



Baseline English and TEYL Competencies of Non-English-Major Elementary Teachers in Riau Islands: A Preliminary Study

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Abstract

Starting in the 2026/2027 academic year, the Indonesian Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has made English a compulsory subject in all elementary schools and requires each school to have at least one qualified English teacher. This policy highlights the urgent challenge of projected national shortage of around 90,000 English teachers. In response, the Ministry introduced competency development program for non-English major teachers. This preliminary study assesses the baseline competencies of 140 elementary teachers in the Riau Islands Province without formal English education backgrounds. Using qualitative descriptive approach, documentary analysis of pretest data from the Ministry's Learning Management System was used to categorize competency levels. The findings show that teachers' English proficiency was comparatively stronger than their pedagogical knowledge and Teaching English to Young Learners in Deep Learning (TEYL-DL) skills, with large proportion still at Low to Very Low levels. These results point to a readiness gap that could undermine equitable policy implementation. The study emphasizes the need for targeted, scalable professional development that uses blended and technology-mediated approaches, offers contextual support for rural schools, and involves all stakeholders to ensure sustainable upskilling of non-graduate English teachers.

Keywords: Competencies; English teachers; English for young learners; Sustainable development

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INTRODUCTION

The imperative to strengthen English proficiency at the elementary level is grounded in developmental and sociotechnical considerations. Children aged 6-12 occupy a critical period for language acquisition during which neural plasticity facilitates rapid learning of phonology, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Early, positive exposure to English reduces later affective barriers such as anxiety and avoidance that commonly emerge in secondary schooling and impede continued language development. In the current digital and artificial intelligence mediated information environment, English functions as a dominant medium for educational content, interactive learning applications, tutorials,

and command-based interfaces, early familiarity with the language therefore enhances learners' capacity for autonomous study and effective engagement with global knowledge resources.

Improving teacher competencies is central to realizing the pedagogical benefits of early English instruction. Because the 6-12 age range is especially sensitive to input quality, the linguistic and pedagogical skills of elementary teachers directly shape learners' phonological accuracy, lexical growth, and attitudes toward English. In Indonesia, many elementary teachers particularly in hinterland areas settings are assigned to teach English despite lacking specialization in English education. This mismatch frequently results in limited language proficiency and insufficient pedagogical content knowledge for Teaching English to Young Learners, with classroom practice often remaining teacher-centered and reliant on grammar-translation approaches rather than communicative, developmentally appropriate methods.

Hinterland areas schools face compounded structural constraints that undermine instructional quality. Common barriers include limited infrastructure, inadequate learning materials, scarce access to professional development, and heavy multi-subject teaching loads for homeroom teachers. These conditions restrict opportunities for teachers to develop communicative teaching strategies and to integrate digital resources that could otherwise compensate for resource shortfalls. Empirical reports from multiple Indonesian provinces document that, prior to targeted interventions, many hinterland areas teachers in Indonesia, especially in Riau Kepulauan Province relied predominantly on lecture-based methods and had minimal ability to use English as the medium of instruction.

The national context amplifies the urgency of targeted teacher development. Indonesia's documented proficiency indicators place the country in the lower tiers of international comparisons, and teacher-level assessments reveal that a substantial proportion of primary teachers perform below the B1 threshold. Concurrently, the country faces a pronounced shortage of qualified elementary English teachers' national estimates indicate a deficit of 90.447 teachers, with the Riau Islands Province alone lacking 995 teachers. In response, the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education have mandated English as a compulsory subject in all elementary schools beginning in the 2026-2027 academic year and requires that each school have at least one teacher formally qualified to teach English. This policy elevates the sustainable development of teacher competencies from a desirable objective to an essential condition for equitable, future-oriented education.

In response to Indonesia's low international proficiency indicators and the digital-AI mediated information environment, the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education has mandated English as a compulsory subject in all elementary schools beginning in the 2026/2027 academic year. The policy also requires that each school have at least one teacher formally qualified to teach English. This regulation elevates the development of teacher competencies from a desirable objective to an essential condition for equitable, future-oriented education. English now functions as a dominant medium for educational content, interactive learning applications, tutorials, and command-based interfaces, making early familiarity critical for autonomous learning and access to global knowledge resources.

Addressing these challenges requires sustained, contextually grounded professional development that integrates linguistic training, age-appropriate pedagogy, and digital literacy. Scalable models should prioritize blended delivery, leverage technology to reach hinterland areas teachers, and align training with the realities of multi-grade and resource-constrained classrooms. Research that evaluates the effectiveness of such interventions particularly in hinterland areas settings will be critical to informing policy

implementation and narrowing hinterland areas disparities in English education. English instruction for young learners in Indonesia remains structurally constrained, as evidenced by studies conducted between 2023 and 2025. The central challenge lies in teacher subject mismatch and inadequate preparation in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). Pebriantini et al. (2024) reported that hinterland areas elementary schools face limited resources and insufficient specialized TEYL training. Similarly, Puspitasari et al. (2023) found that only 14% of English for Young Learners (EYL) teachers in Salatiga held degrees in English, with the majority being generalist teachers. The British Council (2025) further observed that, prior to training, teachers in Batangtoru demonstrated minimal communicative competence and relied predominantly on lecture-based methods.

The implementation of the National Curriculum has intensified these demands by requiring differentiated, learner-centered, and technology-integrated pedagogy. However, Awaliyah (2023) and Nasution and Safithri Armin (2025) noted uneven teacher readiness in interpreting CP, TP, and ATP, as well as in designing authentic assessments challenges exacerbated by poor internet access to the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform. Hinterland areas face compounded barriers. Patanduk et al. (2023) documented severe infrastructure deficits and limited internet connectivity, while Pebriantini et al. (2024) and Fatimah and Jamilah (2024) highlighted critically low student proficiency and persistent difficulties in teaching listening and speaking skills. Collectively, this body of literature reveals a widening hinterland gap, rendering Merdeka Curriculum implementation in rural contexts suboptimal and heavily dependent on teachers' self-directed efforts (Nasution & Safithri Armin, 2025).

The issue of non-specialist teacher competence becomes even more critical under the Merdeka Curriculum, which mandates a more flexible, communicative, and technology-integrated instructional approach. Yet rural teachers remain constrained by limited access to formal training and consequently rely heavily on self-directed learning and open online resources. This reliance is problematic because the competencies demanded today extend beyond mere linguistic mastery. Effective English instruction now requires strong pedagogical content knowledge, digital literacy, and the ability to use AI-based tools through proficient prompting, thereby transforming technology into a pedagogical scaffold rather than a peripheral aid. The urgency of this competence gap is magnified at the elementary school level. The 6-12 age range constitutes the critical period for language acquisition, during which learners demonstrate native-like potential for grammar and phonology that declines sharply after puberty. Consequently, the quality of instruction delivered by elementary school teachers is determinative in establishing the long-term linguistic foundation, communicative confidence, and learning dispositions of students. In this context, the current mismatch between curriculum demands and hinterland areas teacher capacity poses a significant threat to equitable language education outcomes.

The problem of teacher-subject mismatch is not novel in Indonesia, especially in hinterland areas. Fauziyah & Uchtiawati (2017) assert that a substantial number of teachers continue to teach subjects outside their disciplinary expertise, a condition that impedes the effective implementation of government programs and compromises graduate quality. At the junior and senior secondary levels, Wahyuningsih et al. (2023) identify additional barriers faced by non-native English teachers insufficient professional training, low academic literacy, inadequate school facilities, irrelevant instructional materials, low student motivation, and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom. Given this cumulative evidence, professional development for non-specialist English teachers in hinterland areas cannot be limited to one-off training events, it must be sustained, contextualized, and embedded within local realities. The British Council

reports that communicative methodology training in Batangtoru successfully increased teachers' fluency and active use of English in the classroom, demonstrating the impact of targeted pedagogical intervention. Munawarah (2021) further emphasizes that programs such as SM-3T must be aligned with teachers' perceptions and practical classroom experiences to generate lasting impact in remote regions. Complementing this, Khotimah et al. (2024) identify four critical elements for sustainability in hinterland areas consist of teacher motivation, continuous professional development, adaptive retention strategies, and alignment with local cultural contexts. Collectively, these findings underscore that effective competence development for rural English teachers requires systemic, long-term, and culturally responsive approaches rather than episodic capacity-building initiatives.

Existing literature documents the competence problem and barriers in hinterland areas, but few studies evaluate the effectiveness of sustained, contextually grounded professional development that integrates linguistic training, age-appropriate pedagogy, digital literacy, and AI-tool use through proficient prompting in hinterland settings. Most prior interventions are described as one-off training or report general challenges without testing scalable, blended models designed for multi-grade and resource-constrained classrooms. The specific impact of such models on teacher capacity and on narrowing disparities in English education in Riau Islands hinterland contexts remains underexamined.

Based on the preceding discussion, the development of competencies among elementary school English teachers who are not graduates of English departments must be pursued in a sustained, systematic, and contextually responsive manner to address the structural challenges outlined above. This study represents a preliminary investigation that employs documentary analysis to evaluate the competence levels of elementary school English teachers selected by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to participate in targeted training programs. The findings are intended to provide empirical justification and baseline evidence for subsequent research and development initiatives aimed at strengthening teacher preparation and professional growth. Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research question: To what extent do non-English-major elementary school teachers, selected by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education for training, demonstrate competence in English language teaching?

METHOD

Types, Location, and Research Subjects

This study employed a qualitative approach utilizing a documentation study design. A documentation study is a qualitative data collection technique that involves examining documents, records, archives, and other available sources to obtain information relevant to the research problem (Sugiyono, 2025). This design was selected because the study constitutes a preliminary investigation aimed at describing the initial competency levels of elementary school English teachers with non-English educational backgrounds in the hinterland areas of Riau Islands Province, Indonesia based on secondary data stored within the Ministry's system.

The research was conducted with official authorization from the Head of the Teacher and Education Personnel Office of Riau Islands Province. The researcher served as a facilitator for the competency enhancement program for elementary school English teachers from non-English major, as stipulated in Assignment Letter Code 0275/B7.28/GT.00.02/2026. Data were not collected through direct observation or interviews rather, they were derived from the analysis of pretest documents compiled by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education through its Learning Management

System. The study was carried out in three locations within the Riau Islands Province, Batam City, Tanjung Pinang City, and Bintan Regency.

Sampling Technique

This study employed a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which subjects are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2025). The criteria established for subject selection were: 1) elementary school teachers assigned to teach English, 2) teachers with non-English educational backgrounds, and 3) teachers registered as participants in the competency enhancement program facilitated by the Teacher and Education Personnel Office of Riau Islands Province. A total of 140 teachers meeting these criteria were selected as subjects. This sampling technique was deemed appropriate for a documentation study as it ensures that the data obtained are directly relevant to the phenomenon under investigation, namely the initial competency levels of non-English background teachers prior to intervention. The research subjects consisted of 140 elementary school teachers from the aforementioned cities and regency. The distribution of subjects is detailed as follows: 70 teachers from Batam City, 35 teachers from Tanjung Pinang City, and 35 teachers from Bintan Regency. The classification of research subjects is presented below.

Table 1. Distribution of Research Subjects

Co de	City/District Name	Class Code	Gender		Academic Background			Total
			Male	Female	Master	Bachelor	Diploma	
1	Batam City	A1	9	26	2	33	0	35
2	Batam City	A2	14	21	6	29	0	35
3	Tanjung Pinang City	A1	12	23	1	32	2	35
4	Bintan Regency	A1	7	28	0	31	4	35
Total		4	42	78	9	125	6	140

The distribution of research subjects indicates that the majority of participants, 46.7%, were from Batam City. Tanjung Pinang City and Bintan Regency each contributed 23.3% of the total subjects. This distribution reflects the concentration of elementary school English teachers with non-English backgrounds in urban areas, particularly Batam City, compared to other regions in Riau Islands Province.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument in this documentation study was the pretest administered through the Learning Management System of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The pretest was designed to assess two major dimensions of teacher competency: (a) English language proficiency, encompassing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, and (b) pedagogical content knowledge in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), including lesson planning, differentiated instruction, and authentic assessment practices.

The instrument comprised both multiple-choice and constructed-response items, aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and TEYL pedagogical standards established by the British Council (2025). The validity and reliability of the pretest had been previously established by the Ministry; therefore, no additional pilot testing was conducted by the researcher. Pretest scores served as documentary evidence to describe the baseline competency profiles of the research subjects prior to participation in the training program.

Research Data Source

The data source in this study consisted of secondary data derived from the pretest results assessing the competency of elementary school English teachers. These data were systematically extracted from the official Learning Management System of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The dataset was purposively focused on training participants appointed by the Head of the Teacher and Education Personnel Office of Riau Islands Province, specifically teachers with non-English educational backgrounds who were currently assigned to teach English at the elementary school level. The data indicators encompassed three main components: 1) pretest scores as the quantitative baseline, 2) language proficiency aspects covering receptive and productive skills, and 3) pedagogical aspects of Teaching English to Young Learners aligned with the Deep Learning approach. These indicators functioned as the initial baseline parameters prior to the implementation of the six-month competency development program, thereby enabling a preliminary mapping of teachers' existing strengths and areas requiring intervention.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis employed qualitative content analysis following the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which comprises three concurrent stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Sugiyono, 2025). In the data reduction stage, raw pretest data extracted from the Learning Management System were processed by classifying teachers' scores into predefined competency categories. This classification facilitated the identification of baseline patterns in both English language proficiency and pedagogical knowledge related to Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL).

In the data display stage, the reduced data were systematically organized and presented through descriptive tables and narrative explanations. These displays mapped the initial competency profiles of elementary school English teachers with non-English educational backgrounds. Visual representations enabled the researcher to discern regional disparities and competency trends across specific indicators. The conclusion drawing and verification stage involved interpreting the displayed data to determine the extent of teachers' initial competency levels. Verification was achieved through iterative reflection on the consistency of findings with the research objectives. The conclusions derived from this preliminary analysis provided empirical justification and baseline evidence for the subsequent six-month competency development program. The competency level categories for elementary school English teachers are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Competency Level Categories for Elementary School English Teachers

No	Pretest Score Range	Competency Level	Ability Description
1	86 – 100	Very High	Teachers demonstrate active and communicative English use, and apply TEYL strategies aligned with the characteristics of learners aged 6-12 years with minimal assistance.
2	71 – 85	High	Teachers possess adequate English proficiency and TEYL pedagogy, but require reinforcement in specific areas such as speaking skills or instructional media.
3	56 – 70	Moderate	Teachers have basic understanding of English and TEYL concepts, yet experience difficulties in implementing differentiated instruction, authentic assessment, and technology integration.
4	41 – 55	Low	Teachers exhibit limited English proficiency and understanding of TEYL methods. Instruction remains

			dominated by lecture/translation methods with minimal use of media.
5	0 – 40	Very Low	Teachers demonstrate very limited English proficiency and TEYL pedagogy. Intensive training and sustained mentoring are required.

Source: Adapted from Kemendikdasmen training guidelines and British Council TEYL competency rubric (2025)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were derived from the pretest results of elementary school English teachers with non-English educational backgrounds who participated in the competency enhancement training program. These data were obtained from official documents issued by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and archived within its Learning Management System. The pretest results served as the primary source of evidence for describing the baseline competency profiles of the participating teachers prior to intervention. The pretest results of the training participants are presented below.

Table 3. Training Participant Pretest Results

Code	Participants/Batch/ Code	The Name of City and Regency			
		Batam A-1	Batam A-2	TPI A-1	Bintan A-1
1	Participant.1_001	73.4	53.35	90.05	25
2	Participant.1_002	73.4	76.6	29.7	82.5
3	Participant.1_003	67.5	0	73.35	67.5
4	Participant.1_004	65	69.95	73.35	73.35
5	Participant.1_005	30	73.35	0	70
6	Participant.1_006	50	73.35	73.35	82.5
7	Participant.1_007	70	73.4	52.5	62.5
8	Participant.1_008	73.4	73.4	52.5	60
9	Participant.1_009	73.4	76.7	60	77.5
10	Participant.1_010	77.5	73.35	73.35	0
11	Participant.1_011	72.5	93.3	0	0
12	Participant.1_012	65	73.4	0	73.35
13	Participant.1_013	90	73.4	76.75	77.5
14	Participant.1_014	47.5	49.85	73.35	70
15	Participant.1_015	90	6.6	73.35	73.35
16	Participant.1_016	73.4	53.25	52.5	75
17	Participant.1_017	73.4	76.55	52.5	73.35
18	Participant.1_018	72.5	86.65	73.4	52.5
19	Participant.1_019	73.4	80	83.4	77.5
20	Participant.1_020	72.5	73.4	76.7	97.5
21	Participant.1_021	65	73.4	80.05	0
22	Participant.1_022	87.5	79.95	69.9	0
23	Participant.1_023	75	70.05	73.35	57.5
24	Participant.1_024	73.4	83.3	59.85	35
25	Participant.1_025	0	70.1	50.05	80
26	Participant.1_026	87.5	56.55	86.65	73.35
27	Participant.1_027	80	63.25	79.95	52.5
28	Participant.1_028	55	69.95	0	52.5
29	Participant.1_029	72.5	86.75	76.7	73.35
30	Participant.1_030	87.5	73.4	90.05	72.5
31	Participant.1_031	30	73.4	73.35	52.5
32	Participant.1_032	73.4	73.4	52.5	52.5
33	Participant.1_033	73.4	59.85	52.5	52.5

34	Participant.1_034	67.5	59.85	0	0
35	Participant.1_035	65	73.35	73.35	80
Total Score		2376.5	2376.4	2058.35	2005.1
Average		67.9	67.89	58.81	57.28
Highest Score		90	93.2	90.05	97.5
Lowest Score		0	0	0	0
Median		72.5	73.4	73.35	67.5

The data presented above represent the pretest results of elementary school English teachers with non-English educational backgrounds who participated in the competency enhancement training program in Riau Islands Province. For a more detailed description, Table 4.3 presents the total scores obtained by the participants, the mean scores, highest scores, lowest scores, and medians for each district/city. Thus, the information displayed in this table provides a clearer illustration of the teachers' competency levels in terms of a) language proficiency aspects covering both receptive and productive skills, and b) pedagogical aspects of Teaching English to Young Learners aligned with the Deep Learning approach. Some participants received a score of 0 because they did not attend the initial test scheduled by the government. As a result, these zero scores also appear in the government's LMS database.

Table 4. The Criteria of Training Participant Pretest Results

No	Criteria	The Name of City / Regency			
		Batam A-1	Batam A-2	TPI A-1	Bintan A-1
1	Total Score	2376.5	2376.4	2058.35	2005.1
2	Average	67.9	67.89	58.81	57.28
3	Highest Score	90	93.2	90.05	97.5
4	Lowest Score	0	0	0	0
5	Median	72.5	73.4	73.35	67.5

The research data were subsequently converted into interval categories to classify the competency levels of elementary school English teachers with non-English academic backgrounds across districts and cities in Riau Islands Province. Teachers' scores were classified into five competency intervals consist of 86-100 categorized as Very High, 71-85 as High, 56-70 as Moderate, 41-55 as Low, and 0-40 as Very Low. The distribution of teachers according to these competency intervals for each district and city in Riau Islands Province is presented below.

Table 5. The Distribution of Teachers Competency Intervals

No	Competency Level	Intervals	Percentage of Teachers Competency Intervals			
			Batam A-1	Batam A-2	TPI A-1	Bintan A-1
1	Very High	86 – 100	12.5%	8.6%	8.6%	8.6%
2	High	71 – 85	46.9%	48.6%	45.7%	40%
3	Moderate	56 – 70	25%	22.9%	14.3%	20%
4	Low	41 – 55	6.3%	8.6%	17.1%	20%
5	Very Low	0 – 40	9.4%	11.4%	14.3%	11.4%

Table 5 presents the distribution of teachers' competency levels across four aspects Language Proficiency, Pedagogical Knowledge, TEYL-DL, and Total Score. The data show that the High level was the dominant category in all aspects, ranging from 40% to 48.6%. Language Proficiency had the highest proportion of teachers at High to Very

High levels, while TEYL-DL and Total Score showed a greater concentration of teachers at Low to Very Low levels. This indicates variation in baseline competence, with stronger linguistic skills but weaker pedagogical and TEYL-DL understanding among participants. For clearer visualization, the data in this table will be presented in the form of a bar diagram in the following section. The diagram illustrates the percentage distribution of each competency level across the four aspects to facilitate comparative analysis of teachers' initial competence.

Discussion

The baseline data indicate that non-English-major elementary teachers in the Riau Islands entered the competency-enhancement programme with heterogeneous readiness. Mean pretest scores were 67.90 for Batam A-1, 67.89 for Batam A-2, 58.81 for Tanjung Pinang A-1, and 57.28 for Bintan A-1. On the study's classification scheme, these means fall within the Moderate range, although the medians for Batam A-1, Batam A-2, and Tanjung Pinang A-1 were already within the High category. The manuscript also reports that the High category was most common and that language proficiency tended to be stronger than pedagogical knowledge and Teaching English to Young Learners–Deep Learning (TEYL-DL) competence. These results suggest that the main problem is not simply an absence of English knowledge, but an uneven ability to translate linguistic resources into developmentally appropriate classroom practice.

This pattern confirms earlier Indonesian research on primary English teacher preparation. Zein (2015) found that pre-service systems had not adequately prepared elementary English teachers with the knowledge and skills required for their occupational context, while Zein (2016) showed that weaknesses in in-service professional development could also contribute to poor classroom practice. The present findings extend this literature because the participants were generalist elementary teachers assigned to teach English and selected for a government competency-development programme. Their performance therefore offers a policy-relevant picture of the competence gap that can emerge when demand for elementary English instruction expands faster than the supply of specialized teachers.

The reported difference between relatively stronger language proficiency and weaker pedagogy or TEYL-DL competence is particularly important. Language proficiency is necessary, but it is not sufficient for teaching children. Zein (2017a) argues that effective English for Young Learners pedagogy must place the learner, rather than only the language, at the center and requires knowledge of children's developmental characteristics, individual differences, motivation, and age-appropriate learning processes. Pinter (2017) similarly connects successful young-learner instruction with understanding child development, language-learning processes, materials, planning, and assessment. The present results therefore confirm a recurring conclusion in TEYL scholarship: teachers may possess usable English while still needing specialized pedagogical content knowledge. Training should consequently address lesson design, classroom language, differentiation, authentic assessment, task design, and child-centered interaction rather than concentrating primarily on general English upgrading.

The findings partly contrast with Mutiah et al. (2020), who reported generally high teacher readiness for English programmes for young learners, although their participants also described limited confidence in using English and insufficient professional training. The apparent difference may reflect measurement: perceived readiness does not necessarily correspond to performance on a formal competency pretest. At the same time, the present results align with Pertiwi et al. (2022), who identified difficulties involving

learner motivation, limited instructional time, inadequate teaching resources, and speaking anxiety in an Indonesian young-learner setting. The current study adds a diagnostic dimension to these perception-based findings because the pretest records show measurable variation among teachers already expected to deliver elementary English. This strengthens the case for differentiated professional development based on demonstrated need rather than a uniform training package.

Regional variation is also notable. Batam's two groups recorded higher mean scores than Tanjung Pinang and Bintan, although the descriptive design does not establish why. A major review of English education research in Indonesia shows that policy, teacher preparation, sociocultural context, and local conditions interact in shaping English teaching across the country (Zein et al., 2020). The 2024 British Council landscape report likewise highlights differences in English teaching and professional-development opportunities across Indonesian contexts and documents the continuing roles of face-to-face and online professional learning (Isharyanti et al., 2024). The Riau Islands results are compatible with this literature, but they caution against a simple urban-rural explanation because Tanjung Pinang is an urban center yet its mean remained below those of the Batam groups. Future studies should therefore examine prior English exposure, teaching load, school leadership, institutional support, digital access, and participation in professional learning as possible explanatory variables.

The findings have direct implications for the six-month competency-enhancement programme. Sustained development is preferable to isolated workshops because effective professional development is typically content-focused, active, collaborative, supported by modeling or coaching, reflective, and extended over time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Indonesian research similarly favors needs-sensitive professional development that reflects teachers' profiles and particular work contexts (Zein, 2017b), while the British Council review emphasizes continuing professional development through varied delivery modes (Isharyanti et al., 2024). For the present participants, this implies tiered learning pathways. Teachers with weaker baseline performance may need intensive language scaffolding, classroom-language practice, explicit modeling of TEYL strategies, and sustained mentoring, whereas teachers with stronger baseline competence could undertake advanced lesson design, peer coaching, collaborative classroom inquiry, and technology-supported materials development. Such differentiation would make the programme more responsive to actual needs rather than treating all non-English-major teachers as an academically homogeneous group.

The TEYL-DL component further extends previous research by focusing on teachers' capacity to design deeper and more learner-centered experiences. In the present instrument, pedagogical competence includes lesson planning, differentiated instruction, and authentic assessment, while the dataset also identifies TEYL aligned with the Deep Learning approach as a specific baseline component. Weakness in these areas matters because contemporary teaching requires more than explaining vocabulary and grammatical structures. Teachers must organize meaningful learner participation, adapt instruction to learner differences, assess learning through appropriate evidence, and select resources that support children's developmental characteristics. This interpretation is consistent with broader professional-development research showing that sophisticated learning outcomes require equally sophisticated teacher learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). TEYL-DL can consequently be understood as a bridge between teachers' language knowledge and enacted pedagogy rather than as an additional isolated competency. In this respect, the present study extends previous Indonesian TEYL studies that have more commonly concentrated on language proficiency, teacher beliefs, perceived readiness, or general pedagogical difficulties.

A methodological issue, however, affects the strength of interpretation. The manuscript explicitly states that some participants obtained recorded scores of zero because they did not attend the scheduled government pretest. Consequently, these observations cannot automatically be classified as evidence of very-low competence. Because arithmetic means are sensitive to zero values, the contrast between some relatively low means and substantially higher medians suggests that non-attendance may have depressed group averages. In addition, the narrative immediately following Table 5 describes four competency aspects—Language Proficiency, Pedagogical Knowledge, TEYL-DL, and Total Score—whereas the table itself displays Batam A-1, Batam A-2, TPI A-1, and Bintan A-1 as its four comparison columns. Exact cross-domain percentages should therefore be verified against the original LMS dataset before publication. Treating non-attendance as missing data, reporting valid sample sizes for each domain, and displaying language proficiency, pedagogy, and TEYL-DL scores separately would substantially improve transparency, interpretability, and reproducibility.

The study confirms earlier evidence that Indonesia's elementary English challenge is simultaneously linguistic, pedagogical, and structural, while extending that literature with baseline administrative evidence from 140 non-English-major elementary teachers in the Riau Islands. Importantly, the findings demonstrate heterogeneity rather than a uniformly low level of competence: some teachers show substantial initial readiness, while others require more intensive support. This distinction has important policy implications because a single standardized intervention may be inefficient and potentially inequitable. A differentiated, sustained, blended, and context-responsive professional-development model, followed by post-test assessment, classroom observation, teacher reflection, and longitudinal follow-up, would enable subsequent research to determine not merely whether assessment scores improve but whether improved competence is transferred into classroom practice and maintained over time. Such evidence would move the study from baseline diagnosis toward a stronger evaluation of sustainable teacher competency development.

CONCLUSION

This preliminary study demonstrates that non-English-major elementary teachers in Batam, Tanjung Pinang, and Bintan do not enter English-teaching professional development with a uniform level of readiness. Their pretest performance shows substantial variation, with group means generally located in the Moderate competency range and a considerable proportion of participants classified at higher levels. At the same time, the study indicates that linguistic competence alone does not guarantee readiness to teach English effectively to young learners. The reported pattern of relatively stronger English proficiency alongside weaker pedagogical and TEYL-Deep Learning competence points to a specific professional learning need: teachers must be supported not only to improve their language skills but also to transform those skills into child-centered lesson planning, differentiated instruction, authentic assessment, meaningful classroom interaction, and appropriate use of technology. In this respect, the study provides an important baseline for designing a more differentiated six-month development programme in which training intensity, mentoring, and instructional tasks can be adjusted to teachers' initial competency profiles rather than delivered uniformly.

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted as diagnostic rather than as evidence of programme effectiveness. Some recorded zero scores resulted from non-attendance rather than demonstrated incompetence, and the current presentation does not yet provide fully separated domain-level results for language proficiency, pedagogy, and TEYL-DL. Consequently, the dataset should be cleaned and the descriptive statistics recalculated before final publication, with missing values distinguished from valid low

scores and valid sample sizes reported for each competency domain. Future research should then connect this verified baseline with post-test data, classroom observation, teacher reflection, and follow-up measurement to determine whether professional development produces sustained changes in both knowledge and instructional practice.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on this baseline analysis, several directions for future research are recommended. First, longitudinal studies should examine whether the six-month program produces sustained improvements in TEYL-Deep Learning competencies, particularly among teachers who began at Low to Very Low levels. Tracking post-test and follow-up data will reveal whether initial gains are maintained or diminished over time. Second, future research should investigate the contextual factors contributing to persistent low performance in TEYL-Deep Learning. Qualitative methods such as interviews and classroom observations could uncover barriers including limited access to technology, insufficient mentoring, or inadequate institutional support—that quantitative pretest scores alone cannot explain.

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Declaration of Using AI Tools

During preparation of this manuscript, the authors used OpenAI's ChatGPT as an artificial intelligence writing tool to support drafting, language refinement, organization, and clarity in selected sections. The tool was also used to suggest ways of relating study findings to relevant literature. All AI-assisted output was reviewed, revised, and verified by the authors against the dataset, study documents, and cited sources. The authors retained full responsibility for the research design, data integrity, interpretation, citation accuracy, arguments, and final content. No confidential or personally identifiable participant information was intentionally entered into the AI system.

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