

STRATEGIES OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS IN TEACHING VOCABULARY TO ELEMENTARY LEARNERS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Article History		
First Received: (May 20, 2026)	Revised: (June 20, 2026)	Accepted: (June 30, 2026)
Final Proof Received: (July 23, 2026)	Published: (September 6, 2026)	

ABSTRACT

Choosing appropriate strategies is important in teaching vocabulary to young learners. Although many studies have examined vocabulary teaching strategies used by experienced teachers, limited research has explored pre-service teachers' strategies in teaching vocabulary during their teaching practicum. This study aimed to explore the strategies and supporting media used by pre-service English teachers in teaching vocabulary. A descriptive qualitative method was employed. Eight pre-service teachers who had completed their teaching practicum were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and lesson plan analysis and were analysed using qualitative procedures. The findings revealed pre-service teachers employed various strategies for presenting and practicing vocabulary. The strategies used frequently by the participants for presenting vocabulary were, drilling and elicitations. For practicing vocabulary, the participants used tasks, games, and presentations. Pictures, flashcards and worksheet as media were commonly utilized to support strategies. These findings also showed pre-service teachers experienced challenges in managing the classrooms. Implementing the strategies with media made students more active, enthusiastic, and able to remember vocabulary better. Therefore, using various strategies in teaching vocabulary to young learners was essential.

Keywords: Teaching strategies, Teaching vocabulary, Elementary learners, Pre-Service English Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays crucial role in English language learning because without vocabulary learners cannot communicate or understand anything (Salawazo et al., 2020). Vocabulary is numbers of words that someone understands and uses in communication or developing skills. To develop skills in English such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, learners need to have a large vocabulary first. According to Hartini & Ardini (2024) when learners have sufficient vocabulary knowledge, they tend to perform better in all English skills, can understand English material, answer question, and express their idea effectively. In Indonesia, English is introduced from elementary school, so strengthening vocabulary from an early stage is important.

Despite the importance of vocabulary in learning English, teaching vocabulary is not easy, especially for teaching young learners at elementary school. Zakiyah et al. (2024) explain that elementary school learners are generally aged 6 to 12 years old, at this age they experience cognitive, physical, emotional, and also language development. In the context of English learning, the age range of 6 until 12 years old is considered the golden age for learning a foreign language, because during this phase they have high ability to absorb language (Pamungkas & Amin, 2021). Teaching English vocabulary to learners at elementary school tend to be more challenging than teaching learners at higher level.

The challenges faced by teacher in teaching vocabulary to learners at elementary school are to keep learners' motivation and attention in learning. Cameron (2001) concluded that teaching

vocabulary to young learner is difficult and requires extra effort because they are often more enthusiastic and active as learners. Furthermore, young learners' mood usually change quickly in every minute and they often find difficult to sit when learning (Tarakcioglu & Tuncarslan, 2014). In presenting new vocabulary for young learner in the classroom, teachers face several challenges such as, they do not pay attention, still make a noise, learners's were easy to forget the word, the differences of learners' abilities, and the large classes (Bedilu & Degefu, 2024; Sari & Wardani, 2019; Suardi & Sakti, 2019).

These problems tended to get harder for pre-service teachers who have limited teaching experience or never taught students at all. Pre-service teachers are defined as a student teacher who is completing course work in teacher education programs practicum activities, aimed for improving their pedagogical competencies and teaching skills before entering the profession (Sukarni et al., 2023). Understanding how pre-service teachers implement teaching strategies in real classroom is important, because it reflects their readiness in teaching English.

In contrast with experienced teachers, pre-service teachers tend to struggle in choosing appropriate strategies, managing classroom, and selecting suitable media to support their teaching (Hikmah & Astuti, 2025). Young learners have diverse levels of language development and learning experiences, so pre-service teachers are required to implemenent various strategies to help learners understand the material (Katemba & Sianipar, 2020). Without appropriate strategies, learning English potentially become less effective and meaningless for learner.

Applying an effective strategy in teaching enables learners to reach good results in learning English. In the context of learning, strategy is the way used by a teacher to deliver the material for learners to achieve learning goals. Integrating interactive methods, techniques, procedures, and choosing a medium are also part of learning strategies (Pribadi, 2009; Seknum, 2013). A successful learning process depends not only on learners but also on teachers' readiness to deliver learning material. Selecting a strategy in teaching vocabulary is essential to support the material delivered effectively to learners, particularly for elementary school learners.

Teaching young learners requires several strategies because of their characteristics. Young learners are still in the intellectual development stage where they cannot understand difficult rules, they have short attention span, and they get bored easily. Based on these characteristics, Brown & Lee (2015) suggest several guidelines for teachers when teaching young learners. Teachers are encouraged to use repetition, games, songs, gestures, and role-play and sensory aids, to support vocabulary understanding. According to Thornbury (2002) vocabulary teaching involves two main stages: presenting and practicing vocabulary. In the presenting stage, teacher can introduce new words through several means such as translation, demonstration, drilling, and elicitation to help learners understand and illustrate the meanings and forms of vocabulary. On the other hand, in practicing, vocabulary can be reinforced through task and games.

Several studies have examined the strategies employed by teachers in teaching vocabulary to young learners. In this case, Kurniawan et al. (2025) explored teacher's strategies in teaching vocabulary to young

learners. This study indicated that teachers commonly used strategies such as, translation, and using pictures and videos to present vocabulary to elementary learners in the classroom. The teacher also considered factors such as duration of time and students' abilities when choosing the strategies.

Another study conducted by Syahabuddin et al. (2024) investigated teachers' strategies and perceptions regarding the increase of vocabulary in young learners. This study showed that teachers utilized several strategies, such as memorization, games, demonstrations, translation, and singing songs. These strategies are often combined with pictures to get students' attention. Similarly, Deni & Fahriany (2020) identified teachers' perspectives on vocabulary teaching strategies for young learners and found that teachers used games and songs. The teachers also showed interactive media such as pictures, real objects, and video to support the strategies.

Based on those previous studies, it seems to point out that teaching strategies are important, especially for young learners. However, those studies focused on experienced teachers who have been teaching for several years. It might have different results if the study were conducted on pre-service English teachers with limited experience in teaching young learners. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate what strategies are used by pre-service English teachers in teaching vocabulary to young learners and what media they employed to support the strategies. Unlike previous research that only identified experienced teachers, this study focuses on pre-service teachers who are transferring the theories they learned in their classroom into practice during their teaching practicum.



METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method. This method was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore and describe in depth the strategies used by pre-service English teachers in teaching vocabulary to elementary school learners, based on their experience during teaching practicum.

The participants in this research are eight pre-service English teachers from English education study program who had completed teaching practicum (PLP II) in previous semester. Purposive sampling was used in this research to select the participants with several criteria: (1) The

students have finished the teaching practicum (PLP II), and (2) have experienced teaching vocabulary to elementary school students during teaching practicum, (3) willing to be interviewed in offline/online. Based on the latest data for the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, there were thirteen students placed in three different elementary school. From the thirteen students, only eight students met all the criteria to be participants in this research.

Table 1 presents the profile of the eight participants, including their teaching placement, grade level taught, practicum experience, and vocabulary lesson type.

Table 1. Profile of Participants

Name	Teaching Placement	Grade Level Taught	Practicum Experience	Vocabulary Type
P01	SDN X	Grade 3,4,5	Teaching for 3 months	Professions and objects in the garden
P02	SDN Z	Grade 1,2 and 3	Teaching for 3 months	Numbers, days of the week, things in the classroom, and daily activities.
P03	SDN Z	Grade 3, 1 and 4	Teaching for 3 months	Things in the classroom, hobby, things at school.
P04	SDN X	Grade 3,4, and 5	Teaching for 3 months	Things in the classroom and living room, Things in the garden, birthday, professions, and health.
P05	SDN Y	All grades	Teaching for 3 months	Rooms in the house, Time, Expressions, Kind of clothes, Taste of foods and drinks, and numbers.
P06	SDN X	Grade 3 and 4	Teaching for 3 months	Things in the garden, Things in the living room.
P07	SDN Z	All grades except 5	Teaching for 3 months	Food and drinks, Prepositions, Time, and Numbers.
P08	SDN Y	Grade 1,2,3	Teaching for 3 months	Family, and School things.

Data were collected through two techniques: lesson plan analysis and semi-structured interviews. The first data were collected from lesson plans designed by pre-service English teachers during teaching practicums. Only lesson plans including vocabulary teaching activities were selected for analysis. Another way of data collection was through semi structured

interview technique with open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted after lesson plans analysis to obtain more detailed information. The questions consist of 10 main questions, while probing and follow-up questions were asked when necessary to clarify participants' responses. The researcher interviewed each participant in online/offline in a mix of Indonesian and



English, allowing them to freely express their answers. Each interview lasted 10 to 35 minutes. The interview questions were developed based on Thornbury's (2002) framework and the lesson plan analysis. Then, interview guide was reviewed by English language teaching experts to ensure its content validity.

The data gathered from the interviews and lesson plans were analysed using qualitative analysis procedures following the steps outlined by (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Since this research focuses on descriptive design that aims to describe and reveal themes from the data, five main steps were used: organizing and preparing the data from the interviews, reading through all the data, coding the data, grouping the codes into theme, and developing story line interpretation.

The lesson plans were analyzed using Thornbury's (2002) framework for vocabulary teaching strategies, which focuses on two main stages: presenting and practicing vocabulary. In the presenting stage, the strategies include translation, demonstration, elicitation, and drilling. Tasks and games could be employed as ways for vocabulary practice. The analysis of the lesson plans was conducted through the following stages:

- a. All lesson plans were collected from the participants.
- b. Each lesson plan was labelled and coded to organize the data. For example, LPP1 refers to Participant 1, LPP5 stands for Participant 5, and LPP7 indicates Participant 7, etc.
- c. The researchers read each lesson plan and identified its components, including learning objectives, learning materials, learning media, grade level, time allocation, learning activities, and assessment.
- d. The learning activities identified in the lesson plans were analysed using Thornbury's (2002) framework. Activities consistent with the frameworks were categorized and checked off on the checklist.
- e. The researchers also identified activities inconsistent with the framework, which were included as additional findings and explored further through interviews.
- f. The results of the lesson plan were confirmed and clarified through interviews with the participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of the learning activities.

For the interview data, five analysis steps were employed. (1) The interview recordings were transcribed manually by listening to the audio recordings and converting into written transcripts. (2) After the transcription process, the researchers read all transcripts several times to gain familiarity with the data. During this stage, excerpts related to the activities and themes identified in the lesson plans were highlighted for further analysis. (3) The researcher then coded relevant words, phrases, and statements that provided explanations, confirmations, or additional information regarding the findings from the lesson plan. (4) The codes were subsequently organized into themes and sub-themes by grouping similar patterns across participants. (5) Finally, the findings from the interviews were integrated with the lesson plan to develop interpretations and answer the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings obtained from the analysis of lesson plans and



interviews. The results of the lesson plan analysis were presented in the table below.

Table 2. Lesson plan analysis based on Thornbury's (2002) framework.

No	Participants	Strategies				
		Presenting			Practicing	
		Translati on	Demonstration	Drilling	Elicitation	Vocabulary task
1.	P01	√		√	√	√
2.	P02	√		√	√	√
3.	P03	√		√	√	√
4.	P04		√	√	√	√
5.	P05			√	√	√
6.	P06		√	√	√	√
7.	P07	√	√	√	√	√
8.	P08			√	√	√

Based on the analysis of lesson plans and interview data, it was found the participants used several strategies in teaching vocabulary to elementary learners, along with media to support those strategies. In addition, some strategies that were not explicitly mentioned in Thornbury's (2002) framework were discovered. The interview data provided additional information regarding the challenges faced by pre-service English teachers in implementing those strategies. These findings were organized according to the following themes.

Vocabulary teaching strategies

The result of lesson plans and interview discovered several strategies used by pre-service English teacher in teaching vocabulary during their practicum. The participants in this study employed several strategies suggested by the theory. Additionally, there are some strategies were not addressed in the theory. The strategies include presenting and practicing vocabulary.

Presenting stage

In the presenting stage, pre-service teachers introduce and explain new vocabulary to help students understand the target words.

a) Using drilling

All of the pre-service teachers in this study employed repetition drilling when presenting vocabulary. Participant 4 pronounced the words twice, asked students to repeat, and checked their pronunciation. *"I usually pronounce all the vocabulary twice, and then they will also be repeated twice. I used this strategy to build retention because they repeat over and over."* Furthermore, Participant 5 said she implemented choral drilling first followed by individual drilling. *"I often read the vocabulary list first, I asked all the students to repeat, I think this is choral drill, then I will have students mention 3 words they just learned, one by one."* Additionally, participant 7 reported students were able to pronounce the words correctly after they listened to and repeated the words several times. *"From my point of view, they almost pronounce the words*



correctly after I drilled them many times, in the first drilling their pronunciations of cockroaches word were still poor, but because they listened and repeat the words over and over some students can pronounce it correctly."

Participant 8 explained he utilized drilling strategy because the students easily forgot the words. *"Based on my experience teaching students in grade two, they cannot memorize the words easily if I just focus on explaining the words without asked them to repeat, that's why I tried to use drilling and I see on the evaluation they could answer the correct words."* On the other hand, some participants considered repetition drilling was the easiest strategy to apply due to time limitation, so they often use it as the main strategy for presenting new words. *"Because drilling is easy way to teach young learners, we just read the words and asked students to repeat several times"* (P05).

b) Using elicitation

Based on the lesson plan analysis, all participants implemented elicitation at the beginning of the lesson. They reported in the interviews that they always engaged students by asking opening questions related to the topic students were going to learn. *"Every time I teach students in the class especially for vocabulary, I always involve the students by asking them opening question"* (P05). In addition, the participants said opening questions should be included in lesson plan and applied in the real classroom, as instructed by their supervising teachers. *"As far as I know, the lesson plans should contain opening question*

to make students involved and interested. My supervising teacher also told me to make opening question before teaching the material" (P07).

Despite using elicitation strategies for opening questions, some participants also applied this strategy after drilling. They used visual media to help students actively participate in answering questions. *"To keep students focused, I usually ask questions after drilling. I ask fast learners first, then slow learners. For example, I show a picture and ask "what is this?" or "what profession helps sick people?". This helps me check their understanding of vocabulary"* (P04).

c) Using translation

Several participants used translation when presenting vocabulary. However, they applied it in different ways. Participant 3 translated the words during drilling activities. *"After I pronounce the words, they repeat, then I say doctor is dokter, farmer is petani."* Meanwhile, Participant 1 wrote the English words and the Indonesian meanings on the board. *"I write all the words on the board in English and Indonesian because even after drilling and using pictures, they sometimes forget and still ask what the words mean."* Participant 2 translated all the words on flashcards directly while students listened. *"Usually on flashcards there are pictures and words. I translate all the words while flipping the cards and students listen. But they still forget, so sometimes I ask them to write."* Furthermore, Participant 7 provided the words in Indonesian first while showing



flashcards, then translated it into English.

d) Using demonstration

Another strategy employed by participants was demonstration. Several participants applied this strategy when presenting vocabulary to help students understand the material easily. They implemented demonstration when teaching the topic of time. Participant 4 brought a real clock and taught time by showing the position of the long and short hands while saying the time in English. *"There was a class where I needed to teach about time, so I brought a real clock. First, I taught them about a.m., p.m., to, past, quarter past, etc. Then, I used the clock as a medium to show them how to tell time in English. I changed the direction of the long hand and short hand to show different times."* Similarly, Participant 5 demonstrated the long and short hands of a clock using her own hands. *"When I taught time, I used my hands to show the long and short hands. For example, I pointed my short hand to 7 and my long hand to 12 while saying the time in English. I also asked two students to come forward. One student would guess and the other acted out the time. It was fun because the class became enjoyable and focused."*

e) Singing songs

Singing songs were not explained in Thornbury's (2002) framework for presenting vocabulary. However, this strategy was found in several participants' lesson plans and confirmed through interviews. The participants applied songs to present vocabulary and to make students

enthusiastic and interested in learning. They played songs at the beginning of the lesson to familiarize students with the material and to grab their attention, particularly when students looked bored before the lesson started. *"I usually play a song in the beginning of the lesson, then we sing together. I provided songs when I teach things at home, at first, they were quiet, but when I played it the second time, they joined in"* (P03). Similarly, Participant 5 used a song when teaching numbers. She said students became more engaged and excited to sing, although the class was a bit noisy. *"I played song once for them to listen first and the second they had to follow along the song. Even though they kind of became chaos and noisy, they seem pretty excited. I chose this strategy because I thought I need to make them to be paying more attention towards the vocabulary."*

Practicing stage

The practicing stage focuses on providing opportunities for students to reinforce, recall and use the vocabulary has been learned.

a) Using tasks

All of the participants in this study used tasks for students practice vocabulary. The tasks include matching, making simple sentences, multiple choice, translating, fill in the blank, and arranging words. Matching and fill-in-the-blank were the most common types of tasks, such as matching pictures with words or numbers with the written forms. Participant 7 reported she did not utilize various exercise for students due to time limitations. *"For practicing the students, I made the*



same type of tasks for LKPD, such as, matching the words with picture, or matching numbers with written forms. For group activity I usually provided incomplete sentences for them to complete and do the conversation." Similarly, other participants preferred using simple tasks because they believed young learners were not ready for difficult exercises. Some participants also admitted that they lacked knowledge about appropriate task types for elementary students. As a result, they usually looked for worksheet examples from the internet. *"For worksheet I often search on the internet because I don't really know the tasks are suitable for elementary students, I only know matching and fill in the blank"* (P03).

b) Using presentations

In addition to written tasks, the participants also provided production tasks by asking students to present their work. The presentations included conversations in pairs, presenting group projects, or role plays. After completing the written tasks, students presented their work in front of the class. Several participants stated that they were required to design two types of tasks: a group task and an individual evaluation task. *"Our supervising teacher told us to make two tasks: a group activity that must be presented in the form of a conversation or project presentation, and an evaluation task to see each student's understanding"* (P08).

c) Using games

Several participants used games as a way for students to practice vocabulary interactively. The games were usually played after the vocabulary

presentation and before students did written tasks. Through these games, participants could also check students' understanding of the vocabulary taught. They applied various games for vocabulary practice. Participant 4 used guessing games because she wants to create fun activities for practicing vocabulary. *"I showed part of a picture and asked the students, what picture is it? and they had to guess correctly in English. If they said the word in Indonesian, they would lose one point. Students who got many points would get snacks."*

Additionally, participant 7 applied matching game where students work in a group when playing this game. *"For the matching game, I provided ten pictures and many words about animals. They worked in groups to match the words with the pictures. After they finished, I pointed to the pictures and asked them about the pictures to check whether they matched the pictures correctly. The groups who answered correctly would get points that I wrote on the whiteboard. The students were very enthusiastic while playing this game."* Furthermore, Participant 5 used Simon Says game to practice vocabulary after teaching body parts. *"I taught parts of body, then we play Simon says touch your nose, touch your ears, to make them focused and know."* On the other hand, Participant 3 utilized a charades game to measure students understanding. In a lesson about prepositions, she asked a student to come to the front and act out an object based on a picture. The student placed the object on the table, and the other students guessed the preposition. The class became noisy as students



shouted different answers such as “in,” “on,” and “at.” The teacher then told them the correct answer.

d) Using memorization

Memorizing activities were also identified as one of the strategies used by a pre-service teacher to practice vocabulary. According to the participant, this strategy helped students remember the target vocabulary effectively. After the vocabulary had introduced, students were asked to memorize the words and later recall them orally. To check students' vocabulary retention, the participant mentioned words in Indonesian and asked students to say in English. *“I often asked the students to memorize the vocabularies. Then they would come forward, I said the words in Indonesia and they said it in English.”*

The Media

The findings indicated the participants employed various media to support the strategies. The media involved visual media, audio media, audio visual media and printed media. Pictures and flashcards as visual media were widely utilized to support strategies such as drilling, elicitation, translation, and games. *“I used flashcards when I said the words, and the students repeated the words after me. I always used pictures for all of the strategies and for the worksheet” (P07).* Furthermore, several participants used real objects, including clocks, clothes, food, and things in the classroom, particularly for demonstration and game. *“When teaching food and drinks, I used pictures and brought real food so students could easily understand and remember” (P04).* For guessing and matching games, participants

also used pictures and flashcards as media. The participants mentioned visual media were easy to prepare and could be applied in all of the strategies. *“Because the visual media are easy to find and bring to the classroom, the students also more focus on my explanation rather than when I only explain the words without media, so we can interact a lot” (P07).*

Additionally, some participants used audio media such as audio recordings and songs. In drilling strategy, the participants applied audio as a media to provide students learning new words and training their listening skills. *“I played the audio as a media then they will repeat the audio. The class became a little noisy but fun” (P06).* Moreover, one participant utilized audio visual media namely YouTube video as a tool for playing guessing games. *“When teaching about gardening, I used pictures and a short video. After that, I played a guessing game where students identified objects based on pictures.”* Several participants used YouTube video containing vocabulary and songs for singing together. *“At that time, I teach them things at home, for starting the explanation I used song related to the topic.”* One participant played song on YouTube where the video include movement, and the students had to follow it. *“When I teach numbers I played songs on YouTube, and the song had a movement activity. I use it so that students can follow the actions and do not get bored from sitting and studying all the time.”*

Subsequently, worksheet was identified as a form of printed media for students practice vocabulary. All participants reported that worksheet was consistently applied in every lesson because it is required by both Campus learning institution and supervising teacher during



the teaching practicum. The analysis of the lesson plan showed the worksheet contained various tasks supplemented with pictures to help students understand the tasks. *“Every time we teach, we must provide worksheet for students. The worksheet is included in the lesson plan”* (P05). Several participants mentioned that their supervising teacher encourage them to design the worksheet interactively. *“From the first we discuss about lesson plan template at school, my supervising teacher told us to make worksheet with visual elements, so students do not feel difficult answering the tasks”* (P06).

The challenges

In addition to the strategies and media used, several challenges were also found from the participants' answers during the interviews, although this was not the main focus of the study. First, classroom management was a common challenge faced by all of the participants. The participants reported struggling to control students who became overly excited and noisy in the class. Participant 2 said *“biggest challenge is when using listen and repeat in a class with a lot of students and there are students who don't want to listen, it's very hard to do.”* Participant 4 mentioned *“The biggest challenge was managing the class when students became too excited and noisy during games.”* In addition, students with short attention spans are also difficult to manage. They usually do not pay attention if the pre-service teachers simply speak without providing any media. Participant 8 stated *“the biggest challenges are from their characteristics. They are so noisy and have short attention span. That's way I always used a picture to get their attention. Sometimes there are also students who does not want to respect me.”*

Second, pre-service teachers had challenges in distinguishing the appropriate strategies for teaching students. As a result, they tended to use the same strategies, especially when teaching vocabulary. Participant 7 stated, *“I don't know what the students in that class are like or what their interests are.”* Therefore, they tended to follow the direction from the supervising teacher.

Third, limited school facilities prevented pre-service teachers from using interactive media. Some schools did not provide projectors, speakers, or other necessary tools. As a result, pre-service teachers were unable to show online and interactive media in the classroom. Since they could not present the material on the big screen, most of them relied on pictures and flashcards as their primary teaching aids. *“The schools do not have a lot of facilities so I cannot apply an interactive online game or used the power point, I only use picture.”*

The use of teaching strategies in vocabulary learning

Based on the findings above, pre-service teachers in this study employed various strategies in teaching elementary learners. The strategies used frequently by the participants for presenting vocabulary were, drilling and elicitation. For practicing vocabulary, the participants used tasks, games, and presentations.

Drilling helped students practice the pronunciation of target vocabulary and reinforce their memory through repetition. This aligned with Thornbury (2002), who emphasized drilling is important to use in presenting vocabulary. Through repetition students could get opportunities to listen and pronounce the target words. Moreover, Brown & Lee (2015) stated that young



learners need repetition several times, 7 to 16 times, to absorb new words in a foreign language. This finding also confirms the research by Wulandari et al. (2020), who identified that experienced teachers also use the drilling as the main strategy when teaching young learners. This suggests that both experienced and pre-service teachers rely on drilling as their main strategy for teaching vocabulary. Despite its pedagogical benefits, pre-service teachers considered drilling easy to implement due to its minimal preparation, indicating their preference for practical strategies during teaching practicums.

Furthermore, elicitations were used by pre-service teachers to encourage student involvement and know their prior knowledge through opening questions. This strategy also helped pre-service teachers identify students' understanding of the target vocabulary. Consistent with Thornbury (2002) who explained learners need actively involved in vocabulary learning to avoid become passive learners. The pre-service teachers implemented these strategies because they understood the importance of teacher-student interaction in the classroom. This demonstrates their ability to apply the knowledge acquired during their coursework to teaching practice. However, another reason for using elicitation strategies was the requirement from their supervising teachers.

Additionally, several pre-service teachers used first language to present the meaning of target words. Translation was applied because students often had difficulties understanding new vocabulary even after the teacher explained it using visual media. The students continued asking for the meanings of words, indicating that visual media alone was not always sufficient for young learners'

understanding. Therefore, pre-service teachers used translation as a supporting strategy to present the meaning clearly. Thornbury (2002) claimed translation can help convey word meanings directly and efficiently, although excessive use may limit learners' independent L2 vocabulary development. Kurniawan et al. (2025) reported that experienced teacher in their research commonly utilized translation for teaching vocabulary.

The pre-service teachers stated they applied demonstration strategy when teaching difficult materials. Demonstration helped students understand vocabulary more easily by providing concrete examples. This finding shows pre-service teachers were able to adapt their teaching strategies based on the learning difficulties faced by students. As Syahabuddin et al. (2024) mentioned that demonstration increase students' comprehension on vocabulary learning. Apart from that, the use of songs served an engaging way for students to encounter new vocabulary and increased their participation during learning. Students became excited and enthusiastic when singing songs together. Previous studies have shown that songs were effective for vocabulary learning. Songs could improve pronunciation, accelerate memorization, remembered vocabulary easily, create a fun atmosphere in the class, and reduce stress and anxiety (Fransisca & Syafei, 2016; Millington, 2011; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Şevik, 2011). These findings suggest that pre-service teachers selected these strategies not only to improve students' understanding and engagement but also to create a more interactive learning.

To make sure students' understanding of vocabulary, pre-service teachers provided tasks to encourage students in



practicing the words they have learned, both individually and collaboratively. This finding differs from Kurniawan et al. (2025) who found experienced teachers rarely utilized tasks in practicing vocabulary to elementary learner. Experienced teachers considered many tasks might make students feel unburdened and think English was difficult. However, the types of tasks used by pre-service teachers in the worksheets tended to be repetitive. This may demonstrate pre-service teachers still had limited variation in designing vocabulary practice. Besides written tasks, some pre-service teachers also used presentation activities where students practiced using vocabulary through conversation or presenting texts in front of the class. This activity provided opportunities for students to apply the vocabulary they had learned. Thornbury (2002) highlighted students can practice vocabulary by producing the words into speaking or writing activities. Furthermore, to assess students' understanding, some participants also incorporated games as an interactive practice activity. This finding confirmed Bakhsh (2016) statement games were interactive tools for teaching vocabulary to young learners. The use of games shows that pre-service teachers attempted to provide not only structured written practice but also enjoyable activities to support students' vocabulary practice.

Integrating various media to support vocabulary teaching strategies

In teaching vocabulary, the pre-service teachers also utilized diverse media to support their strategies. Visual media were frequently applied by the pre-service teachers to support learning strategies. These media were used because strategies like drilling, elicitation, demonstration, or

games could be supported by pictures or flashcards. This finding was in line with Ngarofah & Sumarni (2018), who stated that using flashcards encouraged students to pay attention and become interested in learning. Students understood better when the teacher applied strategies with pictures or flashcards because they learned in context. Putra (2011) suggested teachers could use realia when teaching vocabulary to young learners to helped them understand the material better.

In addition to visual media, integrating audio as a media for teaching vocabulary trains students to focus and learn correct pronunciation. This finding is supported by Wahyuniar et al. (2021), who stated that audio media helps students concentrate, follow directions, and remember information. To make learning more engaging, some pre-service teachers also applied audio-visual media in the classroom. These audio-visual media helped students understand vocabulary through a combination of pictures, sounds, and movements. These findings aligned with Watkins & Wilkins (2011) who stated that YouTube videos enhanced learners' listening skills, pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition by providing visual and auditory input simultaneously.

The use of worksheet as printed media not only for vocabulary practice but also as a way to provide structured learning activities for students. Pre-service teachers understand that elementary learners required written tasks to reinforce vocabulary they had learned. However, pre-service teachers' decision of using worksheet were also influenced by the requirements from the teaching practicum context. Moreover, these findings reflected pre-service teachers' efforts to create



interactive learning for young learners by using different media.

The challenges in implementing the strategies

Pre-service teachers faced challenges in managing the classroom. Even though some of them were able to apply appropriate strategies and interactive media, they still experienced difficulties in handling noisy students. Aligned with Cameron (2001) who explained teaching young learners is difficult and required extra efforts because they are active and enthusiastic. They reported the implementation of their strategies was not always optimal because some students did not pay attention and did not fully respect them during the learning process. The pre-service teachers admitted teaching elementary learners with their characteristics such as short attention spans, being active, and easily distracted was difficult. The finding supported Tarakcioglu & Tuncarslan (2014) who said the challenges in teaching young learners were dealing with their characteristics. Therefore, appropriate strategies were needed to help students focus and engage in the learning process. In addition, limited technological facilities in schools became another reason for implementing varied strategies and media. The pre-service teachers in this study still relied heavily on the decisions of supervising teachers, as their lesson plan activities required approval before implementation.

CONCLUSION

This research explored the strategies used by pre-service English teachers in teaching vocabulary to elementary learners, as well as the media to support the strategies. Based on the findings and discussions, it can be

concluded that drilling and elicitations were the frequently used by pre-service teachers. On other hand, tasks were implemented by all pre-service English teachers in practicing vocabulary to students. The various media were employed to support the strategies. The main contribution of this research is to describe how pre-service teachers apply the theories they have learned during their coursework to their teaching practices in real classrooms. This research also reveals that despite their limited experience, pre-service teachers are capable of adapting strategies and media based on student characteristics and the limitations of existing facilities. Nevertheless, the findings highlight several challenges they face.

This study has several limitations. First, the data were only collected through interviews and lesson plans analysis, without direct classroom observation. Second, this study only focused on identifying the strategies and media used by pre-service teachers. Third, this study did not deeply explore the specific challenges pre-service teachers faced. Therefore, it is suggested for future research to add classroom observation and explore deeply the challenges pre-service teachers face in applying appropriate strategies for teaching young learners.

For educational institutions, these findings can serve as input for strengthening pre-service teacher training, particularly in terms of strategy variation, classroom management, and the use of media. Pre-service teachers are advised to continue developing their creativity in designing varied learning activities to keep students motivated in learning English vocabulary.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher would like to thank the advisor for the guidance and support during this research. Gratitude also goes to the eight pre-service teachers who willingly participated as respondents. The researcher also thanks the English Education Study Program for allowing this research to be conducted. Finally, thanks to family and friends for their encouragement and prayers.

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