

EXPLORING A NON-SPECIALIST TEACHER'S CONFIDENCE AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES USING *TURTLEDIARY*: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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Abstract: This study explores a non-specialist teacher's perceptions of teaching confidence and instructional practices after integrating the TurtleDiary digital platform into English instruction for young learners. Teacher self-confidence is emphasized due to its critical role in shaping instructional quality in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), particularly when English is taught by teachers without a formal background in the subject. A qualitative case study design was employed, with data collected through a semi-structured interview and supporting teaching documents. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the framework proposed by Terry et al. (2017). The findings indicate that the use of TurtleDiary was perceived to support the teacher's confidence by reducing instructional anxiety and increasing readiness in lesson preparation and classroom implementation. In addition, the platform's features were perceived to shape instructional practices by providing structured activities, interactive games, and visual support suitable for young learners.

Keywords: Digital learning platform, Teacher's confidence, Non-specialist teacher, Teaching English to Young Learners, TurtleDiary

Teacher confidence plays a crucial role in shaping how teachers plan instruction, manage classroom interaction, and make pedagogical decisions, particularly in the context of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). Teachers who feel confident in their instructional abilities are more willing to experiment with teaching strategies, engage learners actively, and respond flexibly to classroom dynamics. In contrast, low teaching confidence is often associated with teaching anxiety, hesitation in trying new approaches, and reliance on limited or repetitive instructional practices, which may reduce the quality of classroom engagement (Prihatin & Ridhani, 2024). Conceptually, teacher confidence is closely related to teachers' beliefs about their capability to plan, organize, and implement instructional tasks effectively, a notion that aligns with the theoretical construct of teacher self-efficacy (Schunk, 2012; Dwiastuti et al., 2024). In TEYL contexts, this confidence is especially important, as teachers are required to continuously design creative and engaging learning experiences for young learners (Rachmajanti et al., 2022).

Low teaching confidence is particularly common among non-specialist teachers in elementary schools who are required to teach English without prior formal training in the subject. These teachers frequently experience uncertainty related to language use, instructional strategies, and classroom management, which can negatively influence their confidence and teaching practices (Lailiyah & Cahyono, 2017; Meng, 2023). Previous research indicates that a lack of confidence may lead teachers to rely heavily on textbooks, minimize communicative activities, or avoid interactive learning practices, especially in the early grades where active engagement is essential (Hasan & Habibie, 2023).

To address the challenges of Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL), previous research has highlighted the use of digital technology and game-based learning as teaching tools. Studies show that digital and game-based learning can support interactive teaching and flexible material adaptation (Nazari et al., 2023; Bibani, 2024). Although most existing research focuses on student motivation and language achievement (Elgamel & Adam, 2023; Mohamed, 2020), emerging evidence suggests that technology integration can also impact teacher confidence in teaching by reducing uncertainty and providing structured pedagogical support (Muslimin & Ivone, 2024).

Despite the growing body of previous research on digital learning media in early childhood English education, the psychological experiences of teachers, especially non-specialist teachers, remain underexplored. Most studies prioritize student learning outcomes, while limited attention has been paid to how digital platforms

support teacher self-efficacy and pedagogical effectiveness in early childhood English education contexts. This represents a significant research gap, as teachers' beliefs about their teaching abilities significantly influence the successful implementation of innovative teaching tools (Meng, 2023).

Based on the development of the concept of teacher confidence in contemporary educational studies, which emphasizes teachers' beliefs in their pedagogical abilities (Zee & Koomen, 2016; Pfitzner-Eden, 2016), this study addresses this gap by exploring a qualitative case study of a non-specialist first-grade teacher's perceptions of confidence after integrating the TurtleDiary (<https://www.turtlediary.com>) digital platform into her English teaching. Rather than examining student learning outcomes, this study focuses on the teacher's reflective experiences and teaching practices. These findings are expected to contribute to teacher-centered research in the context of digital English teaching and provide insights for teacher professional development and education policy.

Considering the issues and goals associated with this research, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does a non-specialist first-grade teacher perceive changes in her teaching confidence after integrating the TurtleDiary digital platform into English instruction?
2. How does the platform support instructional planning and classroom practices in the context of TEYL?

METHOD

A qualitative descriptive case study design was employed in this study to explore a non-specialist teacher's perceived self-confidence and instructional practices in teaching English after the integration of the TurtleDiary digital platform. A case study approach was selected because it allows an in-depth exploration of a single participant's experiences within a real-life instructional context. The case was bounded to one first-grade teacher who was required by school policy to teach English despite having no formal background in English education. This specific context was considered appropriate for examining issues related to teacher self-efficacy and perceived instructional change.

The sole participant was a first-grade teacher, referred to by the pseudonym Mrs. Lia, who had more than five years of teaching experience but no background in English education. Purposive sampling was used based on the following criteria: teaching first-grade learners, teaching English without an English education background, and having used TurtleDiary for English instruction for at least three months.

Data were collected through a single semi-structured interview conducted in Indonesian to ensure clarity and participant comfort. The interview lasted approximately nine minutes and consisted of fourteen open-ended questions adapted from the teacher self-efficacy framework proposed by Örgüt et al. (2024) with modifications made to suit the qualitative and semi-structured nature of the study. The original scale-based items were transformed into open-ended questions to elicit reflective and descriptive responses rather than numerical ratings. The adapted questions focused on perceived confidence, anxiety, instructional planning, strategy use, and perceived ease of teaching activities when using TurtleDiary. The interview was video-recorded with the participant's consent, and teaching modules were used solely to support contextual understanding during data interpretation.

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Terry et al. (2017). The analysis process was conducted through six systematic phases. First, the video-recorded interview was transcribed verbatim, and the transcript was read repeatedly to achieve familiarization with the data. Second, initial codes were generated inductively from meaningful excerpts related to the participant's perceptions of confidence, instructional preparation, emotional responses, and teaching strategies.

A single data excerpt was allowed to be assigned to more than one code when it reflected multiple relevant meanings. Codes were generated based on recurring ideas expressed in the interview rather than being predetermined by theory. Third, the generated codes were examined and grouped into broader themes that represented patterns across the data. Fourth, the themes were reviewed to ensure coherence within themes and distinction between themes. During this stage, some codes were merged or refined to avoid overlap and redundancy.

Fifth, the themes were clearly defined and named to reflect their central meanings. Finally, representative excerpts were selected to illustrate each theme, and these excerpts were chosen because they clearly reflected the participant's perceptions relevant to the research focus. The analysis was conducted by the researcher, and the themes were developed based on alignment with the interview data rather than predetermined theoretical categories.

To enhance the credibility of the study, triangulation was conducted by comparing interview responses with contextual information derived from the participant's teaching materials. Member checking was conducted by sharing a summary of the interpreted findings with the participant to confirm accuracy and alignment with her intended meanings. This process was conducted after the completion of the thematic analysis.

Dependability was ensured through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting coding decisions, theme development, and revisions throughout the analysis process. Peer debriefing was conducted with academic colleagues to review the clarity of codes and themes, and minor refinements were made based on feedback received during this process.

Ethical approval was obtained from the school, informed consent was secured, and all data were anonymized and used solely for academic purposes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This The findings related to Research Question 1 reveal a clear shift in the teacher's perceived teaching confidence following the integration of the TurtleDiary digital platform. Based on the available data, the first research question was answered: a non-specialist first-grade teacher experienced increased confidence in teaching after integrating the TurtleDiary digital platform, as the platform reduced teaching anxiety, increased lesson readiness, and provided structured pedagogical support that helped her feel more capable and secure in teaching English. Thematic analysis of the interview data identified several key themes that emerged related to changes in teacher confidence in teaching after using the TurtleDiary platform. These themes illustrate the transition from low teaching confidence and anxiety to greater readiness, confidence, and self-assurance in teaching English in first-grade elementary schools.

Low Teaching Confidence Before Using TurtleDiary

Before using TurtleDiary, English teaching confidence was reported to be low. This was attributed to limited learning media, monotonous teaching methods, and difficulties in creating engaging learning for early childhood learners. The lack of variety in learning activities led to teachers feeling unable to manage their classes optimally. This is reflected in the following participant statement:

"In my personal experience, before using the TurtleDiary platform, I had a very difficult time creating engaging and interactive learning for my students."

Furthermore, the easily bored and difficult characteristics of first-grade students contributed to a lack of confidence in teaching English. This situation was further exacerbated by the perception that English was a difficult subject for them, leading to concerns about low student engagement during learning. As one participant expressed:

"What made me feel insecure was the limited media and teaching methods I used, as well as... my concern for the students who often felt bored in English lessons."

These findings indicate that before technology integration, teacher confidence was influenced by limited pedagogical resources and uncertainty about how to handle student responses.

Reduced Teaching Anxiety After Using TurtleDiary

After using TurtleDiary, participants clearly reported a decrease in teaching anxiety. The availability of ready-to-use and easily accessible digital learning media provided a sense of security in the teaching process. Teachers no longer felt burdened by having to create materials independently without adequate learning resources. This change was expressed as follows:

"I definitely feel more confident and feel like learning is more lively and enjoyable."

This decrease in anxiety is related to an increased sense of control over learning activities. With the interactive features provided by TurtleDiary, the teaching process felt more structured and predictable, thus reducing tension during classroom learning.

Increased Preparedness and Teaching Readiness

Increased self-confidence was also perceived as resulting from improved teaching readiness. TurtleDiary was seen as a tool that helped teachers prepare lessons more thoroughly, both in terms of materials and classroom activities. The available features allowed teachers to plan lessons according to the needs and characteristics of first-grade students. This was stated by a participant as follows:

"The website itself provides interactive learning media that is easy to access and use, so I am more prepared and confident in using the website during teaching."

This readiness includes the teacher's ability to explain material, manage learning time, and adapt activities to classroom conditions. Thus, self-confidence is not only perceived as a psychological state, but also as a result of better pedagogical preparedness.

Enhanced Perception of Teaching Confidence

Overall, the use of TurtleDiary is perceived to have contributed to increased confidence in teaching English. This confidence is demonstrated through confidence in designing learning activities, the courage to try new strategies, and the perception that learning can be more effective and enjoyable. As expressed by a participant:

"TurtleDiary makes me more creative in designing learning activities that are more interesting and varied, and less monotonous."

These findings indicate that teacher confidence grows along with the increased pedagogical support provided by digital platforms, particularly in the context of teaching English by non-specialist teachers. This has been confirmed by the teaching modules used by Mrs. Lia in teaching English, where it is true that she does not only rely on textbooks, but also uses TurtleDiary as a learning medium in the classroom. (see in Figure 1.)

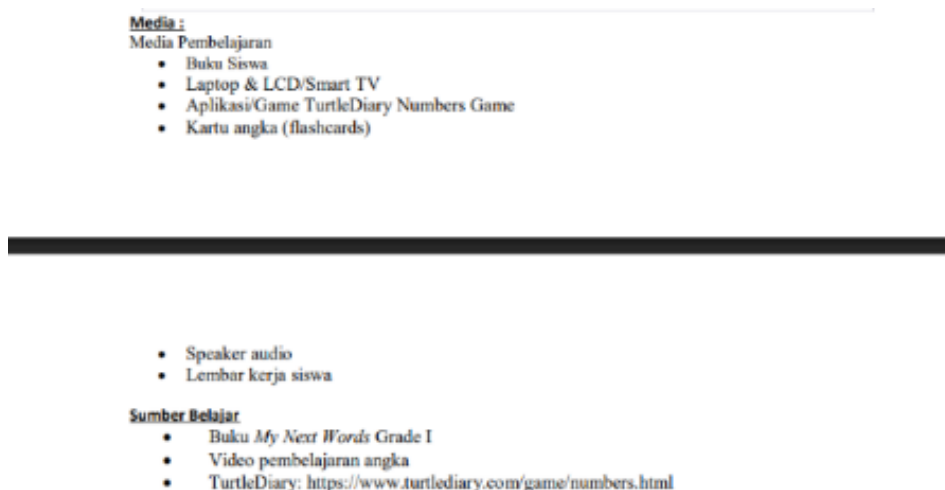


Figure 1. Media and learning resources in Mrs. Lia's English teaching module.

Research findings suggest that the increased teaching confidence perceived after integrating TurtleDiary can be understood through Schunk's (2012) theoretical perspective on self-efficacy, which emphasizes that confidence develops when individuals perceive themselves as capable of planning, organizing, and executing tasks successfully. These findings directly address Research Question 1 by illustrating how a non-specialist first-grade teacher perceives changes in her teaching confidence after integrating the TurtleDiary digital platform into English instruction. This finding aligns with contemporary literature on teacher self-efficacy, which emphasizes that teaching confidence develops when teachers feel capable of managing teaching tasks effectively and consistently (Zee & Koomen, 2016; Pfitzner-Eden, 2016). In this study, the teacher's growing confidence did not emerge instantly, but developed through a gradual process characterized by reduced teaching anxiety, improved lesson preparedness, and access to structured instructional resources. These conditions created repeated experiences of perceived instructional success, which Schunk (2012) identifies as a key source of confidence development.

In the context of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), teaching confidence is particularly critical for non-specialist teachers who lack formal training in English education. The low confidence reported before using TurtleDiary reflects previously identified challenges, including uncertainty in language use, instructional decision-making, and classroom management (Lailiyah & Cahyono, 2017; Meng, 2023). According to Schunk (2012), such uncertainty can undermine confidence by increasing anxiety and limiting teachers' willingness to engage in complex or unfamiliar teaching tasks. As a result, teachers may avoid interactive strategies and rely on safer, more repetitive instructional approaches.

Following the integration of TurtleDiary, the reported decrease in teaching anxiety can be interpreted as a shift in the teacher's perceived control over instructional tasks. Schunk (2012) argues that confidence strengthens when individuals feel able to predict task demands and manage outcomes effectively. In this study, TurtleDiary's ready-to-use activities and clearly structured materials functioned as external instructional support that reduced uncertainty and helped the teacher anticipate lesson flow and student responses. This increased sense of control contributed to a more stable and confident teaching experience.

Moreover, the increased teaching readiness perceived by the participant aligns with Schunk's (2012) assertion that confidence is context-specific and reinforced through successful task completion. The teacher's ability to prepare lessons more systematically and implement classroom activities with greater consistency fostered the perception that English instruction could be managed effectively, despite the absence of a

specialized academic background. These perceived successes, although subjective, served as positive feedback that strengthened teaching confidence over time.

These findings also extend Schunk's theoretical framework by illustrating how external pedagogical tools can facilitate confidence development. While self-efficacy is often discussed as an internal belief system, this study demonstrates that confidence is shaped through interaction with supportive instructional environments. In line with Muslimin and Ivone (2024), digital platforms such as TurtleDiary can provide structure, clarity, and psychological security, enabling teachers to feel more competent in carrying out their pedagogical roles.

Overall, this discussion confirms that the increased teaching confidence experienced in this study results from the interaction between structured digital support and the teacher's reflective teaching experiences, as conceptualized within Schunk's (2012) theory of self-efficacy. By foregrounding teacher perceptions, this study contributes to TEYL research by demonstrating how digital platforms may support the confidence of non-specialist teachers in primary education contexts, not by replacing pedagogical expertise, but by facilitating manageable and successful teaching experiences.

Then, to answer research question number 2, a thematic analysis of the interview data showed that the instructional features available on the TurtleDiary platform shaped changes in the teaching strategies used by teachers. These changes were particularly evident in how teachers designed learning activities, managed student engagement, and adapted teaching strategies to the characteristics of first-grade students. The emerging themes illustrated the causal relationship between digital platform features and teachers' adaptations of teaching strategies.

Availability of Ready-Made Activities Shaping Lesson Planning

One key finding indicates that the availability of ready-made activities on TurtleDiary shapes the way teachers plan lessons. The materials, which are organized by grade level, allow teachers to select activities without having to design the entire material from scratch. This impacts teaching strategies by making lesson planning more focused and structured. A participant expressed this as follows:

"TurtleDiary makes it easier for me to prepare materials because they are already available according to the grade level."

This finding indicates that the teaching strategies used after platform integration have become more systematic, as teachers can adjust the sequence of learning activities to the materials provided by the platform. Mrs. Lia's statement above is confirmed by the teaching module used by Mrs. Lia, which utilizes the interactive game TurtleDiary during English lessons in class. (see figure 2.)

2. Game Interaktif TurtleDiary (25 menit)

- Guru membuka TurtleDiary Numbers Game di layar
- **Game yang pertama adalah Complete The Missing Number.**
- Guru memberikan instruksi kepada siswa untuk melengkapi angka berapa saja yang hilang di layar.
- Selanjutnya guru dapat menambahkan arahan seperti siswa yang hendak melengkapi angka harus mengangkat tangan dan guru dapat memilih salah satunya, setelah itu siswa yang dipilih akan maju kedepan kelas untuk mengisi atau melengkapi angka yang hilang, sementara siswa yang lain bersama-sama menyebutkan angka tersebut dalam Bahasa Inggris setelah angka tersebut dilengkapi.
- Siswa yang dipilih bergantian sampai permainan selesai.



Figure 2. TurtleDiary interactive game activity plan in Mrs. Lia's English teaching module

Interactive Games Encouraging Student Participation

The interactive educational game feature is perceived as a factor that encourages student engagement during learning. The use of games shifts the teaching strategy from a teacher-centered approach to activities that directly involve students. This strategy was chosen because it is considered appropriate for the characteristics of first-grade students who require visual and fun learning. This participant expressed this as follows:

"The students become more active because the learning is in the form of games, so they don't get bored quickly."

Teaching strategies involving games are perceived as helping teachers maintain students' attention and create a more lively classroom atmosphere. Thus, the game features on TurtleDiary create a more interactive and participatory teaching strategy.

Visual and Multimedia Support: Facilitating Material Explanation

Visual support in the form of images, animations, and interactive displays on TurtleDiary are perceived as helping teachers explain English material to students. Teaching strategies become more visual-based, so teachers don't rely solely on verbal explanations. Participants expressed this as follows:

"With images and animations, it's easier for me to explain the material to the students."

This finding indicates that the platform's visual features create a teaching strategy that adapts to the cognitive needs of early childhood students, while also helping teachers deliver material more clearly and confidently.

Platform Structure Supports Classroom Management Strategies

In addition to supporting material delivery, the activity structure on TurtleDiary is perceived as helping teachers manage their classrooms. Activities with a clear flow and specific objectives allow teachers to organize learning time and maintain student focus throughout the activity. As expressed by a participant:

"With the activities on the website, the class becomes more organized because the students focus on their activities."

The classroom management strategies used after platform integration became more focused, as digital activities served as a support for the learning flow. This created a more controlled and organized teaching practice.

Increased Variation in Teaching Strategies

The use of TurtleDiary was perceived as encouraging a variety of teaching strategies. Teachers no longer relied on a single teaching method, but instead combined games, visuals, and digital activities within a single learning session. This variation was seen as a strategy to tailor learning to students' interests and needs. A participant explained as follows:

"I don't just teach in one way, but I can vary it."

These findings indicate that TurtleDiary's features create more flexible and adaptive teaching strategies, tailored to classroom dynamics and the characteristics of early childhood learners. These findings directly address Research Question 2 by explaining how the instructional features of the TurtleDiary platform support instructional planning and classroom practices in the context of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). The findings indicate that the instructional features embedded in the TurtleDiary platform are perceived as shaping changes in teaching strategies used by a non-specialist teacher when teaching English to early childhood learners. Rather than functioning as isolated technological tools, these features interact with the teacher's pedagogical needs and influence how lessons are planned, implemented, and managed in the classroom.

From the perspective of Schunk's (2012) theory of teacher self-efficacy, instructional strategies are closely linked to teachers' beliefs about their capability to organize and execute teaching tasks. In this study, the availability of ready-to-use activities organized by grade level was perceived as reducing uncertainty during lesson planning. This structured support allowed the teacher to focus on instructional delivery rather than material creation, thereby strengthening her sense of instructional control. Such control is a key source of confidence, as teachers who perceive tasks as manageable are more likely to implement lessons consistently and effectively.

The use of interactive educational games was perceived as encouraging more participatory classroom practices. In line with Schunk's (2012) argument, successful engagement with instructional strategies reinforces teachers' beliefs that they can manage learning activities effectively. In this study, increased student participation during game-based activities was interpreted by the teacher as evidence that her teaching approach was working, which in turn reinforced her confidence in using student-centered strategies. These findings support research suggesting that digital games can encourage early childhood student engagement and help teachers manage classroom dynamics more effectively (Nazari et al., 2023; Bibani, 2024). Although this study did not directly assess student learning outcomes, increased student participation was perceived as an indicator that the teaching strategies used were more aligned with the characteristics of early childhood learners.

Visual and multimedia features on TurtleDiary were also perceived as shaping teaching strategies by enabling clearer and more confident material explanations. For non-specialist teachers, explaining English content verbally can be a source of anxiety. Visual support functioned as a pedagogical scaffold that reduced reliance on complex verbal explanations, aligning with Schunk's (2012) view that external instructional supports can enhance teachers' perceived competence in task execution. As a result, the teacher felt more capable of delivering content in ways appropriate to young learners' cognitive characteristics. Previous research confirms

that visual media can help teachers simplify language concepts and reduce reliance on complex verbal explanations (Karaman et al., 2022). In this study, the use of visuals not only supported student understanding but also increased teacher confidence in explaining the material.

The structured sequence of activities on the platform was perceived to support classroom management by helping the teacher maintain student focus and manage learning time more effectively, a common challenge in TEYL contexts. From a self-efficacy perspective, such successful classroom management experiences strengthen teachers' beliefs in their ability to handle instructional demands. Overall, these findings suggest that changes in teaching strategies emerged from the interaction between the platform's instructional features and the teacher's perceived teaching capability. Consistent with Schunk's (2012) theory, TurtleDiary functioned as pedagogical support that enabled the teacher to experience success in planning, implementing, and managing English lessons, thereby reinforcing confidence and perceived instructional effectiveness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This qualitative case study explores a non-specialist first-grade teacher's perceptions of changes in teaching confidence and teaching practices following the integration of the TurtleDiary digital platform into her English language teaching. Findings indicate that the use of TurtleDiary is perceived as supporting the teacher's teaching confidence by reducing teaching anxiety, increasing preparedness, and providing structured pedagogical support. Furthermore, the platform's features are perceived as shaping teaching strategies through the use of ready-to-use activities, interactive games, and visual materials that support lesson planning, classroom management, and instructional variation.

The conclusions drawn in this study are supported by self-reported data obtained from a single interview and supported by a teaching module created and used by the teacher. The findings reflect the teacher's personal perceptions and reflective experiences, not objective measures of teaching effectiveness or student learning outcomes. Therefore, responses regarding increased confidence and changes in teaching strategies are based on the participant's self-reported experiences and should be described as subjective perceptions.

Given the single-case study design, the findings of this study should not be generalized beyond the specific context of this teacher, this school environment, or this particular digital platform. This study does not claim that TurtleDiary is universally effective for all non-specialist teachers or that the platform directly improves students' English language learning outcomes. Claims related to student engagement or classroom dynamics are limited to teacher perceptions and are not independently verified through classroom observations or student performance data.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that digital platforms with structured and age-appropriate instructional features can serve as a support tool for non-specialist teachers who experience a lack of confidence in teaching English. Such platforms can assist teachers in lesson preparation and activity design, thereby helping them feel more secure and confident in delivering instruction. However, these implications should be understood as context-specific and perception-based.

At the institutional level, this study highlights the importance of providing easily accessible pedagogical support for elementary school teachers who are required to teach English without formal training in the subject. Schools and educational institutions may consider offering professional development opportunities focused on the pedagogical uses of digital platforms rather than assuming that technology alone can improve teaching quality. Institutional support remains crucial in helping teachers meaningfully integrate digital tools into classroom practice.

From a research perspective, this study contributes to teacher-centered research in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) by emphasizing teachers' psychological experiences rather than student learning outcomes. Future research is recommended to conduct data collection over a longer period and include additional data sources such as classroom observations or student work to triangulate findings. Further studies could also explore comparative cases across different digital platforms or investigate the long-term development of teacher self-efficacy over time.

In conclusion, this study provides in-depth insights into one teacher's experience integrating digital platforms into English language teaching. While it does not offer evidence for broad generalizations, it provides valuable insights into how digital tools may be perceived as pedagogical supports by non-specialist teachers in the context of early childhood English education.

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