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The Lecturers' Experiences and Generative AI in Developing Communicative Speaking Materials in English Education Program

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Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) has changed the way English language learning materials are created. It offers new possibilities, but it also challenges lecturers to protect the quality of their teaching. This study examined how lecturers balance their own expertise with generative AI when they develop communicative speaking materials for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in an English Education program. This qualitative case study involved five lecturers with academic backgrounds in speaking, grammar, and linguistics. Data were collected through semi structured interviews and analyzed thematically to find recurring patterns. The findings showed that lecturers' professional expertise remained central to materials development, visible in learner centred design, contextual adaptation, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. Lecturers used generative AI widely for brainstorming, lesson planning, and drafting materials, but they always evaluated, revised, and contextualized AI generated content to keep it pedagogically sound, culturally relevant, and communicatively meaningful. The findings also suggested that a healthy balance between human expertise and AI rests on protecting lecturers' pedagogical authority while encouraging lecturers and students to use AI critically and responsibly. The study concludes that generative AI serves best as a complementary tool that supports lecturers' efficiency and creativity without replacing their professional judgment in designing meaningful communicative speaking materials.

INTRODUCTION

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has developed quickly and is now changing how universities around the world teach. Large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude are gradually entering teaching and learning because they can produce content in seconds and respond to many instructional needs. (Kasneci et al., 2023) argued that GenAI offers real promise for educators, especially for automating routine tasks, personalizing learning, and making instruction more efficient. Their study also suggests that AI powered tools may free lecturers for deeper pedagogical work, such as building critical thinking and giving individual feedback. This growing use of AI is part of a larger movement toward digital transformation in higher education. (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019) found that AI applications in universities have grown considerably in areas such as tutoring systems, assessment, and administrative support, yet they warn that most research has focused on the technology itself and paid far less attention to educators' roles and pedagogical concerns. As GenAI becomes a regular part of instructional design, understanding how lecturers actually work with these tools grows increasingly important.

In Indonesian higher education, GenAI tools are increasingly visible in English language teaching (ELT). English lecturers now turn to platforms such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude to prepare lesson plans, speaking activities, discussion prompts, role plays, reading materials, and assessments. The trend fits national efforts to encourage digital innovation and technology enhanced learning in higher education. (Tlili et al., 2023) observed that educators see conversational AI tools as helpful resources for producing teaching materials quickly and for creating more interactive learning environments. They also note that

the easy availability of GenAI has sped up adoption, even though questions about ethical use and pedagogical effectiveness remain open. Along similar lines, (Damiano et al., 2024) found that university instructors generally view GenAI as a useful aid that boosts creativity and cuts course preparation time. Still, many educators in their study were unsure how to integrate AI well because institutional guidance and professional development remained limited. These conditions point to the need to examine how Indonesian English lecturers handle the opportunities and challenges of AI assisted material development.

Bringing GenAI into ELT deserves careful thought because language teaching stands on well established pedagogical principles. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) remains one of the most influential approaches in English language education because it values meaningful communication, authentic interaction, and learner centre instruction. (Richards, 2017) explained that CLT puts learners' ability to use language in real life situations above the mastery of grammatical structures alone. He also argues that teaching materials should invite interaction, negotiation of meaning, and the growth of communicative competence. The spread of AI generated teaching materials therefore raises fair questions about how well such materials match these principles. Modern CLT has grown to fit many learning contexts while keeping its commitment to purposeful communication and learner engagement, and it highlights the need to shape materials around students' needs and sociocultural backgrounds. Judging AI generated materials only by efficiency or linguistic accuracy may therefore miss whether they truly support meaningful communicative learning.

Another concern involves the quality, authenticity, and cultural fit of AI generated materials. GenAI tools can produce grammatically accurate texts and engaging activities, but they can just as easily produce wrong information, stereotyped portrayals, or content that clashes with learners' cultures. (Godwin-Jones, 2024) argued that generative AI systems often show weaknesses in pragmatic competence because they struggle to capture the subtle social and contextual sides of language use. He stresses that AI generated language materials usually need substantial human revision before they become authentic and relevant enough for language learners. Beyond pragmatics, the growing role of AI in ELT also matters for intercultural learning. (Du & Reynolds, 2025) pointed out that GenAI tools tend to repeat dominant linguistic norms and may ignore the diversity of English use across cultural contexts. Their study calls for a Global English perspective so that instructional materials build intercultural awareness and represent varied language practices. Lecturers therefore need to evaluate AI outputs critically so that materials fit students' sociocultural contexts and communicative needs.

Content quality is not the only issue; reliance on GenAI also raises important questions about lecturers' professional agency and pedagogical expertise. Because AI tools are fast and convenient, educators may be tempted to adopt generated materials without weighing contextual factors, learning objectives, or student characteristics. The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, which holds that effective technology integration comes from the dynamic interplay of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. The framework implies that educators must understand not only how technologies work but also when and how they genuinely support learning. Recent research

confirms that the framework still matters for GenAI integration. (Georgiou et al., 2026) found that lecturers' success with generative AI depends on their ability to judge AI outputs critically and adapt them to pedagogical goals, and that educators with stronger pedagogical knowledge are more likely to treat AI as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for professional expertise. In other words, lecturers should be seen as active instructional designers who apply informed judgment throughout the material development process.

Given these opportunities and challenges, the central question is no longer whether English lecturers use AI but how they exercise professional judgment once AI enters material development. Most existing research has focused on the benefits, limitations, and adoption patterns of GenAI in education, while lecturers' decision maker during AI assisted instructional design has received much less attention. The responsible adoption of generative AI in higher education requires educators to evaluate AI outputs critically and set clear boundaries around their use, with human oversight remaining essential for ethical, pedagogically sound, and contextually appropriate implementation. Similarly, the English language teachers increasingly rely on ChatGPT for lesson planning and material development, yet they still lean on their professional expertise to modify and refine AI generated content. His review highlights the need to balance what the technology offers with pedagogical judgment to protect instructional quality. Studying how English lecturers in higher education combine AI capabilities with their own expertise can therefore inform practical guidelines for responsible and effective AI integration in CLT oriented language teaching.

This study therefore uses a case study approach to examine how English lecturers in an English Education program at a public Islamic higher education institution in Indonesia exercise professional judgment when they use generative AI tools to develop instructional materials. By focusing on one bounded educational context, the study explores how lecturers evaluate, adapt, and integrate AI generated outputs while keeping their materials in line with Communicative Language Teaching principles and responsive to local instructional needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems designed to carry out tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem solving, and language processing. In education, AI has moved from simple rule based tutoring systems to advanced applications that support personalized learning, automated assessment, and intelligent content generation. (Hockly, 2023) elaborated the use of educational technologies in English language teaching (ELT) has become widely accepted in the post-pandemic era, and, for better or worse, some of these technologies rely on artificial intelligence (AI). As an area of technological growth and increasing financial investment, we are likely to see more AI-driven technologies in teaching and learning in the post-pandemic ELT world. AI as the study and development of agents that perceive their environment and act to reach particular goals. AI can

enrich education by offering transformative learning opportunities that match individual students' needs and learning patterns. AI also refers to technologies can transform teaching and learning by helping educators with instructional planning, feedback, and learner analytics. In a similar way, AI in education should strengthen human capabilities rather than replace teachers' professional roles.

Recent progress in generative artificial intelligence has expanded what AI can do in language education. Unlike earlier AI systems, which mostly analysed data or automated routine tasks, generative AI can create original content in response to user prompts, including texts, images, and interactive learning materials. A large language models as foundation models that can perform and transform many different tasks through natural language interaction without task specific programming. (Bubeck et al., 2023) argued that advanced language models show emerging capabilities that let them produce coherent and contextually relevant content across many domains. For education, these tools create opportunities for designing learning materials, supporting feedback, and enabling collaborative learning. Even so, the rapid growth of generative AI raises concerns about reliability, transparency, and ethical use, and it is similarly urge educators to examine AI generated outputs carefully for pedagogical appropriateness and contextual relevance.

The wider use of generative AI in higher education has pushed scholars to rethink the relationship between technological innovation and educators' professional expertise. Effective integration takes more than adopting the technology; lecturers also need critical skills for evaluating and adapting AI generated content. (Selwyn, 2019) argued that educators should take a critical stance toward educational technologies by questioning their social, ethical, and pedagogical implications. It is similarly emphasize that teachers need AI literacy to understand both what generative AI can do and where it falls short in educational settings. (Crompton & Burke, 2023) found that successful AI implementation depends on educators' ability to connect what the technology offers with instructional objectives and students' learning needs. The teachers and students alike see the human qualities of educators as irreplaceable, suggesting that human oversight remains essential for keeping AI supported teaching accurate, culturally appropriate, and pedagogically meaningful. Professional judgment, in short, remains decisive in AI assisted material development.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is best understood as an approach to language teaching, not a fixed method or theory (Savignon, 2008). Earlier traditions of foreign language instruction, such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method, focused on mastering grammatical rules, learning vocabulary, practicing pronunciation, and developing the four language skills through tightly structured teaching. CLT, in contrast, allows much more flexibility and encourages teachers and learners to adjust their practices to learners' communicative needs and classroom contexts. Instead of concentrating only on linguistic forms, CLT gives priority to the practical use of language in authentic situations. This shift reflects a wider recognition that language learning should prepare learners to communicate meaningfully, not simply to memorize grammatical patterns.

CLT can also be read as a response to the weaknesses of earlier teaching methods, especially the audiolingual method. (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) explained that CLT grew out of dissatisfaction with audiolingualism's heavy dependence on repetitive drills and the manipulation of linguistic structures. In CLT classrooms, learners take part in authentic communication through negotiation of meaning, interpretation, and self expression. The underlying assumption is that classroom activities should mirror real world communication and give learners chances to use language for genuine purposes. It is also distinguishing three dimensions of classroom interaction: textual, interpersonal, and ideational. Textual interaction deals with linguistic forms and discourse structures; interpersonal interaction covers the sociocultural side of communication and draws learners into meaningful exchanges; ideational interaction involves expressing and exploring ideas and perspectives. According to (Tiwari, 2021), these interactional dimensions build learners' communicative competence by connecting linguistic knowledge with authentic language use. The principles of CLT differ sharply from Chomsky's distinction between linguistic competence and performance. The competence and comprehensibility of teachers and students are as the idealized knowledge of language held by a native speaker, while performance refers to actual language use, which can be affected by memory limits, fatigue, and social context. This view ignored the social and cultural sides of language use. He introduced the idea of communicative competence and insisted that effective communication requires much more than grammatical knowledge. For Hymes, communicative competence covers linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic dimensions that together allow speakers to use language appropriately in different contexts.

(Santos, 2020) explained that these competencies include knowledge of language structures, the ability to use language well in social situations, the capacity to build coherent spoken and written texts, and the strategic skills needed to repair communication breakdowns. CLT therefore focuses on developing learners' ability to communicate effectively in real life situations rather than on mastering grammatical rules alone (Tiwari, 2021). This orientation fits the pedagogical stance, which values contextualized learning experiences and meaningful communication. Its learner centre character and its focus on authentic communication largely explain why CLT has become one of the most influential approaches and strategies in both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context around the world.

Speaking Skill

Speaking is widely seen as one of the most essential yet demanding skills in second and foreign language learning because it asks learners to process and produce language in real time. Brown and speaking ability as an interactive process of building meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information within particular social contexts. This idea indicated that successful speaking depends on learners' ability to handle linguistic knowledge and communicative strategies at the same time. (Nunan, 2015) noted that speaking proficiency involves not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to use language fluently and appropriately for different purposes and audiences. The most consideration of speaking is a multidimensional skill that brings together cognitive, linguistic, and

sociocultural elements. Developing speaking proficiency therefore requires instructional approaches that give learners meaningful chances to communicate authentically and negotiate meaning in different interactional settings.

Several scholars have offered frameworks for understanding what makes up speaking proficiency. Speaking ability has several dimensions, variables and characteristics including pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, fluency, and interactive communication skills, which together help learners communicate effectively in different contexts. The lists a similar set of criteria for judging speaking performance: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Beyond linguistic competence, it is important to give attention to interactional skills such as turn taking, negotiation of meaning, and the use of communication strategies to keep conversations going. A further explanation of speaking is the speech production involves complex cognitive processes, including conceptualization, formulation, articulation, and self - monitoring. Speaking instruction should therefore attend to both the linguistic and the cognitive demands of oral communication if learners are to develop genuine communicative competence.

Classroom practices that invite active participation and authentic language use strongly influence how speaking skills develop. The English learners speak better when they take part in communicative activities that reflect real life situations and encourage spontaneous interaction, such as discussions, role plays, problem solving tasks, interviews, and information gap exercises. The meaningful speaking practice should balance fluency development with chances to improve accuracy and complexity. They add that learners need repeated exposure to comprehensible input and plenty of chances to produce language if oral proficiency is to grow. (Ur, 2012) noted that anxiety, low confidence, and limited participation often hold learners back in foreign language classrooms, it could be comprehended that learners' willingness to communicate strongly shapes whether they join speaking activities. Effective speaking instruction should therefore build supportive environments that encourage interaction, reduce anxiety, and give learners the confidence to speak.

Material Development

Effective materials should do more than provide linguistic input; they should also support learners' cognitive, affective, and communicative growth. (Tomlinson, 2012) defined materials development as a field of study and practice concerned with designing, evaluating, adapting, and using materials to help language learning, and he argues that good materials expose learners to authentic language use, spark engagement, and create space for meaningful communication. The material development is closely tied to curriculum material and development, since instructional materials should reflect course objectives, learners' needs, and contextual factors. (McGrath, 2013) likewise described materials as mediators between curriculum goals and classroom practice that provide structured learning experiences. The effective material and development should be contextualized, flexible, and responsive to learners' backgrounds and proficiency levels.

Developing instructional materials calls for systematic planning and continuous evaluation so that materials stay in line with pedagogical objectives and learners' needs. The material development should start clearly with a needs analysis that identifies the learners' goals, preferences, and target language requirements. In their view, effective materials grow out of the interaction between learner needs and instructional objectives rather than from fixed content alone. A framework that moves through needs identification, contextual imagination and exploration, pedagogical realization, physical production, classroom implementation, and evaluation, presenting material development as a cycle of ongoing revision and adaptation. (Macalister & Nation, 2019) further insisted on materials should respect principles of language acquisition by providing opportunities for meaningful input, output, fluency development, and learner engagement. Material development is therefore much more than content creation; it requires deliberate pedagogical decisions at every stage of design.

In communicative language teaching contexts, instructional materials should encourage authentic interaction and meaningful language use. (Richards, 2017) argued that communicative materials should push learners to negotiate meaning, solve problems together, and use language for real purposes, often through role plays, discussions, information gap activities, and task based on learning experiences that resemble real world communication. The highlight the value of authenticity in materials development. They suggest that instructional resources should expose learners to language as it is naturally used in different social contexts, carry cultural relevance, and invite learners to engage critically with content. The curriculum materials should be adaptable, applicable and flexible since teachers regularly modify existing resources to meet specific classroom needs and learning contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative case study design to explore how English lecturers exercised professional judgment when using generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools in instructional material development. A qualitative approach suited the study because it aimed to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and decision making within their natural context (Tisdell et al., 2025), while the case study design allowed a close and detailed look at a contemporary phenomenon within its bounded setting (Yin, 2018). The study took place in the English Education program of a public Islamic higher education institution in Indonesia. The participants were five English lecturers with different academic specializations, including speaking, grammar, and linguistics. All had experience using generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude to develop teaching materials, including lesson plans, speaking tasks, discussion prompts, role plays, reading materials, and assessments. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevant experience and rich information related to the research objectives.

Data were gathered through semi structured interviews. This format let the researcher follow a set of planned topics while giving participants room to expand on their experiences and views. The interviews looked into how lecturers used GenAI tools, how they evaluated and adapted AI generated materials, and how they carried their professional expertise into the material development process. With participants'

consent, all interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed word by word for analysis. The data is the familiarization with the data, initial code generation, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report writing. Coding proceeded iteratively to bring out recurring patterns related to lecturers' professional judgment in AI assisted material development. To strengthen trustworthiness, the researcher kept detailed analytical memos and carried out member checking, inviting participants to review the accuracy of the transcripts and interpretations.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Lecturers' Human Expertise in Developing Communicative Speaking Materials

The interviews made clear that lecturers saw their professional expertise as the foundation for developing communicative speaking materials. Participants consistently described material development as a process that begins with students' learning needs rather than strict adherence to commercial textbooks. They acknowledged textbooks as useful references, yet felt these often failed to match students' language proficiency, local context, and future professional demands as prospective English teachers. Lecturers therefore often adapted existing resources or built their own materials from authentic sources, including online articles, podcasts, YouTube videos, news reports, and current social issues. This habit reflected their belief that effective speaking materials must answer learners' real communicative needs rather than depend on standardized content. One lecturer explained it like this:

"Nowadays, I rarely use a textbook exactly as it is. Instead, I see it as one of many resources. I usually combine textbook materials with authentic sources, such as YouTube interviews, podcasts, news reports, or even current issues that students are already discussing on social media." (Participant ND)

The quotation captures a view shared across the group: lecturers' expertise lies not only in choosing instructional resources but also in shaping them to fit the characteristics of their students.

A second clear finding concerned the principles lecturers followed when designing communicative speaking materials. Instead of putting grammatical correctness first, lecturers repeatedly stressed that speaking activities should create meaningful interaction between learners. They described communicative tasks as activities that push students to exchange information, negotiate meaning, solve problems, share opinions, and respond to one another spontaneously. Simply getting students to talk was not considered enough when the activity had no genuine communicative purpose. As one of them put it:

"Students can speak for ten minutes and still not communicate anything meaningful. They might simply be repeating memorized expressions. For me, communication begins when students actually need something from each other, whether it's information, clarification, agreement, or even disagreement." (Participant UH)

This was one of the most strongly expressed views in the interviews, and it underlines that meaningful communication depends on purposeful interaction rather than on the sheer amount of spoken language. Lecturers therefore favoured role plays, discussions, debates, interviews, and the problem solving tasks over memorization and tightly controlled practice.

The findings also showed that lecturers deliberately built speaking materials around authentic and contextually relevant situations. Participants explained that students joined in more readily when learning activities connected with their everyday experiences, academic surroundings, or future professional responsibilities. Local contexts, such as tourism in Bone, environmental issues in South Sulawesi, classroom situations, social media, and the growing presence of artificial intelligence, appeared regularly in speaking tasks because these topics felt familiar to students and made classroom interaction livelier. Beyond everyday contexts, lecturers designed activities that prepared English Education students for their future careers by asking them to explain concepts, lead classroom discussions, give instructions, and communicate in situations they would likely face as teachers. For the lecturers, contextualization was an essential ingredient of communicative material development: authentic situations let students use language meaningfully while raising motivation and participation.

A further recurring pattern was the way lecturers tried to balance communicative fluency with linguistic accuracy. Most participants felt that correcting students during a speaking activity made them less confident about expressing their ideas. They preferred to let students finish communicative tasks first and then give feedback on recurring grammatical, lexical, or pronunciation errors. This delayed feedback strategy, they felt, created a more supportive atmosphere without giving up chances for language improvement. One participant took the discussion beyond grammatical accuracy by highlighting pragmatic appropriateness. Grammatically correct language, this lecturer observed, does not guarantee successful communication, because speakers must also consider social relationships and the demands of the situation when choosing their expressions. This perspective widened the idea of communicative competence by showing that effective speaking rests on fluency, accuracy, confidence, and the ability to choose language that suits particular communicative situations.

Finally, the findings showed that lecturers treated professional judgment as the thread running through the whole material development process. In every interview, participants described material development as an ongoing cycle: identifying learning objectives, understanding students' characteristics, choosing suitable contexts, anticipating how classes might respond, and adjusting activities for different proficiency levels. These decisions rested on years of teaching experience and firsthand knowledge of learners' strengths, weaknesses, interests, and classroom dynamics. The lecturers came from different disciplinary backgrounds — speaking, grammar, and linguistics — yet they shared one conviction: communicative speaking materials cannot come from instructional resources alone. Meaningful material development depended instead on lecturers' ability to read students' needs and to turn pedagogical knowledge into communicative learning experiences. This shared outlook confirms that human expertise remains the essential basis for designing speaking materials that are relevant, learner centered, and true to authentic language use.

Lecturers' Experiences in Using Generative AI

The interviews showed that lecturers generally viewed generative artificial intelligence (AI) as a supportive tool that improved the development of communicative speaking materials without taking over their professional role. Lecturers described AI mainly as a resource for generating initial ideas, widening instructional options, and shortening preparation time. Rather than asking AI for finished teaching materials, they usually brought it in early, especially when brainstorming discussion topics, role play scenarios, debate motions, communicative tasks, and alternative versions of activities for different proficiency levels. This helped lecturers move past the creative fatigue that builds up after teaching similar courses semester after semester. One lecturer framed AI as a helpful starting point rather than a finished product:

"Mostly during the brainstorming stage. AI helps me generate ideas very quickly. It is also useful when I need different versions of the same activity for students with different proficiency levels. However, I never use the output directly without reviewing it." (Participant I)

The comment reflects the dominant pattern across the interviews: lecturers treated AI as a spark for creativity and efficiency while keeping the responsibility for developing instructional materials firmly in their own hands.

A second recurring finding involved the benefits lecturers associated with using generative AI in material development. Efficiency was the advantage mentioned most often: tasks that once took several hours of preparation could now be finished in a fraction of the time. Beyond lightening the workload, AI offered a richer variety of instructional ideas, presenting examples, communicative scenarios, classroom activities, and alternative learning tasks within seconds. This variety helped them avoid repetitive classroom activities, especially when teaching the same speaking courses across academic years. AI also made it easier to adjust materials for students at different proficiency levels. Some lecturers appreciated that AI pointed them toward teaching approaches they had not considered before, which stretched their instructional repertoire. One participant described how this felt:

"Imagine you're writing something and you've already reached your fifth idea. AI might suggest a sixth or seventh possibility that you hadn't considered. It doesn't mean I'll use it. Sometimes reading AI's response actually confirms that my original idea was stronger." (Participant UH)

The remark shows that AI's value went beyond producing teaching materials; it also worked as a reflective tool that stimulated lecturers' professional thinking and instructional creativity.

Despite these advantages, lecturers stayed alert to important limitations in AI generated materials. A common concern was that AI often produced conversations and activities that looked communicative on the surface but lacked the complexity and spontaneity of genuine interaction. Several lecturers noticed that AI generated dialogues tended to be too tidy: overly structured, always polite, and linguistically flawless, while real communication is full of hesitation, interruption, misunderstanding,

incomplete responses, and negotiation of meaning. Lecturers also noticed that AI outputs sometimes brought in Western cultural assumptions or unfamiliar settings that had little relevance for Indonesian learners. Factual inaccuracies and repetitive language patterns were also mentioned often, making careful checking necessary before classroom use. One lecturer captured the concern briefly:

“One thing I’ve noticed is that AI tends to produce conversations that are almost too smooth. Everyone responds politely. Everyone understands each other. Everything progresses logically. Real conversations rarely work that way.” (Participant UH)

The finding shows that lecturers did not treat AI generated materials as ready for the classroom. Instead, they saw that these materials needed reworking until they represented authentic communication and learners’ local contexts more faithfully.

The interviews further demonstrated that lecturers took an active role in evaluating and revising AI generated materials before classroom use. Rather than taking AI responses at face value, lecturers described systematic routines for checking the language accuracy, communicative purpose, learner appropriateness, contextual relevance, and instructional effectiveness of the outputs. Many said they regularly adjusted vocabulary, simplified language, localized examples, redesigned classroom procedures, and rebalanced activity difficulty to match students’ proficiency levels and learning objectives. Some even played out the lesson in their minds first, imagining how students might respond to a particular activity before deciding whether to revise it or set it aside. AI thus worked mainly as a draft producing tool, while responsibility for turning drafts into meaningful teaching materials stayed with the lecturer. One participant captured the division of labor simply:

“So, in reality, AI provides a draft, while I produce the final teaching material.” (Participant ND)

The statement captures the shared conviction that meaningful communicative materials come from lecturers’ professional judgment rather than from AI generated output alone.

Finally, the findings highlighted lecturers’ strong awareness of the pedagogical and ethical responsibilities of bringing generative AI into educational practice. Across the interviews, lecturers insisted that AI should remain a supporting technology rather than become the main decision maker in instructional design. Educational decisions — setting learning objectives, choosing teaching strategies, adapting materials to learners’ needs, and evaluating classroom outcomes — should stay, in their view, firmly under lecturers’ control.

Lecturers also stressed the importance of teaching students to use AI critically rather than accepting AI generated information without checking it. Some made a point of asking students to compare AI generated responses with textbooks or other trusted references, and others started classroom discussions about how authentic and appropriate AI produced language really is. One participant went further and argued that responsible AI use begins with recognizing that AI is not entirely neutral, since its responses carry particular assumptions, patterns, and cultural perspectives.

Critical evaluation was thus seen as an essential part of AI integration in language education. Taken together, the findings show a balanced picture: lecturers appreciated AI for its efficiency, creativity, and practical support, yet believed its successful integration depends on continuous human evaluation, contextual adaptation, and pedagogical decision making.

Balancing Human Expertise and Generative AI: Maintaining Pedagogical Authority and Promoting Responsible and Critical AI Use

The interviews revealed a strong consensus that generative AI should complement, not replace, lecturers' professional expertise in developing communicative speaking materials. All participants recognized AI's practical benefits in generating ideas and improving efficiency, yet insisted that responsibility for educational decisions should stay with the lecturer. For participants, AI was mainly a resource for the routine side of material development: brainstorming topics, producing first drafts, or generating alternative learning activities. They argued, however, that AI lacks the contextual understanding needed for pedagogical decisions that take account of students' backgrounds, learning needs, classroom dynamics, and instructional objectives. Lecturers therefore saw themselves as the ones who must turn AI generated content into meaningful learning experiences. One lecturer summed up this stance:

"AI can save time and provide creative ideas, but it cannot replace a lecturer's professional judgment. We understand our students' backgrounds, learning difficulties, and classroom dynamics better than AI. I think AI should support our work, while lecturers remain responsible for ensuring the materials are meaningful, communicative, and appropriate for the learning objectives." (Participant I)

The quotation reflects the dominant finding: participants regarded AI not as a substitute for educators but as a technological assistant whose usefulness rests on lecturers' expertise and pedagogical judgment.

Another prominent finding concerned the importance of keeping lecturers' pedagogical authority throughout the material development process. As participants explained, developing communicative speaking materials is much more than producing classroom activities. It involves a chain of professional decisions grounded in educational experience: setting learning outcomes, selecting suitable communicative tasks, adapting activities across proficiency levels, anticipating how classes will respond, and judging whether learning objectives have been reached. AI can offer endless suggestions in seconds, yet participants doubted that it could understand the particular character of their students or predict how learners would actually behave in class. Several lecturers said years in the classroom had taught them which activities would spark meaningful interaction and which would leave students disengaged. For this reason, AI generated materials were always reviewed, adjusted, or redesigned before use. One participant's reflection made the point clearly:

"I don't measure the balance by asking, 'How much work did AI do?' I measure it by asking, 'Who made the important educational decisions?' As long as the lecturer is still deciding the learning objectives, adapting

materials to students' needs, and reflecting on classroom outcomes, then I think AI is serving its proper role." (Participant UH)

The remark offers a distinctive way of reading balance: it shifts attention from how much AI is used to who owns the pedagogical decisions, making lecturers' authority the defining mark of effective AI integration.

The findings further showed that keeping pedagogical authority could not be separated from lecturers' continuous evaluation and adaptation of AI generated materials. Participants were unanimous that AI outputs never moved straight into the classroom. They described going through generated materials to ask whether the language sounded natural, whether the communicative tasks genuinely required interaction, whether the vocabulary matched students' proficiency levels, and whether the classroom scenarios reflected Indonesian cultural contexts. They also frequently reworked AI generated dialogues that felt overly formal, culturally distant, or not authentic enough for communicative language learning. Far from treating revision as an extra burden, lecturers saw it as an essential part of their professional responsibility. Their role was not limited to spotting inaccuracies; it extended to reshaping AI generated ideas into pedagogically meaningful activities that fit course objectives and learners' characteristics. On this account, balancing human expertise and AI is an active partnership: AI supplies the early ideas, and lecturers then refine, contextualize, and confirm those ideas through their professional experience.

Alongside pedagogical authority, the interviews also showed a shared commitment to encouraging responsible and critical AI use among both lecturers and students. Participants repeatedly cautioned that AI generated information should not be accepted uncritically, since it may contain factual errors, cultural biases, or oversimplified pictures of communication. Rather than telling students to avoid AI, lecturers wanted them to learn how to question, evaluate, and verify AI generated responses against academic references, textbooks, and other reliable sources. Several deliberately built critical reflection into classroom activities, for instance by asking students to compare AI generated dialogues with authentic language use or point out weaknesses in AI produced responses. One lecturer expressed this in a particularly memorable way:

"For me, responsible use starts with accepting that AI is not neutral. Every response it generates reflects certain assumptions, certain patterns, and sometimes certain cultural perspectives. I don't think our role is to reject AI. Our role is to question it." (Participant UH)

The comment shows that participants understood AI literacy not simply as the skill of operating technological tools but as the ability to judge AI generated content critically before bringing it into teaching and learning. Such practices express lecturers' broader educational responsibility to develop students' critical thinking alongside technological competence.

Overall, the findings picture the balance between human expertise and generative AI as a collaborative relationship in which each side contributes distinct yet complementary strengths to communicative speaking material development. AI was widely credited with improving efficiency, generating diverse

instructional ideas, and easing routine workload, while lecturers remained accountable for pedagogical quality, contextual relevance, ethical use, and meaningful communication. Participants consistently described AI and human expertise not as rivals but as mutually supportive parts of the same process. The effectiveness of AI was therefore judged to rest not on the sophistication of the technology itself but on lecturers' ability to exercise professional judgment, adapt AI generated materials to learners' needs, and guide students toward responsible and critical engagement with AI. Successful integration of generative AI in communicative language teaching thus relies on preserving lecturers' pedagogical authority while nurturing reflective and ethical use of emerging technologies.

DISCUSSION

The findings showed that lecturers continued to see their professional expertise as the main foundation for developing communicative speaking materials, even with generative AI readily available. Throughout the interviews, lecturers maintained that communicative materials should grow out of learners' needs, learning objectives, and classroom realities rather than rest only on textbooks or automatically generated content. Lecturers, in other words, still position themselves as instructional designers who actively adapt, modify, and contextualize learning materials for their students. This finding fits closely with (Richards, 2001), who argued that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) requires teachers to design learning experiences that build learners' communicative competence rather than simply transmit linguistic knowledge. (Nunan, 2015) made a similar point: communicative activities should mirror real life language use by involving learners in meaningful tasks rather than isolated language exercises. The lecturers in this study applied this principle by selecting authentic resources, drawing on current issues, and adapting speaking materials to English Education students' future professional roles. Lecturers' expertise therefore remains essential, because effective communicative material development depends on contextual knowledge that no technological tool can simply generate.

A second important finding concerns the principles behind lecturers' design of communicative speaking activities. Lecturers did not measure successful speaking instruction by grammatical accuracy alone; they consistently placed meaningful interaction, authentic communication, and learner participation first. They deliberately chose role plays, discussions, debates, interviews, and problem solving tasks because these activities require students to exchange information, negotiate meaning, and respond spontaneously. These findings align that a communicative language teaching should rest and cover on meaningful communication in which learners use language to achieve and apply genuine communicative purposes. For Littlewood, communication becomes meaningful when interaction involves information gaps, choice, and feedback, not when learners simply reproduce memorized language forms. In the same spirit, the lecturers rejected activities demanding mere repetition or controlled dialogue practice because these failed to create authentic communication. One participant went further, observing that students might speak at length without communicating anything meaningful if the interaction lacks purpose. That observation extends Littlewood's account by stressing that the quality of interaction, not the amount of speech, determines communicative effectiveness. The findings therefore strengthen the case for materials that promote purposeful communication rather than mechanical language production.

The findings also indicate that lecturers deliberately placed speaking materials in authentic situations drawn from learners' everyday experiences, local culture, and future professional responsibilities. Topics such as tourism, environmental issues, social media, classroom interaction, and educational settings kept appearing in speaking activities because lecturers believed students spoke more confidently about familiar subjects. (Nunan & Carter, 2001) claim that communicative tasks should prepare learners to use language beyond the classroom by reflecting realistic situations they are likely to meet. Relatedly, the task features such as interesting and personally relevant topics can strengthen learners' situational willingness to communicate, since meaningful contexts raise engagement during group interaction. Instead of treating speaking as an isolated language skill, the lecturers linked communicative activities to students' future identities as English teachers by asking them to facilitate discussions, explain concepts, and deliver classroom instructions. On this evidence, communicative material development reaches beyond linguistic objectives toward authentic professional communication, reinforcing the practical orientation at the heart of communicative language teaching.

A further notable finding relates to how lecturers balanced fluency and accuracy in their speaking instruction. Most lecturers deliberately delayed corrective feedback until after communicative activities because they believed constant interruption weakens learners' confidence and willingness to speak. Students were encouraged to express their ideas freely first, and recurring grammatical or pronunciation errors were addressed together afterward. This practice matches (Richards, 2001), who maintained that communicative language teaching treats fluency as a core part of communicative competence while still recognizing that accuracy matters for long term language development. The corrective feedback works best when it supports communication rather than interrupts it, allowing learners to keep meaningful interaction going while gradually refining their linguistic accuracy. A distinctive contribution of the present study, however, is its emphasis on pragmatic appropriateness alongside fluency and accuracy. One lecturer pointed out that grammatically correct language can still miss the mark if it does not fit the social context or the relationship between speakers. This perspective widens communicative competence by bringing sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge to the front: effective speaking instruction should help learners choose language that fits specific situations, not simply produce grammatically correct sentences.

Turning to the integration of generative AI, the findings showed that lecturers used AI mostly in the early stages of material development: brainstorming, generating communicative scenarios, creating discussion topics, and producing several versions of activities. Rather than taking over lecturers' instructional planning, AI worked as a creativity support tool that sped up idea generation and cut preparation time. A language educators and leaners mainly use generative AI to support lesson planning and material preparation instead of handing pedagogical decisions to the technology as a facilitate of teaching and learning. A generative AI offers substantial opportunities for language teachers by supporting brainstorming, adapting learning and developing materials, generating differentiated instructional content, and the effective was to improve ideas. The lecturers in this study showed similar practices, drawing on AI to overcome the creative fatigue of teaching the same courses repeatedly while

keeping responsibility for refining AI generated ideas. In short, generative AI appears to raise lecturers' productivity without fundamentally changing their instructional responsibilities.

These benefits, however, came with limitations that lecturers repeatedly identified and that called for careful human evaluation of AI generated materials. Participants observed that AI often produced dialogues that were overly formal, culturally distant, repetitive, or unrealistically smooth compared with authentic communication. These findings resonate with (Selwyn, 2019), who argued that educational technologies should never be seen as neutral because they inevitably carry the assumptions, cultural values, and limitations built into their design. Pointing in the same direction, (Law, 2023) found that generative AI can produce educational content efficiently, but teachers still carry the responsibility for judging its pedagogical appropriateness, factual accuracy, and cultural relevance before it enters the classroom. The lecturers in the present study behaved in much the same way: they adjusted vocabulary, localized contexts, redesigned communicative tasks, and removed culturally inappropriate examples before using AI generated materials. AI outputs thus worked mainly as preliminary drafts rather than finished teaching resources, confirming the continued need for lecturers' expertise throughout the process.

The findings further revealed that preserving lecturers' pedagogical authority was the central principle of AI integration. Rather than measuring successful AI use by how many tasks are automated, lecturers insisted that educational decisions stay under human control. Choices about learning outcomes, instructional strategies, classroom implementation, and assessment were consistently seen as responsibilities AI cannot carry, because they require contextual knowledge of learners and classroom environments. This reflects (Selwyn, 2019) called for a critical rather than deterministic stance toward educational technologies, one that keeps technological innovation in the service of professional judgment instead of replacing it. (Sharples, 2023) argued along similar lines that generative AI should strengthen teachers' professional capabilities rather than take over educational decision making. The lecturers' insistence on pedagogical authority therefore illustrates a balanced model of AI integration in which the technology contributes efficiency while educators keep ownership of instructional design and learning quality.

Finally, the findings indicate that balancing human expertise and generative AI also means promoting responsible and critical AI use among both lecturers and students. Rather than letting AI generated information pass unchecked, lecturers stressed the need to verify AI responses, compare them with reliable academic sources, and weigh their authenticity and appropriateness. This matches (Kohnke et al., 2023), who argued that AI literacy is now a core professional skill for language educators, because teachers need a clear sense of what generative AI can and cannot do before bringing it into their teaching. The maintained that effective AI integration requires teachers to build critical digital literacy so that learners become reflective users of AI rather than passive consumers of automatically generated content. The present study extends these arguments by showing lecturers already developing such practices through classroom discussions in which students question AI generated dialogues, identify inaccuracies, and evaluate communicative authenticity. The balance between human expertise and

generative AI, then, is decided not by how extensively AI is used but by how well lecturers exercise pedagogical judgment, uphold educational responsibility, and build students' capacity to engage critically with emerging technologies.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to understand how lecturers balance human expertise and generative artificial intelligence (AI) when developing communicative speaking materials for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in an English Education program. The findings confirmed that lecturers' professional expertise is still the cornerstone of communicative speaking material design. Participants consistently believed that effective materials should be learner centered, relevant to context, and true to the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Rather than depending only on commercial textbooks, lecturers actively adapted and created materials by drawing on authentic resources, local contexts, and real world communicative situations that reflected students' academic and professional needs. They also showed pedagogical expertise by balancing fluency with accuracy, encouraging meaningful interaction, and designing activities that built communicative competence rather than rote memorization of language forms. These findings indicate that the development of communicative speaking materials continues to rest on lecturers' pedagogical knowledge, teaching experience, and understanding of their learners' characteristics.

The study also showed that generative AI has grown into a valuable supporting tool in the material development process. Lecturers used AI mainly in the brainstorming, planning, and drafting stages to generate discussion topics, role play scenarios, communicative tasks, and alternative materials for different proficiency levels. The main advantages they identified were greater efficiency, wider creativity, and shorter preparation time. At the same time, participants recognized clear limitations in AI generated materials, including cultural irrelevance, repetitive language, unnatural dialogues, and occasional factual errors. For this reason, lecturers evaluated, revised, and contextualized AI generated content before any of it reached their classrooms. AI clearly contributes a great deal to material development, but its effectiveness ultimately depends on lecturers' ability to assess and adapt its outputs so that materials stay pedagogically appropriate and communicatively valuable.

Finally, the study concludes that the balance between human expertise and generative AI rests on two things: keeping pedagogical authority in lecturers' hands and promoting responsible, critical AI use. Participants agreed that AI should serve as an instructional assistant rather than a replacement for educators, since core pedagogical decisions — defining learning objectives, adapting materials to students' needs, selecting instructional strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes — remain the lecturer's responsibility. Lecturers also highlighted the importance of AI literacy, encouraging educators and students alike to verify AI generated information, weigh its authenticity, and use it critically rather than accept it without question. Successful integration of generative AI into communicative speaking material development therefore does not mean replacing human expertise. It means building a complementary relationship in which AI adds efficiency and creativity while lecturers keep providing the

professional judgment, contextual understanding, and pedagogical leadership that meaningful language learning requires.

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
LLMs	Large Language Models
ELT	English Language Teaching
TPACK	Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge
GTM	Grammar Translation Method

Declarations

Clinical trial number

Clinical trial number is not applicable

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Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation and data collection were performed by Ishak. Analysis was performed by Ishak and Mujammilatul Halimah. The first draft was written by Ishak and the finding and discussion was approved by Ungku Khairunnisa BT. Ungku Mohd Nordin.

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Ethics approval and consent to participate

All procedures involving human participants and all experimental protocols were approved by the ethics committee of Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bone. The necessary permissions were obtained from the

related lecturer authorities and internationally accepted ethical guidelines from research involving human participants. The data were collected and analysed in anonymised form. Informed consents (Consent to Participate) were obtained from all participants.

Competing interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this study.

Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. The data are not publicly archived because participants consented only to reporting in anonymized aggregate and quotation form. All of the data analyzed and reported on can be downloaded in a copy of the original spreadsheet. The authors agreed to share the results of this analysis, all parties signed a legal contract agreeing to do so.

Consent for publication

Not applicable

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