

## Designing Local Culture-Based EFL Materials To Enhance English Language Proficiency: Evidence From West Papua

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### ABSTRACT

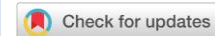
*Designing EFL with students' own culture is not a garnish, it is a lever for equity and measurable learning. this study examines whether integrating West Papuan cultural knowledge into EFL materials improves proficiency and engagement. Using an educational design research approach, we co-developed culture-based units with teachers at two middle schools (SMP YPK 2 Manokwari and SMP YPK Aiumieri), drawing on authentic narratives (e.g., Ottow-Geissler and Dorewui). The intervention targeted four main English skills and was evaluated via a one-group pretest-posttest design. Moreover, there were classroom observation and document analysis. Results show consistent gains across all skills at inferential tests that confirmed the improvements of the students. Observation checklists and field notes documented heightened participation, confidence, and attentiveness when lessons referenced familiar places, people, and practices. Triangulating test scores, observation evidence, and material design indicates that culturally grounded scaffolds (vocabulary banks, evidence-based questions, C.E.R routines) transformed tasks from decontextualized drills into meaningful communication, strengthening proficiency while affirming learners' identities. Findings position locally responsive materials as a practical pathway to improve EFL outcomes in under-researched regions such as West Papua.*

**Keywords:** Local Culture, EFL materials, West Papua, English proficiency, Students engagement.

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## 1. Introduction

Across the last decade, English language teaching (ELT) has moved steadily toward culturally responsive and decolonizing approaches that treat learners' cultures as central resources for meaning-making rather than decorative "add-ons." Materials that relate to students' lived experiences tend to promote deeper engagement and better learning outcomes because culture influences what and how learners notice, process, and retain linguistic input, according to recent syntheses (Hossain, 2024; Aswad et al., 2019; Yaumi et al., 2023). Additionally, research in ELT materials studies contends that expanding opportunities for voice, identity, and equitable participation can be achieved by reimagining classroom texts through locally relevant content, thereby countering colonial legacies in curricula (Kim, 2023; Kimura & Tsai, 2023; Youngsun et al., 2024; Adinda et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian EFL context, a growing body of research shows that adapting or redesigning materials around learners' sociocultural worlds enhances relevance, agency, and communicative practice. For instance, (Hanifa et al., 2024) finds that thoughtful adaptation embedding culturally relevant themes and tasks improves the meaningfulness of learning, while also warning against superficial localization. According to empirical development studies, when materials based on local culture are systematically designed and tested, they can enhance particular skill outcomes (like reading) (Oktarina et al., 2022). Although translation into classroom materials is still uneven, teacher-belief studies show that Indonesian EFL teachers increasingly view "teaching culture" as essential to language instruction (Kidwell, 2021).

Yet, most Indonesia-based materials design studies have concentrated on western and central regions (e.g., Sumatra, Java) leaving eastern Indonesia, especially West Papua which largely under-documented in the ELT materials literature. This gap matters. The human development indicators of West Papua are still below the national average, according to official statistics, and the province continues to lag behind more developed ones in terms of education (e.g., years of schooling and literacy) (BPS-Statistics Indonesia Papua Barat Province, 2024). Additionally, according to national tables, a number of Papuan provinces have relatively higher rates of illiteracy, highlighting ongoing educational inequalities that may impede language learning paths (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2024). Indonesia's adult English proficiency, on the other hand, is still in the "low" band at the national level. EF's regional breakdown indicates that the Papua region has significantly lower scores than Java and other islands, underscoring the need for locally relevant solutions as opposed to universally applicable materials (EF EPI, 2024).

Theoretically, decolonial perspectives on ELT material propose moving beyond "imported" target-culture texts toward designs that mobilize students' own semiotic resources such as local stories, livelihoods, arts, and ecologies, as springboards for communicative tasks. In order to align language development with identity affirmation and community knowledge, these designs seek to develop critical intercultural

awareness while enhancing core proficiency (Kim, 2023; Kimura & Tsai, 2023). However, there is little evidence on how to design, validate, and iteratively improve culture-responsive materials with and for West Papuan learners, whose multilingual, indigenous, and place-based knowledge systems differ from those represented in mainstream textbooks, despite strong arguments and encouraging outcomes elsewhere in Indonesia.

The cultural-based English materials in this study were designed through a collaboration with the English teachers in two different middle school in West Papua, specifically at the Cristian Middle School 2 of Manokwari (SMP YPK 2 Manokwari) and the Cristian Middle School of Aiumieri (SMP YPK Aiumieri). The materials authentically integrate West Papuan cultural knowledge across skills, and assess the impact on learners' English proficiency and perceptions. Those schools were selected as two representatives based on diverse educational and sociocultural context of West Papua, where disparities between urban and rural schools remain evident in literacy and English proficiency outcomes (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2024). Manokwari, as an urban center, offers relatively better access to resources and teacher training, while Aiumieri represents a more rural and peripheral setting with limited facilities, thus allowing the study to test the adaptability and effectiveness of culture-based English materials across contrasting conditions. This dual-site approach not only enhances the representativeness and ecological validity of the findings but also addresses a documented gap in Indonesian ELT research, which has rarely examined underrepresented Papuan contexts (Hanifa et al., 2024; Oktarina et al., 2022; Youngsun et al., 2024; Prihandoko et al., 2021).

This study fills that gap by describing a design-based materials development project that uses West Papuan culture as the organizing framework for tasks aimed at integrated skills. Examples of this culture include indigenous narratives, environmental stewardship practices, arts, and community livelihoods. It extends previous materials work (e.g., Oktarina et al., 2022) beyond Sumatra to the Papuan context, contextualizes recent theoretical calls into a tangible, evidence-based design, and combines a decolonial design stance with iterative validation in a geographically and culturally under-researched Indonesian province.

In order to improve the English language proficiency of secondary and tertiary students in West Papua, this article aims to design and assess students' English ability after learn contextual EFL materials based on local culture. The study's specific objectives are to: (1) co-design a set of culturally responsive materials with teachers and students; (2) investigate how learners' engagement when incorporating West Papuan cultural knowledge into EFL tests. By doing this, the study responds to regional educational needs identified by current national statistics and provides evidence from West Papua that advances the scholarship of decolonizing ELT materials.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Cultural Integration in ELT and Materials Development

The integration of culture in English language teaching (ELT) is now positioned not only as an additional component of communicative competence but as a core driver of equitable learning, aligning with culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and decolonial perspectives. Recent studies argue that English teaching that centers learners' sociocultural realities can redress historical hierarchies in English education and expand participation, especially in multilingual contexts (Baker et al., 2025; Galante et al., 2024). To operationalize how teachers create and assess materials for relevance and rigor, modern CRT frameworks define actionable dimensions such as academic challenge, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Zhang et al., 2024; Rahman, 2018).

Culturally grounded content promotes identity affirmation and deeper language processing, while culturally "neutral" or Anglocentric materials risk disengagement and unequal outcomes (Hossain, 2024). These pedagogical perspectives are reinforced by broader reviews of culture in EFL, which emphasize that local cultural knowledge should function as a primary source for tasks, texts, and assessment rather than merely serving as contextual illustration (Hossain, 2024; Galante, 2024; Baker, 2025).

Evidence mapping further shows that cultural representation in foreign language textbooks remains uneven globally. Local epistemologies are often underrepresented, while source, target, and international cultures are imbalanced. A 2024 scoping review highlights persistent issues such as stereotyping, limited intercultural tasks, and lack of attention to local cultures, while recommending explicit evaluation of intercultural outcomes and locally authored materials (Zhang, 2024).

Recent developments in ELT materials design stress the importance of moving beyond superficial localization toward principled, context-driven design that connects cultural content with language skill development and measurable learning outcomes (Hu et al., 2021). Thus, materials development should be iterative, context-led, and empirically evaluated rather than merely adapted (Carabantes, 2025; Zhang et al., 2024).

### 2.2. Cultural Representation in Indonesian ELT and the West Papua Context

In the Indonesian context, recent Scopus-indexed studies show progress in incorporating culture into national and commercial textbooks, although notable limitations persist. Analyses of senior high school textbooks reveal that while Indonesian (source) culture is present, target and international cultures still dominate many units. Moreover, tasks rarely encourage students to actively use their local knowledge to achieve communicative goals (Sihombing & Nguyen, 2025; Jung et al., 2025).

Curriculum design studies recommend integrating local culture into syllabus development, particularly for young learners, as a central component rather than as

supplementary enrichment (Ratri, 2024). However, evaluations of Indonesian textbooks also highlight inconsistencies between classroom materials and policy frameworks such as the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in terms of intercultural task diversity and alignment with skill-based learning objectives (Ratri et al., 2025). These findings support the need for teacher-driven, context-specific materials that integrate local culture across language skills and assessment (Ratri et al., 2025; Sihombing & Nguyen, 2025).

The West Papua context further underscores the urgency of this issue. Although Indonesia's performance in PISA 2022 remains below the OECD average, regional indicators show gradual improvement alongside continuing educational challenges. In 2024, the Human Development Index (HDI) of West Papua reached 67.69, with mean years of schooling at 7.86, while Southwest Papua recorded an HDI of 69.65 and mean schooling of 8.39 (BPS Papua Barat, 2024; BPS Papua Barat Daya, 2024/2025). These figures indicate the need to enhance curriculum relevance and the quality of learning time, particularly in secondary education.

Despite these developments, two key gaps remain. First, most Indonesian studies focus on textbook content analysis rather than the full cycle of material design, classroom implementation, and impact evaluation on language proficiency. Second, empirical studies involving teacher co-design of materials in remote or underrepresented regions—especially West Papua—are still scarce. Consequently, there is limited understanding of how integrating local cultural texts, practices, and knowledge across all four language skills affects measurable proficiency and learner perceptions (cf. Sihombing & Nguyen, 2022; Ratri, 2024; Zhang, 2024).

This study addresses these gaps through a teacher-researcher collaboration in two middle schools in West Papua. It focuses on co-designing culturally based EFL materials, integrating them across four language skills with explicit proficiency targets, and evaluating their impact through pre- and post-tests, learner perceptions, and classroom observation. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to design and evaluate cultural-based EFL materials at SMP YPK 2 Manokwari and SMP YPK Aiumieri.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Design**

This study employed an educational design research (EDR) sequence with one-group pretest-posttest evaluation, Co-designing West culture-based EFL units with teachers at the two sites and then iterating after classroom trials (McKenney & Reeves, 2018). Based on teachers and researchers' consideration from document analysis to prepare cultural-based material, the sources were curated and pedagogically structured: accessible narratives that surface tense use, sequencing, and culturally loaded vocabulary, with bilingual vocabulary banks grouped by word class, comprehension

items requiring textual evidence, and reflection/discussion prompts to connect texts to students' lives (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Mishra et al., 2019).

Topic selection and unit building began from authentic local knowledge such as Ottow & Geissler for Manokwari, and Dorewui (Roon Island) for Aumieri, so that language work was anchored in histories, places, and values students already know. Each unit deliberately bundled scaffolds in some main sections such as image analysis, reading and taking notes, vocabulary bank, comprehension tasks, claim-evidence-reasoning (CER) part, and reflective prompts (PISA 2022 Results (Volume I), 2023; Tinoca et al., 2022). This design choice was meant to connect cultural familiarity with measurable language output and critical thinking. The intervention was implemented across lessons that targeted all four English skills and was bookended by pre/post tests in the same skill areas to allow fair gain comparison.

### 3.2 Participants

The participants in this research were first year students from two middle schools (SMP YPK 2 Manokwari (n = 23 students) and SMP YPK Aiumieri, Wondama (n = 17 students). We used intact-class (cluster) sampling at each site, appropriate for school-based interventions that must preserve existing timetables and teacher assignments. The sample sizes and site labels are shown in the pre/post tables and subsequent tests.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Before teaching, we (the researcher and local teachers built two culture-based units by analyzing local documents and stories to surface teachable language features to embedded scaffolds. We used the Ottow-Geissler story in Manokwari (SMP YPK 2 Manokwari) and the Dorewui (Roon Island) legend in Wondama (SMP YPK Aiumieri). Each unit is consisted by some components such as image analysis, reading and taking notes, vocabulary bank, comprehension tasks, claim-evidence-reasoning (CER) part, and reflective prompts. There is "Notice and Wonder" opener to activate observation and inquiry. These decisions were made specifically to connect local knowledge to the practice of recounting and describing skills and to the use of critical thinking in discussions (Cohen et al., 2017).

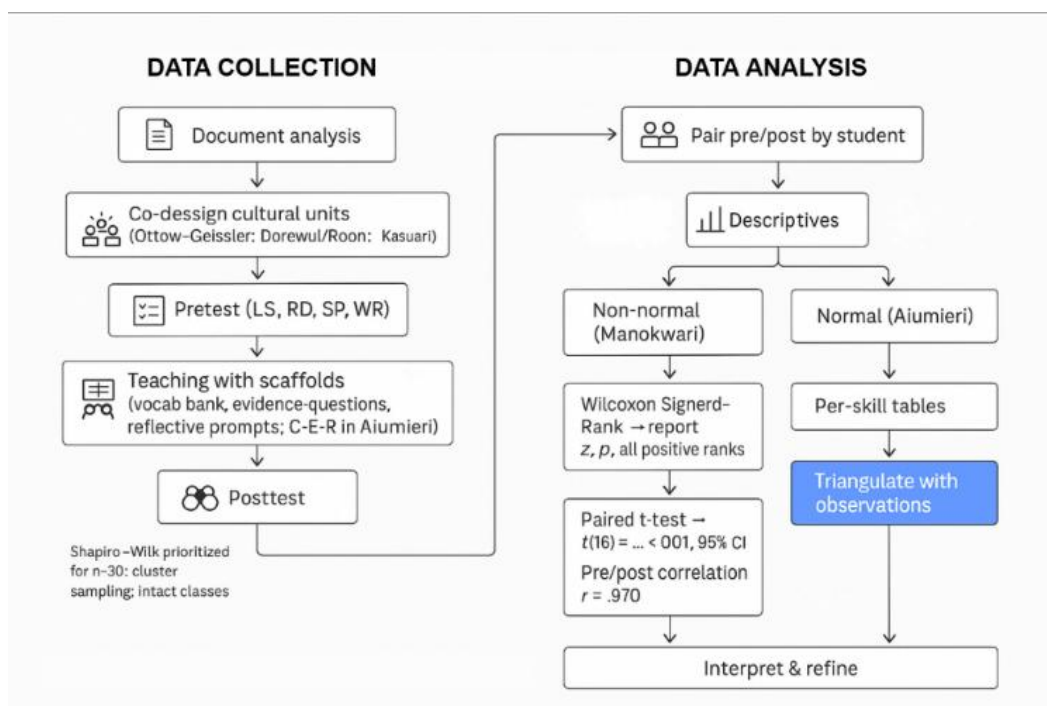
In order to establish a baseline for subsequent comparisons, intact classes at each site finished a pretest that covered the four skills of speaking, writing, listening, and reading. After that, we used the embedded scaffolds to teach the culture-based unit or units during our regular classes. A nine-indicator classroom observation checklist recorded participation (starting a conversation, asking questions, and seeking clarification), communication confidence (talking clearly, answering questions, and expressing ideas), and general engagement (paying attention, showing enthusiasm for the subject, and giving positive answers) during each session. Students took a posttest in the same skill areas following the teaching phase. Field comments frequently relate enthusiasm to topic familiarity (e.g., Ottow-Geissler; kasuari/cassowary).

### 3.4 Data Analysis

After administering the post-tests at both sites, we began analysis by pairing each learner's post-test score with their own pre-test score (overall and by skill), screening for missing values, and producing descriptive summary including means, standard deviations, and average comparison to verify the expected upward shift using SPSS (Field, 2024). Then, we checked distributional assumptions for inferential testing using both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk, the latter prioritized because class sizes were <50. In Manokwari, although Kolmogorov-Smirnov suggested normality, Shapiro-Wilk returned  $p < .05$  for pre- and post-scores, so we treated the data as non-normal and selected the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test for the paired comparison (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). The Wilcoxon "Ranks" table showed all 23 learners as positive ranks (no, negatives, no ties), and the test was significant ( $p < .05$ ), indicating a uniform and statistically reliable improvement from pre- to post-test after cultural-based materials were taught.

For Aiumieri, normality checks were mixed. Kolmogorov-Smirnov on the post-test dipped just below .05, but Shapiro-Wilk exceeded .05 for both pre- and post-tests; following the small-sample convention, I proceeded with a paired-samples t-test. Results showed a clear and statistically significant gain from  $M = 63.65$  to  $M = 73.12$ , with  $t(16) = -12.659$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI  $[-11.057, -7.885]$ , and a strong pre-post correlation ( $r = .970$ ), confirming that post-test improvements were not due to chance.

In order to understand why the post-test increased after the main tests, I triangulated the score gains with evidence from classroom observations made during the same teaching cycle. The explanation will be stated in result section. In order to determine which skills contributed most to the post-test uplift and to make sure that no single subskill was responsible for the entire effect, I lastly examined the per-skill tables (LS, RD, SP, and WR) where necessary for reporting depth. These per-skill matrices can be found in the Aiumieri pre/post table and the Manokwari displays that go with the SPSS outputs. A thorough, empirically supported explanation of the improvements made following the intervention can be found by combining the steps of post-test scoring, assumption checks, Wilcoxon (Manokwari), paired t-test (Aiumieri), and observation-based interpretation.



**Figure 1.** Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

It illustrates a systematic process of data collection and analysis, beginning with document analysis and co-designed cultural units, followed by pretest–posttest implementation with scaffolding strategies. The data were then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, complemented by observational triangulation to ensure the validity and depth of the findings.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Element of Local Culture of Papua for English Teaching Materials

#### 4.1.1. Manokwari Regency (SMP YPK 2 Manokwari)

The topic chosen is Ottow and Geisler. These two gentlemen are the missionaries that landed in Mansinam Island in Manokwari. They came to preach the Bible to people in this area. Thus, Manokwari City is called '*Kota Injil*' or the Bible City, and the moment is now commemorated as Bible Day that is celebrated annually on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February since those missionaries gave contributions to education, community health, and cultural transformation. The relevancy of this material can be seen in the integration of local historical and cultural narratives into English learning.

## Read & Take Notes



**Figure 2.** Ottow Geissler Church in Manokwari

Instructions: Read the passage below. Take notes in the space provided.

**Take Notes Here**

Ottow and Geissler

In 1855, two men from Germany, named Ottow and Geissler, traveled to Papua. They were missionaries, which means they wanted to teach people about God and help them live better lives. Their journey was long and difficult, but they were determined to reach Papua and share their message of hope.

When they arrived on Mansinam Island, Ottow and Geissler learned the local language. They then shared stories about Jesus with the Papuans. They also taught valuable skills like reading, writing, and how to grow more food.

The people of Papua were eager to learn. They built churches and learned to read the Bible in their own language. They also started to live healthier lives and grow more food, thanks to the new knowledge they gained from Ottow and Geissler.

February 5th, the day Ottow and Geissler first arrived, is now a special day in Papua called "Bible Day." It is a day to remember these kind men and how they helped change the lives of the Papuan people. Their legacy continues to this day, as the people of Papua cherish the values of faith, education, and community that Ottow and Geissler helped to bring to their island.

**Figure 1.** A Piece of English material about Ottow and Geissler

This material is significant for several reasons. First, it represents a contextualized approach to English learning where students engage with content rooted in their own history and identity. By learning English through stories of Ottow and Geissler, learners not only practice language skills but also reflect on values such as faith, education, and community service, which continue to shape Papuan identity today

Second, the text is structured with pedagogical support, including a vocabulary bank, comprehension questions, and reflective activities, making it adaptable for classroom use. This scaffolding ensures that learners not only acquire linguistic competence but also critical thinking and cultural awareness, aligning well with the goals of English education in local contexts.

The Ottow-Geissler text delivers accessible input for core EFL skills through a blend of narrative-descriptive prose that models past-tense verbs, sequencing connectors (e.g., first, then, after that) and culturally loaded vocabulary. A built-in vocabulary bank, comprehension checks, and reflective prompts function as scaffolds, helping students connect new lexis to familiar realities and practice grammar in context- especially within recount and descriptive genres- consistent with CTL principles.

The English materials are linked to local identity based on Papuan history such as The arrival at Mansinam, the spread of literacy and community welfare, and Bible Day


(5 February). Students recognize names, places, and traditions, which reliably boosts motivation and confidence versus generic passages. In short, the unit bridges global language goals with West Papuan heritage, improving linguistic outcomes while nurturing pride and engagement in an underrepresented region.

#### 4.1.2. Wondama Bay Regency (SMP YPK Aiumieri)

The topic chosen from this regency is ‘Dorewui in Roon Island’. This is a legend from Wondama Bay Regency. The contextual English material Dorewui in Roon Island from Wondama presents a structured integration of local folklore into English learning, emphasizing both linguistic skills and cultural literacy. The text narrates the legend of Dorewui, a heroic figure with special powers who fought to protect his people but later faced internal conflict with the arrival of the gospel. The material is organized pedagogically, beginning with “Notice and Wonder” tasks that activate learners’ observation and inquiry, followed by a narrative passage recounting the local legend in simplified English.

### Image Analysis: Notice & Wonder

**Instructions:** Look at the image and write down 2-3 things you notice (key details, main ideas, themes) and then write down 2-3 things you wonder (questions you have because of the image, things you are curious about when you look at the image.)

<b>What do you notice?</b>	
	
<b>What do you wonder?</b>	

**Figure 4.** A Piece of English material about Dorewui in Roon Island

To scaffold language acquisition, a vocabulary bank is provided, categorized into adjectives, verbs, and nouns with bilingual explanations, enabling learners to connect new words with prior knowledge. Comprehension is reinforced through multiple-choice

questions aligned with key events and moral dilemmas in the story, requiring students to cite textual evidence in their explanations. The inclusion of the Claims, Evidence, and Reasoning (C.E.R.) framework further supports critical thinking, ensuring that learners not only identify answers but also justify them with reference to the text.

In addition, reflective and group discussion prompts link the narrative's themes such as sacrifice, faith, and cultural identity, related to students' own experiences, encouraging deeper engagement and moral reasoning. This contextualized approach demonstrates how local cultural heritage can be systematically transformed into an English teaching material that fosters reading comprehension, vocabulary enrichment, and critical reflection while maintaining strong cultural relevance for learners in Papua.

#### 4.2. Students' English Skills Proficiency

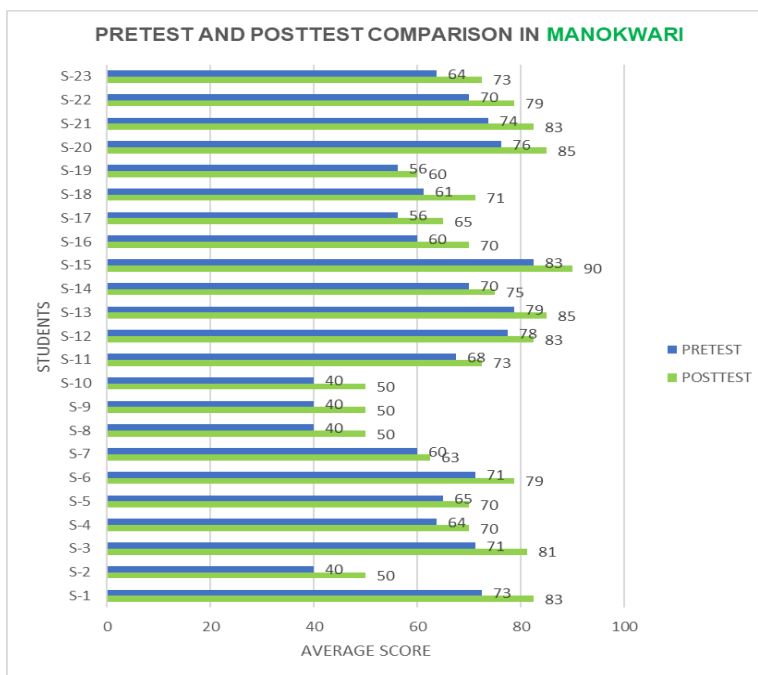
Discussing about students' proficiency reverts to students' competence or ability, consider their proficiency in using English as target language. It covers the four skills along with areas such as vocabulary, grammar, and fluency.

##### 4.2.1. SMP YPK 2 Manokwari

**Table 1.** Pretest and Post test of Cultural-based English material in SMP YPK 2 Manokwari

NO	Ss Code	Score Before Using Local Culture				Score After Using Local Culture			
		LS	RD	SP	WR	LS	RD	SP	WR
1	S-1	80	70	70	70	80	90	80	80
2	S-2	40	40	40	40	50	50	50	50
3	S-3	75	70	70	70	80	85	80	80
4	S-4	70	65	60	60	70	70	70	70
5	S-5	70	65	60	65	70	70	70	70
6	S-6	70	70	75	70	80	75	80	80
7	S-7	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	70
8	S-8	40	40	40	40	50	50	50	50
9	S-9	40	40	40	40	50	50	50	50
10	S-10	40	40	40	40	50	50	50	50
11	S-11	65	65	70	70	70	80	70	70
12	S-12	75	75	80	80	85	80	85	80
13	S-13	80	80	75	80	80	90	80	90
14	S-14	70	70	70	70	75	70	75	80
15	S-15	85	85	80	80	90	90	90	90
16	S-16	60	60	60	60	70	70	70	70
17	S-17	55	60	50	60	60	70	60	70
18	S-18	60	65	60	60	70	70	70	75
19	S-19	65	60	50	50	60	60	60	60
20	S-20	85	70	80	70	90	80	90	80
21	S-21	80	70	75	70	80	80	80	90
22	S-22	70	70	70	70	80	80	80	75

23	S-23	65	70	60	60	70	80	70	70
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**Figure 5.** Pretest and Posttest Average Score Comparison in Manokwari

According to the table 1, each learner's pre- and post-test results in speaking, writing, listening, and reading are listed in the SMP YPK 2 Manokwari table, which allows readers to observe both individual progress and the general skill pattern. When reading horizontally, the majority of the rows in all four skills move upward from pre to post; when reading vertically, the text-based skills exhibit the biggest lift, which is consistent with the unit's emphasis on reading and writing. In summary, the table shows a steady upward trend for the entire class, along with who improved and in what skills.

Based on the figure 5, the bar chart aggregates those same results into an average-score comparison, making the class movement easy to see at a glance. Each pair of bars rises from pre to post for listening, reading, speaking, and writing, and the tallest visual uplift appears in the literacy-oriented skills, mirroring the table's detailed evidence. The figure thus functions as a quick visual confirmation of the table's detailed evidence.

#### 4.2.2. SPSS Analysis Results for Pretest and Posttest in Manokwari

##### a. Normality test

The normality test was conducted using both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk statistics.

**Table 2.** Normality test of Manokwari

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
English Pretest average score	.137	23	.200*	.902	23	.028
English post-test average score	.157	23	.148	.912	23	.044

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

**b. Non-parametric tests**

**Table 3.** Non-parametric test (Wilcoxon) of SMP YPK 2 Manokwari

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
English Posttest Average Score – English Pretest Average score	Negative Ranks	0 <sup>a</sup>	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	23 <sup>b</sup>	12.00	276.00
English Pretest Average score		Ties	0 <sup>c</sup>	
		Total	23	

a. English Post-test Average Score < English Pre-test average score

b. English Post-test Average Score > English Pre-test average score

c. English Post-test Average Score = English Pre-test average score

**Test Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

		English Posttest Average Score – English Pretest Average score
Z		-4.225 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Prior to inferential testing, SPSS assumption checks were performed. A non-parametric approach was chosen because Shapiro-Wilk was given priority and showed

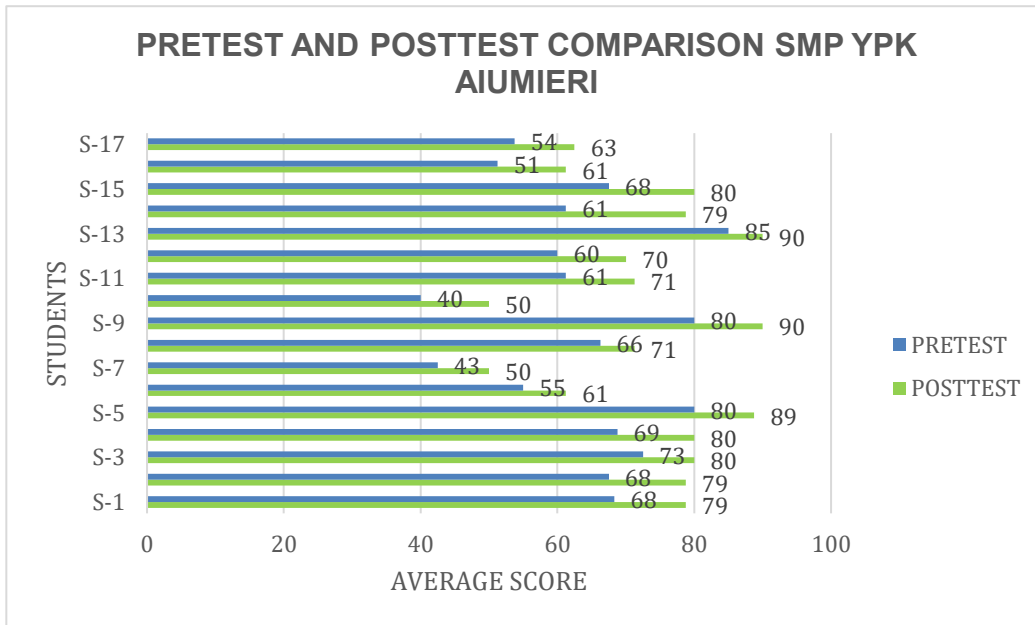
non-normality with this class size. After that, paired pre/post averages were subjected to the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which only produced positive ranks with a statistically significant outcome, indicating that the post-test gains were not the result of chance.

To sum up, when West Papuan cultural knowledge was integrated into the EFL learning, learners in SMP YPK 2 Manokwari showed greater interest and active participation. The use of familiar figures, places, and traditions made the test items more meaningful, reduced anxiety, and encouraged them to express ideas more confidently. It is proved by the test scores improvement in pre- and post-test. The cultural connection helped transform the tests into relatable tasks rather than abstract exercises, strengthening both their engagement and their motivation to perform in English.

#### 4.2.2. SMP YPK Aiumieri

**Table 4.** Pretest and Post test of Cultural-based English material in SMP YPK Aiumieri

NO	Ss Code	Score Before Using Local Culture				Score After Using Local Culture			
		LS	RD	SP	WR	LS	RD	SP	WR
1	S-1	65	70	65	70	80	80	75	80
2	S-2	65	70	70	65	80	75	80	80
3	S-3	70	70	75	75	80	80	80	80
4	S-4	65	70	70	70	80	80	80	80
5	S-5	85	75	80	80	85	90	90	90
6	S-6	55	50	60	55	60	60	65	60
7	S-7	50	40	40	40	50	50	50	50
8	S-8	70	60	65	70	75	70	70	70
9	S-9	80	80	85	75	90	90	90	90
10	S-10	40	40	40	40	50	50	50	50
11	S-11	65	60	60	60	75	70	70	70
12	S-12	60	60	60	60	70	70	70	70
13	S-13	80	90	85	85	90	90	90	90
14	S-14	65	60	60	60	75	80	80	80
15	S-15	70	65	65	70	80	80	80	80
16	S-16	55	50	50	50	60	60	65	60
17	S-17	60	55	50	50	65	65	60	60



**Figure 6.** Pretest and Posttest Average Score Comparison in SMP YPK Aiumieri

According to the table 4, each student's listening, reading, speaking, and writing pretest and posttest results are shown in the table for SMP YPK Aiumieri, enabling a detailed examination of each student's development and general skill patterns. Each learner demonstrated progress, with literacy-oriented skills showing the biggest gains. Vertically, the overall class profile shows a consistent shift, confirming that the local-culture-based unit contributed to a broad uplift rather than isolated changes. Horizontally, each row shows that learners moved upward across all four areas.

Based on the bar chart in figure 6 and by comparing the pre- and posttest averages for each skill, the chart visually summarizes this progression. Every bar rises consistently, demonstrating improvement in speaking, writing, listening, and reading, with reading and writing displaying the most obvious gains. The chart supports the overall impact of the culturally-based materials by offering a quick confirmation that the intervention improved the entire class, not just a subset of students, and that the impact was skill-balanced.

**a. Normality test**

**Table 5.** Normality test of SMP YPK Aiumieri

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
English Pretest average score	.106	17	.200*	.972	17	.848
English post-test average score	.209	17	.047	.919	17	.141

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

### b. Parametric Test

Since the assumption was satisfied, a paired sample t-test was chosen as the appropriate statistical test to analyze the difference between pretest and posttest scores.

**Table 6.** T-Test of SMP YPK Aiumieri

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	English Pretest average score	63.65	17	12.525	3.038
	English post-test average score	73.12	17	12.629	3.063

		Paired Samples Correlations		
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	English Pretest average score And English post-test average score	17	.970	.000

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest Nilai Rata-Rata Bahasa Inggris - Posttest Nilai Rata-Rata Bahasa Inggris	-9.471	3.085	.748	-11.057	-7.885	-12.659	16	.000

Normality testing of the paired scores was the first step in the SPSS analysis process. The Shapiro-Wilk test, which is thought to be more reliable for small samples, indicated a normal distribution even though the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test revealed some values below the threshold. This supported the parametric procedure of using a paired-samples t-test. Students who performed reasonably well at baseline also demonstrated proportionate improvement following the intervention, as indicated by the t-test, which showed a highly significant improvement from the pre- to posttest and a strong positive

correlation between the two sets of scores. This statistical support demonstrates that the upward shift seen in the table and chart is significant and not coincidental.

Taken together, the table, the bar chart, and the results highlight that incorporating west Papuan cultural knowledge into EFL learning in Aiumieri fostered strong learner engagement. Students were more motivated and attentive since the materials connected directly to their lived environment, including familiar traditions, local wildlife, and community narratives. This cultural anchoring not only raised test performance but also encouraged active participation, showing that when English learning resonates with local identity, learners respond with higher confidence, stronger interest, and deeper commitment in class.

### c. Class Observation Notes

**Table 7.** Classroom observation checklist for students In SMP YPK 2 Manokwari

No	Indicator	Yes	No	Comments
	<b>Classroom participation</b>			
1	Initiating communication	✓		
2	Engage in a discussion	✓		
3	Ask for clarification	✓		
	<b>Communication confidence</b>			
1	Speak audibly and clear	✓		
2	Responds to questions	✓		
3	Express ideas confidently	✓		
	<b>Overall engagement</b>			
1	Pays attention during the lesson	✓		
2	Shows enthusiast for the topic	✓		
3	Respond positively to the lesson	✓		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	

In Manokwari, the checklist indicated full engagement, with all nine indicators marked “Yes.” Students actively initiated communication, engaged in discussions, sought clarification, and demonstrated confidence in responding to questions and expressing ideas. They also showed attentiveness, enthusiasm, and positive responses toward the lesson.

Students respond positively to the materials, and enthusiast during the class. All students are happy with the learning materials, because the topic is familiar with them. They said, the topic is local, it’s very close to them, but they learn English. They are motivated to learn English more. They said, if the materials are what they have known or familiar with, they are able to become clever students. Besides, most of the students are Christians and the topic is Ottow and Geisler who are the missionaries come to this land for the first time to preach about Christianity, and it is celebrated every 5th of May.

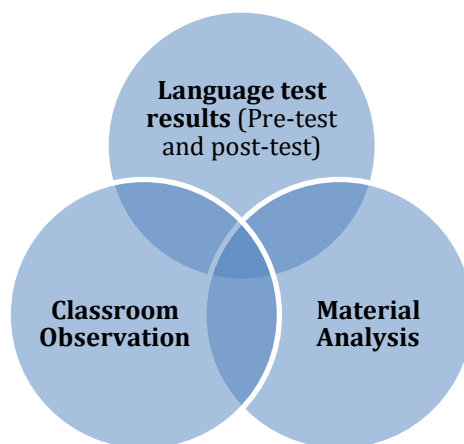
The observation in SMP YPK Aiumieri, Wondama also reflected a similar pattern to Pegaf, with eight “Yes” and one “No.” This indicates strong but not perfect

engagement, suggesting that some students may have hesitated in communication or confidence-related behaviors

**Table 8.** Classroom observation checklist for students In SMP YPK Aiumieri

No	Indicator	Yes	No	Comments
	<b>Classroom participation</b>			
1	Initiating communication	✓		
2	Engage in a discussion	✓		
3	Ask for clarification	✓		
	<b>Communication confidence</b>			
1	Speak audibly and clear		✓	
2	Responds to questions	✓		
3	Express ideas confidently	✓		
	<b>Overall engagement</b>			
1	Pays attention during the lesson	✓		
2	Shows enthusiast for the topic	✓		
3	Respond positively to the lesson	✓		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	

Students are very happy and enthusiast during the class. This is because they are familiar with the issue. The topic is familiar; it is a bird called Cassowary or in Papua we call it 'Kasuari'. It is known as 'Emu' in Australia. They are so happy learning English. Students ask for clarification, but they speak Indonesian. However, it is to show that they pay attention to the topic. To strengthen the results, the data triangulation is explained below.



**Figure 7.** Data Triangulation

The credibility of this study was strengthened through data triangulation involving test results, classroom observations, and material analysis. The pre-posttests provided quantitative evidence of improvement in listening, reading, speaking, and writing, with statistical tests confirming the reliability of these gains. At the same time, classroom observations captured behavioral indicators of engagement, such as students'

willingness to participate, confidence in speaking, and attentiveness during lessons. These observations not only confirmed that learners were more active but also explained why test scores improved, showing that cultural familiarity acted as a motivational driver.

Document analysis of the teaching materials added a third strand of evidence by demonstrating how local culture texts were deliberately structured with scaffolds such as vocabulary banks, comprehension questions, and C.E.R reasoning tasks. This ensured that the cultural dimension was pedagogically integrated rather than decorative, linking directly to language practice and critical thinking. Together, these three data sources validated one another.

The triangulated findings confirm that embedding West Papuan cultural knowledge into EFL instruction enhanced both learning outcomes and student engagement. Learners responded more confidently and enthusiastically when tasks resonated with their identities and experiences, allowing them to focus cognitive efforts on meaning-making rather than contextual decoding. Therefore, this study shows that culturally grounded materials are not only effective in raising proficiency but also vital in affirming learners' cultural identity and motivation in underrepresented regions like West Papua.

### 4.3. Discussion

This study set out to examine whether and how locally grounded EFL materials could shift both engagement and achievement in two West Papuan Schools. The central mechanism emerging from the findings is straight forward to cultural relevance primed engagement, and engagement enabled proficiency gains. When lessons revolved around narratives and symbols that students already know, they entered tasks with activated background knowledge that has positive effect for their comprehension and motivation (De Caro-Barek, 2022; Tan & Mante-Estacio, 2021). Observation notes captured this clearly where classes in Manokwari displayed consistently high participation, confidence, and attentiveness while Aiumieri showed the same pattern with only minor slippage on a single indicator. These behavioral records did not sit apart from the scores; rather, they help explain why the post-test improved students' ability. It is indicated by students were more willing to initiate talk, ask for clarification, and persist since the content felt like their world (Chung & Long, 2024).

What precisely in the materials appears to have fueled these improvements? In order to transform familiarity into a springboard for language work rather than merely decorative elements, the design purposefully connected cultural anchors to pedagogical scaffolds (Kwee & Dos Santos, 2022; Yang, 2021). To lessen lexical load, bilingual vocabulary banks arranged by word class were included with texts (Kwon et al., 2024); comprehension tasks required textual evidence rather than recognition (Diprossimo et al., 2023); reflective prompts linked locations and events to students' personal experiences (Tan & Mante-Estacio, 2021); and, when applicable, Claims–Evidence–Reasoning (CER) routines assisted students in defending their responses and extending

their writing and speech (Bossér, 2024). These design decisions seem to have played a key role in converting cultural recognition into quantifiable performance and are consistent with contextual teaching and learning principles.

The two-site implementation also discusses transferability with nuance. Gains were observed in both Aiumieri's more remote location and Manokwari's semi-urban setting, indicating that the underlying mechanism in terms of cultural relevance plus scaffolded tasks transports across various school ecologies. However, the lone "No" on Aiumieri's checklist of observations begs for caution: even captivating designs have to contend with practical limitations like time constraints, unequal prior knowledge, or resource shortages (Ganesan, 2025; Nørgaard et al., 2020). That nuance serves to define scope rather than undermine the main argument: the approach is sound, but its implementation will take into account local logistics and teacher mediation (Martin et al., 2019).

Here, the assessment lens is important. In tests and assignments, culturally anchored prompts lessen the burden of contextual decoding; students focus more on what they want to say and how to say it rather than trying to figure out "what the text is about" (Ajjawi et al., 2022; Jukes et al., 2021; Sparks et al., 2024). The biggest apparent lifts occur in literacy-oriented skills, where vocabulary scaffolds and prior knowledge can compound, which is probably explained by observation comments linking increased engagement to recognition of local names, locations, and customs (Diprossimo et al., 2023; Tan & Mante-Estacio, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). To put it another way, the design effectively shifted students' cognitive focus from comfort to composition and meaning-making.

Triangulation is the foundation of the study's credibility from an evidentiary perspective. The pre-posttests capture the resulting proficiency gains with appropriate inferential checks; the observation records document participation, confidence, and enthusiasm in action; and the document/material analysis demonstrates how local knowledge was methodically converted into teachable units with clear language and reasoning targets. In a one-group design, this three-way alignment is especially crucial because, even though randomized controls were impractical in these schools, the coherence between sources—design → engagement → achievement—reduces the possibility that the effects are chance or measurement artifacts.

A brief interpretation of the skill profile is also warranted. All four skills improved, but the most noticeable improvements followed the units' literacy-heavy design: reading and writing were probably improved by narrative/descriptive texts, evidence-based comprehension, and structured writing responses. Speaking and listening skills also improved, bolstered by opportunities to verbally defend claims and repeated exposure to well-known material (Carter, 2022; Tan & Mante-Estacio, 2021). However, the main benefits of the materials were evidently found in the prolonged text processing and composition required. This is not a limitation; rather, it demonstrates that form follows function, with materials centered around texts and reasoning producing the greatest

impact on outcomes that depend on them (Bouwer & van der Veen, 2024; Vandermeulen et al., 2024).

The implications are tangible for practice. Similar contexts allow teachers to: (1) choose or co-author locally resonant texts (Banegas et al., 2020); (2) create bilingual vocabulary banks to reduce lexical barriers (Quinn, 2021); (3) cultivate reading-to-learn habits by requiring textual evidence in comprehension (Graham et al., 2024); (4) adopt C.E.R. frames to push justification in speaking and writing (Turkan et al., 2012); and (5) permit brief, intentional L1 checks before returning to English production (Ganesan, 2025). These steps don't require costly infrastructure; instead, they call for curation and framing, not new technology. Curriculum-wise, matching assessment prompts to community knowledge can also improve equity because test scores more accurately reflect language proficiency than prior knowledge of foreign cultures when tasks make reference to familiar environments.

There are a few limitations that should be noted. Causal certainty is limited by the one-group design, the brief intervention period, and the small sample size, which reflects intact classes in actual schools. These limitations are common in school-embedded design research, but they clearly indicate what needs to be done next: add delayed post-tests to assess retention; include student and teacher interviews to further explore motivation and identity; and include a comparison group in subsequent cycles (Wedde et al., 2023). The current evidence would be strengthened by such extensions, which would maintain ecological validity while elucidating mechanism and endurance.

Well-scaffolded, locally sourced materials continuously improved students' proficiency and engagement in two different West Papuan schools. Scaffolds transformed that focus into measurable language output, while cultural knowledge redirected cognitive effort toward meaning and expression. Cultural knowledge did more than just make lessons more enjoyable. When classroom behavior, pre-post-performance, and material design are triangulated, a logical narrative emerges: English instruction becomes more equitable and effective when it aligns with students' identities and lived ecologies. This provides a useful way to enhance EFL learning in understudied, multilingual areas like West Papua.

## 5. Conclusion

Embedding West Papua cultural knowledge by designing learning material including vocabulary banks, evidence-based questions, and C.E.R frames which made English tasks feel familiar and meaningful. Students participated more, spoke and wrote with greater confidence, and shifted effort from decoding context to expressing ideas. Tables, graphs, and appropriate tests all pointed to broad gains across skills, not just in one area.

Overall, culture-responsive, well-scaffolded materials offer a practical way to boost English proficiency and motivation in West Papua's diverse classrooms. They also

make assessment more authentic and affirm students' identities which make it become strong reasons to scale this approach through teacher co-design and curriculum alignment.

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