

## A Comparative Study of Novice and Experienced English Teachers' Reinforcement Strategies in Rural and Urban English Classrooms

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Abstract	Article Info
<p>The current study focused on comparing the reinforcement strategies used by novice English teachers and experienced English teachers in rural and urban areas. The challenges in implementing the reinforcement strategies were also obtained in this study. The study used qualitative approach as the research design. The data were collected from observation and interview. The research instruments were observation sheet, and interview guide. The data were analyzed by using THEMATIC analysis consisted of several steps; familiarizing data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes, producing report. After analyzing the data, method triangulation was conducted to ensure the data credibility. The findings were; The novice English teachers conducted similar reinforcement strategies in rural and urban context. The verbal form was often in the simple praise to engage and motivate students meanwhile the non-verbal forms; gesture, proximity, contact, and symbol were used as the corrective or reflective manner on students' works. The experienced English teachers also conducted positive and negative reinforcement strategies both in rural and urban areas manifested in verbal and non-verbal forms, but they frequently used verbal forms; such as praise but more contextual and academic. The novice English teachers encountered several challenges in applying the reinforcement in rural and urban areas. There were six challenges faced by the teachers, such as; misinterpretation of reinforcement, student disengagement, student diversity, avoidance of competitive reinforcement, need individualized reinforcement strategies, inconsistent application of reinforcement.</p>	<p><b>Article History</b>  <i>Received :</i>  <i>July 08, 2025</i>  <i>Revised :</i>  <i>August 11, 2025</i>  <i>Accepted :</i>  <i>October 20, 2025</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>  <i>English Classrooms, Teachers' Reinforcement Strategies, Urban English Classrooms</i></p>

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### INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a critical role in shaping the classroom environment and influencing the quality of the learning process. The effectiveness of teaching and the achievement of learning goals are largely determined by how well teachers manage their classrooms. According to Astuti (2016), the teacher is a key factor in the successful attainment of educational objectives. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to understand their students' individual characteristics in order to provide guidance that meets their specific needs (Hamalik, 2014). Harmer (2007) and Brown (2001) describe the teacher's role as multifaceted, encompassing functions such as (1) classroom management, (2) organization of learning activities, (3) assessment and evaluation, (4) mentoring, (5) participation in learning, (6) acting as a resource, (7) fulfilling student needs, and (8) observation. Teachers are expected to choose appropriate teaching approaches and create an engaging and supportive classroom atmosphere. Such conditions are crucial for enhancing student motivation and fostering a genuine desire for learning. One of the key strategies to boost student motivation is the implementation of reinforcement.

Adeyemo (2012) identifies six fundamental elements that comprise the learning process. These components encompass the reinforcement of information, the incorporation of varied stimuli, the effective delivery of content, the utilisation of illusions and instances in the learning process, the culmination of the learning experience, and the facilitation of a question-and-answer session. This model aligns with the constructivist approach to learning, as proposed by Piaget (1973), who emphasized that learning is a process of constructing knowledge through experiences and interactions with the environment. In this context, reinforcement of information serves as a key component, as it helps solidify learning and make it more meaningful. Reinforcement is

Vygotsky (1978) also adds to this theory by introducing the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), suggesting that learners can achieve more with the guidance of a more knowledgeable person, such as a teacher, who can reinforce their learning through scaffolding. Additionally, Gagne's (1985) Nine Events of Instruction outline a systematic approach to lesson delivery, emphasizing the importance of stimulating learners' attention and providing appropriate reinforcement at various stages to ensure retention and mastery of content. According to Gagne (1985), the use of varied stimuli and the culmination of the learning experience are critical for keeping students engaged and motivated, reinforcing the content while promoting deeper understanding. These theories collectively highlight how the learning process is influenced by the interaction between the learner and the learning environment, with reinforcement serving as a crucial tool in consolidating new knowledge and encouraging continuous engagement.

Reinforcement is recognized as a basic teaching skill that every teacher should possess (Yatim, 2016). It refers to a response to student behavior that increases the likelihood of that behavior being repeated (Skinner, 2010). According to Yatim (2016), reinforcement can improve student attention, increase motivation, and promote positive behaviors. Sari (2019) supports this view, noting that reinforcement helps students feel valued and encourages them to behave appropriately both inside and outside the classroom. Reinforcement can be classified into positive and negative types. Positive reinforcement is used to encourage desirable behavior by providing rewards or praise, aiming to increase the repetition of good actions (Diedrich, 2010). Negative reinforcement, on the other hand, seeks to reduce or eliminate undesirable behavior by withdrawing an unpleasant stimulus, thereby promoting better behavior (Skinner, 2010). Thus, positive reinforcement motivates students to continue behaving well, while negative reinforcement aims to discourage poor behavior.

Research by Mudjiran (2011) revealed that positive reinforcement is highly effective in influencing student behavior. Similarly, Pratiwi et al. (2018) found that reinforcement strategies can enhance positive behavior and reduce negative behavior in the classroom. Usman (2005) identified five principles for effective reinforcement: (1) it should be delivered with warmth and enthusiasm, (2) it must not be a negative response, (3) it should be meaningful, (4) it can be applied individually or in groups, and (5) it should be adapted to different contexts. In addition, Setiawan and Mahmud (2020) conducted a study on reinforcement theory in junior high schools and found that both verbal (e.g., praise, encouragement) and non-verbal (e.g., thumbs up, smiles) reinforcement significantly enhanced student engagement and classroom interaction. Their study emphasized that consistent and meaningful reinforcement plays a crucial role in shaping student behavior and classroom dynamics.

Understanding how English teachers implement reinforcement strategies is crucial for improving teaching methods and promoting student engagement. Jayanti (2023) explains that teachers use rewards to recognize student achievement, support learning objectives, improve behavior, maintain classroom order, increase concentration, and build stronger relationships with students. On the other hand, punishments are applied to maintain student interest in learning, encourage discipline, reduce negative behavior, and ensure adherence to school rules. These approaches reflect the types of reinforcement commonly used in classrooms each with different methods and intended outcomes.

The use of reinforcement differs significantly between novice and experienced teachers. According to Gatbonton (2008), novice teachers typically have fewer than two years of teaching experience, while Farrell (2009) defines novice teachers as those with less than five years of experience. In contrast, experienced teachers have more extensive knowledge and skills, and they are better equipped to use varied teaching strategies effectively (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Experienced teachers also tend to emphasize discipline and order in the classroom (Okas, 2014). Furthermore, teachers in rural and urban schools often face different challenges. Rural schools, due to their remote locations, often experience limited infrastructure, a lack of teaching resources, and differences in parental mindsets (Febriana et al., 2018). Teachers in rural areas may also encounter students with lower motivation and

limited vocabulary (Endriyati et al., 2019). In contrast, teachers in urban schools must manage large class sizes and ensure that students remain motivated in a highly competitive environment.

The learning process in rural and urban schools differs significantly due to variations in context, resources, and teaching strategies, which ultimately affect the educational experience for students. In rural schools, the learning process is often hindered by limited access to educational materials, outdated infrastructure, and a lack of technological resources. Febriana et al. (2018) found that teachers in rural areas often struggle to find sufficient learning materials, relying on outdated textbooks or minimal resources to deliver lessons. This limits the variety of teaching methods that can be employed, reducing opportunities for interactive or student-centered learning. Moreover, students in rural areas frequently encounter challenges such as low motivation, insufficient vocabulary, and limited exposure to English, which negatively impacts their classroom participation and overall language acquisition. Endriyati et al. (2019) highlighted that rural students tend to have less parental support for academic achievement, which further decreases their academic engagement. Teachers in rural schools, therefore, must employ creative strategies to engage students despite these challenges. They may use more rote learning techniques or adapt lessons to fit the limited resources available.

In contrast, urban schools are generally better equipped with modern educational facilities, up-to-date teaching materials, and access to technology. The learning process in urban schools benefits from a wider range of teaching resources, such as interactive whiteboards, multimedia tools, and internet access, which can enhance student engagement and provide a more dynamic learning environment. Teachers in urban schools often have more opportunities to implement diverse instructional strategies, including project-based learning, technology-enhanced lessons, and group work. However, despite these advantages, urban schools face their own set of challenges, primarily due to larger class sizes and a more diverse student population. Endriyati et al. (2019) pointed out that teachers in urban schools often struggle with managing overcrowded classrooms, where individual attention may be limited. The diverse student needs in urban schools, including varying levels of language proficiency and cultural backgrounds, require teachers to adapt their methods to ensure all students are effectively engaged and learning. Additionally, students in urban areas often come from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds, leading to disparities in motivation and academic readiness.

These contextual differences between rural and urban schools significantly influence the learning process. In rural schools, where resources are limited and challenges are more pronounced, teachers often focus on maintaining basic educational standards and engaging students in a more traditional manner. On the other hand, urban schools, with their better access to resources and more varied student populations, offer a more dynamic learning environment, though they must contend with issues such as overcrowding and student diversity. Both settings require teachers to adjust their approaches to meet the needs of their students, but the strategies employed may differ greatly depending on whether the school is in a rural or urban area. Understanding these differences is crucial for tailoring effective teaching practices and reinforcement strategies to the unique needs of each context.

Numerous studies have explored the application of reinforcement in education and its impact on student behavior and classroom dynamics. Mudjiran (2011) demonstrated that positive reinforcement is highly effective in influencing student behavior and encouraging desirable actions. Similarly, Pratiwi et al. (2018) found that reinforcement strategies play a vital role in promoting positive behavior and minimizing disruptive conduct among students. Sari (2019) emphasized that reinforcement not only improves student discipline but also makes students feel valued and appreciated by their teachers. Kurniasi (2021) examined how verbal and non-verbal reinforcement strategies influence students' perceptions of the learning process, indicating that students tend to respond positively when appropriate reinforcement is applied. Furthermore, Afta (2024) uncovered gender-based differences in reinforcement practices, showing that female teachers generally provide more reinforcement and utilize a wider range of strategies compared to male teachers. Nurdiana et al. (2021) confirmed that positive reinforcement tends to elicit positive student behavior. Interestingly, Afta (2024) found gender-based differences in reinforcement practices, with female teachers providing more reinforcement than male teachers, and male teachers using less non-verbal reinforcement due to various influencing factors. While these studies have provided valuable insights into the effectiveness and application of reinforcement in classrooms, they have primarily focused on general behaviors, gender differences, and student responses.

However, there is a lack of studies that examine how reinforcement strategies are used specifically by novice and experienced English teachers in different geographical contexts, such as rural and urban schools. There is also limited discussion on the types of reinforcement used and the specific challenges these teachers face in applying reinforcement in their English classes. This research aims to fill

this gap by analyzing the types of reinforcement strategies employed by novice and experienced English teachers in rural and urban schools, as well as identifying the challenges they encounter. This study offers a nuanced perspective on how teacher experience and school location influence reinforcement practices, with the goal of enhancing student motivation and promoting more effective classroom management.

## METHOD

Qualitative approach was adapted as the research design of the current study which focused on researching the phenomenon of reinforcement strategies used between novice English teachers and experienced English teachers both in rural and urban areas. The study was conducted in two different settings. The first research setting was located in Mengwi district which was categorized as a rural area. There were two junior high schools selected as the representations of rural English classrooms, such as; SMPN 2 Mengwi, and SMPN 4 Mengwi. Meanwhile, Kuta district was selected as the research setting for obtaining the data in urban areas. SMPN 2 Kuta Utara and SMPN 4 Kuta Utara were the research setting of urban English classrooms. Totally, there were eight English teachers who became the research subjects of this study. There were four English teachers in rural areas consisting of two novice teachers and two experienced teachers. Meanwhile other four teachers were also two novice teachers and two experienced teachers. They were selected as research subjects by using purposive sampling technique. The data were obtained by conducting observation and interview. The research instruments were interview guide and observation. The data were analyzed quantitatively by using THEMATIC analysis. There were several steps; familiarizing data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes, producing report. After analyzing the data, method triangulation was conducted to ensure the data credibility.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Reinforcement Strategies Used by Novice English Teachers

The current study found that there were two reinforcement strategies used by the novice teachers in both rural and urban English classrooms. Those were positive and negative strategy. It was revealed that the strategies were implemented in many forms as presented in table 1.

Table 1. The Reinforcement Strategies Used by Novice English Teachers in Rural and Urban English Classrooms

Themes	Sub-categories	Categories
Positive reinforcement	- Praising students	- Using verbal reinforcement
	- Using gestural signs	- Clapping hands, smiling, or giving thumbs
	- Approaching students	- Approaching students - Guiding students
	- Using contact reinforcement	- Tapping shoulder or shaking hands
	- Using free activities	- Rewarding students with free-choice activities
	- Using symbolic or token	- Giving sticker, stamp, or emoticon as rewards - Providing feedback in students' book
Negative reinforcement	- Correcting students' behavior	- Using verbal reinforcement to warn students
		- Using gestural reinforcement as a signal of disapproval
		- Doing physical presence to correct students' misbehavior
		- Giving mark or warning notes for undesirable behavior

Table 1 indicated that there two reinforcement strategies used by novice English teachers in rural and urban areas. The positive strategy was implemented in many forms. The rural teachers often used verbal reinforcement to praise their students, for examples; “*wih JJ kali*” (wow, JJ is really good), “*keren kali ci*” (so cool guys), “*mantap*” (awesome)”, and “NT ni NT” (really nice try). The rural teachers mostly used their local languages to praise students, meanwhile the urban teachers commonly spoke formal phrases to praise the students, for examples; “good job!”, “that’s good!”, “well done, kid”, “nice”, “so clever of you!”, “wow very fast!”. Both rural teachers and urban teachers using gestural signs to appreciate their students’ learning performance, such as; giving thumbs, smiling, or clapping. In order to guide students, the rural teachers often approached the students as the implementation of proximity reinforcement. It was contrast with the urban teachers in which proximity reinforcement was selectively used as an individual reinforcement for a certain student. The urban teachers mentioned that they did not use contact reinforcement considering that there was a cultural norm in which the institutions had a limit on conducting physical contact with students. On another side, the rural teachers applied this strategy selectively in which they only tapped students’ shoulders or shook hands when students were able to perform well. It was revealed that the rural teachers provided students with free activities as the reward. The students who were able to win the game or quiz were given a choice to choose their own activities, for instance; having break earlier, drawing, another quiz, etc. This kind of reinforcement was only found in rural English classrooms. However, both of rural teachers and urban teachers used symbolic or token as the reinforcement. The teachers frequently gave feedback by adding sticker, stamp, or emoticon as the reflection of students’ work.

Another finding revealed that the novice English teachers applied negative reinforcement both in rural and urban classrooms. Both of the teachers stated that they implemented negative reinforcement to correct students’ miss behaviors. The rural teachers used verbal reinforcement to warn students when they were not discipline in the classrooms. It also occurred in urban English classrooms in which the teachers directly gave command for students as the negative reinforcement to avoid misbehavior. In addition, the current study discovered that the rural teachers also applied gestural reinforcement as a signal of disapproval but it was not implemented by the urban teachers as often as the rural teachers did. It was due to the class size where the rural classrooms tent to have more students in one class. An inconducive classroom is more often in rural schools than the urban schools. Therefore, gestural reinforcement was often applied by rural teachers. In addition, the physical presence was used by rural teachers in which it was also different from the urban classrooms. The urban teachers preferred to not use this reinforcement since the school limited the physical contact between the teachers and students. However, both of rural teachers and urban teachers applied symbolic or token reinforcement by marking students’ works with red ink or giving warning not for undesirable behavior. These findings revealed that there was no significant difference on the reinforcement strategies used by the novice English teachers in rural and urban classrooms in which the urban teachers were more formal and selective in implementing the types of reinforcement, meanwhile the rural teachers tent to be more flexible.

### **The Reinforcement Strategies Used by Experienced English Teachers in Rural and Urban Classrooms**

The current study revealed that experienced English teachers also used reinforcement strategies both in rural and urban English classrooms. The findings indicated that the experienced teachers applied several types of reinforcements as positive and negative strategies. Those were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Reinforcement Strategies Used by Experienced Teachers in Rural and Urban Settings

Themes	Sub-Categories	Categories
Positive Strategy	- Using verbal reinforcement	- Encouraging students - Motivating students
	- Using gestural reinforcement	- Appreciating students’ learning performance
	- Using proximity reinforcement	- Approaching students to support their participation
	- Using contact reinforcement	- Providing students with emotional reassurance
	- Using activity reinforcement	- Providing students with fun activity as a reward
	- Using symbolic or token reinforcement	- Providing feedback with scoring or grading or written feedback

Negative Strategy	- Using verbal reinforcement	- Warning students with a respectful phrase and warm voice-tone
	- Using facial expression	- Indicating disagreement and breaking an unsupportive environment
	- Using proximity reinforcement	- Approaching students to obtain and warn their misbehavior
	- Using activity reinforcement	- Giving extra tasks
	- Using symbolic or token reinforcement	- Grading or providing critical feedback

Table 2 presented the forms of reinforcements used by experienced English teachers in implementing the reinforcement strategies in rural and urban classrooms. There were two strategies used by the teachers; positive reinforcement, and negative reinforcement. Both rural and urban teachers applied verbal reinforcement as positive and negative strategy. In positive strategy, the rural and urban teachers used verbal phrases to encourage and motivate students, for instances; “great job”, “try it again”, “don’t worry”, “excellent”, “what a nice try”. The phrases used by experienced English teachers in both settings tent to be more formal and professional than the novice English teachers. They preferred to use English phrases than their native language. Meanwhile, the verbal phrases were used to warn students with a warm tone voice, for examples; “be focus!”, “keep silent please!”, “pay attention!”. These phrases were used to warn students in inconducive situation.

Gestural reinforcement was also applied as positive and negative strategies in rural and urban settings by the experienced English teachers. Facial expression was the common way used by them in warning people misbehavior. The experienced teachers often smiled when their students did a great job during the class, but when they showed a serious expression, the students who were making noise becoming calm and being focused. This strategy was supported with proximity reinforcement. The experienced teachers approached the students while they were working in group as a way to support and encourage their participation. The experienced teachers also approached the students when they did not focus in learning. Activity reinforcement was applied as negative strategy as well as positive strategy when the experienced teachers provided fun activity as a reward. In contrast, they gave an extra assignment when they had done undesirable behaviors. In addition, grading and giving critical feedback becoming the symbolic or token reinforcement used by the experienced teachers as a positive or negative feedback on students’ works. Overall, these findings revealed that the experienced English teachers in both settings had similar strategies and purposes in applying the reinforcement in their English classrooms.

### **The Challenges Faced by Novice English Teachers and Experienced English Teachers in Rural and Urban Classrooms**

The current study also focused on obtaining the challenges faced by novice English teachers and experienced English teachers in conducting reinforcement in rural and urban classrooms. The findings were presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The Challenges Faced by Novice English Teachers and Experienced English Teachers in Rural and Urban Classrooms

Themes	Sub-Categories	Categories
Novice English Teachers	- Misinterpretation	- Interpreting reinforcement as punishment
	- Students’ disengagement	- Decreasing students’ learning motivation
	- Avoidance of competitive reinforcement	- Decreasing students’ collaboration
	- Needs of individualized reinforcement	- Facing difficulty in handling students with various characters
	- Inconsistent application of reinforcement	- Implementing reinforcement rarely
Experienced English	- Students’ motivation	- Having lack of learning

Teachers		motivation
	- Students' diversity	- Having different characters and needs
	- Limited infrastructure	- Limited facilities to improve the variation of reinforcement
	- Students' responses	- Having low interest in responding to the reinforcement
	- Class size	- Having difficulty in handling a big size class

Table 3 showed that the novice English teachers and experienced English teachers faced different challenges in applying reinforcement. The novice English teachers mentioned that they frequently faced difficulty related to the misinterpretation particularly when they applied negative reinforcement strategy. The novice English teachers who taught English in rural setting mentioned that some of the students misinterpreted the facial expression as a punishment. Meanwhile the novice English teachers who taught English in urban setting gave a different statement where most of their students never gave any responses on the gestural reinforcement. It did not work considering that students also showed disengagement during the learning process. It was also related to another challenge, where the novice teachers faced a difficulty in improving students' motivation itself. It revealed that they needed more individualized reinforcement. The inconsistent application became another challenge faced by the novice English teachers considering that it was a way for avoiding competitive environment that might decrease students' collaboration.

On another side, the experienced teachers faced several challenges related to students' motivation, students' diversity, limited infrastructure, students' responses, and class size. Students' motivation became a challenge faced by novice teachers considering that the students had low learning motivation that was correlated on how they responded the reinforcement given by students. The class size, students' diversity, and limited infrastructure were intercorrelated each other. It was strengthened by the condition and statement given by the experienced teachers especially the ones who taught English in rural areas. The experienced teachers could not improve the reinforcement strategy since there was a limited infrastructure to support the learning process particularly when the class consisted more than 25 students. It also made difficulty for the students to apply and handle students with different character and needs. These findings indicated that the novice English teachers and experienced English teachers had different challenges in both settings.

## DISCUSSION

The current study revealed that the novice English teachers in rural and urban areas used both positive and negative reinforcement to encourage students in their classrooms. This finding indicated that reinforcement could be applied in the positive or negative form which has a pivotal role in shaping students' behavior (Fitriati et al., 2020). It was found out that positive reinforcement was applied to motivate students, acknowledge students' efforts, and foster students' engagement. This finding showed that positive reinforcement was a motivational expression fostering students' learning motivation and participation in the learning process as mentioned Manzoor and Gill (2015). There were many forms of positive reinforcement used by the novice English teachers, such as; verbal reinforcement, gestural, proximity, contact, activity, and token/symbolic strategies. Those forms were similar to the previous study conducted by Kurniasih et al., (2022). It showed that English teachers frequently used verbal reinforcement, and non-verbal reinforcement, such as; gestural, proximity, contact, activity, and token/symbolic strategies to create good atmosphere for students. In addition, positive reinforcement was the most dominant strategy used by the novice English teachers in rural and urban areas in which they commonly used praise as the positive reinforcement to avoid punishment. It strengthened the existence of verbal reinforcement as a warmth and enthusiastic expression of praising (Gaffar et al., 2022; Jonaria & Ardi, 2020).

However, the dominant usage of positive reinforcement showed that the novice English teachers used negative reinforcement less frequent in their classrooms. It was found that negative reinforcement was not used as a punishment but it was referred as a corrective strategy. The novice English teachers used both verbal and non-verbal reinforcement to reduce undesirable behavior and promote compliance through supportive redirection. It proved that teachers used reinforcement to provide correction towards

students' mistakes with a strong empathy and clarity (Marlina & Hidayat, 2019). Zahid and Cheema (2023) argued that punishment was not classified as negative reinforcement, but it shared a conceptual similarity in which both punishment and negative reinforcement were perceived as unpleasant stimuli for students. Both the rural and urban novice teachers did not define reinforcement as punishment instead it still had a similar function. It was added that negative non-verbal feedback was an effective respond to students' misbehavior without embarrassing them in public (Pratiwi et al., 2018; Setiawan & Mahmud., 2020).

The use of proximity as a corrective strategy was highlighted in the current study in which it was found that rural novice English teachers used proximity to subtly prompt students' behavioral change. This finding was aligned with the earlier study revealing that rural teachers often demonstrated a stronger tendency in giving personal correction to the students (Supriani et al., 2021). Another negative reinforcement was proved by using symbolic reinforcement in which the rural novice teachers gave the feedback by using red ink. It symbolized the needs of an improvement for the students' works or answers. This action was also relevant to the function of negative reinforcement in supporting students' directed learning in which it assisted students to conduct self-assessment on their own learning (Wishkoski et al., 2022).

The reinforcement strategies used by the novice English teachers in rural and urban areas clearly highlighted that the implementation of reinforcement was shaped by the school context. It was strengthened by the findings indicating that the novice English teachers in rural school employed a wider range of both positive and negative reinforcement types, with an emphasis on tangible rewards, physical proximity, and cultural responsiveness. The strategies appeared due to the smaller class size as mentioned by Mbhele (2024). It was added that less participants becoming a factor that influenced the novice teachers to apply many different strategies to optimize students' learning (Ulya, 2019). Meanwhile, the rural novice English teachers preferred to applied reinforcement strategies with lower effort by adapting students' simple lifestyle. It was found that students' simple lifestyles made them more responsive to casual language and tangible rewards like snacks or coins. This form of reinforcement resonated with the students' daily experiences and economic realities, supporting motivation through familiar, relatable incentives in which those were easier for rural teachers to apply reinforcement in their classrooms (Belatrech, 2018). In conclusion, these findings revealed that the novice English teachers were actively applied different kinds of reinforcement both in rural and urban areas although they had less teaching experiences.

Although the novice English teachers effectively implemented wide range of strategies, they still encountered many challenges. The findings revealed that the rural and urban teachers mentioned that there were six challenges in implementing reinforcement, those were; misinterpretation of reinforcement, student disengagement, student diversity, avoidance of competitive reinforcement, need individualized reinforcement strategies, inconsistent application of reinforcement. These findings aligned with the perspective from Ahmed et al., (2020), who mentioned that novice teachers frequently encountered challenges related to their pedagogical practices. Nath et al., (2022) argued that reinforcement was considered as teachers' pedagogical skills in which it was perceived as a driven-learning solution. Therefore, it indicated that the novice English teachers were required to optimize their pedagogy.

Misinterpretation was found as the most common challenge faced by the novice English teachers both in rural and urban areas. It was revealed that the students did not comprehend the meanings behind the verbal phrases, gesture, or facial expression. It highlighted that lack of communication skills in the classrooms was the core of this challenge particularly when the novice teachers used adventitious reinforcement caused the misinterpretation. It also led students to show unexpected behavior (Rey et al., 2020). Then, it was followed by students' disengagement where the novice teachers in both areas reported that students did not respond the reinforcement given. It was relevant to the previous studies discovering that students were unaware with the reinforcement because of the unstated emotional or any other external influences (Lestari, 2020; Reeve et al., 2020). Another recurring theme was the challenge of addressing student diversity. Both rural and urban teachers reported that a single reinforcement method rarely worked for all students, given the variation in academic abilities, cultural values, and socio-economic conditions. It was important to emphasize differentiated instructions to accommodate students' diversity (Woolfolk, 2016). On another side, this finding was in contrast with the result which revealed that verbal reinforcement helped teachers to accommodate students' diversity (Supriadi et al., 2023).

However, the varied of reinforcement strategies depended on the teachers' pedagogy or teaching skills. It was supported with the current challenges faced by the novice English teachers in rural and urban areas, such as; avoidance of competitive reinforcement, need individualized reinforcement strategies, inconsistent application of reinforcement. Those challenges appeared due to the lack of proper training or mentoring and the tools to differentiate effectively (Nurdiana et al., 2021). The novice English teachers both in rural and urban areas were required to have more insight particularly in providing individualized reinforcement strategy since there was students with special needs who not responded to the reinforcement given. These findings strengthened the needs of supportive training to develop novice teachers' pedagogy to solve the current problems (Ahmed et al., 2020; Putri & Ningsih, 2021; Shank, 2023).

The current study discovered that experienced English teachers in rural and urban areas tent to employ adaptive and context sensitive reinforcement strategy in promoting students' motivation, participation, and classroom management. It was found that the experienced English teachers also applied positive strategies, such as; verbal, gestural, proximity, contact, activity, and symbolic reinforcement. These strategies effectively increased students' learning engagement. This finding was relevant to the study showing that positive reinforcement positively affected the learning engagement and motivation of secondary students (Green & James Owo, 2020). The use of simple verbal reinforcement by the experienced English teachers in rural areas strengthened the previous study conducted by Maisarah (2024) which proved that praise was a part of communication strategy in succeeding the reinforcement implementation.

In contrast, experienced English teachers in urban areas preferred to use a more personalized and academically-oriented approach. It was also found that they emphasized the use of non-verbal reinforcement, such as; contact, proximity, and symbolic reinforcement. It was argued that the higher urban teachers' disciplinary, the more effective was their instructional practice (Colcord et al., 2016). It was related to the use of more personalized and academically-oriented approach by experienced English teachers in urban areas indicating that they had better instructional practice. Overall, it was found that positive reinforcement was beneficial to improve the teachers' classroom management in urban areas by influencing students to behave positively (Gunaretnam, 2021; Konyu et al., 2019; Lynnette et al., 2021).

The experienced English teachers in rural and urban areas also implemented negative reinforcement in their classrooms. The rural teachers tent to employ less prevalent which was used purposefully and with emotional sensitivity. Meanwhile in urban areas, teachers demonstrated more assertive but respectful approaches to negative reinforcement. It was mentioned that negative reinforcement was used as a reflection on students' learning in which they were reinforced to revise their works. It supported the use of negative reinforcement to improve students' learning performance (Kelly & Pohl, 2018). A relevant study highlighted that negative reinforcement had a pivotal rule in shaping students' learning development (Azubuike, 2025). It was also argued that the use of negative reinforcement highly influenced students' academic achievement (Macalisang & Bonghawan, 2024). Therefore, the experienced English teachers both in rural and urban areas employed varied reinforcement strategies to promote students' learning.

Experienced teachers generally possessed stronger pedagogical skills and a deeper understanding of classroom dynamics than novice teachers (Mahmoudi & Özkan, 2015). In contrast, the current study showed that the experienced English teachers in rural and urban areas faced challenges in employing reinforcement into their classrooms. It was revealed that these challenges were student motivation, background diversity, and sociocultural sensitivity, infrastructural limitation, inconsistent student responsiveness, and classroom conditions. Each of this challenge dealt with the teachers' abilities in applying and modifying reinforcement strategies (Green & James Owo, 2020). As the teachers reported that they struggled on students' internal factors and external factors during the implementation. It was relevant to the statement showing the learning process depended on external and internal factors (Gholamalian et al., 2017).

One key challenge was students' motivation, the planned reinforcement did not meet the expected behaviors or academic outcomes. It was revealed that the several students showed disinterest on the rewards or praise given. It was considered as a serious challenge considering that motivation had a significant role in the learning process (Frahesti & Natasha, 2020; Maisarah, 2024). This finding was relevant to the study conducted by Mahendra et al. (2024), which emphasized that reinforcement was regarded as a structured motivational framework, often involving classroom agreements or collaborative behavior contracts to enhance responsibility. It was also added that disengaged students reflected that reinforcement was not meaningful (Lestari., 2020). Therefore, students' motivation was perceived as an

obstacle disrupting the implementation of reinforcement strategies by the experienced teachers in rural and urban areas.

Another prominent challenge involved student background diversity, including their home and family environment. Teachers shared that students' responsiveness to reinforcement was often influenced by socioeconomic conditions, emotional support at home, and parental involvement. These findings supported the implementation of needs analysis in English learning process to assist teachers in selecting which strategy was appropriated for the students' condition (Maula, 2021; Rott et al., 2022). These insights emerged the necessity for teachers to adopt differentiated strategies that account for familial and emotional backgrounds, which affect both students' receptivity and behavioral patterns (Moayeri & Rahimiy, 2019). This challenge was followed by sociocultural sensitivity disrupted reinforcement practices conducted by the experienced English teachers particularly in rural settings. It was reported that public praise or correction often clashed with local norms that emphasize humility, modesty, and collective identity. These challenges were aligned with the suggestion proposed by Gay's (2010), who argued that teachers were supposed to stress and connect students' social cultural values to employ reinforcement. It was emphasized that teachers who prioritized students' social cohesion and emotional safety assisted students to accomplish the expected behavioral change stimulated by the reinforcement (Angela et al., 2024).

Limited infrastructure was also the challenge faced by the experienced teachers particularly in rural areas. Teachers described how the lack of technological tools such as projectors, multimedia speakers, or internet access restricted their ability to diversify reinforcement methods. This limitation not only reduced the variety of reinforcement types but also increases the cognitive and emotional burden on teachers, as they must compensate for the lack of engaging stimuli. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) argue that varied and dynamic reinforcement could lead students to give effective response on the given reinforcement. Angela et al. (2024) also reported that teachers in resource-poor settings often resorted to using personal funds to create motivating classroom environments. Therefore, it indicated that infrastructural equity supporting teachers in innovating and employing the reinforcement itself.

Lastly, the classroom condition, including class size and noise level, emerged as a practical yet profound challenge. The urban teachers mentioned that large and overcrowded classrooms created an environment in which providing individualized reinforcement was nearly impossible. According to Bashir et al. (2020), the effectiveness of reinforcement was contingent on timely delivery; reinforcement lost its behavioral impact when administered after a significant delay. Additionally, physical arrangements, such as limited space or poor seating layouts, hindered teachers' ability to circulate, observe, and interact with students meaningfully. Jayanti (2023) stressed that consistent classroom routines and clear behavior norms were essential for a successful reinforcement but it was harder to establish in chaotic or overpopulated environments. In contrast, rural classrooms tend to have fewer students still disrupted classroom flow and, by extension, reinforcement opportunities. Both scenarios reveal how physical space and environmental management directly influence the consistency and success of reinforcement practices.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the findings show that; 1) novice English teachers in rural and urban areas use positive and negative reinforcement strategy including the verbal and non-verbal forms, 2) the novice English teachers face many challenges in implementing the reinforcement strategies both in rural and urban areas, such as; misinterpretation of reinforcement, student disengagement, student diversity, avoidance of competitive reinforcement, need individualized reinforcement strategies, inconsistent application of reinforcement, 3) the experienced English teachers conduct positive and negative reinforcement strategies both in rural and urban areas manifested in verbal and non-verbal forms, 4) the experienced English teachers in rural and urban areas face challenges in employing reinforcement into their classrooms, such as; challenges were student motivation, background diversity, and sociocultural sensitivity, infrastructural limitation, inconsistent student responsiveness, and classroom conditions. These findings implicate the theoretical foundation in classrooms management and practical manner of the novice and experienced English teachers in improving their pedagogy as well as students' learning both in rural and urban areas.

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