



INTEGRATING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN INDONESIA: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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Abstract

English language education in Indonesia is governed by three interdependent pedagogical processes: curriculum development, material development, and learning assessment. Although these processes are frequently treated as separate administrative tasks, their effectiveness depends on the degree to which they are coherently aligned. This article presents a conceptual review of how the three components are theorised in applied linguistics and how they are operationalised within the current Indonesian policy environment, particularly following the national adoption of Kurikulum Merdeka (Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024) and the elevation of English to a compulsory subject at the primary level under Permendikdasmen No. 13 of 2025. Drawing on a narrative review of the curriculum-design, materials-development, and language-assessment literature, the discussion argues that the Indonesian context is shifting from a content-driven model toward an outcomes-driven model organised around Capaian Pembelajaran (learning outcomes) and a text-based, phase-structured framework that is increasingly aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The article proposes a constructive-alignment framework in which learning outcomes, instructional materials, and assessment are designed as a single coherent system rather than as sequential stages. It concludes by identifying the principal implementation challenges, including uneven teacher readiness, regional disparity, large class sizes, and the digital divide, and offers recommendations for teacher education, contextualised material design, and balanced formative-summative assessment.

Keywords: curriculum development; material development; language assessment; English language teaching; Kurikulum Merdeka; Indonesia

A. INTRODUCTION

English occupies a distinctive position in the Indonesian education system. It is taught and learned as a foreign language (EFL) rather than as a second language, meaning that, for most learners, meaningful exposure to English is largely confined to the classroom. This linguistic reality places an unusually heavy burden on the formal mechanisms of instruction, because the curriculum, the teaching materials, and the assessment instruments must collectively compensate for the limited naturalistic input available outside school (Marcellino, 2008). Where a second-language environment supplies abundant incidental learning, an EFL environment requires that nearly every

element of language development be deliberately designed.

These deliberate elements can be grouped into three closely related processes. Curriculum development specifies what learners are expected to achieve and the principles by which learning is sequenced and organised. Material development translates those intentions into the texts, tasks, and resources that learners actually engage with. Learning assessment gathers evidence about whether the intended learning outcomes have been attained and feeds that evidence back into teaching. Although these processes are often handled by different actors and at different stages, applied-linguistics scholarship has long emphasised that their value lies in their coherence: a curriculum is only as effective as the materials that enact it and the assessment that verifies it (Richards, 2001; Nation & Macalister, 2010).

The Indonesian policy landscape that frames these processes has changed substantially. After a series of curriculum reforms, including the Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) and the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013), the government formally adopted Kurikulum Merdeka as the national curriculum for all levels of education through Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024. This curriculum is characterised by an emphasis on learning outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran), phase-based progression, and greater pedagogical autonomy for teachers. More recently, Permendikdasmen No. 13 of 2025, which amends the 2024 regulation and is framed explicitly around “curriculum and assessment” (kurikulum dan penilaian), elevated English from an optional or local-content subject to a compulsory subject at the primary level, with full implementation scheduled for the 2027/2028 academic year and the associated learning outcomes established through Decree No. 046/H/KR/2025 of the Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency (BSKAP).

This regulatory development is significant for the present discussion for two reasons. First, it expands the population of English learners downward into the primary grades, raising new questions about age-appropriate materials and assessment. Second, by binding curriculum and assessment together within a single regulation, it institutionalises the very integration that this article argues is pedagogically essential. Against this background, the article addresses three questions: (1) How are curriculum development, material development, and learning assessment theorised in the applied-linguistics literature? (2) How are these processes operationalised in the current Indonesian context? (3) How can the three be designed as a coherent, mutually reinforcing system? The article is conceptual rather than empirical; its contribution is to synthesise existing theory and policy into an integrative framework that can guide practitioners, material writers, and teacher educators.

B. METHOD

This study employs a narrative literature review, a method appropriate for synthesising and interpreting a body of conceptual and policy literature rather than for aggregating empirical effect sizes. Sources were drawn from three domains: foundational and contemporary works on language curriculum design and materials

development; the language-assessment literature; and Indonesian regulatory documents and scholarship on English language teaching policy. The review proceeded in three stages. First, the core constructs of each of the three processes were identified and defined from authoritative sources. Second, the Indonesian policy framework was mapped onto these constructs to establish how each process is currently operationalised. Third, the three processes were analysed jointly to derive an integrative framework based on the principle of constructive alignment. Because the aim is interpretive synthesis, the analysis emphasises conceptual coherence and contextual relevance to the Indonesian EFL setting rather than statistical generalisation.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Curriculum Development in English Language Education

In language education, a curriculum is more than a list of topics; it is a principled plan that links a statement of needs and goals to decisions about content, sequence, methodology, and evaluation (Richards, 2001; Nation & Macalister, 2010). The classical articulation of curriculum reasoning is Tyler's (1949) rationale, which frames curriculum design around four questions: what purposes the programme should serve, what experiences will attain them, how those experiences should be organised, and how attainment will be evaluated. The enduring importance of this formulation is that evaluation is built into the design from the outset rather than appended at the end, an insight that anticipates the integration this article advocates.

Richards (2013) usefully distinguishes three orientations to curriculum design. Forward design begins with content and syllabus and moves toward methodology and assessment; it characterises traditional, syllabus-driven programmes. Central design begins with classroom methodology and learning processes. Backward design begins by specifying the learning outcomes and works backward to determine the assessment evidence and the instruction needed to produce them. The international movement toward outcomes-based and competency-based curricula, and increasingly the Indonesian framework itself, reflects a shift toward backward design, in which the destination is defined before the route is planned.

The Indonesian trajectory illustrates this shift. The 2013 Curriculum already organised English instruction around core and basic competencies, but Kurikulum Merdeka deepens the outcomes orientation by replacing detailed annual competency lists with broader Capaian Pembelajaran (CP), or learning outcomes, defined for developmental phases rather than single grades. Learners progress through phases (commonly labelled Fase A to Fase F across the school years), and teachers derive more specific learning objectives (Tujuan Pembelajaran) and teaching sequences (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran) from the phase-level outcomes. This phase structure grants teachers latitude to adjust pacing to learners' actual readiness, embodying the curricular autonomy that is a defining feature of the reform.

Two further features of the current English curriculum deserve emphasis. The first is its text-based (genre-based) orientation: language is taught through whole texts

situated in social purposes, so that learners encounter grammar and vocabulary in the service of communication rather than as isolated forms. The second is its increasing alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), which provides a transparent scale of communicative proficiency. At the newly compulsory primary level, the outcomes emphasise vocabulary building, pronunciation, and the confidence to speak, with a deliberately limited grammatical load, reflecting an age-appropriate, communicative starting point rather than a grammar-driven one.

3.2 Material Development

Material development refers to the principled creation, selection, adaptation, and evaluation of the resources that mediate language learning, including coursebooks, supplementary texts, audio-visual input, and digital tasks (Tomlinson, 2011, 2012). Materials are the point at which abstract curricular intentions become concrete classroom experience; consequently, weaknesses at the material level can neutralise even a well-designed curriculum. Tomlinson (2011, 2012) articulates a set of widely cited principles for effective materials: they should expose learners to authentic and meaningful language in use, engage learners affectively and cognitively, provide opportunities for both noticing and communicative use, account for differing learning styles, and avoid premature or excessive control of practice.

For the Indonesian EFL context, three considerations are especially salient. The first is authenticity and contextualisation. Because learners have little exposure to English beyond the classroom, materials carry much of the responsibility for representing how the language is actually used; yet authenticity must be balanced against accessibility and, importantly, against local relevance. Materials that situate English within recognisable Indonesian settings, alongside intercultural content, are more likely to be meaningful than materials transplanted wholesale from inner-circle contexts. The second is the teacher as material developer. Kurikulum Merdeka's emphasis on teacher autonomy positions teachers not merely as deliverers of a fixed textbook but as adapters and creators of materials suited to their learners; this expands teachers' professional role and, correspondingly, their need for support and training.

The third consideration is multimodality and the digital divide. Contemporary materials are increasingly multimodal and technology-mediated, offering rich input and interactivity. However, the capacity to produce and deliver such materials is unevenly distributed across Indonesia's schools. While printed materials can be supplied with relative ease, readiness to provide and use multimodal, ICT-based resources varies widely between well-resourced urban schools and schools in remote, frontier, and disadvantaged (3T) regions. Material development policy that assumes uniform digital readiness risks widening rather than narrowing existing gaps. Effective material development in this setting therefore requires designs that degrade gracefully, remaining usable in low-resource environments while exploiting technology where it is available.

3.3 Learning Assessment

Assessment is the systematic process of gathering and interpreting evidence about learning in order to make decisions (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018). The assessment literature draws several distinctions that are central to coherent practice. The most fundamental is between assessment of learning (summative assessment), which certifies attainment at the end of a period of instruction, and assessment for learning (formative assessment), which uses evidence during instruction to adjust teaching and to give learners actionable feedback. Black and Wiliam (1998) demonstrated that strengthening formative assessment produces substantial learning gains, while a complementary tradition emphasises assessment as learning, in which learners develop the capacity to monitor and regulate their own progress through self- and peer-assessment.

A second key distinction concerns the qualities that any assessment must possess. Validity, the extent to which an assessment measures what it claims to measure, and reliability, the consistency of its results, are the classical criteria (McNamara, 2000), while frameworks such as that of Bachman and Palmer (1996) expand these into broader notions of usefulness that include authenticity, interactiveness, impact, and practicality. The concept of washback, the influence of assessment on teaching and learning, is particularly consequential in EFL systems, because high-stakes tests can powerfully shape, for better or worse, what teachers prioritise in class. An assessment regime dominated by selected-response, grammar-focused testing tends to produce grammar-focused teaching, regardless of communicative intentions stated in the curriculum.

In the Indonesian context, the assessment orientation has moved toward this richer conception. Kurikulum Merdeka foregrounds diagnostic assessment at the start of learning, continuous formative assessment during learning, and summative assessment of outcomes, and it encourages authentic and performance-based assessment, in which learners demonstrate communicative ability through tasks such as presentations, projects, and the production of texts, rather than solely through discrete-point tests. The decision to regulate curriculum and assessment together in Permendikdasmen No. 13 of 2025 signals that assessment is to be treated as an integral part of curriculum design. For the newly compulsory primary English programme, the implication is that assessment should be developmentally appropriate and largely formative, prioritising oral participation and confidence over formal testing of grammar.

3.4 Constructive Alignment: Integrating the Three Processes

The central argument of this review is that curriculum development, material development, and learning assessment achieve their purpose only when they are mutually aligned. The most influential articulation of this principle is Biggs' concept of constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011), which holds that intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities (and the materials that support them), and assessment tasks must all be directed at the same objectives. Alignment is

“constructive” because it assumes that learners build understanding through the activities they undertake; if the assessment rewards a competence that the materials never develop, or if the materials pursue goals the curriculum does not specify, the system pulls learners in inconsistent directions and learning is diminished.

Applied to English education in Indonesia, constructive alignment implies a single design logic flowing from the phase-level *Capaian Pembelajaran*. The learning outcomes specify the communicative competences to be developed; materials are then selected or created to provide the input and tasks through which those competences can be practised; and assessment is designed to elicit precisely those competences as evidence of attainment. A misalignment at any node degrades the whole: communicatively framed outcomes paired with form-focused materials and discrete-point tests will, through washback, default to grammar instruction. Conversely, when a text-based outcome (for example, producing a simple procedural text) is matched with materials that model and scaffold that genre and with a performance task that asks learners to produce such a text, the three processes reinforce one another.

Table 1. Constructive alignment across the three processes (illustrative)

Curriculum (Learning Outcome)	Material (Input & Tasks)	Assessment (Evidence)	Risk if Misaligned
Learner can comprehend and produce a short procedural text.	Model procedural texts (recipes, how-to), genre scaffolding, sequencing tasks.	Performance task: learner writes/presents an original procedure; rubric-scored.	If tested only by multiple-choice grammar items, teaching reverts to form drills.
Learner can hold a short conversation with confidence (primary level).	Dialogues, songs, games, picture prompts; high-frequency vocabulary.	Formative oral observation against simple speaking criteria.	If assessed by written grammar tests, oral confidence is neither built nor valued.

Table 1 makes the practical stakes of alignment visible. In each row, the assessment column elicits the same competence named in the outcome and developed by the materials; the final column shows how a common form of misalignment, the substitution of convenient discrete-point testing for performance assessment, would undermine the intended learning through negative washback.

3.5 Challenges and Opportunities in the Indonesian Context

Designing an aligned system is one matter; implementing it across a vast and heterogeneous education system is another. Several challenges recur in the Indonesian literature. The first is teacher readiness. Both teacher-developed materials and formative, performance-based assessment demand professional competences (in genre pedagogy, materials adaptation, rubric construction, and feedback) that not all teachers currently possess; this is especially acute at the primary level, where many teachers are generalists rather than English specialists. The scheduling of intensive teacher training ahead of the 2027/2028 compulsory primary rollout reflects an official recognition of this

gap, but the scale of the need is considerable.

A second challenge is regional disparity and the digital divide. The readiness of schools to provide multimodal materials and to implement varied assessment differs sharply between well-resourced and under-resourced regions, and a uniform policy risks advantaging schools that are already advantaged. A third is class size and workload: formative assessment and individualised feedback are difficult to sustain in large classes, and teachers may default to easily scored summative tests under time pressure. A fourth, more conceptual challenge concerns the model of English that materials and assessment encode. An over-reliance on inner-circle native-speaker norms can be both unrealistic and demotivating in an EFL setting; framing English as a means of international communication, and incorporating intercultural and local content, is more consistent with learners' actual purposes (Marcellino, 2008; Lie, 2007).

These challenges are matched by genuine opportunities. The teacher autonomy embedded in Kurikulum Merdeka, if supported by sustained professional development and shared material banks, can produce instruction that is far better adapted to local learners than a single national textbook ever could. The outcomes-based, phase-structured design lends itself naturally to constructive alignment and to formative assessment. Technology, including increasingly capable language tools, offers means to generate contextualised materials, to provide learners with additional practice and feedback, and to lighten teachers' assessment workload, provided that access constraints are addressed. The integration of curriculum and assessment within a single regulatory instrument, finally, creates a policy environment in which aligned design is not merely good practice but an institutional expectation.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This review has argued that curriculum development, material development, and learning assessment in English language education in Indonesia are most productively understood not as separate stages but as components of a single, constructively aligned system. The current policy environment, in which Kurikulum Merdeka has become the national curriculum, English has been made compulsory at the primary level, and curriculum and assessment are regulated together, both reflects and reinforces this integrative logic. The curriculum increasingly follows a backward-design, outcomes-based, text-based, and CEFR-referenced orientation; materials are expected to be authentic, contextualised, and teacher-adaptable; and assessment is expected to be predominantly formative, authentic, and performance-based. The coherence of these elements, rather than the quality of any one in isolation, determines the quality of learning.

Several recommendations follow. For teacher education, sustained professional development should treat the three processes together, equipping teachers to derive objectives from learning outcomes, to design and adapt materials for those objectives, and to assess the resulting competences with valid performance tasks and rubrics; this is most urgent for primary teachers ahead of the compulsory rollout. For material

development, designs should be contextualised to Indonesian and intercultural settings, should remain usable in low-resource environments while exploiting technology where available, and should be shared through accessible repositories to reduce duplication of effort. For assessment, the balance should tilt toward formative and authentic assessment, with care taken to ensure positive washback, and with developmentally appropriate, low-stakes approaches at the primary level. Finally, future empirical research should examine the degree of alignment actually achieved in classrooms and the effects of the new primary English policy on materials, assessment practices, and learning outcomes, so that the integrative framework outlined here can be tested and refined against evidence.

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