

Beyond Grammar Drills: A Critical Applied Linguistics Perspective on Oxford English Curriculum Implementation for Prospective Elementary School English Teachers

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Abstract—The introduction of English as a compulsory subject in Indonesian primary schools from the 2027/2028 academic year requires prospective teachers who are not only proficient in the language but also critical of the globally standardized materials they use. This study aims to map the research landscape and to formulate conceptual propositions on the implementation of the Oxford English curriculum, treated as an illustrative case of globally standardized materials, in the education of prospective elementary school English teachers through a Critical Applied Linguistics perspective. The study adopts a critical conceptual review design that combines VOSviewer-based bibliometric mapping with a systematic literature review reported in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 statement. A search of the Scopus database for the 2016–2026 period yielded 866 records, of which 36 studies met the eligibility criteria and were synthesized thematically. The review generated four propositions: the implementation of global materials tends to be reduced to structural drills owing to textbook dependency; global materials carry a native-speakerist ideology that prospective teachers are likely to naturalize; prospective teachers' critical agency can emerge through contextual localization and translanguaging but remains constrained by structural factors; and teacher education needs to shift prospective teachers from curriculum users to critical interpreters of the curriculum. The study concludes that the problem of English instruction in primary schools is rooted in how prospective teachers are positioned in relation to materials rather than merely in the choice of materials or methods. Future research should test these propositions empirically through case studies, action research, and longitudinal designs in elementary teacher education programs.

Keywords—critical applied linguistics; global textbooks; native-speakerism; pre-service elementary teachers; teacher agency; systematic literature review; bibliometric analysis

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I. Introduction

The expansion of English instruction into primary education is driven by the belief that early mastery of the language enhances young people's competitiveness in the knowledge economy. In Indonesia, stakeholders even regard English instruction in primary schools as an urgent need, although shortages of qualified teachers and curricular inconsistency remain major obstacles (Rahman et al., 2026). Through Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 12 of 2024, as amended by Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education No. 13 of 2025, English has been designated a compulsory subject from Grade III of primary school, to be implemented gradually from the 2027/2028 academic year (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, 2025; Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2024). The policy also prioritizes communicative ability over grammatical mastery as the learning goal at this level. This emphasis places teacher education institutions in a decisive position, because the success of the policy ultimately depends on the readiness of the teachers who translate it into classroom practice. Previous experience shows that the expansion of English in Indonesian primary schools has often proceeded without adequate teacher

preparation, leaving many teachers without a pedagogical foundation for teaching English to children (Zein, 2016, 2017).

In the absence of locally designed materials, elementary school teacher education (*Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar*, PGSD) programs and teacher training institutions may rely on commercially published textbook series for young learners, such as those published by Oxford University Press, as the core reference for English instruction. In this article, the term Oxford English curriculum refers to Oxford textbook series for young learners that function as the operational curriculum in courses on primary English pedagogy. The Oxford series is treated as an illustrative case of globally standardized materials rather than as a directly examined object; accordingly, the propositions developed in this article concern global textbooks in general. Such a choice may rest on the assumption that internationally standardized materials guarantee quality. Yet such adoption entails two problems. The first is pedagogical: materials that are conceptually communicative are often implemented reductively as grammar exercises, vocabulary memorization, and worksheet completion. The second is ideological, because global textbooks are never neutral; they embody choices about which variety of English counts as standard, which cultures deserve representation, and which speakers serve as models (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Weninger, 2021). These two problems reinforce each other when prospective teachers accept materials uncritically.

Critical studies of English textbooks have grown considerably over the past decade. Numerous studies have revealed cultural representations centered on native-speaking countries, the marginalization of local cultures, and the reproduction of *native-speakerism*, which positions native speakers as the ideal model (Holliday, 2018; Lowe, 2020; Rose & Galloway, 2019). However, most of these studies stop at textual analysis and have not traced how ideological content is accepted, negotiated, or resisted by material users in teaching practice. At the same time, the critical awareness of prospective teachers has rarely been a research focus, even though language policies and ideologies have been recognized as forces shaping English language education in Indonesia (Zein et al., 2020). This gap is most acute at the primary level. Prospective elementary teachers are the ones who will introduce English to children for the first time, so the language beliefs they hold may shape students' long-term views of English, local languages, and their own linguistic identities.

Bibliometric mapping reinforces the identification of this gap. Bibliographic data from the Scopus database for the 2016–2026 period were visualized using VOSviewer on the basis of keyword co-occurrence (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Fig. 1 shows that *critical pedagogy* and *teacher education* already form a well-established cluster, whereas the nodes *textbooks*, *global englishes*, *ELT*, and *Indonesia* remain small and peripheral. The nodes *child* and *schools* even belong to a general education cluster far removed from the discourse on language ideology, while the *computational linguistics* cluster forms a separate region detached from the critical pedagogy clusters. This configuration indicates that the critique of textbooks and research on elementary teacher preparation have developed along separate tracks. The present study positions itself at the intersection of these tracks; its novelty therefore lies not in a change of research site but in linking the ideological analysis of materials with the position of prospective teachers as material users within a single, coherent conceptual framework.

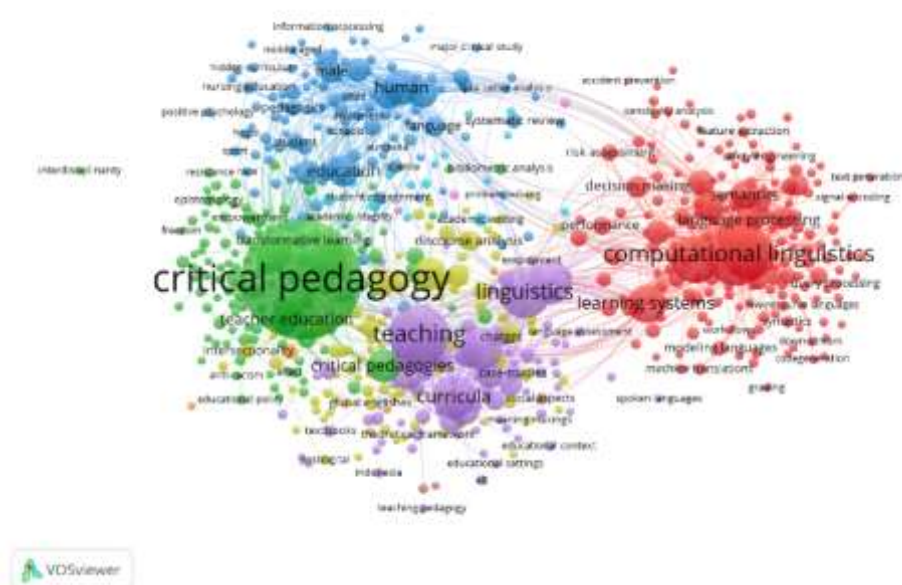


Fig. 1. Keyword co-occurrence network visualized in VOSviewer

To examine this problem, the study adopts a Critical Applied Linguistics perspective. Textbook evaluation frameworks and curriculum implementation theories can assess the suitability and feasibility of materials, but they are not designed to uncover the power relations and language ideologies embedded within them. Critical Applied Linguistics views language teaching as a sociopolitical practice and thus allows researchers to question not only what is taught but also whose interests are served by particular ways of teaching (Pennycook, 2021). Drawing on this perspective, the study aims to (1) map the research landscape connecting Critical Applied Linguistics, global textbooks, and teacher education; (2) formulate conceptual propositions on implementation patterns, ideological content, and prospective teachers' agency in the use of the Oxford English curriculum; and (3) propose a conceptual framework for strengthening the education of prospective elementary school English teachers. Theoretically, the study extends Critical Applied Linguistics to teacher education for young learners. Practically, the resulting framework is expected to underpin the integration of critical literacy into PGSD curricula ahead of the compulsory English policy in primary schools.

II. Literature Review

A. Critical Applied Linguistics and Language Ideology in English Language Teaching

Critical Applied Linguistics emerged from a critique of mainstream applied linguistics, which tends to treat language teaching as a purely technical matter. Pennycook (2021) argues that every language teaching practice is bound up with issues of power, inequality, and identity, so questions about method cannot be separated from questions about who benefits from that method. This perspective is particularly relevant to English language teaching, because the status of English as a global language did not arise naturally but was shaped by histories of colonialism and political-economic dominance. Kumaravadivelu (2016) further contends that the English teaching profession remains dependent on knowledge, methods, and materials produced in Western centers, positioning teachers in peripheral countries as consumers rather than producers of knowledge. This critique resonates with calls to re-examine criticality in language studies so that it moves beyond discourse toward practices capable of transforming existing conditions (Kubota & Miller, 2017).

One of the ideologies most frequently examined within this framework is *native-speakerism*, the belief that native speakers of English from Western countries are the best source of language models and teaching methodology (Holliday, 2018). Lowe (2020) shows that this ideology operates as an unnoticed frame and is therefore taken for granted by teachers, learners, and materials developers. In classrooms, the frame manifests in the tendency to treat native-speaker accents and cultural norms as benchmarks of success. In response, the *Global Englishes* paradigm offers a perspective that recognizes the diversity of English varieties and positions non-native speakers as legitimate users (Rose & Galloway, 2019). *Translanguaging* likewise demonstrates that drawing on learners' full linguistic repertoire, including their mother tongues and local languages, can strengthen learning (Li, 2018). Together, these perspectives provide a conceptual basis for judging whether a set of materials opens or closes space for local learners' linguistic identities.

B. Global Textbooks and Their Implementation in Elementary English Teacher Education

Global textbooks are among the principal media through which language ideologies operate subtly. Rose and Galloway (2019) show that globally circulated English teaching materials tend to rely on native-speaker norms and the cultures of English-speaking countries, leaving little room for other varieties of English and for learners' own cultures. By contrast, nationally developed textbooks in Indonesia have begun to incorporate multicultural values, including respect for the cultures of ethnic, religious, and indigenous groups (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). This contrast shows that the choice of materials is not merely technical but a choice about which cultures and identities are brought into the classroom. Multimodal research further confirms that ideology is conveyed not only through verbal text but also through illustrations, characters, and settings, which dominate materials for children (Weninger, 2021). Moreover, Weninger (2021) stresses that critical textbook analysis must take into account the pedagogic frame within which learners encounter the meanings of materials, since those meanings are always guided by tasks and by how teachers use them in class.

In the Indonesian context, the problem of materials is intertwined with the problem of teacher preparation. Zein (2016) notes that pre-service education for primary school English teachers has not been specifically designed, so many PGSD graduates teach English without adequate pedagogical preparation for young learners. This condition fosters dependence on textbooks as the determinant of lesson content and sequence. Zein et al.'s (2020) review of research on English language education in Indonesia shows that policies, ideologies, and sociocultural and religious values contend with one another in shaping classroom practice, yet the connection between these issues and the preparation of prospective elementary teachers has received little attention. At the policy level, Widodo (2016) shows that the English curriculum in Indonesia is often narrowed during implementation, as teachers tend to revert to grammar- and examination-oriented practices. Taken together,

these findings suggest that adopting globally standardized materials without strengthening critical awareness risks producing practices that are both reductive and insensitive to students' linguistic identities.

C. Prospective Teachers' Critical Agency in Contextualizing Global Textbooks

Teacher agency is understood as teachers' capacity to act meaningfully within the structures that surround them, including curricula, materials, and institutional cultures. In the context of curriculum reform, such agency does not arise spontaneously but is shaped through the interplay between teachers' identity commitments and the contextual conditions in which they work (Tao & Gao, 2017). Within critical pedagogy, this form of agency is closely related to the ability to read educational practice critically, that is, to recognize that seemingly natural practices are social constructions that can be changed. Critical language pedagogy requires teachers to connect learning with learners' lives, interests, and languages and to treat social justice as part of the purpose of language teaching (Crookes, 2021). For prospective teachers, this capacity is not developed through mastery of content alone. It needs to be cultivated through experiences of reflecting on, questioning, and adapting materials in authentic teaching situations, so that prospective teachers learn to view materials as resources to be interpreted rather than as prescriptions to be followed verbatim.

The synthesis above reveals three strands of research that have developed separately. The first strand uncovers ideology in global textbooks but rarely examines how teachers use them. The second strand investigates the preparation of primary English teachers in Indonesia but emphasizes technical competence over critical awareness. The third strand addresses teacher agency but largely focuses on in-service teachers at the secondary and tertiary levels. Studies that bring these three strands together, particularly with respect to prospective teachers of primary-age children, remain scarce. Yet it is during the pre-service phase that beliefs about language and teaching are still relatively open to reshaping, which makes pre-service education a strategic point for preparing primary English teachers (Zein, 2016). This study addresses the gap by simultaneously synthesizing the ideological content of the Oxford English curriculum, its implementation patterns in teacher education, and the agency prospective teachers display when engaging with these materials. This integrated approach enables a more complete explanation of why teaching practice tends to become trapped in grammar drills.

III. Methods

This section describes the review design, the literature corpus, the search instruments, the analytical procedures, and the measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The description is sufficiently detailed to allow each stage to be traced and replicated by other researchers. The study did not collect field data from participants; instead, it treats reputable literature and bibliographic data as its primary data sources. This choice was deliberate: because the compulsory English policy in primary schools will only take effect in the 2027/2028 academic year, the most urgent need at present is a conceptual framework that can guide the preparation of prospective teachers and serve as a foundation for subsequent empirical research. Accordingly, all findings in this article are formulated as conceptual propositions grounded in a synthesis of the literature rather than as empirical generalizations about the behavior of prospective teachers at a particular institution. This distinction is essential to keep the claims proportionate to the type of data used.

A. Research Design

This study employs a critical conceptual review design within a critical paradigm. The design combines two complementary components. The first is bibliometric mapping based on keyword co-occurrence, which provides a macro-level picture of the knowledge structure and of the position of the topic in the international literature (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). The second is a systematic literature review reported in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 statement to ensure transparency in the identification, screening, and selection of studies (Page et al., 2021). The results of both components were then read through the lens of Critical Applied Linguistics to formulate conceptual propositions (Pennycook, 2021). This design was chosen because the aim of the study is neither to test relationships between variables nor to describe practice at a single site, but to build an explanatory framework that links three research strands that have so far developed separately. The strength of the design lies in its capacity to generate propositions rooted in accumulated evidence, while its limitation lies in the need for further empirical testing.

B. Population and Sample

The population of the study comprises Scopus-indexed scholarly publications from 2016 to 2026 related to Critical Applied Linguistics, global English textbooks, teacher education, and English instruction for children. The initial search yielded 866 records, which served both as the corpus for bibliometric mapping and

as the starting point for systematic selection. The inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters written in English or Indonesian that address language ideology, critical analysis of teaching materials, or teacher agency in English as a foreign language contexts. The exclusion criteria were publications without peer review, studies focusing on computational aspects of language, and studies unrelated to educational contexts. After screening and eligibility assessment, 36 studies were retained as the synthesis sample. Screening and eligibility assessment were carried out by one author (F.A.), which is acknowledged as a limitation of the review. This sample was complemented by key theoretical works in Critical Applied Linguistics and critical discourse analysis, which were selected purposively because they provide the conceptual foundation for reading and interpreting the literature. These purposively selected works (e.g., Fairclough, 2015; Pennycook, 2021; Rose & Galloway, 2019) and the methodological references (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021; Page et al., 2021) are cited as conceptual or procedural sources and are not counted among the 36 included studies.

The literature selection was conducted through a systematic search and is reported in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 statement so that the identification, screening, and selection of literature could be traced (Page et al., 2021). A search of the Scopus database for publications from 2016 to 2026 yielded 866 records, while searches of websites, organizations, and citations produced no additional records. A total of 100 duplicate records and 20 records excluded for other reasons were removed before screening, leaving 746 records to be screened by title and abstract. This stage excluded 600 records that were irrelevant to the focus of the study. Of the 146 reports sought for full-text review, 10 could not be retrieved, leaving 136 reports assessed for eligibility. The eligibility assessment excluded 100 reports because they did not address language ideology, critical analysis of teaching materials, or teacher agency in English as a foreign language contexts. Consequently, 36 studies were included in the review, as shown in Fig. 2. These studies were then synthesized thematically into three interrelated foci: the foundations of Critical Applied Linguistics, the implementation of global textbooks in teacher education, and prospective teachers' critical agency in contextualizing materials.

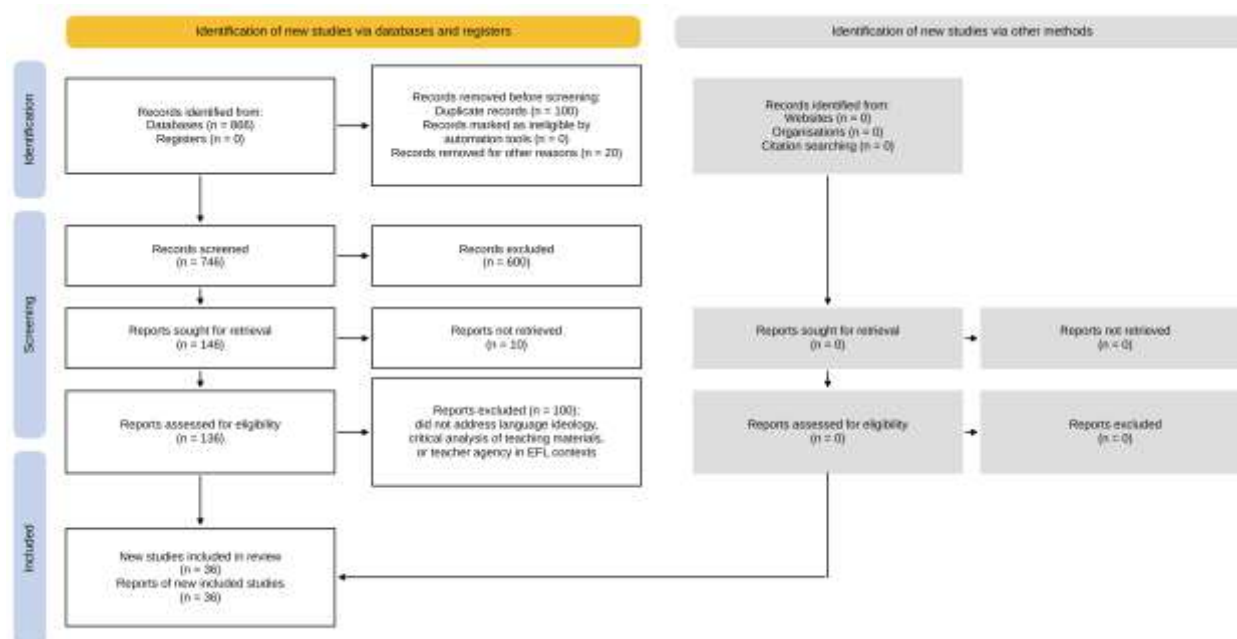


Fig. 2. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the literature selection process

C. Data Collection Instrument

The instruments of the study consisted of a search protocol and a data extraction sheet. The search protocol specified the database, time span, keywords, and inclusion and exclusion criteria, as summarized in Table 1. Publisher-specific terms (e.g., Oxford) and level-specific terms (e.g., young learners or primary education) were not included in the search; the search therefore targeted the broader literature on language ideology, materials critique, and teacher agency, and the Oxford series is treated as an illustrative case (see Section I). The protocol was developed before the search was conducted so that selection decisions would not be influenced by the results obtained. The data extraction sheet was used to record key information from each selected study, including publication details, research context, educational level, research focus, theoretical concepts, main findings, and relevance to the three foci of the study, namely implementation patterns, ideological content, and teacher agency. No formal appraisal of the methodological quality of the included studies was conducted, because the review aimed to develop conceptual propositions rather than to estimate effects; this is acknowledged as a limitation. For the bibliometric mapping, bibliographic data were exported from Scopus and

processed in VOSviewer with keywords as the unit of analysis. Keywords were displayed as recorded in the database, so variant terms such as *critical pedagogy* and *critical pedagogies* still appear as separate nodes; this was taken into account when interpreting the clusters. The combination of the two instruments allowed the study to move from a macro-level picture of the knowledge structure to an in-depth reading of the studies' content.

Table 1. Search Protocol and Literature Selection Criteria

Component	Specification
Database	Scopus
Publication years	2016–2026
Keywords	Combinations of the terms <i>critical applied linguistics</i> , <i>critical pedagogy</i> , <i>linguistics</i> , <i>ELT textbook</i> , <i>curriculum</i> , and <i>teacher education</i>
Document type	Peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters
Language	English and Indonesian
Inclusion criteria	Addressing language ideology, critical analysis of teaching materials, or teacher agency in English as a foreign language contexts
Exclusion criteria	Not peer-reviewed, focused on computational aspects of language, or unrelated to educational contexts
Selection outcome	866 records identified; 36 studies included in the synthesis

D. Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted in three stages. The first stage was a bibliometric analysis of keyword co-occurrence using VOSviewer to identify thematic clusters, the relative position of each topic, and the strength of links between concepts (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Node size was interpreted as an indication of keyword frequency, while distance and line thickness were interpreted as indications of conceptual proximity. The second stage was a thematic synthesis of the 36 selected studies. The extracted data were coded inductively and deductively and then grouped into themes describing implementation patterns, ideological content, and teacher agency. This process adapted the principles of reflexive thematic analysis, which emphasize the researcher's active role in constructing themes rather than merely counting codes (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021). The third stage was a critical reading of the resulting themes using concepts from Critical Applied Linguistics, including Fairclough's (2015) three dimensions of discourse analysis, namely text, discursive practice, and social practice, as a heuristic for linking findings on teaching materials to their broader social context.

The conceptual propositions were formulated through abductive reasoning, that is, by seeking the most plausible explanation connecting patterns in the literature with the context of elementary English teacher education in Indonesia. Each proposition had to meet three requirements. First, it had to be supported by more than one source from different contexts or research traditions. Second, it had to be consistent with the Critical Applied Linguistics framework. Third, it had to be translatable into an empirically testable research question. The third requirement was deliberately set so that the propositions would not remain normative statements but would develop into an operational research agenda. The resulting propositions were then integrated into a conceptual framework describing the relationships between material content, the ways materials are used, and the position of prospective teachers in relation to materials. This framework constitutes the main contribution of the study and is presented as a diagram in the results section.

E. Trustworthiness and Authors' Reflexivity

The trustworthiness of the review was ensured through three strategies. First, procedural transparency was secured by reporting every stage of literature selection in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, enabling readers to trace the number of records at each stage (Page et al., 2021). Second, analytical traceability was maintained through an audit trail documenting data extraction, coding, and decisions on theme formulation, in line with the trustworthiness criteria for thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Third, the interpretation of each theme was discussed among the three authors, whose backgrounds in English education, accounting, and elementary teacher education ensured that interpretation did not rest on a single disciplinary perspective. In the critical tradition, the authors' reflexivity must also be stated openly. The authors are educators at Indonesian higher education institutions who are committed to linguistic justice, so the reading in this study deliberately sides with the interests of local learners and teachers. This positioning is not intended to replace evidence but serves as an explicitly declared lens that allows readers to evaluate the interpretations offered.

IV. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results at two levels. The first level is the research landscape derived from bibliometric mapping. The second level consists of four conceptual propositions formulated from the literature synthesis, addressing implementation patterns, ideological content, prospective teachers' agency, and the direction for strengthening teacher education. The four propositions are then integrated into a conceptual framework presented at the end of the results. It should be emphasized that the propositions are theoretical statements grounded in accumulated evidence from various contexts, not reports of direct observation of prospective teachers at a particular institution. Each proposition is therefore accompanied by an account of its evidential basis and its implications for empirical testing. The discussion then places the propositions in dialogue with theory, with the compulsory English policy in primary schools, and with the actual needs of PGSD programs in Indonesia.

A. Research Results

1) Research Landscape: Research Strands That Remain Unintegrated

The cluster profiles derived from the mapping in Fig. 1 are summarized in Table 2. These profiles show that each cluster contributes different conceptual material to this study. In addition to the five clusters profiled in Table 2, the map contains four smaller clusters (shown in cyan, pink, brown, and orange); these were not profiled because they contain only a few items and are not central to the focus of the study. The green cluster provides the foundations of critical pedagogy and transformative teacher education but rarely addresses teaching materials specifically. The purple and yellow clusters provide tools for curriculum analysis, discourse analysis, and the *Global Englishes* perspective, but most of their content does not focus on prospective elementary teachers. The blue cluster brings in the context of children and schools, but from a general education standpoint that does not problematize language ideology. The red cluster shows that the term linguistics in the database is dominated by a computational orientation, so critically oriented linguistic research constitutes a relatively small share. Consequently, no single cluster fully addresses the problem examined in this study. This finding provides the methodological basis for the subsequent synthesis: each proposition must be assembled from several clusters at once rather than derived from a single research tradition.

Table 2. Cluster Profiles from the VOSviewer Mapping

Cluster	Dominant Keywords	Research Focus	Relevance to This Study
Green	<i>critical pedagogy, teacher education, transformative learning, empowerment, anti-racism</i>	Critical pedagogy and transformative teacher education	Foundation for prospective teachers' agency and critical literacy
Purple	<i>teaching, linguistics, curricula, case-studies, ELT, Indonesia</i>	Language teaching, curriculum, and ELT contexts	Context of curriculum implementation; Indonesia remains peripheral
Yellow	<i>textbooks, global englishes, discourse analysis, theoretical framework</i>	Analysis of materials and discourse	Foundation for analyzing the ideology of teaching materials
Blue	<i>human, education, student, child, schools, pedagogics</i>	General education and student studies	Context of young learners without a language ideology perspective
Red	<i>computational linguistics, language processing, semantics, learning systems</i>	Computational linguistics	Outside the study focus; indicates the dominance of a computational orientation

The selection process substantially narrowed the corpus. Of the 866 records identified, 120 records, or 13.9%, were removed before screening, comprising 100 duplicates and 20 records removed for other reasons. Title and abstract screening of 746 records excluded 600 records, or 80.4%. The high exclusion rate at this stage is consistent with the presence of the computational linguistics cluster in Fig. 1, which indicates that part of the corpus lies outside the focus of language education. Of the 146 reports sought for full-text review, 10 reports, or 6.8%, could not be retrieved, and the eligibility assessment of 136 reports excluded 100 reports, or 73.5%. The final number of included studies was 36, equivalent to 4.2% of the initial records. Details of each stage are presented in Table 3. This small inclusion ratio indicates that literature directly linking the ideology of teaching materials, teacher education, and young learners is indeed limited.

Table 3. Summary of Literature Selection Results Based on PRISMA 2020

Selection Stage	Records Entering (n)	Excluded (n)	Exclusion Rate
Identification (duplicates and other reasons)	866	120	13.9%
Title and abstract screening	746	600	80.4%
Full-text retrieval	146	10	6.8%
Eligibility assessment	136	100	73.5%
Studies included in the synthesis	36	—	4.2% of initial records

2) Proposition 1: The Reduction of a Communicative Curriculum to Structural Drills

The first proposition holds that the implementation of the Oxford English curriculum in the education of prospective elementary teachers tends to be reduced to grammar exercises, vocabulary repetition, and workbook completion, even though the materials are conceptually designed for communicative learning. This proposition is built on three layers of evidence. The first layer comes from policy studies showing that the English curriculum in Indonesia is often narrowed to grammar- and examination-oriented practice during implementation (Widodo, 2016). The second layer comes from teacher preparation studies showing that pre-service education has not provided specific preparation for prospective primary English teachers (Zein, 2016, 2017). The third layer comes from recent research identifying shortages of qualified teachers and curricular inconsistency as major obstacles to English instruction in primary schools (Rahman et al., 2026). These three layers of evidence reinforce one another and point to the same tendency. Because these studies concern English education in general, including secondary and in-service contexts (e.g., Widodo, 2016), their transfer to pre-service primary teacher education is inferential, and the Oxford series serves here as an illustrative case of globally standardized materials rather than as a directly examined object.

The mechanism underlying this proposition can be understood through the concept of textbook dependency. When prospective teachers lack adequate pedagogical preparation for young learners, internationally standardized textbooks easily shift from being learning resources to being authorities that determine the content, sequence, and measures of success in learning. In such circumstances, teaching is understood as completing the book rather than facilitating communication. This tendency aligns with the critique, within critical language pedagogy, of transmissive approaches that treat knowledge as something transferred to students rather than constructed through meaningful interaction (Crookes, 2021). The result is a gap between the written curriculum, which is communicatively oriented, and the enacted curriculum, which is structurally oriented. This proposition can be tested empirically by comparing the activities designed in the textbook with the activities actually carried out by prospective teachers in microteaching sessions and then tracing the reasons behind each change of activity.

3) Proposition 2: The Naturalization of Native-Speakerism through Global Materials

The second proposition holds that global teaching materials such as the Oxford series carry the ideology of *native-speakerism* through representations of Western culture and native-speaker language models, and that prospective teachers are likely to accept this ideology as natural. Evidence for this proposition comes from two directions. With respect to materials, Rose and Galloway (2019) show that global English teaching materials tend to rely on native-speaker norms, while Weninger (2021) demonstrates that ideology in textbooks operates through the interplay of text, images, and tasks that guide how learners make meaning of the materials. With respect to users, Holliday (2018) describes *native-speakerism* as an ideology that positions native speakers as the best models, while Lowe (2020) shows that this ideology operates as a frame of which teachers and institutions are unaware. The convergence of these two lines of evidence suggests that the problem lies not only in the content of the materials but also in the absence of critical tools for reading that content.

From the perspective of Critical Applied Linguistics, the unquestioning acceptance of native-speaker norms is a form of naturalized hegemony, that is, domination that is no longer experienced as domination because it has become common sense (Pennycook, 2021). Kumaravadivelu (2016) situates this phenomenon within a colonial legacy that leads teachers in peripheral countries to become consumers of knowledge and materials produced at the center. The situation is more serious at the primary level because prospective teachers will be the first intermediaries between children and English. Unlike global materials, national textbooks in Indonesia have begun to incorporate multicultural values and local cultures (Setyono & Widodo, 2019), which shows that alternative representations are already available. The *Global Englishes* paradigm, which encompasses the perspectives of World Englishes and English as an International Language, offers a conceptual basis for positioning non-native speakers as legitimate users (Rose & Galloway, 2019). This proposition can be

tested through critical discourse analysis of textbook units combined with interviews on how prospective teachers interpret these representations.

4) Proposition 3: Critical Agency That Is Promising yet Constrained

The third proposition holds that prospective teachers have the potential to exercise critical agency in adapting global materials, but that this agency tends to emerge sporadically because it is constrained by institutional structures. The literature identifies several forms of agency relevant to Indonesian primary schools. The first is contextual localization, namely replacing the characters, settings, and themes of materials with elements close to students' lives. The second is strategic *translanguaging*, namely using Indonesian and local languages as resources for meaning-making, in line with Li's (2018) view that learners' linguistic repertoire is an integrated whole that can be mobilized for learning. The third is the personalization of materials, which connects lesson topics with learners' interests and experiences, as emphasized in critical language pedagogy (Crookes, 2021). None of these forms of agency requires replacing the materials; rather, they require the ability to interpret materials contextually.

The constraints on such agency can be explained through Tao and Gao's (2017) finding that teacher agency in curriculum reform is shaped by the interaction between identity commitments and contextual conditions. For prospective teachers, these contextual conditions include microteaching assessment formats that emphasize adherence to lesson plans and completion of material, the perception that internationally standardized materials should not be altered, and the scarcity of discussion spaces that explicitly invite them to analyze the ideology of materials. Kubota and Miller (2017) remind us that criticality in language studies cannot stop at awareness but must be realized in practices that change existing conditions. Accordingly, prospective teachers' critical agency is better understood as a capacity that can be nurtured or hindered by program design rather than as an innate individual trait. This proposition can be tested through action research that integrates critical reflection activities into coursework and then traces changes in the forms of adaptation prospective teachers undertake over time.

5) Proposition 4: From Curriculum Users to Critical Interpreters of the Curriculum

The fourth proposition holds that strengthening the education of prospective elementary school English teachers requires shifting their position from curriculum users to critical interpreters of the curriculum. This proposition synthesizes the three preceding ones. The reduction of the curriculum to structural drills, the naturalization of *native-speakerism*, and the limits of agency share a common root, namely the positioning of prospective teachers as implementers of materials rather than as pedagogical decision-makers. Fig. 3 presents a conceptual framework depicting this shift. On the left, the position of curriculum users is characterized by textbook dependency, acceptance of native-speaker norms, and sporadic adaptation. On the right, the position of critical interpreters is characterized by contextualized communicative learning, awareness of language ideology, and systematic adaptation. The shift is mediated by three strengthening components: critical literacy, analysis of teaching materials, and the development of materials grounded in local wisdom.

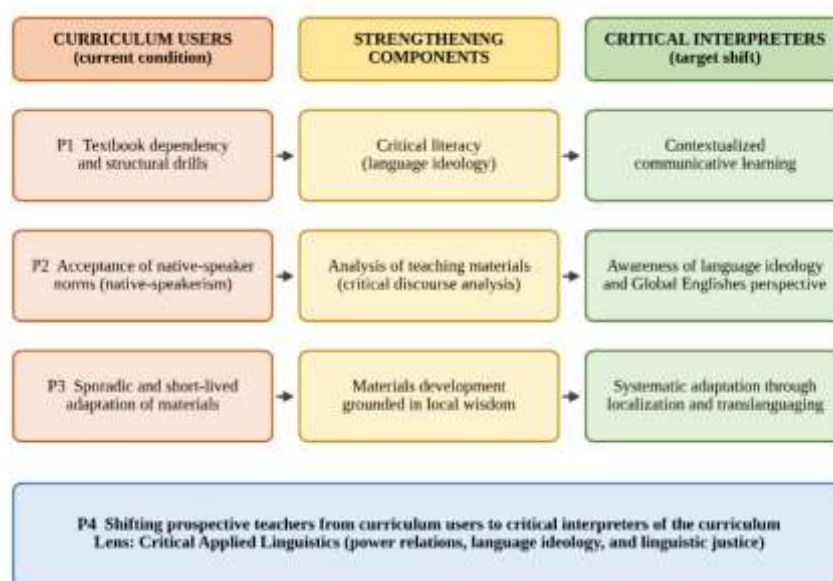


Fig. 3. Conceptual framework for shifting prospective teachers from curriculum users to critical interpreters

A summary of the evidential basis for each proposition is presented in Table 4, while the operationalization of the conceptual framework within the PGSD curriculum is presented in Table 5. Table 4 shows that each proposition is supported by sources from different research traditions, ranging from policy studies and materials studies to research on teacher agency. This diversity of sources matters because it shows that the propositions do not depend on a single finding. Table 5 translates the conceptual framework into recommendations applicable to primary English pedagogy courses, covering learning objectives, course activities, and forms of assessment. The recommendations are deliberately formulated at the level of principles so that they can be adapted to the characteristics of each program, including the diversity of local languages and the conditions of partner schools. In this way, the conceptual framework does not remain a normative idea but provides concrete guidance for curriculum designers and course lecturers.

Table 4. Synthesis of the Evidential Basis of the Conceptual Propositions

Proposition	Key Concepts	Supporting References	Direction for Empirical Testing
P1: Reduction of a communicative curriculum to structural drills	Textbook dependency; transmissive approach; gap between the written and enacted curriculum	Widodo (2016); Zein (2016, 2017); Rahman et al. (2026); Crookes (2021)	Comparison of textbook activities with microteaching activities
P2: Naturalization of <i>native-speakerism</i>	<i>Native-speakerism</i> ; hegemony; <i>Global Englishes</i>	Holliday (2018); Lowe (2020); Rose & Galloway (2019); Weninger (2021); Kumaravadivelu (2016); Setyono & Widodo (2019)	Critical discourse analysis of textbook units and interviews on interpretation
P3: Promising yet constrained critical agency	Teacher agency; <i>translanguaging</i> ; critical language pedagogy	Tao & Gao (2017); Li (2018); Crookes (2021); Kubota & Miller (2017)	Action research based on critical reflection
P4: Shift toward critical interpreters of the curriculum	Critical literacy; Critical Applied Linguistics	Pennycook (2021); Zein (2016); Zein et al. (2020)	Longitudinal design from pre-service education to early-career teaching

Table 5. Recommendations for Strengthening the Curriculum for Prospective Elementary English Teachers

Component	Prevailing Tendency	Direction of Strengthening	Example Course Activity
Learning objectives	Mastery of textbook content and language structures	Ability to interpret and adapt materials critically	Formulating task-based communicative objectives for primary pupils
Critical literacy	Not yet an explicit part of the course	Analysis of language ideology and cultural representation	Examining one textbook unit using a critical discourse analysis guide
Analysis of teaching materials	Materials accepted as unquestioned standards	Materials treated as resources open to interpretation	Comparing a global textbook with a national textbook
Materials development	Reliance on ready-made materials	Materials grounded in local wisdom and <i>translanguaging</i>	Creating stories, songs, or dialogues set in local cultures
Microteaching assessment	Emphasis on completing material	Assessment of contextual adaptation and reflection	A rubric with indicators of localization and critical reflection

B. Discussion

Theoretically, this study contributes by extending Critical Applied Linguistics to teacher education for young learners, an area that critical scholarship has rarely addressed. The contribution lies in explaining the mechanism that links the ideological content of materials with teaching practice. The resulting framework shows that ideology in textbooks does not operate directly but through intermediaries, namely the authority of materials, the pedagogical readiness of prospective teachers, and assessment systems in teacher education institutions. This explanation is consistent with Weninger's (2021) argument that critical textbook analysis must account for the pedagogic frame within which learners encounter the meanings of materials. The second contribution is integrative. The bibliometric mapping shows that research on critical pedagogy, teaching materials, and young learners has developed along separate tracks, whereas the conceptual framework of this study brings the three together into a single, testable explanatory model.

Contextually, the framework is relevant to the policy establishing English as a compulsory subject from Grade III of primary school in the 2027/2028 academic year (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, 2025; Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2024). The policy emphasizes communicative ability, yet the first proposition cautions that communicatively oriented materials are easily reduced to structural drills if prospective teachers' position in relation to materials remains unchanged. The shortage of qualified teachers noted by Rahman et al. (2026) may also encourage hasty teacher preparation programs focused on language proficiency while neglecting the ability to interpret materials. Moreover, Zein et al. (2020) show that policies and language ideologies contend with one another in shaping English language education in Indonesia. The success of the policy therefore cannot be measured solely by the availability of teachers and materials but also by teachers' readiness to interpret materials critically and contextually.

The practical implications of this study are directed primarily at PGSD programs. Primary English pedagogy courses need to integrate critical literacy, the analysis of teaching materials, and the development of materials grounded in local wisdom, as outlined in Table 5. Such integration does not require replacing Oxford textbooks but requires changing how textbooks are positioned in coursework. These implications carry particular significance for regions with strong local languages, such as South Kalimantan, where Banjar is widely spoken, or Bima in West Nusa Tenggara, where the community speaks the Mbojo language. In such contexts, strategic *translanguaging* and the development of materials set in local cultures can serve as a bridge between children's language experiences and English learning. In addition, microteaching assessment rubrics should give weight to the quality of contextual adaptation and reflection, so that prospective teachers' critical efforts are valued as professional competence rather than regarded as deviations from the lesson plan.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when reading its findings. First, the propositions are conceptual and have not been tested directly with prospective teachers, so their strength lies in theoretical consistency rather than empirical generalization. Second, the literature search was limited to the Scopus database and to publications in English and Indonesian, so studies published in other databases may not have been captured. In particular, because Scopus indexes few Indonesian-language publications, relevant studies indexed in national databases such as SINTA or Garuda may have been missed. Third, the bibliometric mapping used keywords as recorded in the database, so term variants and the presence of a computational cluster may have affected the picture of the knowledge structure. Fourth, screening and eligibility assessment were conducted by a single author, and the methodological quality of the included studies was not formally appraised. Fifth, much of the evidence underlying the propositions comes from secondary and in-service contexts, so its transfer to pre-service primary teacher education requires empirical confirmation. In light of these limitations, future research should test each proposition through appropriate empirical designs, such as microteaching case studies, critical discourse analysis of the textbook units in use, action research based on critical reflection, and longitudinal designs that follow prospective teachers into their early years of teaching. Comparative research on global and national textbooks is also needed.

V. Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of the Oxford English curriculum in the education of prospective elementary school English teachers should be understood as a matter of how prospective teachers are positioned in relation to materials, rather than merely a matter of material quality or methodological appropriateness. The literature synthesis produced four interrelated propositions. First, the implementation of global materials tends to be reduced to structural drills because of textbook dependency. Second, global materials carry a native-speakerist ideology that prospective teachers are likely to naturalize. Third, prospective teachers' critical agency can emerge through contextual localization, *translanguaging*, and personalization of materials, but it is constrained by assessment systems and institutional culture. Fourth, teacher education needs to shift prospective teachers from curriculum users to critical interpreters of the curriculum. These propositions are integrated into a conceptual framework that places critical literacy, the analysis of teaching materials, and the development of materials grounded in local wisdom at the core of teacher education.

Based on these conclusions, PGSD programs are advised to integrate the three strengthening components into primary English pedagogy courses and to revise microteaching assessment rubrics so that they value contextual adaptation and critical reflection. This step is all the more urgent in view of the introduction of English as a compulsory subject in primary schools. The proposed framework should be understood as a set of initial principles open to testing rather than as a model ready for uniform application. Future research should test each proposition empirically through case studies, action research, and longitudinal designs across PGSD programs with different linguistic and cultural characteristics. Comparative studies of global and national textbooks are also needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the choice of materials shapes the way prospective teachers view English, local cultures, and their students' linguistic identities.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

A.A. conceptualized the study, conducted the critical reading and formulation of propositions, and wrote the original draft; F.A. conducted the bibliometric mapping and the PRISMA-based literature selection and edited the manuscript; R.I. performed the data extraction and thematic synthesis and contextualized the findings for elementary teacher education; all authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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