

Non-English Major Teachers' Pedagogical Readiness in Elementary English Instruction: An Interpretative Phenomenological Study in Indonesia

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Abstract: Following the enactment of Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, which establishes English as a compulsory subject in Indonesian elementary schools, increasing attention has been directed toward the pedagogical readiness of non-English major teachers who are expected to teach English despite limited specialized preparation. While previous studies have primarily examined teacher competence and classroom challenges, limited research has explored how pedagogical readiness is experienced and enacted by non-English major teachers within this new policy context. This study aimed to explore the pedagogical readiness of non-English major teachers in teaching English to young learners at private elementary schools in Bengkulu City. Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations involving ten non-English major teachers. The findings revealed that pedagogical readiness was manifested across seven pedagogical competencies, although considerable variation existed among participants. Teachers encountered challenges related to English language proficiency, implementing child-centered instruction, lesson planning, classroom interaction, and formative assessment. Their readiness was influenced by individual factors, including teaching experience and self-efficacy, as well as contextual factors such as professional development opportunities and institutional support. This study contributes to the growing literature on teacher readiness by demonstrating that pedagogical readiness is a dynamic, context-dependent construct that extends beyond pedagogical competence and is shaped by the interaction between teachers' professional capabilities and their instructional environment.

Keywords: Elementary English Education, English for Young Learners, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Non-English Major Teachers, Pedagogical Readiness

A. Introduction

Recent international discussions on teacher quality increasingly distinguish between pedagogical competence and pedagogical readiness. While pedagogical competence

generally refers to the knowledge, skills, and professional capabilities required for effective teaching, pedagogical readiness reflects teachers' capacity to enact those competencies within authentic classroom contexts. Readiness is therefore understood as a dynamic and context-dependent construct shaped by teachers' beliefs, confidence, prior experiences, institutional support, and the instructional challenges they encounter in everyday practice. Rather than representing a fixed professional attribute, pedagogical readiness develops continuously through the interaction between individual and contextual factors.

This distinction is particularly important in English for Young Learners (EYL), where effective teaching requires more than the possession of pedagogical knowledge. Teachers must be able to translate pedagogical understanding into responsive classroom practices that accommodate children's developmental, linguistic, cognitive, and emotional characteristics. Consequently, teachers with comparable pedagogical competence may demonstrate substantially different levels of pedagogical readiness when confronted with authentic instructional situations. This perspective positions pedagogical readiness as an experiential and interpretative construct that extends beyond competency standards and provides an appropriate conceptual foundation for examining teachers' lived experiences.

The position of English in Indonesian primary education has experienced a notable policy change with the enactment of Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, which requires English to be a mandatory subject at the elementary level commencing in the 2027/2028 academic year. This approach signifies a shift from English being a local-content or elective topic to a mandatory element of basic education at the national level. Consequently, elementary schools are required to deliver English education that adheres to pedagogical standards suitable for young learners. This transition unavoidably imposes more demands on teachers especially in situations where English is instructed by non-English major teachers, a prevalent practice in Indonesian private elementary institutions.

Elementary English instruction should adhere to the principles of English for Young Learners (EYL), which prioritize age-appropriate pedagogy, meaningful engagement, and emotional support (Octaberlina, 2023; Oktavia et al., 2022). Young learners require instructional approaches that integrate language exposure with cognitive, social, and emotional development (Gay et al., 2022). Recent studies emphasize that effective teaching of English to young learners relies not only on teachers' linguistic proficiency but, more importantly, on their pedagogical competence, which encompasses the ability to create engaging activities, manage classroom interactions, and assess learning in developmentally suitable manners (Manuela & Carneiro, 2022; Reynolds et al., 2021; Shi, 2024). Thus, the effectiveness of the mandatory English policy is intricately linked to teachers' pedagogical readiness rather than only to curriculum design.

Pedagogical competence in the Indonesian educational context is formally

articulated in Permendiknas No. 16 of 2007, which defines it as teachers' capacity to manage learning processes through understanding learners, mastering learning theories, designing curriculum and lesson plans, implementing interactive instruction, utilizing educational technology, conducting assessment, and fostering learners' potential. These seven pedagogical competencies constitute an integrated framework of knowledge, skills, and reflective practice rather than a set of isolated technical abilities. In the domain of English for Young Learners (EYL), these competencies acquire heightened relevance due to children's developmental characteristics and the experiential nature of early foreign language learning (Blömeke et al., 2022; Hollenstein et al., 2024; Zhang, 2026).

In Indonesia, there are rules that define what teachers are allowed to do, and how they are supposed to do it to some extent. These rules are addressed in Permendiknas No. 16 of 2007, and they require that teachers fit within and exercise the following areas: understanding of the learners, understanding of the theories of education and learning, curricular and lesson design, instructional and interactive teaching, use of teaching and learning courses, assessment of learning, and development of the learners. These items serve to set a baseline for the indicators of teaching professionalism, but in the use of English, and particularly for teachers who do not have an English degree, there seems to be a large and unforeseen gap (Kao, 2023; H. Liu et al., 2021; Widagsa et al., 2025). In the last studies, a few of which are in the (Imran et al., 2024; Juárez et al., 2021; Matsumura, 2022), it is shown that there are gaps in the pedagogical use of the theories of learning in the teaching of English, it is evident that the teachers use the textbook, do not demonstrate much teaching, and it is assumed that they do not have a high degree of confidence, and pedagogical content knowledge.

Research on English for Young Learners further indicates that pedagogical competence involves teachers' ability to align instructional aims, classroom activities, and learners' developmental stages. Without such alignment, instruction risks becoming pedagogically fragmented and linguistically ineffective (Diyanti, 2021; König et al., 2020; Manuela & Carneiro, 2022). For young learners, interactive practices such as games, songs, storytelling, and scaffolded communication are essential to support comprehension and language use, underscoring the centrality of pedagogical readiness beyond content mastery alone.

The last five-year studies do evidence and sometimes, do show a pattern in highlighting gaps in teachers who do not have English majors in EYL settings. These limitations include the insufficient ability to scaffold language input, difficulty in selecting age-appropriate materials, less incorporation of communication activities, and uncertainty in the application of formative evaluation (Blömeke et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2021; Zucker et al., 2021). Also, the teachers' willingness to integrate technology into English has become an issue of concern. Studies on technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) suggest that even with an increasing

supply of technology, many elementary school teachers do not have the pedagogical knowledge to use technology in teaching language (Hoi & Shiu, 2025; Wah & Hashim, 2021; A. Y. Wang, 2022). These conditions suggest that pedagogical readiness is shaped by personal ability and the organizational climate of public service, training, and resource availability (Hao & Yu, 2024; Scherer et al., 2021).

In addition to technical and instructional challenges, affective dimensions such as teacher confidence and self-efficacy have been identified as influential factors shaping pedagogical readiness. Non-English major teachers frequently report anxiety and low confidence when using English as the medium of instruction, which often results in reduced classroom interaction and limited opportunities for students to engage in communicative language use (Burri & Baker, 2021; M. Liu & Wu, 2021; C. Wang, 2021). Such affective constraints further complicate the enactment of learner-centered EYL pedagogy (Gordani et al., 2025).

Notwithstanding the expanding corpus of literature about teacher competence and early years language training, numerous gaps persist. Initially, a limited number of studies rigorously investigate pedagogical preparation utilizing the comprehensive framework of the seven pedagogical competences stipulated by national regulations (Basantes-andrade et al., 2022; Belda et al., 2022). Secondly, non-English major educators, who comprise a significant percentage of English teachers in private elementary institutions, are frequently underrepresented in targeted empirical research. Third, current research seldom contextualizes teacher readiness in relation to impending policy execution, specifically the forthcoming mandatory English requirement at the primary level. These inadequacies restrict the availability of context-specific evidence essential for informing school-level preparation and targeted professional development.

This study examines the pedagogical readiness of non-English major teacher in instructing English at private elementary institutions in Bengkulu City. This study, informed by the seven pedagogical skills specified in Permendiknas No. 16 of 2007, aims to address three research questions:

1. How is pedagogical readiness manifested among non-English major teachers in teaching English at private elementary schools in Bengkulu City?
2. What pedagogical challenges do these teachers encounter when delivering English instruction to young learners?
3. What factors support and what factors hinder the pedagogical readiness of non-English major teachers, and how do these factors shape their instructional practices?

While the three research questions are closely related, each addresses a distinct analytical focus. The first research question concentrates on how pedagogical readiness is manifested in classroom practices. The second examines the specific pedagogical challenges encountered during English instruction for young learners.

The third explores broader supporting and hindering factors, including experiential, institutional, and affective dimensions, that shape teachers' pedagogical readiness beyond immediate instructional difficulties.

This study aims to provide contextually relevant insights for teacher development initiatives, institutional planning, and evidence-based policy implementation in Indonesian primary education by situating the investigation within the policy trajectory of compulsory English implementation and grounding it in recent empirical research.

B. Methods

Research Design

For the qualitative research study, the researcher used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to understand non-English major teachers' experiences for their pedagogical readiness to teach English to young learners. IPA focuses on the lived experiences of its participants and the meaning ascribed to their experiences (Smith, 2019; Willig & Rogers, 2017). This methodology is appropriate for this study since pedagogical readiness is not a solely technical construct. It is complex and intertwined with the teachers' own beliefs, emotions, practices, and contextual challenges.

IPA was used to gain an understanding of teachers' subjective lived experiences on their instructional practices, challenges, and contextual factors, as opposed to evaluating 'readiness' from an empiricist lens. In keeping with the principles of IPA, this research study focused on depth of analysis, an idiographic perspective, and an interpretive articulation of the teachers' lived experiences.

In line with the interpretative nature of IPA, this study adopted an idiographic approach, emphasizing an in-depth exploration of each participant's unique lived experience before identifying shared patterns across participants. IPA also acknowledges the process of double hermeneutics, whereby participants make sense of their own pedagogical experiences while the researchers subsequently interpret those interpretations. Accordingly, the analysis focused not only on describing participants' experiences but also on understanding how they constructed meaning regarding their pedagogical readiness within the context of teaching English to young learners.

Rather than measuring pedagogical readiness against predetermined performance indicators or normative benchmarks, this study seeks to explore how teachers themselves perceive, experience, and negotiate their pedagogical readiness within the specific context of teaching English to young learners. This orientation allows pedagogical readiness, pedagogical challenges, and supporting or hindering factors to emerge organically from participants' narratives rather than being imposed a

priori by the researcher.

Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in five private elementary schools located in Bengkulu City, Indonesia. These schools were selected because English instruction was assigned to teachers who were not graduates of English Education programs, a common practice in primary education contexts.

The participants consisted of ten non-English major teachers who were responsible for teaching English to students aged 6-12 years. The inclusion of learners' age is relevant because pedagogical readiness in this study is interpreted within the framework of English for Young Learners (EYL), where instructional decisions are closely tied to learners' cognitive, affective, and developmental characteristics.

Within the interpretative phenomenological framework, the number of participants was intentionally kept limited to allow for an in-depth, idiographic exploration of each teacher's lived experience. This sample size is consistent with IPA principles, which prioritize analytical depth and interpretative richness over representativeness or generalizability (Smith, 2019).

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the following criteria:

1. teachers currently teaching English at the elementary level
2. teachers without formal academic training in English Education or English Language Teaching
3. teachers with a minimum of five years of teaching experience.

A minimum of five years of teaching experience was established to ensure that participants had accumulated sufficient classroom experience to reflect meaningfully on their pedagogical readiness. Within IPA, participants are purposively selected because they possess substantial experience of the phenomenon being investigated, enabling rich and reflective accounts of their lived experiences.

Data Collection

Data collection involved two methods, including semi structured interviews and classroom observation. Semi structured interviews were used in conjunction with classroom observations to enable methodological triangulation, increasing the overall reliability of the study's findings. The use of multiple data sources is consistent with qualitative research standards and strengthens interpretative validity by allowing findings to be examined across different forms of evidence rather than relying on a single perspective.

Teachers' perceptions, experiences, and reflections related to the teaching of English were explored in semi structured interviews. The interviews aimed at understanding the lived experiences of the participants in relation to their readiness to teach,

challenges they faced, and the supports they received within their context. Interviews were conducted in the Indonesian language to ensure that participants were able to express their experiences closely and freely. The interviews took between 45 to 60 minutes and were audio recorded with the approval of participants. This approach allowed participants to articulate their experiences in their own terms, which is essential in IPA studies that seek to privilege participants' meaning-making processes.

Semi-structured interviews were guided by an interview protocol developed from the research questions and relevant literature on pedagogical readiness. The protocol consisted of open-ended questions that encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences in teaching English to young learners. Examples of guiding questions included: "How do you prepare yourself before teaching English?", "What challenges do you experience when teaching English to young learners?", and "What factors support or hinder your teaching practices?" Follow-up questions were used to explore participants' responses in greater depth.

Classroom observations focused on the teachers' pedagogical activities, including what language they use in their instructions, what interactions they create in the class, what learning media they use, how they assess learners, and how they stimulate learner engagement. The observations were kept at a distance and were focused on the activities of the class. Field notes captured for instructional activities, teacher and student interactions, and the settings of the class. Observation data functioned to contextualize and substantiate interview accounts, enabling the researchers to identify consistencies and tensions between reported practices and actual classroom enactment.

Each participant was observed during one complete English lesson lasting approximately 6090 minutes. Observations focused on teachers' instructional practices, classroom interaction, lesson organization, use of learning media, assessment strategies, and responses to learners' developmental needs. Field notes were recorded using a structured observation guide and expanded immediately after each observation to preserve contextual details relevant to the subsequent IPA analysis.

Methodological triangulation was implemented by integrating interview and classroom observation data throughout the analytical process rather than analysing each dataset independently. Interview data provided insights into teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences, whereas classroom observations enabled the researchers to examine how these perceptions were enacted in authentic instructional settings. The convergence and divergence between both data sources were subsequently interpreted to strengthen the credibility and richness of the findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the systematic steps of IPA outlined by (Smith & Osborn, 2004). Consistent with the idiographic orientation of IPA, analysis began with an in-depth examination of each participant's account before identifying shared patterns across participants. The analytical process was iterative, requiring continuous movement between the original data, emerging interpretations, and the broader conceptual understanding of pedagogical readiness.

Stage 1: Repeated Reading and Initial Noting. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, while classroom observation field notes were organized and reviewed alongside the interview transcripts. The researchers repeatedly read each transcript to become thoroughly familiar with the participants' lived experiences. During this stage, descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments were recorded to capture significant expressions, language use, and preliminary interpretations while maintaining close engagement with participants' original narratives.

Stage 2: Emergent Theme Identification. The initial notes were systematically examined to identify emergent themes representing the essential meanings embedded within participants' experiences. These themes remained closely connected to participants' own words while reflecting the researchers' interpretative engagement with the data. Particular attention was given to how participants understood and experienced their pedagogical readiness in teaching English to young learners.

Stage 3: Theme Clustering and Abstraction. Related emergent themes were subsequently clustered into superordinate themes through abstraction, subsumption, and polarization. During this stage, themes associated with pedagogical readiness (RQ1), pedagogical challenges (RQ2), and supporting and hindering factors (RQ3) were analytically distinguished according to their conceptual focus while preserving the interconnected nature of participants' experiences. The researchers continuously revisited the original transcripts to ensure that the emerging interpretations remained grounded in the participants' accounts.

Stage 4: Cross-case Analysis and Data Integration. Finally, superordinate themes and their associated sub-themes were compared across all participants to identify patterns of convergence and divergence. Interview findings were then integrated with classroom observation data as part of methodological triangulation. Interview data provided insight into teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences, whereas classroom observations demonstrated how these perceptions were enacted in authentic classroom practice. The integration of both data sources enabled the researchers to identify consistencies and discrepancies between reported and observed practices, thereby strengthening the credibility and interpretative depth of the findings.

To ensure ethical standards and analytical transparency, all participants were anonymized using identification codes. Each teacher was assigned a unique code (T1-T10), which was used consistently throughout transcription, analysis, and reporting. These codes appear in the Findings section to identify the source of interview excerpts while maintaining participant confidentiality. The use of systematic coding enhanced transparency and traceability between the original data, analytical interpretations, and the reported findings.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Several strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Methodological triangulation was achieved through the combination of interviews and classroom observations. Prolonged engagement with the data and iterative analysis strengthened interpretative depth. In addition, careful attention was paid to maintaining coherence between the research questions, methodological approach, and analytical outcomes, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in participants' lived experiences rather than researcher assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any stage. Informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the research process.

C. Results and Discussion

Results

Following semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with ten non-English major teachers from five private elementary schools, several themes were identified regarding teachers' pedagogical readiness in teaching English to young learners. The analysis revealed that pedagogical readiness was manifested unevenly across classrooms and could be organized into seven overarching themes corresponding to the seven pedagogical competencies outlined in the national teacher competency framework. These themes include understanding learner characteristics, applying learning principles, lesson planning and instructional organization, interactive classroom practices, use of learning media and technology, assessment and feedback, and facilitation of learners' potential.

The analysis revealed clear contrasts in the manifestation of the seven themes, in particular, between the teachers who demonstrated a high degree of pedagogical readiness and those who demonstrated a low degree of pedagogical readiness. Notable among the contrasts was that while some teachers were able to demonstrate adaptive instructional practices, interactive teaching strategies, and supportive

classroom environments, others demonstrated a reliance on textbook-driven instruction, little to no interaction, and scant pedagogical adaptation. There was a noted consistency between classroom observations and interviews with regards to instructional organisation, learner engagement, and the degree of English utilised during instruction.

Apart from examples of pedagogical readiness, the results indicated a pattern of pedagogical difficulties faced by teachers of other subjects besides English. These challenges are grouped into five areas: lack of self-confidence when using English for teaching, difficulties in the application of principles of communicative learning and play-based learning, inadequate lesson preparation, problems in guiding students to participate in class, and weak use of instructional media and inadequate use of formative evaluation.

In addition, the analysis identified a number of both supportive and obstructive factors that influence teachers' pedagogical readiness. Five themes were identified: teaching experience, pedagogical training, institutional support, workload and role multiplicity, and teachers' self-efficacy in teaching English. All of these factors account for the varying degrees of pedagogical readiness evident in different classrooms and demonstrate the interrelation of specific teacher attributes and the contextual circumstances of the school.

Manifestations of Pedagogical Readiness among Non-English Major Teachers in Teaching English at Private Elementary Schools

Theme 1: Pedagogical Readiness in Understanding Learner Characteristics

The presence of pedagogical readiness in this theme deals with teachers adjusting their instructional methods in relation to the cognitive, emotional, and linguistic capabilities of the students. More pedagogically ready teachers responded to student inattention, limited vocabulary, and an affective filter concerned about learning English. This awareness influenced their instructional language, pacing, and activity selection.

"Students have different characteristics and abilities. Most of them are enthusiastic, but they still need guidance in vocabulary and pronunciation, so I try to adjust the lesson to their level." (T1)

The analysis indicates that these teachers employed strategies such as gestures, visual support, repetition, and simplified instructions to support students' comprehension. More students exhibited greater engagement and more responsiveness to the instructional activities as compared to less engaged and less responsive students of less pedagogically ready teachers. On the contrary, less pedagogically ready teachers employed the same instructional style with a great disregard for the levels of proficiency and learning requirements of the students.

"I usually follow the book directly because the material is already there, and it is easier to manage the class that way." (T7)

Observations revealed that such lessons relied heavily on textbook explanation with minimal adaptation, resulting in passive student participation and limited engagement.

Theme 2: Pedagogical Readiness in Applying Learning Principles

This theme demonstrates educators' ability to utilise effective learning principles for young learners, particularly those that are more communicative, experiential, and include elements of play. More pedagogically prepared teachers used songs, games, and other activities to encourage meaningful exposure to language.

"I use songs and simple games so students don't get bored and can remember the vocabulary more easily." (T4)

Lessons with students are more likely to promote speaking and are more responsive to activities that they need to participate in. In contrast, less pedagogically prepared teachers focused more on rote learning, translation, and mechanistic repetition.

"Usually I ask students to memorise the words first, then we do exercises from the book." (T8)

When these lessons were observed, students were able to contextualise the language, but interactions were very limited, and students' opportunities for communicative engagement were mostly absent.

Theme 3: Pedagogical Readiness in Lesson Planning and Instructional Organization

The ability of teachers to demonstrate pedagogical readiness was also reflected in how they prepared and organised their lessons. Those who exhibited greater readiness stated that they developed lesson plans and organised their teaching into systematic components such as warm-up, main activities, and reinforcement.

"Before teaching, I prepare the lesson plan and think about what activities are suitable for the students' level." (T3)

These classrooms were observed to maintain student attention and ensure a smoother flow of teaching. On the contrary, some teachers began lessons with little more preparation than following the sequence of the textbook.

"I usually teach based on the book because the schedule is tight." (T9)

Lessons that were observed lacked a specific focus, resulting in teaching being more fragmented. This led to minimal interaction and activity.

Theme 4: Pedagogical Readiness in Interactive Classroom Practices

Another example of pedagogical readiness was noted in managing interactions in the classroom. More ready teachers promoted participation through elaborative questioning, praising, and giving supportive feedback.

"I try to encourage students by praising their effort, so they are not afraid to speak English." (T6)

More classroom discourse was noted in which students responded and participated in short dialogues. On the other hand, less ready teachers controlled the classroom discourse and students responded mostly through choral answers and short answers. Observation notes confirmed that there were little to no opportunities for students to start dialogues.

Theme 5: Pedagogical Readiness in Utilizing Learning Media and Technology

Pedagogical readiness was reflected in the teachers' use of instructional media. More ready teachers employed flashcards, pictures, songs, and some digital aids to enhance understanding.

"I use pictures, flashcards, and sometimes videos to help students understand." (T2)

Lessons that were observed indicated greater student focus and participation. Less ready teachers relied almost entirely on the textbook and verbal explanations.

"I rarely use media because the book is usually enough." (T10)

Less engaged students were noted in the observations.

Theme 6: Pedagogical Readiness in Assessment and Feedback

This theme is about how teachers assess students' learning. More ready teachers used observation, questioning, and feedback as techniques in formative assessments.

"I check their understanding by asking questions and correcting gently." (T5)

Observations indicated that participation and pronunciation were being monitored. Less ready teachers tended to assess only through written work and task completion, with feedback that was limited to correct or incorrect.

Theme 7: Pedagogical Readiness in Facilitating Learners' Potential

The last theme relates to teachers' attempts to help increase learners' confidence and motivation. More ready teachers fostered safe environments in which mistakes were viewed as a part of the learning process.

"I ensure students feel at ease and are not worried about making errors." (T6)

Described classrooms demonstrated positive emotional climates. Teachers with less

readiness concentrated mostly on explaining the content and showed little affective support. Observations showed lesser student confidence and participation.

Table 1. Pedagogical Readiness of Non-English Major Teachers Based on Seven Pedagogical Competencies

Theme	Indicators of Pedagogical Readiness	Indicators of Limited Pedagogical Readiness
Pedagogical Readiness in Understanding Learner Characteristics	Teachers adapted language level, pacing, and activities to students' cognitive and affective needs; used repetition, visuals, and gestures	Uniform instruction regardless of students' proficiency; limited attention to learners' developmental differences
Pedagogical Readiness in Applying Learning Principles	Use of songs, games, interactive activities, and contextualized practice to support learning	Reliance on memorization, translation, and mechanical repetition with minimal interaction
Pedagogical Readiness in Lesson Planning and Instructional Organization	Preparation of lesson plans with clear stages (warm-up, practice, reinforcement) and age-appropriate activities	Teaching without clear objectives; dependence on textbook sequence without adaptation
Pedagogical Readiness in Interactive Classroom Practices	Encouragement of student participation through questioning, praise, and group activities	Teacher-dominated discourse; students limited to choral repetition or short responses
Pedagogical Readiness in Utilizing Learning Media and Technology	Purposeful use of visual aids, flashcards, songs, and simple digital media to support comprehension	Exclusive reliance on textbooks and verbal explanation with minimal media support
Pedagogical Readiness in Assessment and Feedback	Use of informal formative assessment through questioning and observation of student responses	Assessment limited to written exercises or completion of textbook tasks
Pedagogical Readiness in Facilitating Learners' Potential	Provision of encouragement and a supportive atmosphere to build confidence and willingness to use English	Limited affective support; focus on task completion rather than learner confidence

Pedagogical Challenges Encountered by Non-English Major Teachers in English Instruction for Young Learners

Theme 1: Limited confidence in using English as the medium of instruction

A significant challenge in the classroom for non-English major teachers is their lack of self-assurance in utilizing English as a language of instruction. Teachers' worries about making mistakes while speaking, especially with their grammar and pronunciation, have caused them to reduce their English used in instruction.

"I'm afraid my pronunciation is wrong, so I usually I explain in Indonesian to avoid confusing the students." (T7)

This anxiety is corroborated by classroom observations. Teachers tended to use English only to introduce a few vocabulary words or read a passage from the

textbook in some class while providing explanations, instructions, and classroom management almost entirely in Indonesian. Consequently, students had little opportunities to hear and engage with uninterrupted English. Conversely, teachers with fewer difficulties tended to engage in the use of formulaic English expressions to facilitate classroom management, such as, 'Good Morning', 'Be quiet', 'Good job', etc. This suggests that self-assurance, rather than the need for accuracy, is a major factor in determining teachers' language of instruction.

Theme 2: Difficulty in applying communicative and play-based learning principles

The other case is about teachers implementing the communicative, play, and experience-based approaches suitable for young learners. While most teachers indicated that gaining knowledge through games and interactions is better for students, many do not practice this in their classes.

"I know children like games, but sometimes I don't know what kind of activity to use, so I just follow the book." (T5)

In the classroom observation data, many teachers had a strong reliance on rote memorization, vocabulary learning, and the completion of worksheets. The learning activities were teacher-dominated and had little student interaction, particularly in the use of English. In those classes, most students were simply responding through collective repetition or very short and discrete answers. Such an instance points to a lack of knowledge in operationalizing the practice of EYL principles that the teachers possess, especially in the absence of any pedagogical training in English language teaching.

Theme 3: Insufficient lesson planning and instructional coherence

The teachers' planning of the lessons and the organization of the instructions also highlighted some pedagogical difficulties. Some of the participants said that they do not prepare detailed lesson plans and rather follow the sequence of the textbook or do some on-the-spot teaching.

"Sometimes I just follow the next page in the book because I have other subjects to prepare as well." (T9)

This statement was corroborated by the classroom observation. Lessons lacked learning objectives, and in certain cases, the lessons even lacked objectives, steps, and phases (i.e. warm-up, practice, and reinforcement) that typically characterize systematic lesson construction. The instruction was also fragmented so that diminished student understanding and resulted in lack of meaningful student engagement. In comparison, it was noticeable that teachers prepared lessons that were more structured and with clearer objectives in the stronger readiness contrasted teachers. This contrast underscores how lack of pedagogical support, planning time, and heavy workload operates as barriers to effective teaching.

Theme 4: Challenges in facilitating interactive classroom participation

A further recurring barrier concerns teachers' difficulties in promoting active participation from their students. Teachers report that, while students are reluctant to speak English for fear of making mistakes, some teachers do not have strategies for dealing with these affective filters. As one teacher put it:

"Students are usually shy. If I ask them to speak English, they are afraid of being wrong."
(T8)

Between teachers, the opportunity for students to respond to questions, activate the peers to respond to questions, and respond to each other, is minimal. Teachers, however, do not encourage individual participation. They do not respond to silence, except to ask the class to repeat an answer in unison. On the other hand, the classrooms, where teachers appeared to have more pedagogical knowledge, were characterized by the use of praise, the provision of supportive feedback, and the use of activities that invited student participation with little risk. These results indicate that the teachers' self-reported concerns about the lack of engagement from their students is, at least in some measure, a reflection of their own lack of engagement.

Theme 5: Limited ability to utilize instructional media and formative assessment

The last issue focuses on teachers' use of instructional media and formative assessment. Although some teachers appreciated the value of using visual aids and even digital media, most of them were constrained by their skills and resources.

"I want to use videos or pictures, but I'm not used to technology, so I just use the textbook."
(T10)

During the observations, many teachers used textbooks and their own explanations. In the same way, the only feedback provided to students on written exercises was, "You are right" or, "You are wrong." Some teachers with fewer challenges utilized observation, oral questioning, and feedback to prompt learning. The difference shows that challenges in teaching are not just about the resources; it is also about the teachers' competence in using and teaching the resources.

Table 2. Pedagogical Challenges Encountered by Non-English Major Teachers in English Instruction for Young Learners

Theme	Indicators from Interviews	Indicators from Classroom Observations
Limited confidence in using English as the medium of instruction	Teachers expressed fear of making grammatical and pronunciation errors; preference for Indonesian to avoid confusing students	English use limited to isolated vocabulary or reading aloud; explanations, instructions, and classroom management conducted mostly in Indonesian
Difficulty in applying communicative and play-based learning	Teachers acknowledged the value of games and interaction but reported uncertainty in	Heavy reliance on rote memorization, worksheets, and choral repetition; minimal student interaction and

principles Insufficient lesson planning and instructional coherence Challenges in facilitating interactive classroom participation	selecting or designing activities Teachers reported following textbooks due to time constraints and multiple teaching responsibilities Teachers perceived students as shy and afraid of making mistakes, with limited strategies to address affective barriers	communicative use of English Heavy reliance on rote memorization, worksheets, and choral repetition; minimal student interaction and communicative use of English Teacher-dominated discourse; limited individual responses; interaction mainly through collective repetition with few opportunities for student- initiated talk
Limited ability to utilize instructional media and formative assessment	Teachers reported low confidence in using technology and limited skills in assessment beyond task completion	Predominant use of textbooks and verbal explanation; feedback restricted to right/wrong responses with minimal formative monitoring

Supporting and Hindering Factors Shaping Pedagogical Readiness in Elementary English Teaching

Theme 1: Teaching experience as a supporting but uneven factor

Teaching experience was described as an important supporting factor for pedagogical readiness, especially for teachers who had taught English for several years, even though formal English teaching qualifications were lacking. Adaptive strategy development, as reported by experienced teachers, was a result of trial and error, classroom reflection, and knowledge of student attributes.

"I learned mostly from experience. After teaching for several years, I understand what activities work and what don't for my students." (T2)

This statement was exemplified in the classroom observations. Experienced teachers demonstrated more confidence in classroom management, pacing, and responsiveness to students. However, alone, experience was a necessary but insufficient condition for pedagogical readiness. Despite his or her same years of teaching experience, some teachers still employed a traditional, textbook-driven teaching methodology. This confirms the notion that experience serves as a supporting factor only in the presence of reflective practice and an adaptive mindset.

Theme 2: Limited pedagogical training as a major hindering factor

A lack of formal training on English pedagogy and English for Young Learners (EYL) was reported as a major hindering factor for many teachers. There was a common lack of any type of training pertaining to teaching English at the primary school level.

"I never got any special training for teaching English. I just teach based on what I know." (T8)

The findings indicate that teachers who are untrained in the profession seem to have the greatest difficulty in lesson sequencing, designing communicative activities, and

assessing participants formatively. This inability to structure their assessments meant they could not meet the grade level teaching constituents or the professional standards in the teaching document. Regardless of the fact that some of their training could have been considered minimal, teachers who have completed any number of training workshops are still more likely to have some understanding of interactive teaching methods. This reinforces the importance of professional training in order to improve the level of teaching the participants are engaged in.

Theme 3: School Support and Context of the Institution

From the perspective of the institutions, the way they support teachers, or the way they facilitate or even hinder the teachers' ability to be ready pedagogically, is an aspect of the context that regulates their ability to be ready pedagogically. The teachers who describe the provision of teaching materials, primary teaching aids, and peer teaching materials in their schools reported that they were more confident in trying new teaching methods. This suggests that pedagogical readiness is not simply the lack of an individual characteristic, but also hinges on the policies, resources, and instructional norms of the school.

Theme 4: Workload and role multiplicity as constraining factors

One of the most significant of these, the author's suggest, is the teachers' burden of having to take on multiple roles and the responsibilities that come with their teaching schedules. A number of teachers, who were not English majors, had to cover several subjects in addition to English, constraining their lesson preparation and reflective practices.

"I teach many subjects, so sometimes I don't have enough time to prepare English lessons well." (T9)

Lessons where observational data documented this constraint showed the absence of purposeful diverse teaching. Completing tasks rather than teaching interactively was a result of pedagogical decisions made as a result of the burden of teaching schedules. This suggests that pedagogical readiness is simply the result of structural conditions involving schools.

Theme 5: Teachers' beliefs and self-efficacy in teaching English

The factor of teachers' own perceptions of their ability to teach English was one of the most significant determinants of pedagogical readiness. Teachers with higher self-efficacy had a greater propensity to use English, implement interactive activities and actively encourage students to participate, even if their language proficiency was not high.

"Regardless of my level of proficiency in English, I print out papers in English and talk in English so students get accustomed to English." (T6)

On the other hand, teachers who were less confident tended to not engage in using English and limited interactions in the classroom. Student exposure to English and opportunities to practice it were directly influenced by these kinds of beliefs, as seen in the observations, which influenced the instructional decisions. This perspective illustrates that the discomfort of teachers is linked to stress that is affective and psychological in nature, as it is not simply a question of lacking in skills.

Table 3. Supporting and Hindering Factors Shaping Pedagogical Readiness of Non-English Major Teachers

Factor	Role in Pedagogical Readiness	Empirical Indicators from Interviews and Observations
Teaching experience	Supporting (uneven)	Experienced teachers demonstrated better classroom management, pacing, and responsiveness to learners. However, experience alone did not guarantee pedagogical readiness, as some experienced teachers continued to rely on textbook-driven instruction without reflective adaptation.
Pedagogical training in English and EYL	Hindering (dominant)	Teachers reported a lack of formal training in English pedagogy and English for Young Learners, which limited their ability to design communicative activities, sequence lessons systematically, and conduct formative assessment.
School support and institutional context	Supporting or hindering	Availability of teaching materials, learning media, and collegial support increased teachers' confidence to experiment with instructional strategies. In contrast, limited institutional support constrained pedagogical innovation and adaptation.
Workload and role multiplicity	Hindering	Teachers responsible for multiple subjects had limited time for lesson preparation and reflection, resulting in fragmented instruction and reduced use of interactive teaching practices.
Teachers' beliefs and self-efficacy	Supporting or hindering	Teachers with higher self-efficacy used English more frequently, encouraged participation, and implemented interactive activities. Teachers with low confidence minimized English use and limited student interaction, reducing learning opportunities.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine the level of pedagogical readiness among non-English major teachers teaching English to young learners, the pedagogical challenges they face, and the supportive and constraining factors to this situation. Considering the current policy direction of Indonesia which advocates for the teaching of English as a compulsory subject at the primary level, this study provides empirical evidence of teaching practices, and its pedagogical deficits, concerning the English for Young Learners (EYL) framework. The results showed that among the seven pedagogical competencies stipulated in Permendiknas No 16 of 2007, the level of pedagogical readiness varied and was manifested differently across teachers. While a few teachers practiced some adaptations and learner

centered approaches, most teachers showed a weak pedagogical readiness which was reflected in instruction that used textbooks, was led by the teacher, and was inflexible pedagogically. This research illustrates that low pedagogical readiness continues to be a significant challenge to the successful delivery of English teaching at the primary level.

One sign of pedagogical readiness is how well the teachers understand their learners. More ready teachers described learning objectives using different terminology, varying the speech rate, and employing varied instructional activities based on the learners' cognitive, affective, and linguistic levels. These teachers described using paraphrasing, pictures and simplified instructional language to reduce affective barriers, and to sustain engagement. They encouraged participation and confirmed engagement. In contrast, the teachers with lesser readiness applied uniform instructional methods regardless of learners' developmental differences and relied on the textbook a lot. This finding corroborates the existing literature, which states that good instruction of young learners of English primarily depends on the pedagogical sensitivity of the teacher to the developmental phases of the learners, not merely the content mastery of the teacher (Hollenstein et al., 2024). The current study strengthens the notion that pedagogical readiness and the sensitivity of teachers to the developmental responses of learners are closely linked.

The same trend was observable regarding the application of learning principles. Even though most participants recognized the educational benefits of using games, songs, and activities that promote communication, and other exercises for children, only a few managed to apply these principles most of the time. Instead, most of them relied on rote learning and mechanical repetition, and offered little room for the actual use of language. Numerous other studies on non-English major teachers have highlighted the same difference between pedagogical beliefs and practices. Such teachers often have some knowledge of learner-centered pedagogy, but they do not have the confidence to implement it, and the knowledge on how to do it (Rahman et al., 2021; Sakata et al., 2022). This means that more than just pedagogical understanding, there is a need for pedagogical readiness to be accompanied by the other aspects of practice that one acquires through experience and teaching practice.

Imbalances in pedagogical readiness showed in lesson planning and instructional organization. More ready teachers crafted lessons with sharper objectives and better structured flows and steps, which improved classroom management and prolonged attentional focus. Conversely, less ready teachers depended on textbook sequencing and did so with little planning, which led to instruction breakdowns and vague learning outcomes. Such textbook reliance seems to be more of a coping mechanism than a pedagogical choice, indicative of low self-efficacy and insufficient lesson preparation. This textbook reliance reinforces previous findings that link poor lesson planning of non-English major teachers to poor instruction and low student engagement (König et al., 2020; Matsumura, 2022).

The discrepancies in responsive teaching practices among educators seem to be related to the varying degrees of teaching readiness among these educators. More responsive facilitators tended to bring about more active participation via questions, constructive feedback, reiteration, and opportunities for low-risk speaking, thereby creating a more psychologically safe environment for learners to use English. Conversely, less responsive facilitators took on more of the classroom discourse and restricted learners' responses to choral repetition and short answer responses. Evidence of a more restrictive use of classroom English and higher levels of teacher talk in EYL classrooms has been documented in parallel studies and is associated with a lack of pedagogical confidence and/or training of the teacher (Reynolds et al., 2021; Tavakol & Tavakoli, 2023). Limited opportunities for interactive discourse appear to constrain learners' willingness to use English. This suggests that reluctance to speak is more strongly linked to instructional practices than to learner attributes.

Disparity in pedagogical readiness is clearly evident in the application of learning media and resources. More ready teachers integrated visual materials, songs, and even some digital tools that aid in comprehension and help sustain learners' attention. Less ready teachers, in contrast, tended to rely more on textbooks and explanations given verbally. This corroborates the findings of earlier studies showing that use of media in EYL classrooms is more determined by the pedagogical objectives and the teachers' skills than by the mere presence of technology (Wah & Hashim, 2021; A. Y. Wang, 2022). The limited use of media by less ready teachers can be attributed to a lack of pedagogical skills to use the available resources in a more constructive manner.

There were also similar gaps in assessment and feedback practices. More ready teachers demonstrated the use of informal formative assessment practices, for example, by asking questions and observing, and providing feedback which supports learning in the process. Less ready teachers tended to use only written tasks and a judgment of right or wrong. This is consistent with the previous findings of non-English major teachers who many times have problems in using formative assessment in primary language classrooms (Morris et al., 2021; Patra et al., 2022). The findings pointed out that assessment literacy is a significant but still relatively undeveloped aspect of pedagogical readiness of non-English major teachers.

The affective dimension of pedagogical readiness was evident in teachers' ability to create emotionally supportive learning environments. More ready teachers promoted confidence enhancing learner participation by encouraging risk-taking, including appreciation of mistakes as learning opportunities. In contrast, teachers with lower readiness provided limited emotional support and focused primarily on content delivery. This aligns (Burri & Baker, 2021; Feng et al., 2022) in documenting the impact of teacher affective support and self-efficacy on young learners' engagement and willingness to speak a foreign language. It illustrates that pedagogical readiness consists of emotional and relational aspects besides

instructional expertise.

The study, besides readiness manifestations, revealed patterns of challenges that were common among teachers of non-English majors. English language inhibition was the most notable challenge, as it caused most teachers to minimize their use of English and to switch to Indonesian. Data from the observations indicated that teachers' concerns about the pronunciation and grammar of their instructional language restricted the amount of English available to learners. This is consistent with previous research that identifies teacher self-efficacy, and not simply linguistic accuracy, as a critical determinant of classroom language use (Matsumura, 2022; C. Wang, 2021)

Further examination of supportive and hindering factors illustrates the intricacy of pedagogical readiness. These findings extend the discussion on pedagogical readiness by highlighting its phenomenological nature, where readiness emerges from the interaction between experience, belief, and institutional context. Teaching experience emerged as a supportive but inconsistent factor; while some teachers advanced adaptive methodologies, others continued traditional approaches despite years of teaching. This supports prior research suggesting that experience contributes to pedagogical readiness only when accompanied by reflective practice and professional support (Blömeke et al., 2022; Ho & Dimmock, 2023). A deficiency of formal pedagogical training in EYL was cited as a hindering factor especially regarding lesson sequencing, the design of communicative activities, and formative assessment. These findings reinforce the need for tailored professional development for non-English major teachers who teach English at primary levels (Oktavia et al., 2022; Veliz et al., 2025)

The institutional context was also significant. Teachers in schools with instructional materials and peer support described feeling more capable to explore different pedagogical approaches, while the combination of less teaching time and multiple roles limited lesson preparation and reflection. This suggests that the attributes of pedagogical readiness extend to the individual teacher, the structural arrangement, and the organization of the school.

The uneven pedagogical readiness documented in this study presents challenges to the effective teaching of English as a mandatory subject at the primary school level. Beyond curriculum reform, the findings point to the need for systematic preparation, including targeted professional development in EYL pedagogy, classroom discourse, and formative assessment.

D. Conclusions

This study explored the pedagogical readiness of non-English major teachers in teaching English to young learners at private elementary schools in Bengkulu City. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the study examined manifestations

of pedagogical readiness, challenges encountered, and factors supporting or hindering effective instruction. The findings reveal that pedagogical readiness among non-English major teachers is uneven and shaped by the complex interplay of pedagogical knowledge, affective dispositions, and institutional contexts.

Pedagogical readiness was manifested across seven competencies, but with considerable variation. While some teachers demonstrated adaptive practices, including adjusting instruction to learners' needs, using interactive activities, and providing supportive feedback others relied predominantly on textbook-driven, teacher-centered instruction with minimal pedagogical adaptation. Key challenges included limited confidence in using English as the medium of instruction, difficulties implementing communicative and play-based approaches, insufficient lesson planning, challenges in facilitating interactive participation, and limited use of formative assessment. Supportive factors included teaching experience and self-efficacy, while hindering factors included lack of pedagogical training, heavy workloads, and limited institutional support.

This study contributes to the literature by extending Shulman's (1986) Pedagogical Content Knowledge framework to the context of non-English major teachers in EYL settings. The findings demonstrate that pedagogical readiness is not simply a function of content knowledge or teaching experience but emerges from the interaction between teachers' beliefs, their ability to transform pedagogical knowledge into practice, and the institutional context. The study also highlights the importance of affective dimensions—particularly self-efficacy and confidence—in shaping pedagogical practices, extending prior research on teacher cognition in language teaching.

The findings have several implications for policy and practice. First, the uneven pedagogical readiness documented in this study suggests that the implementation of compulsory English instruction in Indonesian elementary schools requires systematic teacher preparation, including targeted professional development in EYL pedagogy, classroom discourse, and formative assessment. Second, schools should provide non-English major teachers with access to teaching resources, planning time, and mentoring from English-specialist teachers. Third, teacher education programs should consider incorporating EYL modules to prepare prospective teachers for the realities of elementary English instruction.

For policymakers, the findings underscore that curriculum reform must be accompanied by investment in teacher capacity building. Without addressing the pedagogical gaps identified in this study, the compulsory English policy risks being implemented through suboptimal instructional practices that may not achieve the intended educational outcomes. Targeted professional development, ongoing support mechanisms, and adequate resource allocation are essential for successful policy implementation.

This study has several limitations. The findings may not be generalizable beyond private elementary schools in Bengkulu City, and the cross-sectional nature of the data limits understanding of how pedagogical readiness develops over time. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine the progression of pedagogical readiness, include public schools and diverse geographical contexts, and incorporate mixed-methods approaches to complement qualitative insights with quantitative measures of readiness. Further studies might also examine the relationship between specific professional development models and improvements in pedagogical practices among non-English major teachers.

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