

# English as a Double-Edged Knife: Reframing Language Education in Indonesia in the Age of AI

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Artificial intelligence (AI) has profoundly disrupted English education in Indonesia, exposing the fragility of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)-focused curricula and destabilizing traditional professions such as translation and tutoring. This article frames AI's impact through the metaphor of a double-edged knife: One blade democratizes access to English, while the other devalues surface-level fluency. In response, the paper highlights the enduring importance of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), academic literacy, and interdisciplinary engagement. Through an analysis of FKIP (Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan)'s historical legacy, the collapse of traditional English professions, and the identity challenges faced by graduates and lecturers, the article argues for systemic reframing. Recommendations include embedding CALP, repositioning lecturers as intellectual mentors, reframing professional identity for students, and using inclusive approaches that honor educators while empowering learners. Ultimately, English is no longer merely a skill—it must be cultivated as a profession of ideas, inquiry, and ethical authorship.

*Keywords:* English education, AI disruption, CALP, FKIP, academic literacy, Indonesia

## Introduction

English education in Indonesia is facing one of its most significant turning points. For decades, English proficiency has been treated as a pathway to social mobility and professional opportunity. Graduates of English departments and FKIP (Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan) programs were trained to deliver grammar instruction, translation services, and conversational fluency—skills that once held high market value. However, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has disrupted this ecosystem. Tools such as ChatGPT, DeepL, and Grammarly now automate translation, grammar correction, and surface-level conversation, destabilizing the professional identities of both students and lecturers. This disruption can be conceptualized through the metaphor of a double-edged knife. One blade democratizes access to English, making fluency widely available; the other blade devalues Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). What remains is the urgency of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)—academic literacy, disciplinary reasoning, and knowledge creation—as the new frontier of relevance.

## The Double-Edged Knife of English Education

Artificial intelligence (AI) has made BICS—Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills—cheap and widely accessible. Students can now translate, correct grammar, and simulate conversations using apps, reducing the

professional market value of these skills (British Council, 2024). In contrast, CALP—Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency—remains human-centered. Academic literacy, disciplinary discourse, and evidence-based writing are areas where AI struggles. Cummins' (1980) framework is newly relevant.

### **The Collapse of Traditional English Professions**

Translation and private tutoring once provided stable careers for English graduates. Today, AI platforms perform these tasks with near-human accuracy. A 2024 report in Jakarta revealed that 60% of translation requests were handled by AI, displacing freelancers. Similarly, in Bandung, 72% of tutors lost clients to mobile apps like Duolingo and Elsa Speak (Oyelabs, 2025). The result is an identity crisis: Graduates are fluent but professionally undefined.

### **FKIP and the Legacy of Teacher Training**

FKIP programs, founded in the 1970s to address teacher shortages, emphasized pedagogy and lesson delivery. While effective historically, this model now leaves graduates unprepared for academic inquiry or digital pedagogy (MoEC, 2019). A 2023 review showed fewer than 15% of FKIP graduates could produce publishable academic work or design CALP-rich modules (Daud et al., 2025).

### **Reframing Professional Identity**

English majors must move beyond fluency to roles such as academic writers, curriculum designers, digital educators, and cultural mediators. Lecturers must also evolve into intellectual mentors who guide academic reasoning, ethical authorship, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Institutional scaffolding is essential for connecting CALP to career pathways and global relevance.

### **Inclusive Framing for Systemic Change**

Inclusive reform validates past practices while inviting stakeholders into transformation. Blame alienates; acknowledgment empowers. In Surabaya, professional development reframed lecturers as “knowledge facilitators”, increasing confidence and purpose.

### **Conclusion**

English education in Indonesia faces disruption but also opportunity. AI has automated surface-level fluency, exposing the inadequacy of BICS-centered training. Yet CALP, academic literacy, and ethical authorship remain uniquely human. By reframing curricula, identities, and institutional strategies, English can be redefined as a profession of ideas and inquiry. The knife has cut deep, but it can also carve a path toward global relevance and intellectual empowerment.

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