

## Adapting Contextualized ELT Materials in Sorong Regency: Teachers' Perspectives and Pedagogical Implications

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### ABSTRACT

Material adaptation is a pivotal aspect of English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. This study examines the perceptions of junior high school teachers in Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua, regarding contextualized ELT material adaptation, with a focus on challenges encountered and perceived impacts on student engagement and learning. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected from five experienced ELT teachers through semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that teachers actively contextualize materials by integrating local culture, environmental themes, and student experiences to enhance relevance and motivation. Despite notable challenges such as varied proficiency levels, limited resources, and technological gaps, teachers observed improvements in comprehension, participation, and academic performance. The study underscores the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy and calls for targeted professional development and resource allocation to support ELT in underrepresented regions.

**Keywords:** Contextualized ELT Materials, Material Adaptation, Teacher Perspectives

### INTRODUCTION

Adapting contextualized English Language Teaching (ELT) materials is crucial for creating inclusive and effective language learning in today's diverse classrooms. As English is increasingly used as a global lingua franca, it is taught to students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds (Yacob et al., 2022). Contextualization involves aligning educational content with learners' real-world experiences, cultural identities,

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and local knowledge (Rose et al., 2022; Stahl et al., 2020). This strategy enhances comprehension and interest and fosters a deeper connection between the students and the language they are learning (Heald et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, particularly in the eastern regions such as Sorong Regency in Southwest Papua, the demand for culturally and contextually adapted teaching materials is pressing. Students in this region represent a rich mix of indigenous groups, each with its language, traditions, and worldviews. This diversity presents a dual challenge for teachers to accommodate individual learning differences while building a cohesive and inclusive classroom experience. Adapting ELT materials to reflect better students' cultural backgrounds and daily realities can help close proficiency gaps, boost confidence, and enhance learner motivation (Toledo-Sandoval, 2020)

Research supports the value of culturally responsive teaching in diverse classrooms. Howard et al. (2021) argue that students are more likely to engage actively and retain information when they see their culture and lived experiences reflected in the content. Setiawan and Qamariah (2023) also emphasize the importance of integrating local culture into ELT to ensure that students find the material both familiar and meaningful. However, most of these studies have been conducted in more urban or resource-rich contexts, where access to training, digital resources, and teacher support is significantly higher than in remote areas. In contrast, teachers in rural or marginalized communities often struggle with outdated textbooks, lack of contextualized materials, and minimal professional development opportunities (Rose et al., 2022).

In Sorong Regency, these issues are particularly acute. Students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds; many speak indigenous languages at home rather than Indonesian, let alone English. The resulting linguistic distance creates a substantial barrier to English acquisition (Jaekel et al., 2023). Additionally, due to limited access to digital learning tools, libraries, and well-equipped classrooms, teachers must often rely on their creativity and personal efforts to adapt generic teaching materials Prastiyo & Navisha (2025). These adaptations may include incorporating local names, customs, places, or relevant daily activities into lessons to help students better understand and relate to the content. Unfortunately, there is minimal empirical research examining how teachers in Sorong carry out such adaptations and what challenges they face in the process.

While existing studies recognize the general benefits of contextualization in ELT, Hanifa and Yusra (2023) focus either on urban learners or linguistic adaptation alone, often overlooking broader cultural and academic diversity. Moreover, these studies frequently focus on theoretical models of material development rather than practical, on-the-ground insights from teachers. Basnet (2024) highlights this gap, noting that the existing literature isolates specific variables rather than exploring the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors in material adaptation.

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In areas like Sorong, where education systems are often under-resourced, and teachers wear multiple hats, there is an urgent need to understand how ELT practitioners navigate and respond to the realities of diverse classrooms.

The current research is grounded in the belief that teachers are central agents in the adaptation process. Their insights are invaluable for understanding how contextualized materials are developed and implemented in real classroom situations. However, there remains a significant gap in the literature concerning teacher perceptions, how they define effective material adaptation, what factors they consider when contextualizing lessons, and how they perceive the outcomes of their adaptations on student learning. Despite being on the front lines of instructional decision-making, teachers' voices are often underrepresented in educational research, especially those working in rural or marginalized areas.

This study responds directly to this gap by focusing on the lived experiences and perspectives of junior high school ELT teachers in Sorong Regency. By investigating how they adapt teaching materials to meet the needs of their diverse learners, the study aims to contribute fresh empirical evidence to English language education in multicultural contexts. In particular, the study examines how cultural and academic diversity intersect in shaping teachers' decisions and practices. It also explores the challenges teachers face, including a lack of resources, insufficient training, and administrative or curricular constraints that limit innovation in lesson design.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated exploration of cultural and academic diversity as key dimensions in ELT material adaptation. While previous research has touched on these aspects independently (Nurteteng et al., 2024), few studies have examined them as interrelated challenges that influence instructional effectiveness. This research also provides localized, practice-based insights often missing in broader national or international studies. By foregrounding teacher perspectives from Sorong, this study offers a more grounded and context-sensitive understanding of what it means to teach English in settings marked by complex student backgrounds and limited institutional support.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its integrated examination of cultural and academic diversity in ELT material adaptation, specifically from the lens of teachers working in marginalized, rural contexts. Unlike previous research that often isolates cultural or linguistic factors or is based in urban, better-resourced areas, this study provides grounded, empirical insights directly from educators navigating the realities of remote teaching in Sorong Regency. By capturing how these teachers define, develop, and implement contextualized materials, this research fills a notable gap in the literature centered on what adaptations are made and why and how classroom realities shape those decisions.

Furthermore, this study distinguishes itself by elevating the teacher's voice as a central source of knowledge. While many studies focus on policy,

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theory, or student outcomes, this research prioritizes the practitioner perspective, acknowledging that sustainable innovation in ELT begins with those most directly involved in day-to-day instruction. This bottom-up approach generates rich, practical implications for material development, professional training, and curriculum design, particularly in underrepresented educational environments.

This study aims to explore teachers' perceptions of contextualized ELT material adaptation in Sorong Regency, focusing on the challenges they face and the perceived impact of these adaptations on student engagement and learning outcomes. The study aims to inform policy and practice through this investigation, encouraging more inclusive, culturally relevant, and practical approaches to English language education in diverse and underrepresented contexts.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design, which was selected to explore the subjective experiences and perspectives of English language teachers regarding adapting contextualized ELT materials in diverse classroom settings. The qualitative approach is well-suited for understanding the teachers' practices, challenges, and the underlying factors influencing their material adaptation strategies. Through in-depth interviews, the research aimed to capture rich, nuanced insights into how these teachers adapt materials to cater to their students' cultural and linguistic diversity.

The research was conducted in Sorong Regency, located in Southwest Papua, a region marked by its multicultural and multilingual student population. The choice of this location was driven by the unique educational context where classrooms often consist of students from various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the adaptation process, the study focused on three Junior High Schools within the regency: SMPN 1 Kabupaten Sorong, SMPN 11 Kabupaten Sorong, and SMP Muhammadiyah Aimas. These schools were selected for their diversity in student demographics and the presence of English language teachers with firsthand experience in adapting ELT materials to suit the needs of their diverse student bodies.

The primary data sources for this study were five English language teachers from junior high schools in Sorong Regency, consisting of three female and two male teachers, with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 15 years. They were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct experience adapting English teaching materials in multicultural and multilingual classroom environments. Although the number of participants is limited, their in-depth, context-specific experiences provide rich qualitative insights into the challenges and practices of material adaptation in underrepresented areas, which aligns with the study's exploratory purpose.

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Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, allowing flexibility and structure in gathering information. A set of 12 open-ended questions was developed to probe teachers' experiences adapting ELT materials, challenges, and perceptions of the impact on student motivation and learning outcomes. Two university lecturers with expertise in ELT and qualitative research validated the interview instrument. Their input helped refine question clarity and alignment with the research objectives. To strengthen validity, member checking was also conducted by returning transcripts to participants for review and confirmation of accuracy.

The interview consisted of 12 open-ended questions, each grouped into three thematic areas to explore teachers' perceptions, challenges, and observed impacts of contextualized ELT material adaptation. Questions 1 to 4 focused on teachers' perceptions of material adaptation, aiming to understand how teachers define, implement, and value contextualization in their classrooms. Questions 5 to 8 examined the challenges teachers encounter in meeting the needs of diverse learners, particularly about varying proficiency levels, limited resources, and cultural diversity. Lastly, questions 9 to 12 explored the perceived impact of material adaptation on student motivation and learning outcomes, including classroom engagement, understanding of content, and academic participation.

The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms such as as Zoom or WhatsApp Video Call, depending on the teachers' availability and preferences. Specifically, two teachers were interviewed face-to-face at their schools, one teacher via Zoom, and the remaining two teachers through WhatsApp Video Call due to connectivity limitations in their areas.

For data analysis, thematic analysis was employed, a widely recognized method for identifying and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. The process began with data familiarization through repeated readings of the interview transcripts. Initial coding was conducted by systematically extracting significant excerpts aligned with the research questions. Thirty-eight initial codes were generated from the twelve open-ended interview questions. Specifically, Questions 1 to 4, which explored teachers' perceptions of material adaptation, produced 14 codes; Questions 5 to 8, which addressed challenges in adapting materials, yielded 12 codes; and Questions 9 to 12, which focused on the perceived impact on students, resulted in 12 codes.

Frequently occurring codes included terms such as cultural relevance, student engagement, limited teaching resources, and language barriers. These initial codes were then categorized into three overarching themes that corresponded directly to the research focus: (1) Teacher Perception of Material Adaptation, (2) Challenges to Meet Diverse Students' Needs, and (3) The Impact of Adaptations on Student Motivation and Learning Outcomes.

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Each theme consisted of grouped codes that addressed specific aspects of the research questions. For example, using local content and media adjustment were grouped under teacher perception, while curriculum constraints and proficiency gaps were included under challenges.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are derived from semi-structured interviews consisting of twelve open-ended questions. These interviews aimed to capture teachers' experiences and perspectives regarding adapting contextualized English Language Teaching (ELT) materials. Specifically, Questions 1 to 4 explored teachers' perceptions of material adaptation, focusing on how they define, apply, and value contextualization within their classroom practices. Questions 5 to 8 investigated the challenges teachers encounter in addressing the diverse needs of students, particularly about varying levels of language proficiency, limited instructional resources, and cultural diversity. Finally, Questions 9 to 12 examined the perceived impact of contextualized materials on student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes.

### 1. The Teacher's Perception of Material Adaption

A central theme that emerged from the interviews was the teachers' emphasis on adapting English Language Teaching (ELT) materials to align with students' cultural backgrounds and daily lives. Teachers reported that one effective strategy was incorporating traditional stories, family routines, or community practices into lesson content. These familiar references created a bridge between the English language and students' real-life experiences, allowing learners to connect emotionally and cognitively with the material. For example, reading tasks that included local celebrations or family events sparked interest and made students more willing to engage.

"I use stories about traditional celebrations or family activities for reading tasks. Students can relate to the content and participate more actively."  
Teacher 2, Q.1

Another commonly used technique involved designing dialogues or role-plays around daily routines, such as shopping, cooking, or visiting a traditional market. These tasks introduced conversational phrases that students could use immediately in their everyday interactions, thus reinforcing practical language skills.

"I design dialogues around daily activities like shopping or cooking, which help students learn conversational phrases they can use." Teacher 1, Q.1

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In addition to embedding cultural content into pre-made tasks, teachers encouraged student-generated material, asking learners to share personal stories or describe family traditions in English. This created space for authentic interaction and student voice, turning language practice into a personalized and meaningful experience.

"I encourage students to share their own cultural experiences in English, then build lessons based on those stories." Teacher 3, Q.1

These strategies reflect a strong commitment to contextualized and student-centered instruction, where language is taught not as an isolated subject but as a tool for real-life communication. This form of material adaptation not only addressed students' cognitive needs but supported their sense of identity and belonging within the learning process.

Related to how teachers incorporate local contexts and issues into their teaching materials, the interview results indicate that teachers intentionally embed environmental and cultural elements to bridge the gap between academic English content and students' real-life experiences. One commonly used context is local environmental issues, particularly waste management, pollution, and sustainability. These themes are used to build students' vocabulary and writing skills and encourage critical thinking about their communities. For example, one teacher shared:

"I ask students to write about how their families manage household waste. It helps them learn words like 'separate,' 'recycle,' and 'trash bins.'" Teacher 2, Q.2

This strategy allows students to engage with practical vocabulary while drawing on their routines, making the lesson more relatable and easier to remember. By integrating familiar topics such as household chores and community cleanliness, students develop the language in a meaningful and helpful way beyond the classroom. Another teacher emphasized how environmental topics can support argumentation and opinion writing:

"We discussed why littering is a problem in our area. Students gave opinions and practiced writing about what should be done to solve it." Teacher 5, Q.2

This activity illustrates that using local environmental challenges not only develops students' language skills (e.g., expressing opinions and proposing solutions) but also raises social awareness and promotes English as a tool for advocacy. Besides environmental themes, local cultural events were also highlighted as valuable content for adaptation. Teachers stated that incorporating festivals, ceremonies, and traditional celebrations helps students practice descriptive and narrative skills. These events are familiar to students and offer a rich source of vocabulary related to time, place, emotions, and customs. One teacher shared:

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“I often focus on local cultural events like festivals, asking students to describe them in English or act out scenes from these events.” Teacher 4, Q.2

This approach allows students to express their own experiences in English and reinforces the cultural relevance of learning. Another teacher added:

“During the New Year festival, I had students tell stories about what their families did. They practiced past tense and learned new words related to food and clothes.” Teacher 3, Q.2

Including culturally familiar content, such as food traditions, greetings, or customs, helps learners associate language forms with real-life events. These examples show that by integrating local environmental issues and cultural traditions, teachers enhance ELT materials' relevance, engagement, and authenticity. These adaptations improve students' comprehension and vocabulary use and support higher-order thinking and emotional connection to the content.

Another important aspect of teachers' material adaptation practices is ensuring the content remains relevant to students' immediate environment and local community. Teachers reported that embedding familiar elements such as references to students' homes, neighborhoods, or public places like schools and markets significantly enhances the relatability and effectiveness of the materials. This strategy allows students to build stronger connections between the English language and their everyday surroundings, making lessons more accessible and engaging. One teacher shared how the use of visuals from familiar locations helps students feel more connected to the lesson:

“I include visuals and topics from their surroundings, like pictures of their school or the market.” Teacher 2, Q.3

Incorporating such content helps reduce the cultural and linguistic distance students might feel when engaging with generic or foreign materials. When lessons feature recognizable places and situations, students are more likely to understand the vocabulary and confidently participate. It also allows teachers to explain new language through contextual examples that students intuitively understand. In addition to visual familiarity, teachers emphasized the importance of responding to student interests and daily behavior. By observing students' routines and preferences, teachers can select themes and activities that resonate personally with learners. This responsiveness to the classroom context ensures that lesson content is academically aligned and emotionally engaging. As one teacher noted:

“I ensure that the materials are relatable by observing what students do in their daily lives and using these as examples.” Teacher 3, Q.3

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This type of reflective teaching demonstrates a learner-centered approach, where materials are not static but evolve based on classroom dynamics and student input. These findings suggest that material adaptation is about adding local content and continually adjusting to student experiences, interests, and environments. This level of responsiveness plays a key role in making English language instruction more inclusive, engaging, and contextually appropriate.

In addition to cultural content and locally relevant themes, teachers also described specific examples of successful material adaptation that directly and positively impacted student comprehension and classroom engagement. These examples illustrate how contextualization enhances linguistic understanding and student motivation. One teacher highlighted the effectiveness of using a story about a local celebration to teach grammar, specifically the past tense. Because students were already familiar with the celebration and its sequence of events, they could easily follow the narrative and focus on learning the grammar structures embedded in the lesson.

“I used a story about a local celebration to teach past tense. Students already knew the event, which made it easier to follow the lesson.” Teacher 1, Q.4

This adaptation shows that prior cultural knowledge is an effective scaffold for language instruction. When students understand the context, they can construct meaningful sentences and apply grammar rules appropriately. It also reduces the need for extensive background explanation, allowing more class time for practice and feedback. Another teacher shared how role-play based on shopping experiences reinforced transactional vocabulary and conversational structures. Students practiced expressions like “How much is this?” or “I would like to buy...” in a fun, practical context that mimicked real-life situations.

“I created a shopping role-play activity where students had to ask for items and prices. They found it fun and practical.” Teacher 5, Q.4

This example reflects experiential learning, a strategy where students simulate everyday activities in the target language. Role-playing helps learners develop fluency and builds confidence by giving them opportunities to use English in scenarios they might realistically encounter. In another case, a teacher integrated school-based settings, such as a class field trip, to contextualize vocabulary related to locations and directions. Using language cues, students were tasked with describing their route from the classroom to the library.

“I used our school map and asked students to give directions using English. Since they walk there every day, it was easy for them to describe.” Teacher 4, Q.4

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Here, the adaptation merges environmental familiarity with target language structures, reinforcing spatial vocabulary while promoting the active use of English. This strategy taps into students' real-world routines and physical environment, providing a concrete reference point for abstract linguistic concepts. One more teacher emphasized the benefit of turning personal student experiences into classroom content. For example, students were asked to write a short recount text about a recent family event or weekend activity.

“I asked students to write about something they did over the weekend, like helping their parents or visiting relatives. They were excited to share.”  
Teacher 2, Q.4

This writing task supported grammar and vocabulary development (past tense, time adverbs, sequencing) and increased student ownership and emotional connection to the lesson. By writing about personal experiences, students were more invested and enthusiastic, improving their work quality.

These examples demonstrate that successful material adaptation occurs when content is meaningfully anchored in students' lived experiences, routine environments, and cultural reference points. These adaptive practices are particularly beneficial in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms, where a one-size-fits-all approach may not effectively engage all learners. This approach aligns with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy and reinforces the importance of teacher agency in creating inclusive and effective language learning environments.

## 2. Challenges to Meet Diverse Students Needs

Teachers face several challenges when adapting materials for students with different levels of language proficiency and backgrounds. One significant difficulty is creating materials catering to beginners and more advanced students. Teachers must find a balance in designing content that is neither easy for advanced learners nor difficult for beginners. This process demands significant time and effort to ensure that all students are appropriately supported and challenged. One teacher emphasized:

“It's difficult to create lessons that are not too easy for advanced students but also not overwhelming for beginners. I must find a balance that works for everyone.” Teacher 5, Q.5

Another challenge is meeting the needs of students from rural or remote areas, who often have different learning experiences compared to their peers from urban environments. Students in rural areas frequently have limited exposure to English outside the classroom due to a lack of resources, such as media in English or access to native speakers. This makes it harder for teachers to connect lessons with the students' real-world experiences. Teachers address this by incorporating local examples, stories, and familiar

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situations into their lessons. For instance, using materials that reflect the local community or cultural practices helps make the lessons more relatable and accessible to students, bridging the gap between classroom learning and students' everyday lives. Another teacher emphasized:

“Students from rural areas often have limited exposure to English in their daily lives. So, I try to use materials that reflect their environment and experiences, like stories or examples from their community.” Teacher 3, Q.6

Resource limitations were also identified as a significant challenge. Teachers reported that a lack of updated textbooks, multimedia tools, and online resources makes providing engaging learning experiences challenging. In some cases, the available resources are outdated, which limits the teachers' ability to offer current and relevant content. Teachers often rely on more traditional, paper-based materials, which can be less engaging than interactive digital resources. These limitations force teachers to be creative with what they have, making the most of basic resources like printed worksheets or classroom discussions. However, this can result in a lack of variety and may not fully capture students' attention or cater to different learning styles. One teacher shared:

“We often must make do with limited resources. I try to find creative ways to adapt what we have, but sometimes it's a struggle to keep lessons interesting with limited materials.” Teacher 4, Q.7

In addition, the issue of students' limited access to technology was another significant barrier discussed during the interviews. In areas where students do not have regular access to the internet or computers, teachers find it challenging to incorporate digital tools that could enhance their lessons. With online learning materials, videos, or educational apps off-limits to some students, teachers must focus on traditional methods, such as textbooks, printed handouts, or oral instruction. While these methods can still be effective, they often lack the interactive elements to make learning more engaging and accessible, especially for students who might benefit from visual or digital content. Another teacher commented:

“It's difficult to create lessons that are not too easy for advanced students but also not overwhelming for beginners. I must find a balance that works for everyone.” Teacher 5, Q.5

A key difficulty teachers face in adapting ELT materials is meeting the needs of students with varying levels of English proficiency. In classrooms where learners range from beginners to advanced users, creating instructional content that is accessible yet sufficiently challenging presents a considerable obstacle. As one teacher shared:

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“It's difficult to create lessons that are not too easy for advanced students but also not overwhelming for beginners. I must find a balance that works for everyone.” Teacher 5, Q.5

This response underscores the need for differentiated instruction, where content, pacing, and learning tasks are tailored to students' capabilities. Lower-proficiency learners may require simplified texts, visual cues, or sentence starters, whereas more advanced students benefit from open-ended tasks and creative language use. Achieving this balance demands considerable planning time and pedagogical skill. Moreover, some teachers noted that curriculum materials often fail to account for this variation. Standard textbooks are typically designed with a single proficiency level in mind, making them unsuitable for heterogeneous classrooms. As one teacher explained:

“The textbook we use doesn't really fit all students. I have to modify a lot add simpler words for some, extra exercises for others.” Teacher 1, Q.5

Rather than relying solely on published materials, teachers frequently invest additional time designing or adjusting lesson content themselves. This hands-on approach, while beneficial, significantly increases workload and highlights a gap in resource availability. In addition, maintaining equitable participation during class activities can be challenging. Teachers reported that more fluent students dominate discussions, while lower-proficiency students often withdraw. As a result, ensuring balanced interaction and engagement becomes difficult:

“Sometimes, the advanced students answer everything quickly, and the others just stay silent. It's hard to keep everyone involved.” Teacher 3, Q.5

To address this, teachers experiment with alternative formats such as peer mentoring, small group instruction, or tiered tasks, although these methods also require thoughtful preparation and classroom management. The challenge of differentiating materials for diverse proficiency levels is both pedagogical and logistical. It requires content adaptation and classroom strategies that promote inclusive participation. The insights gathered in this study reflect teachers' dedication to addressing these disparities, even in the face of limited support and resources.

Closely linked to the challenge of addressing varied proficiency levels is teachers' difficulty adapting materials for students from rural or remote areas. These learners often differ significantly from their urban counterparts regarding their access to English language exposure and educational resources. Limited availability of media, digital tools, and interaction with fluent speakers outside of school restricts their opportunities to engage with English in authentic contexts. As one teacher explained:

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“Students from rural areas often have limited exposure to English in their daily lives. So, I try to use materials that reflect their environment and experiences, like stories or examples from their community.” Teacher 3, Q.6

This response highlights a critical barrier: Without meaningful exposure to the language outside the classroom, students may struggle to see the relevance of English or apply it in real-world situations. Consequently, traditional textbooks, often designed with urban, globalized settings in mind, can feel abstract or disconnected for rural learners.

To bridge this gap, teachers turn to localized material adaptation. They draw on familiar community settings, cultural practices, and daily routines to design examples, tasks, and stories that resonate with students' experiences. For instance, teachers might introduce a dialogue based on buying vegetables at a local market rather than using a lesson about shopping in a supermarket. Moreover, some teachers shared how using local folktales, family traditions, or environmental issues like farming cycles or local conservation practices encourages students to participate more confidently in discussions and writing tasks. These adaptations support language development and affirm students' cultural identities within the learning process.

Without institutional support or curated rural-relevant content, the burden of material creation falls entirely on the teacher. This was echoed by another respondent who said:

“It's hard to find suitable content, so I make my own worksheets using local names or events. It takes time, but students understand better.” Teacher 4, Q.6

These reflections reinforce that material adaptation in rural settings requires more than translation. It involves thoughtful cultural alignment, environmental awareness, and sensitivity to students' socio-economic realities. While teachers demonstrate strong commitment and innovation, they also call attention to the need for system-level support, such as access to adaptable resources and training on rural-responsive teaching strategies.

About the previous challenge of managing diverse proficiency levels, this issue further illustrates the intersectionality of teaching in complex classroom settings. Rural students may have lower language proficiency, fewer educational resources, and less familial support for English learning at home. As a result, teachers in rural areas must navigate multiple layers of disadvantage while ensuring quality, inclusive instruction. These challenges illustrate ELT teachers' nuanced and demanding role in under-resourced and culturally diverse regions. Though varied and resourceful, their strategies underscore a critical need for broader educational policies that recognize and support the realities of rural and multilevel classrooms.

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Many reported working with outdated textbooks, minimal multimedia tools, and limited access to the internet conditions that make it challenging to design varied and stimulating lessons. One teacher expressed this clearly:

"We often must make do with limited resources. I try to find creative ways to adapt what we have, but sometimes it is difficult to keep lessons interesting with limited materials." Teacher 4, Q.7

Teachers shared that the lack of visual or interactive content often forces them to rely on monotonous paper-based worksheets, which are less engaging for students, particularly those who benefit from audio-visual input. The absence of tools like projectors, speakers, or classroom computers further limits their ability to present material dynamically. Another teacher reflected on the outdated nature of available textbooks:

"Most of our textbooks are old. Some of the topics are not relevant to students anymore, and we have to skip or replace them." Teacher 1, Q.7

However, the time required to redesign materials can be overwhelming, especially without institutional support or collaboration opportunities. One respondent highlighted how these limitations affect students' learning variety:

"I try to combine storytelling or drawing to replace videos or apps, but it's not the same. Some students get bored quickly." Teacher 2, Q.7

Teachers resort to low-tech strategies such as role-playing, drawing, or group discussion without engaging tools. In particularly under-resourced schools, some teachers even reported printing materials at their own expense:

"No school printer or paper is available sometimes, so I just print worksheets at home. I cannot do it often, but it helps." Teacher 5, Q.7

These findings underscore how resource limitations compound the challenges of material adaptation, pushing teachers to be highly resourceful and resilient. However, despite their creativity, basic teaching infrastructure, especially in rural and marginalized contexts, undermines efforts to create inclusive and effective learning environments.

Beyond the challenges of resource scarcity and mixed proficiency levels, another significant issue reported by teachers was the limited access to technology among students, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This digital divide severely restricts the use of online tools, multimedia content, and interactive platforms that are otherwise common in modern English language teaching. As one teacher noted:

"Students in rural areas often don't have regular access to the internet or computers, so I focus on more traditional methods like paper-based

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activities or local resources. It's a bit harder to integrate technology into lessons." Teacher 1, Q.8

Basic infrastructure such as reliable Wi-Fi, projectors, or classroom computers is unavailable in many schools. Even when these tools are present at school, students may not have access to smartphones or internet connections at home, doing homework that requires digital tools infeasible. This limitation affects lesson planning and widens the learning outcomes gap, especially between students in rural and urban settings. Another teacher expressed concern about this inequality:

"Some students can watch YouTube or use apps at home, but others can't. So I have to make sure every activity works without internet." Teacher 2, Q.8

As a result, many educators revert to low-tech strategies, relying on textbooks, printed handouts, and oral presentations. While these methods are still valuable, they often lack the interactivity and multimodality to enhance engagement, especially for visual or auditory learners. Several participants also reported difficulties in using digital platforms for assessments or supplementary instruction:

"During the pandemic, we tried using WhatsApp, but not all students could join. Some had to rely on notes from friends or wait until the next class." Teacher 3, Q.8

"We want to use videos or interactive games, but many students have no phones or share with siblings. It's hard to make sure everyone can participate." Teacher 4, Q.8

These insights demonstrate how the lack of consistent technological access undermines teachers' efforts to innovate or personalize their instruction. They also reinforce the finding that contextual adaptation must go beyond content and consider the delivery method and students' accessibility. Nonetheless, these limitations call attention to a pressing need for policy-level investment in educational technology infrastructure and training, especially in remote areas where students are already at an academic disadvantage.

### **3. The Impact of Adaptations on Student Motivation and Learning Outcomes**

The findings of this study underscore the powerful influence of adapted teaching materials on student motivation and learning outcomes. When English Language Teaching (ELT) materials are contextualized, primarily through references to students' cultural backgrounds and local environments, teachers observe a marked increase in learners' interest, participation, and comprehension.

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“When we use content, they can relate to, such as local celebrations or daily life scenarios, students get more interested. They enjoy learning when it feels familiar to them.” Teacher 3, Q.9

This comment reflects the central role of relevance and familiarity in boosting intrinsic motivation. Rather than approaching English as an abstract or foreign subject, students can see its value and applicability. For example, when teachers design reading tasks or speaking activities around local festivals, family roles, or traditional foods, students are more inclined to engage actively, ask questions, and use English more confidently. Another teacher shared a similar experience:

“I once used a traditional market scene for a dialogue task, and the students were really into it. They even started using the new vocabulary outside of class.” Teacher 1, Q.9

This anecdote illustrates how contextualized content improves classroom engagement and promotes language use beyond the school setting, a key indicator of successful language acquisition. Teachers also reported that adapted materials contribute positively to learning outcomes, particularly in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and speaking fluency. Students can better infer meaning, recall new terms, and structure their responses by connecting tasks to familiar cultural references. One teacher explained:

“When students read about things they know, like their own village or daily chores, they understand faster. They don’t just memorize; they actually learn the meaning.” Teacher 4, Q.10

Furthermore, adapted materials reduced students' anxiety in using English, as they did not have to grapple with unfamiliar scenarios or abstract content. This emotional comfort allowed students to take risks, participate more frequently, and engage in peer discussions more easily.

“If they know the topic, they’re more confident. Even shy students want to speak when it’s about something they’ve experienced.” Teacher 5, Q.10

While the positive impact was most notable in oral activities and comprehension tasks, several teachers also observed improvement in students' written expression. They noted that students produced longer and more coherent responses when writing prompts were based on culturally relevant or familiar themes.

“Writing assignments used to be hard for them, but when I asked them to describe their homes or village life, they wrote with more details and fewer mistakes.” Teacher 2, Q.11

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These reflections point to a critical insight: Adapted materials foster motivation and support concrete academic progress. Teachers consistently emphasized that contextualization enabled students to connect emotionally and cognitively with the material, leading to deeper learning. Teachers in this study found that by adapting their materials to reflect the realities of students' lives, they were able to create more inclusive, engaging, and effective learning environments, particularly in communities where English is not part of daily discourse.

Building upon the observed boost in motivation, teachers also noted a tangible increase in student participation and interest when lessons were grounded in real-life scenarios. The connection between contextualized materials and student engagement became especially evident during activities mirrored the students' daily experiences. This alignment made learning feel more authentic and gave students a reason to use English in class actively. One teacher highlighted this point through a classroom example:

“Definitely. Students are more engaged in class. For example, when they have to role-play real-life situations like shopping, they love it. It makes them want to speak in English because it’s something they can relate to.” Teacher 4, Q.10

Activities such as mock shopping interactions, preparing traditional dishes, or describing local places allowed students to practice functional language within a familiar and meaningful context. Another teacher echoed this by describing how participation increases when students feel a personal connection to the topic:

“When the content reflects their own lives like how to prepare local food or visit the traditional market, they get excited. Even the quieter students raise their hands.” Teacher 3, Q.10

These reflections indicate that students are not merely passive recipients of language instruction but become active contributors when the learning experience feels relevant. Role-plays, storytelling, and collaborative tasks tied to local practices provided natural platforms for language use, making English feel less foreign and more immediately useful.

Moreover, teachers observed that such engagement extended beyond oral practice. When students were asked to write or present about familiar topics, they exhibited more confidence, creativity, and sustained effort. This connection between cultural relevance and academic performance shows that material adaptation increases interest and enhances participation across language skills. By aligning lessons with students' everyday realities, teachers

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foster a sense of ownership over learning and invite more consistent, enthusiastic participation.

In addition to enhancing motivation and classroom engagement, teachers consistently observed that contextualized materials improved students' comprehension of complex language concepts. Students found it easier to process and retain the information when abstract topics such as grammar rules, vocabulary nuances, or cultural references were linked to familiar local customs or events. As one teacher explained:

“Using local stories or events to explain grammar and vocabulary helps students understand better. For instance, when teaching past tense, we use examples from local festivals, and it clicks for them.” Teacher 3, Q.11

This observation illustrates the cognitive advantage of culturally grounded instruction. Students are more likely to grasp grammatical structures when embedded in content they recognize and care about. For example, describing what happened during a traditional village ceremony or family gathering provides a natural context for using past tense verbs, allowing students to connect language form with meaningful use. Another teacher shared a similar experience with vocabulary learning:

“When I introduce new words using examples from students' daily lives or customs, they remember the words more easily.” Teacher 5, Q.11

Furthermore, several teachers noted that students retained language better when it was tied to memorable local experiences, such as annual festivals, religious practices, or school traditions. The emotional and experiential connection to the content served as a powerful memory aid, reinforcing vocabulary and grammar skills meaningfully.

“They remember the lesson better when it's connected to something they've experienced. Like, using their own story from a holiday to practice writing in the past tense really works.” Teacher 2, Q.11

Overall, the findings affirm that localized, contextualized materials are effective for increasing motivation and deepening students' understanding of English. Teachers can demystify abstract language elements by aligning instructional content with learners' backgrounds, making lessons more concrete, relatable, and, ultimately, more effective.

Beyond improvements in engagement and comprehension, teachers also reported a noticeable increase in students' academic performance due to using localized and culturally relevant materials. This approach enriched classroom interaction and translated into measurable improvements in assessments, particularly in vocabulary usage and grammatical accuracy. One teacher shared a compelling example of this connection:

“Yes, I've seen improvements. For example, when we used a local cultural event to practice vocabulary, students performed better in tests. They could

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relate the words to something real, and it helped them remember better.”  
Teacher 1, Q.12

By grounding instruction in familiar themes such as community events, cultural practices, or everyday routines, teachers make it easier for students to recall and apply what they have learned during formal assessments. Another teacher supported this finding by describing improvements in grammar application:

“When we explain sentence structure using familiar contexts, like describing their homes or festivals, students understand the patterns and use them better in writing tests.” Teacher 4, Q.12

Learners who see direct links between lesson content and their own world are more likely to internalize concepts, use them appropriately, and perform successfully in evaluative settings. Furthermore, teachers noted that language retention improved significantly when lessons were delivered using culturally meaningful material. The ability to recall vocabulary or grammar points in tests increased, not because of rote memorization, but because students had already connected the knowledge to real-life experiences.

“They didn’t just memorize definitions. When we talked about real events in their village, they could describe them using the correct tense and vocabulary. It showed in their test results.” Teacher 3, Q.12

These findings indicate that contextual adaptation is not just a motivational strategy but also a pedagogically sound approach that supports long-term academic growth. Teachers can help students move beyond surface-level learning to achieve deeper understanding and academic success by integrating real-world, localized content into ELT instruction. This reinforces the importance of supporting teachers in developing and delivering contextualized resources, especially in diverse and underserved educational settings.

This study provides new insights into the significance of adapting teaching materials to students' cultural backgrounds and daily experiences. The findings support the hypothesis that contextualizing materials significantly enhances student engagement and motivation in English Language Teaching (ELT). Specifically, integrating local cultural references, such as traditional festivals and community events, made lessons more relatable, fostering greater participation and enthusiasm among students. These findings align with prior research (Anyichie & Butler, 2023; Olanrewaju & Omeghie, 2024; Reskyani et al., 2024), which observed that culturally responsive teaching methods increase student motivation. Teachers in this study reported that using local contexts allowed students to make personal connections with the content, making the learning process both meaningful and engaging.

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This observation is echoed by Wicaksono et al. (2024), who explored the cultural significance of Nubian marriage rituals in Egypt. They emphasized that culturally rooted practices maintain social harmony and identity, which parallels how localized ELT materials can help students find relevance and pride in their learning experiences. Similarly, Zaidah et al. (2023) noted in their study of international students in Java that meaningful interaction with local culture improved students' adaptation and engagement, underscoring the motivational value of culturally grounded educational content.

Another significant outcome of this study is the observed link between localized teaching materials and improved academic performance. Teachers found that students exhibited better comprehension and retention when lessons incorporated local cultural events or familiar daily scenarios. This result supports the findings of (Zhang & Su, 2021), who suggested that using familiar, local examples in teaching grammar and vocabulary helps students grasp complex language structures. The study's results indicate that contextualizing language learning enhances students' understanding of the material and improves academic success, as demonstrated by improved test scores and language proficiency. This notion is also supported by Lestari and Sukarni (2024), whose research on critical reading in EFL highlighted that engaging materials rooted in students' lived experiences foster greater cognitive engagement and lead to higher academic outcomes. When content mirrors students' contexts, comprehension becomes more meaningful, thus facilitating deeper learning and performance gains.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study also identified several challenges that hinder the adaptation of materials. A primary difficulty was catering to the varying levels of language proficiency among students. Teachers found it challenging to create appropriately complex materials for advanced learners while still accessible to beginners. This difficulty aligns with (Gumbo's, 2020; and Walenta's, 2018) findings on the complexities of balancing content complexity for a diverse group of students. Teachers often resorted to differentiated instruction strategies to address this issue, such as simplifying tasks for lower-level learners and offering more challenging activities for advanced students. However, this approach increased teachers' workload, which could be a significant limitation, particularly in schools with fewer resources or higher student-teacher ratios. Malaikosa and Taopan (2020) similarly documented that implementing structured pedagogies like the scientific approach in rural classrooms is complicated by student diversity and time constraints, which mirror the differentiation burdens found in this study.

Another limitation noted in this study was the scarcity of resources, especially in rural areas. Teachers often had to rely on traditional, low-tech materials, such as printed worksheets, due to limited access to updated textbooks, multimedia tools, and internet resources. This lack of

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technological support may have hindered the effectiveness of material adaptation, as digital tools and interactive media could have provided more engaging and diverse learning experiences (Prastiyo & Navisha, 2025b). This limitation is consistent with Gumbo's (2020) research, which highlighted how a lack of technological resources in rural schools can hinder the effectiveness of localized teaching methods. Despite these resource constraints, teachers showed remarkable creativity in maximizing what was available. However, the overall quality of instruction could be significantly improved if schools had access to more varied and up-to-date resources. Wahyuningsih et al. (2024) also emphasized the importance of engagement through dynamic classroom practices like ice-breaking techniques, suggesting that even simple, low-tech methods can help manage learner attention and create effective learning environments in under-resourced settings.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching for both educational practice and policy. The positive impact of culturally adapted materials on student engagement suggests that teacher training programs emphasize the importance of contextualized teaching. Educators must have the tools and strategies to integrate local content into their lessons, enabling students to connect their learning with real-world experiences. Furthermore, schools, especially those in rural areas, should prioritize investing in diverse, up-to-date learning resources, including multimedia and digital tools, to enhance the effectiveness of language instruction. This is particularly crucial for improving engagement and ensuring that a lack of modern learning aids does not hinder students. Understanding the processes by which teachers modify English as a Foreign Language material is crucial for optimizing pedagogical strategies and supporting student language acquisition (Marwa et al., 2017).

In addition, the study emphasizes the need for continuous professional development for teachers. Supporting teachers in learning how to adapt materials effectively is crucial, particularly in linguistic and cultural diversity contexts. Scholars such as Körkkö et al. (2016) highlight that professional development must move beyond technical skills to include reflective practices that help teachers make informed decisions about instructional materials. This is especially important when adapting English language teaching (ELT) materials for students with different proficiency levels, backgrounds, and learning needs. Training incorporating principles of differentiated instruction, such as those discussed by Gheysens et al. (2020), can help educators better address classroom diversity by planning flexible lessons that accommodate a range of abilities. Moreover, integrating culturally relevant pedagogy, as proposed by Kim et al. (2021), can empower teachers to select or adapt content that resonates with students' lived experiences, increasing engagement and comprehension. Therefore, professional development initiatives must build technical competence and nurture

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pedagogical adaptability, ensuring that teachers are prepared to create inclusive and meaningful learning experiences for all students.

Another critical implication of this study is the importance of fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment. Teachers reported that allowing students to share their cultural experiences and using them to build lessons helped create a classroom environment that respected and valued cultural diversity. This inclusive approach improved motivation and promoted greater engagement among students. This finding resonates with the work of (Attaviriyanupap, 2025; Maqsood et al., 2024; McConachy, 2018), who argued that recognizing and incorporating students' cultural backgrounds can significantly enhance the language learning process.

Despite the strengths of this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size, though sufficient for a qualitative study, was relatively small, consisting of only five teachers from three junior high schools in Sorong Regency. This limits the generalizability of the findings, and future studies could include a larger and more diverse sample to assess whether the results hold across different educational contexts. Moreover, the limited number of participants may have unintentionally excluded dissenting voices. Teachers who may have had negative experiences or differing views on contextualized material adaptation might not have been represented, potentially skewing the findings toward more favorable perspectives.

Additionally, the study relied heavily on self-reported teacher data, which may introduce bias. Teachers' perceptions of their teaching practices might not always align with the actual outcomes in the classroom. Future research could include classroom interactions or student performance observations to complement the self-reported data. To help mitigate potential bias in this study, triangulation was employed by drawing on additional sources such as curriculum documents, sample adapted materials and interview field notes. These materials supported cross-validation of responses and helped strengthen the reliability of the findings. The researcher also practiced neutrality during interviews through open-ended questioning and conducted member checking to ensure that participants' views were accurately captured.

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical role of contextualized English Language Teaching (ELT) materials in supporting diverse student needs. When teaching resources reflect learners' cultural identities and daily realities, they foster more inclusive, engaging, and effective language learning environments. This is particularly vital in regions like Sorong Regency, where linguistic and academic diversity poses significant instructional challenges. The findings highlight the importance of equipping teachers with the skills and autonomy to adapt materials creatively. Therefore, teacher education and

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professional development programs must prioritize training in culturally responsive and differentiated instruction. In addition, schools and policymakers should invest in localized content development and provide sufficient teaching resources, especially in rural or marginalized settings, to ensure equitable access to quality education. Nevertheless, the research has limitations. It involved a small sample of teachers from three junior high schools, which may limit the broader applicability of the findings. The reliance on self-reported data also presents potential bias. Classroom observations and student achievement data should be included to strengthen future research. Additionally, exploring digital and multimedia tools for contextual material adaptation could provide new directions for innovation, particularly in low-resource educational settings.

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