. Educ.* 47.5 (Sept. 2021), pp. 681–695. doi: 10.1080/03054985.2021.1924654.
- [35] K. Barton, R. Burroughs, A. Hemmings, G. Markle, and H. Meyer. "Chair: Piyush Swami". In: 2004.
- [36] P. Cordingley et al. *Constructing Teachers' Professional Identities Education International Research*. Tech. rep. 2019.

- [37] C. Y. Charalambous and H. C. Hill. "Teacher knowledge, curriculum materials, and quality of instruction: Unpacking a complex relationship". In: *J. Curric. Stud.* 44.4 (Aug. 2012), pp. 443–466. doi: 10.1080/00220272.2011.650215.
- [38] I. A. Mehedi. "Enforced CLT or disguised GTM?: investigating English curriculum implementation in secondary schools in Bangladesh". MA thesis. 2019. URL: <https://dspace.bracu.ac.bd:8443/xmlui/handle/10361/12391>.
- [39] D. Myhill. "Grammar As a Meaning-Making Resource for Improving Writing". In: *L1 Educ. Stud. Lang. Lit.* 18.2018 (2018), pp. 1–21. doi: 10.17239/L1ESLL-2018.18.04.04.
- [40] M. Al-Hor, H. Almahdi, M. Al-Theyab, A. G. Mustafa, M. Seed Ahmed, and S. Zaqout. "Exploring student perceptions on virtual reality in anatomy education: insights on enjoyment, effectiveness, and preferences". In: *BMC Med. Educ.* 24.1 (Dec. 2024), p. 1405. doi: 10.1186/S12909-024-06370-6.
- [41] C. Winch, A. Oancea, and J. Orchard. "The contribution of educational research to teachers' professional learning: philosophical understandings". In: *Oxford Rev. Educ.* 41.2 (Mar. 2015), pp. 202–216. doi: 10.1080/03054985.2015.1017406.
- [42] V. D. Opfer and D. Pedder. "Conceptualizing teacher professional learning". In: *Rev. Educ. Res.* 81.3 (2011), pp. 376–407. doi: 10.3102/0034654311413609.
- [43] C. Zhang and W. Zeng. "A Forward-Looking Study on the In-Depth Development Planning of Information Technology into Teacher Education". In: *J. Sensors* 2022.1 (Jan. 2022), p. 4885771. doi: 10.1155/2022/4885771.
- [44] S. Karppinen, V. Kallunki, and K. Komulainen. "Interdisciplinary craft designing and invention pedagogy in teacher education: student teachers creating smart textiles". In: *Int. J. Technol. Des. Educ.* 29.1 (Dec. 2017), pp. 57–74. doi: 10.1007/S10798-017-9436-X.
- [45] E. Akhter. "AI IN THE CLASSROOM: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTELLIGENT TUTORING SYSTEMS FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION". In: *ASRC Procedia Glob. Perspect. Sci. Scholarsh.* 1.01 (Apr. 2025), pp. 532–563. doi: 10.63125/GCQ1QR39.
- [46] J. L. Sewell, J. L. Bowen, O. Ten Cate, P. S. O'Sullivan, B. Shah, and C. K. Boscardin. "Learning Challenges, Teaching Strategies, and Cognitive Load: Insights From the Experience of Seasoned Endoscopy Teachers". In: *Acad. Med.* 95.5 (May 2020), pp. 794–802. doi: 10.1097/ACM.0000000000002946.
- [47] R. M. Schneider and K. Plasman. "Science teacher learning progressions: A review of science teachers' pedagogical content knowledge development". In: *Rev. Educ. Res.* 81.4 (2011), pp. 530–565. doi: 10.3102/0034654311423382.
- [48] L. Azhary and S. Fatimah. "The Integration of Local Cultures in English Teaching Materials in Promoting Culturally Responsive Teaching". In: *AL-ISHLAH J. Pendidik.* 16.2 (May 2024), pp. 2045–2056. doi: 10.35445/ALISHLAH.V16I2.4998.
- [49] S. Tekir and H. Akar. "The Current State of Instructional Materials Education: Aligning Policy, Standards, and Teacher Education Curriculum". In: *Educ. Sci. Theory Pract.* 19.1 (Feb. 2019), pp. 22–40. doi: 10.12738/estp.2019.1.043.
- [50] E. Babaii and M. Sheikhi. "Traces of neoliberalism in English teaching materials: a critical discourse analysis". In: *Crit. Discourse Stud.* 15.3 (May 2018), pp. 247–264. doi: 10.1080/17405904.2017.1398671.