

**READINESS AND COPING STRATEGIES OF NON-ENGLISH BACKGROUND
TEACHERS IN RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

An Undergraduate Thesis

Presented to the Department of English Language Education

as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain the Sarjana Pendidikan Degree

in English Language Education



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STATEMENT OF WORK ORIGINALLY

I honestly declare that this thesis, which I have written, does not contain the work of parts of the work of other people, except those cited in the quotations and references, as a scientific paper should.

Yogyakarta, 27 July 2026



Iji Astuti Rahayu
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MOTTO

"And those who strive for Us, We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good."

(QS. Al-'Ankabut: 69).

"Whoever treads a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise."

(HR. Muslim)

DEDICATION

I do not really know how to express everything my parents have done for me in words. To my mother and father, thank you for the prayers I may not even have realized you were sending, for the hard work you put in, so I could focus on my studies, and for never giving up on me even when I gave up on myself. This is for you, more than myself. To my aunts, uncles, and family who supported my education, I know it was no small thing, and I will never forget it. To my supervisor, thank you for your patience during the revision process and for your honest feedback, even when it was hard to hear. It made this work better, and it made me a better person. I would also like to thank the Islamic University of Indonesia for the years I spent here, not only in the classroom but also as I grew into adulthood. And to my friends, both here in Jogja and those far away, thank you for always being by my side, for the unexpected calls, for being willing to listen whenever I needed to vent, and for reminding me that I'm not doing this alone. I dedicate this to all of you. I couldn't have done it without you.

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Readiness and coping strategies of non-English background teachers in rural elementary schools

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the readiness and coping strategies of non-English background teachers in rural elementary schools who, due to the absence of specialist English teachers, are assigned to teach English in response to Indonesia's policy mandating English as a compulsory subject from the 2027/2028 academic year. These teachers demonstrate readiness through self-directed digital learning, peer collaboration in regular informal Teacher Working Group (KKG) discussion, and adaptive teaching strategies. Employing a qualitative approach, the study conducted semi-structured online interviews via Zoom platform with three classroom teachers and one school principal from a rural elementary school in Purworejo, and one classroom teacher and one school principal from a rural elementary school in Lampung. In addition, teaching documents were collected from the teachers. The thematic analysis found that all four teachers, despite never having received formal English language teaching training, demonstrated considerable professional resilience through adaptive coping strategies such as self-directed digital learning and peer collaboration. The most prominent challenges encompassed non-English educational backgrounds, pronunciation difficulties shaped by first language (L1) Javanese interference, and limited infrastructure. School principals highlighted the absence of specialist English teachers as a critical concern. By documenting how non-English background teachers independently develop coping strategies in the absence of formal training, this study offers new empirical insight into teacher-level readiness for Indonesia's English mandate in rural, resource-constrained schools an aspect that has received limited attention in prior research. These findings suggest the urgent need for structured teacher training programmes, professional learning communities, and policy-level deployment of specialist English teachers to rural primary schools before full curriculum implementation.

Keywords: *non-English background teacher; teacher readiness; coping strategies; rural elementary schools; English mandate*

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's recent policy mandating English as a compulsory elementary school subject beginning in 2027/2028 represents a significant structural shift in the national curriculum (Mendikbudristek, 2024; Mendikdasmen, 2025). Previously classified as a local content subject (*muatan lokal*), English now carries formal instructional obligations for all primary schools, including those in remote and rural contexts where specialist teachers remain critically (Kemendikbud, 2013; Mendikdasmen, 2025; Laila et al., 2023; Mariyam et al., 2025). Many rural schools rely on unqualified or homeroom teachers (Fadilah et al., 2023). This research is urgent because, although the mandate is national, teacher readiness in underserved areas to transition from elective to compulsory instruction by 2027 remains understudied (Purwanti & Prasanti, 2025).

Non-English background teachers face substantial hurdles in taking on this new instructional role. In terms of teacher competence, prior studies report that such teachers struggle with limited content knowledge and insufficient instructional resources (Candrawati & Purbani, 2025; Fadilah et al., 2023). A pattern echoed even among pre-service educators, who show only moderate readiness for the upcoming mandate (Wijayanti et al., 2025) and continue to struggle with pronunciation and grammar mastery through self-directed study alone (Widagsa et al., 2025). Resource limitations further compound these competence gaps, as uneven teacher readiness combined with limited instructional materials has been identified as a key obstacle to implementing student-centered approaches such as inquiry-based learning in Indonesian elementary English classrooms more broadly (Nirwan et al., 2024). Within the rural teaching context specifically, such challenges were first documented when English was merely an elective subject (Laila et al., 2023; Shahnaz & Gandana, 2021), and persist in the design of age-appropriate activities for young learners (Aminah et al., 2023; Yusrina et al., 2025). Despite these constraints, existing research also points to teacher adaptation, as many rural teachers demonstrate professional resilience by employing creative classroom strategies, such as utilizing digital tools and localized materials, to compensate for their lack of formal training (Angraeni & Yusuf, 2022; Harmilawati et al., 2024; Noviani & Kuswandono, 2022). However, these studies largely capture teacher challenges and adaptations under English's former elective status or among pre-service teachers. How in-service, non-English background teachers in rural elementary schools cope with the shift to compulsory instructional remains largely unexamined the gap this study addresses.

This study integrates three complementary theoretical lenses to provide an interpretive understanding of how rural teachers navigate their professional reality. Shulman's (1987) Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) frames how teachers translate limited subject-matter knowledge into workable classroom instruction. Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory situates this process within teachers' social interactions, such as peer

discussion through the KKG, as a mediating resource for learning. Masten's (2001) Resilience Theory accounts for how teachers sustain effective performance despite the absence of formal training and adequate resources. Together, these frameworks allow the study to capture both the cognitive and social dimensions of teacher readiness. Specifically, research examines the readiness of non-English background teachers for the 2027/2028 mandate and identifies the coping strategies they utilize to address gaps in competence and resources.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-interpretive design (Elliott & Timulak, 2021) to explore the professional readiness of rural teachers to teach English at elementary schools. The primary data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview protocol adapted from (Purwanti & Prasanti, 2025). This approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of three interconnected dimensions of pedagogical readiness, policy comprehension, and adaptive capacity, grounded in Resilience Theory (Masten, 2001). The interviews were conducted online via Zoom platform, and the adapted protocol served as a flexible guide. Prior to each interview, participants were briefed on the purpose and procedures of the study and provided informed consent, including consent for audio recording and for their responses to be used for research purposes. All participants were also assured of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their involvement.

Participants and Setting

This study involved four classroom teachers (T1-T4) and two school principals (P1-P2) from rural elementary schools in Purworejo, Central Java, and Lampung. T1, T2, and T3, who taught Grade 6, 5, and 4 respectively, together with principal P1, were based in Purworejo. T4, who served as a local content teacher, and principal P2 were based in Lampung. Only one teacher was recruited from Lampung because, unlike Purworejo where three homeroom teachers each taught a single grade level, T4 in Lampung was the sole teacher responsible for English instruction across all grade levels at her school, making a single participant sufficient to represent that context. This regional imbalance in participant distribution is acknowledged as a limitation in the Discussion section. P1 managed a school where homeroom teachers taught English, whereas P2 oversaw a dedicated English teaching position despite the teacher's lack of specialist qualifications. Principals were responsible for curriculum planning and facilitating professional development through the *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* (PMM) and *School Working Group* (GTK). Participants were selected through purposive sampling because this technique allowed the researchers to deliberately target information-rich cases, namely active rural educators with non-English education (non-PBI) backgrounds who were directly responsible for teaching English under the upcoming mandate, thereby ensuring participants' experiences were directly relevant to the study's research questions.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a semi-structured interview protocol adapted from (Purwanti & Prasanti, 2025). Semi-structured interviews 30-40 minutes were conducted via Zoom platform in Bahasa Indonesia, allowing for flexible follow-up questions to explore teacher experiences in-depth. Secondary data were retrieved from

seven documents, consisting of one English instructional module for Grade 4, five English instructional modules for Grade 6 (Units 7–11) obtained from the Lampung teacher (T4), who taught English across all grade levels at her school, and one student textbook titled *My Next Words* for Grade 4. The interview data were subsequently cross-checked against these classroom materials.

Data Analysis

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim in Bahasa Indonesia to preserve participant expression and ensure a traceable record through systematic process documentation (Elliott & Timulak, 2021). Data was analyzed using (Braun & Clarke, 2006) six-phase thematic approach. The analysis involved repeated reading of the six interview transcripts and seven teaching documents to achieve data familiarization and identify preliminary patterns, resulting in twenty-nine initial codes such as non-English education background, limited facilities, first language (L1) interference, peer collaboration, and adaptive strategies. These codes were iteratively refined into four final themes representing readiness, challenges, coping strategies, and institutional support.

First, *policy readiness* refers to the ways teachers and principals prepared for the incoming English mandate, spanning curriculum planning, task distribution, and individual efforts to locate teaching references and appropriate methods. Second, *challenges in implementation* capture the linguistic, pedagogical, and material difficulties encountered in the classroom, particularly students' limited foundational knowledge following the recent reintroduction of English, as well as teacher's own linguistic barriers stemming from their non-English educational background. Third, *coping strategies* encompasses the practical responses teachers independently develop to manage these classroom demands, ranging from using Google Translate for pronunciation checks to employing peer tutoring, vocabulary memorization drills, and contextual games. Fourth, *institutional support* describes the kinds of assistance available to teachers, spanning formal channels such as the GTK training platform and KKG forums, as well as the informal peer discussion that teachers found more meaningful in practice. Interview data were triangulated with seven teaching documents to ensure interpretations were grounded in and verifiable through actual classroom materials.

RESULT

Findings are organized into four thematic sections, namely readiness, challenges, coping strategies, and institutional support. These themes integrate interview data with a content analysis of instructional documents, ensuring rigorous data triangulation.

Teacher Readiness

Three of four teachers ($f = 3$, where f denotes the number of participants whose response reflected a given code) possessed PGSD backgrounds that provided basic pedagogical foundations, though all acknowledged insufficient English content knowledge particularly for complex topics such as tenses and vocabulary. T2 captured this tension directly: "*Because our educational background is in PGSD, our mastery of English subject matter is still limited and requires further deepening. English was previously only an elective course, so the main obstacle is insufficient content knowledge.*" T4, with an Indonesia Language background, expressed significant vulnerability, "*Because my background is not in*

English but in Indonesian, I am very unfamiliar with English”.

All teachers prepared lessons independently ($f = 4$), including adaptation of available resources ($f = 2$) and independent module searches ($f = 2$). Such self-directed coping is consistent with prior documentation of non-English background teachers relying on practical experience to overcome content limitations (Aminah et al., 2023; Anandari et al., 2025; Noviani & Kuswandono, 2022; Yusrina et al., 2025). At the institutional level, principals reported a structured preparatory process. P1 explained *"The first step we took was to develop the curriculum related to English subject. Subsequently, the teachers developed instructional modules based on the school curriculum."* Evidence of this planning appears in T3's English instructional module, which demonstrates deliberate effort to adapt complex curriculum goals into collaborative, student-centered learning. This kind of grassroots material development reflects a wider pattern among Indonesian elementary teachers, who have begun designing their own curriculum-aligned digital media, such as interactive storytelling tools, when ready-made resources fail to meet classroom needs (Wati et al., 2025). This strategy is visible in Figure 1, which illustrates card-based games fostering active learning. Figure 2 reinforces this student-centered orientation through contextual *Look and Say* drills, integration of interactive word-search puzzles *Let's Search*, and visual activities for vocabulary identification *Look and write*. The teacher demonstrated professional resilience by leveraging PGSD training despite limited English knowledge.

Game

1. Guru menjelaskan bahwa mereka akan melakukan dialog dengan temannya dengan menggunakan kartu sebagai media.
2. Guru membuat beberapa kelompok yang beranggotakan 4-5 peserta didik.
3. Semua peserta didik mendapatkan kartu bergambar suatu yang ada di dapur dan di kamar mandi. Setiap anak secara bergantian bertanya kepada teman kelompoknya tentang kegiatan yang dilakukan di dapur, kamar mandi, kamar tidur dan ruang tamu.

Contoh kegiatan:

Student A : (Sambil menunjukkan kartunya) *"Where does Kimi eat?"*

Student B : (Melihat kartu dari temannya) *"He eat in the kitchen"*

Pada kegiatan ini guru membutuhkan kartu bergambar siswa sedang melakukan berbagai aktivitas di ruangan

Figure. 1 T3's Instructional Activities in Modul Ajar Incorporating Card-Based Games

Let's Search

1. Peserta didik diminta untuk mengamati huruf-huruf acak di halaman 58.
Contoh kalimat guru: *"let's find the words: things in the bath room, and give circle"*
2. Guru memberikan contoh bagaimana menemukan nama sebuah benda pada huruf acak di halaman 58.

Find the things in the kitchen

1. Peserta didik diminta untuk mengamati gambar halaman 59.
Contoh kalimat guru: *"see the picture things in the kitchen"*
2. Guru memberikan contoh bagaimana mengisi nama-nama benda di dapur sesuai gambar di halaman 59.
Contoh kalimat guru: *"let's we write words things in the kitchen"*
3. Peserta didik diminta mengisi teka-teki tentang nama-nama benda sesuai gambar.

Figure. 2 Instructional Activities in Modul Ajar Incorporating Contextual 'Look and Write' Tasks

Constraints included shared access to Interactive Flat Panels (f = 1) as T1 noted, *“It’s just that its use must be shared with other teachers, so it cannot be used at all times”* and misaligned textbooks (f = 2). Teachers prioritized training for non-specialists (f = 2) over specialist deployment (f = 1), confirming that inadequate infrastructure and limited support impede rural teacher readiness (Fadilah et al., 2023). Despite these barriers, three teachers (f = 3) applied student-centered learning principles through group discussion, interactive media, and collaborative vocabulary inquiry.

Table. 1 Frequency of Themes: Teacher and School Readiness

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency
Non-English educational background (PGSD/Indonesian Language)	Foundational pedagogical training from PGSD	3
	Limited English content knowledge	2
	Indonesian Language background (non-English)	1
Curriculum Readiness (Teacher)	Self-directed preparation before each lesson	4
	Adapting available resources to the syllabus	2
	Independent search for teaching modules and methods	2

Challenges in Teaching English

Teacher-side challenges centered on non-specialist background (f =2) and limited English knowledge (f = 2), which affected teacher confidence (f = 1) when facing unfamiliar vocabulary or complex sentence structures. This link between limited preparation and diminished confidence echoes findings among EFL pre-service teachers, for whom preparedness and anxiety were identified as one of the most persistent challenges when transitioning into real classroom responsibilities (Wiediantin et al., 2023)Pronunciation emerged as the primary linguistic hurdle (f =3), with T2 explaining, *“I certainly face my own challenges because I do not use English in my daily life, so I have to make a great effort to learn the pronunciations, given that spelling and pronunciation often differ significantly.”*

L1 Javanese interference compounded pronunciation difficulties (f = 2), with teachers’ thick accents influencing student learning. T3 illustrated this with *they* and *day*, which become indistinguishable, *“At that time, there were words that were unclear in their pronunciation, such as ‘THEY’ and ‘DAY’, because the thick accent made the pronunciations sound the same”*. Similarly, T4 noted, *“For example, in the pronunciation of the word ‘noodle’, my pronunciation is still mixed with a thick Javanese accent”*. This L1 interference aligns with research on non-English background teachers struggling with phonological awareness (Pastika et al., 2023; Wardani & Suwartono, 2019). A parallel pattern of mother-tongue interference has been documented among Acehnese EFL learners, whose error in

producing English consonant sounds absent from their first language point to a broader regional pattern beyond the Javanese context alone (Zalha & Lefiandi, 2024).

Student-side challenges further constrained progress. Students had limited prior English knowledge ($f = 1$), forcing teachers to teach basics despite curriculum expectations. T2 reflected, *“It was only this year that they started being taught, so their basic knowledge is very minimal. As a result, when they must follow the government syllabus, students still face difficulties.”* This mismatch is evident in the Grade 4 textbook *My Next Words* and T3’s instructional module Figure 3, which introduce complex concepts like *tenses* ($f = 2$) before students possess foundational vocabulary.



Figure. 3 Grammar Exercise on Auxiliary Verbs in Grade 4 Student Textbook

B. PEMAHAMAN BERMAKNA

Pada pembelajaran ini peserta didik mampu mengidentifikasi dan mengungkapkan kegiatan di masa yang akan datang (future activity)

C. PERTANYAAN PEMANTIK

- Peserta didik mampu menyimak cerita yang menggunakan kata kerja bentuk lampau.
- Peserta didik mampu menjawab pertanyaan guru yang berhubungan dengan isi cerita.

Figure. 4 Trigger Questions Section in the Grade 6 English Module

Figures 3 and 4 highlight a significant curriculum misalignment where grammar-heavy modules, focusing on auxiliary verbs *do not* or *does not* and complex past-tense morphological changes are introduced to students who still lack foundational vocabulary. T3 and T4 observed that such technical instructional materials exceed student competence in rural context, particularly when learners arrive with almost no prior English knowledge. This pedagogical gap is further widened by a severe shortage of resources, specifically, the lack of dictionaries ($f = 1$) due to socio-economic constraints forces students to depend exclusively on teachers for word meanings, thereby hindering independent vocabulary and phonetic verification.

Without independent reference materials, students cannot verify pronunciation beyond the teacher's model, intensifying L1 interference. T1 recalled, *"Once, some children asked about the pronunciation of 'Kentucky Fried Chicken'...the children tended to read it with Indonesian pronunciation"*. This pattern exemplifies how L1 interference spreads when students lack means for phonetic verification. Both principals (f = 2) reinforced these concerns, citing the absence of qualified English teachers as a primary barrier. P2 stated, *"One of the obstacles that arises when English is not taught by an expert is that there will be barriers in term of preparation and learning quality"*.

Table. 2 Frequency of Themes: Challenges in Teaching English

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency
Teacher difficulties	Non-English educational background	2
	Limited English content knowledge	2
Pronunciation	Inability to accurately pronounce English words	3
	L1 Javanese accent interference	2
	Minimal Use of English Outside classroom	1
Teacher confidence	Lesson Preparation Increased Confidence	2
	Unfamiliar Vocabulary Reduced Confidence	1
Student difficulties	Limited prior English knowledge	1
	Low motivation towards English	1
Infrastructure	Insufficient/misaligned textbooks	2
	Limited dictionary availability	1

Teachers' Coping Strategies

Without formal training, all four teachers relied on Google Translate as their primary pronunciation aid (f = 4), having never attended an English workshop. T3 explained, *"I usually use Google Translate because it shows how to pronounce words; I use the speaker feature to let the students listen to it together"*. YouTube and digital platforms provide informal professional development (f = 2), while some teachers accessed GTK modules independently (f = 1). This reliance on freely accessible online video content for pronunciation modelling mirrors findings on internet-based video lessons, where learners similarly turned to YouTube channels to self-teach pronunciation outside any formal classroom setting (Amanda et al., 2024). Though demonstrating resilience, these self-directed efforts align with (Widagsa et al., 2025), who note that such learning rarely achieves depth in phonological or grammatical mastery. One teacher also simplified complex textbook material into basic sentences before teaching (f = 1).

All four teachers employed differentiated instruction to address diverse academic levels (f = 4). T1 used multi-modal materials such as images and videos, while T2 grouped students by activity levels for classroom management. T3's instructional module exemplifies this approach, employing mind-mapping to simplify conceptual structures and integrating drawing-based vocabulary tasks to make the language less intimidating.

Let's Write

1. Guru menjelaskan bahwa saat ini peserta didik akan diajak untuk melanjutkan menulis cerita berdasarkan gambar.

Contoh kalimat guru:

Ok class, open your book page sixty four, today we are going to make a story through the picture. There are some sentences and complete the story.

Now, look at the picture and the sentences!

2. Peserta didik diminta untuk mengamati gambar dan tulisan di halaman 64.

-
3. Guru menjelaskan kalimat dengan menunjuk benda-benda serta suasana yang ada di gambar.

4. Pada pertemuan sebelumnya, peserta didik diberi tugas menggambar atau membawa gambar kamar tidurnya di rumah masing masing. Kalimat guru:

'Ok students, can you draw your own room at home? And then you can write about your lovely room'

Figure. 5 Adaptive Instructional Scaffolding through Drawing-Integrated Vocabulary Tasks in T3's Module

F. ASESMEN / PENILAIAN

1. Asesmen Diagnostik (Sebelum Pembelajaran)

Untuk mengetahui kesiapan siswa dalam memasuki pembelajaran, dengan pertanyaan:

No	Pertanyaan	Jawaban	
		Ya	Tidak
1	Apakah siap untuk belajar?		
2	Apakah siap mengenal <u>kosakata</u> baru dalam bahasa <u>inggris</u> ?		
3	Apakah kalian sudah siap melaksanakan pembelajaran dengan berkelompok?		

2. Asesmen Formatif (Selama Proses Pembelajaran)

Asesmen formatif dilakukan oleh guru selama proses pembelajaran berlangsung, khususnya saat siswa melakukan kegiatan diskusi, presentasi dan refleksi tertulis.

- 1) Teknik Asesmen : Observasi, Unjuk Kerja
- 2) Bentuk Instrumen : Pedoman/lembar observasi

3. Asesmen Sumatif

a. Asesmen Pengetahuan

Teknik Asesmen:

- Tes : Tertulis
- Non Tes : Observasi

Bentuk Instrumen:

- Asesmen tidak tertulis : Daftar pertanyaan
- Asesmen tertulis : Jawaban singkat

b. Asesmen Keterampilan

- Teknik Asesmen : Kinerja
- Bentuk Instrumen : Lembar Kinerja

Asesmen formatif dilakukan oleh guru selama proses pembelajaran berlangsung, khususnya saat siswa melakukan kegiatan diskusi, presentasi dan refleksi tertulis.

Figure. 6 Systematic Needs Analysis via Pre-Instructional Diagnostic Assessment Used by T4

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the diverse adaptive strategies employed by teachers, ranging from creative scaffolding to systematic needs analysis. T3's Grade 4 module utilizes drawing-integrated vocabulary tasks, such as the *My Bedroom* worksheet, to guide students in expressing ideas visually before producing English descriptions, effectively reducing anxiety while building vocabulary lexis. Meanwhile, T4 in Lampung implements a systematic pre-instructional diagnostic assessment to identify foundational gaps and psychological readiness, allowing for the alignment of lessons with actual student competence rather than the rigid prescribed curriculum. These adaptive behaviors exemplify professional resilience as theorized by (Masten, 2001) and observed in recent scholarship (Harmilawati et al., 2024; Herdiyanti et al., 2025; Yusrina et al., 2025),

highlighting how non-specialist educators utilize creative adaptation to compensate for limited formal language proficiency.

Sustaining motivation remained a persistent challenge. Teachers frequently employed interactive media, songs, and games ($f = 2$), aligning with (Herdiyanti et al., 2025). T2 explained, *“I usually transform the learning material into activities such as watching English educational films, singing English songs, and playing games using the IFP, with the aim of re-energizing students’ enthusiasm for learning.”* T3’s instructional module similarly employed ‘Snowball Throwing’, digital games (Worldwall, Educaplay), and card-based activities. T1 shifted to animated media when students showed disinterest, while other strategies included T2’s peer tutoring ($f = 1$) and T4’s routine vocabulary drills. Together, these strategies illustrate how teachers navigate a demanding policy mandate with minimal resources.

Table. 3 Frequency of Themes: Teachers’ Coping Strategies

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency
Digital tools	Google Translate for pronunciation guidance	4
Self-directed learning	YouTube and Online Resources	2
	GTK platform (modules and videos)	1
Differentiated instruction	Adapting methods to learner characteristics	4
	Varying methods across sessions	3
	Grouping students by learning needs	2
Classroom strategies	Peer tutoring	1
	IFP interactive games	2
	Video and Animated Media	2
Peer collaboration	Informal within-school discussions	3
	Cross-school KKG participation	1

School Support and Institutional Response

All four teachers ($f = 4$) relied on informal peer collaboration through spontaneous, necessity-driven discussions to navigate English instruction. T3 explained, *“Because the teachers here who teach English do not have a background in English education, we often exchange thoughts on teaching methods and materials”*. This aligns with (Herdiyanti et al., 2025), who note that rural EFL teachers in Indonesia depend on spontaneous peer support due to the lack of structured professional development programs. Though most exchanges remained within individual schools ($f = 3$), T4 extended collaboration through cross-school Teacher Working Group (KKG), noting, *“My experience in following KKG certainly adds to my knowledge about teaching strategies and provides an opportunity to exchange instructional modules with other teachers”*. This grassroots exchange aligns with (Vygotsky's, 1978) Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes learning through collaborative social interaction.

Principals ($f = 2$) created a monitoring framework despite lacking specialist teachers. P1 explained, *“The indicators we use to assess teacher readiness are the instructional module created, the learning steps, and the content of the material”*. T3’s instructional module exemplifies this, showing structured sequences including ‘Look and Say’ Figure 1, ‘Snowball Throwing’ Figure 2, and digital tools (Wordwall, Educaplay), demonstrating thoughtful activity design. P2 in Lampung maintained direct oversight through weekly briefings and evaluation meetings, stating, *“Every Monday morning, we usually give a briefing to teachers to foster enthusiasm... additionally, at the end of the week, we hold evaluation*

meetings with teachers to review the learning achievements”.

Despite these efforts, both leaders acknowledged that English-specific KKG programs for primary level have not yet materialized, highlighting an urgent need for specialist intervention. P2 stated, *“Our expectation of the government under this new policy is to deploy specialist English teachers who truly hold an English language educational qualification to teach at the primary school level, so that English can be instilled from an early age.”*

Table. 4 Frequency of Themes: School Support and Principal Perspectives

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency
Peer collaboration (teachers)	Informal within-school discussions	4
	Unscheduled / within-school only	3
	Cross-school KKG participation	1
Formal collaboration (principals)	Cluster-level KKG available	2
	No English-specific KKG yet established	2
Instructional monitoring	Summative & formative assessment (P1)	1
	Daily briefing and weekly evaluation (P2)	1
	GTK platform directed to teachers	1
External support	Coordination with Regional Education Office	1
	No external collaboration yet (P1)	1
	Collaboration with non-PBI university (P2)	1
	Deployment of specialist English teachers	2
Policy expectations	Provision of adequate facilities & materials	1

DISCUSSION

The professional readiness observed among the four teachers seems less a matter of formal qualification than something assembled through repeated, improvised exposure to an urgent classroom demand, consistent with Masten's (2001) resilience framework for coping with adversity absent external support. Their independent module preparation and use of card-based games, mind-mapping, and drawing tasks reflect Shulman's (1987) Pedagogical Content Knowledge reconstructed informally rather than taught. Yet this readiness was uneven: teachers were most confident in Instructional planning, weakest in pronunciation, suggesting resilience helped them cope with the gap rather than close it. Their preference for informal peer discussion over formal GTK or KKG channels also supports Vygotsky's (1978) view that professional competence in under-resourced settings is built socially, not delivered top-down.

These results largely confirm, and slightly extend, earlier research. The reliance on independent preparation mirrors findings among non-specialist teachers elsewhere (Aminah et al., 2023; Anandari et al., 2025; Noviani & Kuswandono, 2022; Yusrina et al., 2025), who caution that self-directed learning rarely reaches real phonological depth, confirmed here by errors such as the near-identical *they* and *day* or Javanese-influenced *noodle* being passed directly to students (Pastika et al., 2023; Wardani & Suwartono, 2019). The study also responds to (Purwanti & Prasanti, 2025), whose protocol was adapted here

and who flagged rural readiness as understudied ahead of the 2027/2028 mandate, extending that work by showing readiness as actively performed rather than simply present or absent. The most within-school peer collaboration found here matches (Herdiyanti et al., 2025), while the infrastructure constraints noted, such as shared IFP units, insufficient textbooks, aligning with resource gaps described by (Candrawati & Purbani, 2025; Fadilah et al., 2023), intersecting directly with the approaching policy deadline.

Practically, training for non-English background primary teachers should precede, not follow, full implementation, with specialist placement in rural schools treated as an urgent staffing priority rather than long-term goal. The informal peer exchange teachers already rely on could be formalized into KKG-level professional learning communities at low cost, given the collaborative habits already evident. Theoretically, resilience theory and sociocultural theory appear to operate together here rather than separately, since individual coping was almost always mediated through peer interaction.

These conclusions should nonetheless be treated with caution. With only four teachers and two principals from two regions, the findings cannot be assumed to represent rural Indonesia more broadly. The regional distribution of participants was also uneven, with three teachers recruited from Purworejo, where each homeroom teacher is individually responsible for English in their own class, compared to only one teacher from Lampung, where a single local-content (*mulok*) teacher covers English instruction across all grade levels. This asymmetry reflects a genuine structural difference between the two school systems rather than a flaw in sampling, though it still means the Lampung context is represented by a single perspective, which limits how far conclusions from that site can be generalized. Interview and document data, though triangulated, reflect what teachers reported rather than direct observation, and were collected before the mandate's full implementation, an anticipatory picture rather than an account of how these strategies hold up once fully enforced. In addition, because interviews were conducted and transcribed in Bahasa Indonesia and subsequently translated into English for reporting, some nuance in participants' original expressions may not be fully captured. The study is also confined to teacher and principal perspective. Student experiences of these coping strategies were not directly examined.

CONCLUSION

This study found that, among the four teachers observed in Purworejo and Lampung, readiness for Indonesia's compulsory English mandate was real but incomplete. All four planned lessons independently, adapted instructional materials, and drew on their PGSD pedagogical background despite having no formal English qualification, yet none had closed the gap in their own linguistic competence, particularly pronunciation shaped by L1 Javanese interference. To manage this gap, they relied on a small set of consistent strategies, most notably Google Translate, informal peer discussion within their own schools, and differentiated instruction, strategies that kept classrooms functioning but were reactive rather than the product of structured training, and both principals confirmed that no English-specific support programmed yet exists at the school or cluster level.

These findings describe how this particular group of teachers is currently coping ahead of the 2027/2028 mandate, given the small sample and the concentration of

participants in only two regions, they should not be read as representative of rural Indonesian schools more broadly. What they do show, within that limited scope, is that individual resilience is currently substituting for structural support that has not yet arrived, and that gap is unlikely to close on its own once the mandate takes full effect.

Taken together, these findings carry two clear implications. For policy and practice, they underscore the urgency of front-loading structured English training and specialist teacher deployment to rural schools before, rather than after, the 2027/2028 mandate takes effect, and of formally recognizing and supporting the peer-learning networks teachers already rely on. For theory, they suggest that resilience and sociocultural learning operate jointly rather than separately in under-resourced settings, offering a basis for future studies to examine how individual coping and social support interact as compulsory English instructional is rolled out more broadly.

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