


Pre-Service English Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Strategies in English Learning for Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Teaching adolescent learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom requires instructional strategies that address not only language development but also students' cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics. Previous studies have examined pre-service teachers' beliefs, teaching practices, and practicum experiences in general EFL settings. However, limited research has specifically explored how pre-service English teachers perceive the suitability of various teaching strategies for adolescent learners and what factors influence those perceptions during teaching practicum. This issue is important because perceptions formed during practicum often shape future instructional decisions and professional teaching identities. Therefore, a deeper understanding of pre-service teachers' views can provide valuable insights into teacher education and classroom practice. This study investigates pre-service English teachers' perceptions of teaching strategies for adolescent students and the factors shaping those perceptions during practicum. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the study involved 40 pre-service English teachers from Universitas Negeri Semarang who participated in the LANTIP 6 practicum program. Data were collected through a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire and follow-up semi-structured interviews with five selected participants. The findings indicate that participants generally favored strategies that promote active participation, provide clear scaffolding, and create a low-anxiety learning environment. Interview data further revealed that strategy selection was influenced by students' confidence, proficiency differences, classroom management challenges, time constraints, mentor expectations, and available facilities. These findings suggest that pre-service teachers view teaching strategies as contextual and adaptive practices shaped by real classroom conditions rather than as fixed instructional techniques.

Keywords: *Adolescents, Practicum Context, Pre-Service English Teacher, Teacher Perceptions, Teaching Strategies.*

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial period in English language learning because students are reforming their identities and social relationships, which influences how they participate in English as a foreign language classes (Piaget, 1970). The sociocultural perspective also emphasizes that language develops through supported interaction, so teachers need to provide guidance on tasks and dialogues rather than relying on separate exercises (Vygotsky, 1978). Motivation is particularly important at this age, as students tend to be more motivated to learn when teachers establish a clear learning vision and a supportive environment (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). Data from English as a foreign language learning environments for adolescents shows that interaction patterns during tasks can shape language-related episodes and writing performance (Blaca & Villarreal, 2025). Therefore, the strategy chosen by teachers is not merely a teaching routine, but a practical way to maintain adolescent engagement while still guiding them toward language goals.

In English Language Teaching (ELT), teaching strategies refer to the choices planned by teachers regarding the methods, procedures, teaching materials, and patterns of interaction used to achieve learning objectives (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). In adolescent classrooms, these choices often need to balance structure and flexibility, as students may respond differently depending on their level of confidence, peer influence, and classroom atmosphere. In day-to-

day instruction, teachers often adjust strategies to help students build vocabulary and use words meaningfully in context (Putri et al., 2022). However, vocabulary routines alone may not be sufficient when adolescents need a larger space for interaction to practice language, negotiate meaning, and express personal ideas. Strategy decisions are also influenced by the use of teaching materials, including how textbooks are selected or adapted for intermediate-level students (Jemadi et al., 2024). In a school environment, pre-service teachers may rely heavily on textbooks or examples from mentors, which can make their choice of strategies seem "safe" but not always responsive to the urgent learning needs of adolescents. Because the use of strategies involves judgment and emotion, teachers' feelings about teaching can influence what they try and what they avoid in the classroom (Seyri & Ghasvand, 2025).

Teaching strategies play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction because they influence students' engagement, participation, and language development. According to Harmer (2007), effective EFL teaching should encourage active learner involvement through meaningful classroom interaction rather than relying solely on teacher-centered practices. Similarly, Brown & Lee (2015) emphasize that successful language instruction requires strategies that promote communicative competence, learner autonomy, and authentic language use. In recent years, learner-centered approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), collaborative learning, and scaffolding have gained prominence because they provide opportunities for students to use language in meaningful contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural perspective highlights the importance of social interaction and guided support in facilitating language learning, making collaborative activities and scaffolding essential components of effective EFL instruction. Research by Zamil (2026) also indicates that interactive teaching strategies contribute positively to students' confidence, motivation, and language performance. Therefore, teaching strategies in EFL contexts should be viewed as flexible and context-sensitive practices that support language acquisition while addressing learners' diverse needs, proficiency levels, and classroom realities.

Research on teacher cognition shows that teachers' beliefs influence how they interpret learning objectives in the classroom and determine what is considered learning support (Chen & Abdullah, 2022). In other words, perceptions can serve as filters that teachers use to decide whether a strategy is worth trying with adolescents or whether it seems too risky for classroom management. Studies on teacher psychology show that self-confidence and resilience can influence how confident teachers are in continuing lessons when they do not go according to plan (Xue, 2022). Emotional stress and anxiety can reduce teachers' willingness to experiment, especially in communicative lessons where outcomes feel less predictable (Attia & Algazo, 2025). Assessment-oriented teaching also depends on teachers' understanding of evidence of learning, including how self-assessment is used to encourage learning responsibility (Ariyanti et al., 2025). A review of teacher development also shows that training can strengthen the integration of digital instruction and influence daily teaching practices (Amemasor et al., 2025).

Pre-service teachers often develop their repertoire of strategies during teaching practice, but their learning is influenced by school limitations and the realities of teaching adolescents (Li et al., 2023). A literature review on microteaching shows that training can build basic techniques, but does not always prepare beginners for complex classroom interactions (Iliasova et al., 2025). As a result, many pre-service teachers enter the classroom with theoretical knowledge but still feel uncertain about how to choose strategies that suit the attention span of adolescents, their participation patterns, and classroom dynamics. Reflective journal writing has been used to help pre-service teachers interpret experiences and refine strategies after teaching (Almutawa & Alfahid, 2024). Technology-related confidence, including self-reported TPACK, can influence which strategies pre-service teachers feel capable of implementing in real classrooms (Dwi Susanti et al., 2023). However, studies still rarely focus on how pre-service teachers specifically link their choice of strategies to the learning needs of adolescent EFL students while explaining their reasons in depth (Hwang &

Lee, 2024). This lack of emphasis is important because perceptions often influence what pre-service teachers actually do during teaching practice, especially when time is limited and classroom demands are high.

Although attention to teacher cognition and teaching practice experience is increasing, research still provides limited details about how pre-service English teachers view specific teaching strategies for teaching English to adolescents, as well as how they justify these perceptions in relation to classroom realities. Therefore, this study aims to explore pre-service English teachers' perceptions of teaching strategies for teaching English to adolescents, as well as the considerations that form these perceptions (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). This study is based on sociocultural theory, which views learning as a process mediated through interaction and teacher support, so that the use of strategies becomes a form of contextual classroom practice (Vygotsky, 1978). Data were collected through a agree-disagree questionnaire, followed by interviews to clarify participants' responses and understand the meaning behind their choices (Hernández-Ocampo et al., 2025). Therefore, this study answers two questions: (1) What teaching strategies do Pre-Service English teachers consider suitable for teaching English to adolescents? and (2) What personal and contextual factors shape the perceptions and strategy choices reported?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore pre-service English teachers' perceptions of teaching strategies in English language learning for adolescents. A qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate when the purpose of the research is to provide a comprehensive and straightforward description of participants' perspectives and experiences without generating highly abstract theoretical interpretations (Sandelowski, 2000). The study was guided by Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory, which views learning as a socially mediated process influenced by interaction, collaboration, and instructional support. Within this framework, teaching strategies are understood as contextual classroom practices shaped by learners' needs, classroom dynamics, and social relationships.

The participants were pre-service English teachers from Universitas Negeri Semarang who were enrolled in the LANTIP 6 practicum program and were actively teaching English during their school placements. Purposive sampling was employed because the study required participants who had direct experience teaching adolescent learners in authentic classroom settings. Recruitment was conducted through announcements distributed by the LANTIP 6 practicum coordinator and student communication groups. Interested participants received information about the study objectives, procedures, and ethical considerations before voluntarily agreeing to participate. A total of 40 participants met the inclusion criteria: (1) being officially registered in the LANTIP 6 program, (2) teaching English during the practicum period, and (3) teaching adolescent students at the secondary school level.

Data were collected using a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire and follow-up semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consisted of five response categories ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree and was designed to examine participants' perceptions of various teaching strategies commonly used in EFL classrooms. The questionnaire items reflected major areas of English language teaching, including classroom interaction, student engagement, instructional materials, and assessment practices. To ensure content validity and clarity, the instrument was reviewed by an English Language Teaching (ELT) expert and revised based on the feedback received. A readability check was also conducted prior to distribution to minimize ambiguity and improve comprehensibility.

The data collection process was conducted in two stages. First, the questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms during January–February 2026. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality of responses, and their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. After the questionnaire responses were collected and reviewed, five participants were selected for interviews using purposive sampling. The interviewees represented different response patterns, including those who expressed strong

agreement with most teaching strategy statements and those who provided more varied or critical responses. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face in locations agreed upon by the participants. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The questionnaire data were analysed descriptively by calculating item means and examining the distribution of responses across the five Likert categories. Mean scores were used to identify general response tendencies, while response distributions provided insights into areas of consensus and variation among participants. The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke (2006) framework. The process involved familiarization with the data, initial coding, categorization of related codes, theme development, theme refinement, and interpretation. Finally, the interview findings were compared with the questionnaire results to enhance the credibility of the analysis and provide a more comprehensive understanding of pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching strategies in adolescent EFL classrooms.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Strategy Preferences in Adolescent EFL Classrooms

The questionnaire items were interpreted descriptively using both item means and response distributions across the five Likert categories: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Overall, the responses show that participants generally endorsed interactive, scaffolded, and supportive classroom practices. However, the inclusion of neutral and disagreement data also shows that not all items received uniform support. Several items indicate mixed perceptions, especially those related to textbook use, adaptation of textbook activities, self-assessment, peer assessment, and activities that require adolescents to explain opinions or reasons in English. This pattern suggests that participants viewed teaching strategies for adolescents as useful when they were engaging and guided, but they became more cautious when the strategy required greater classroom control, assessment literacy, or deviation from textbook routines.

Table 1. Descriptive Results of Questionnaire Items With Response Distribution (N = 40)

Item	Statement (short)	Mean	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Q01	Pair/group work	4.28	35.0	57.5	7.5	0.0	0.0
Q02	Clear models/examples	4.40	45.0	50.0	5.0	0.0	0.0
Q03	Step-by-step support	4.28	40.0	47.5	12.5	0.0	0.0
Q04	Peer interaction	4.22	35.0	55.0	7.5	2.5	0.0
Q05	Strategy adjustment	4.03	30.0	47.5	17.5	5.0	0.0
Q06	Daily-life topic links	4.10	30.0	50.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Q07	Varied activities	4.33	47.5	40.0	10.0	2.5	0.0
Q08	Supportive atmosphere	4.33	37.5	57.5	5.0	0.0	0.0
Q09	Clear goals/purposes	4.35	42.5	50.0	7.5	0.0	0.0
Q10	Textbook activity adaptation	3.75	30.0	30.0	25.0	15.0	0.0
Q11	Additional materials	4.58	60.0	37.5	2.5	0.0	0.0
Q12	Heavy textbook reliance (safer option)	3.35	20.0	30.0	17.5	30.0	2.5
Q13	Contextual vocabulary teaching	4.12	22.5	67.5	10.0	0.0	0.0
Q14	Short speaking tasks	4.20	32.5	55.0	12.5	0.0	0.0
Q15	Guided writing activities	4.00	25.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	0.0
Q16	Opinion/reason activities	4.05	32.5	47.5	15.0	2.5	2.5
Q17	Improvement-oriented feedback	4.47	52.5	42.5	5.0	0.0	0.0
Q18	Self-assessment	3.90	27.5	45.0	17.5	10.0	0.0
Q19	Peer assessment/feedback	3.75	17.5	50.0	25.0	5.0	2.5
Q20	Digital tools for engagement	4.60	70.0	25.0	2.5	0.0	2.5

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree. Values are presented as percentages.

The strongest endorsement appeared in items related to learning resources and technology. Participants strongly supported the use of additional materials such as videos,

songs, or short texts (Q11: M = 4.58; SA = 60.0%; A = 37.5%; N = 2.5%; D/SD = 0.0%) and the use of digital tools when they help adolescents participate and stay engaged (Q20: M = 4.60; SA = 70.0%; A = 25.0%; N = 2.5%; SD = 2.5%). Although Q20 still received one strongly disagree response, the overall pattern indicates that most participants considered digital tools useful when they served a clear pedagogical purpose. This finding is in line with studies showing that teacher development and pre-service teachers' technological knowledge influence confidence in integrating digital resources into language instruction (Dwi Susanti et al., 2023).

Items related to scaffolding, feedback, and classroom atmosphere also received consistently high endorsement. Participants strongly supported giving clear examples or models before independent work (Q02: M = 4.40; Agree+SA = 95.0%; N = 5.0%; D/SD = 0.0%), creating a supportive classroom atmosphere to reduce fear of mistakes (Q08: M = 4.32; Agree+SA = 95.0%; N = 5.0%; D/SD = 0.0%), and giving feedback that helps adolescents improve rather than only pointing out errors (Q17: M = 4.47; Agree+SA = 95.0%; N = 5.0%; D/SD = 0.0%). These results indicate a stable preference for classroom strategies that combine guidance with emotional safety. Brown, (2000) emphasized that feedback should guide improvement while protecting learner confidence, while Attia & Algazo (2025) noted that anxiety can restrict participation in EFL classrooms. Therefore, the strong support for modeling, supportive atmosphere, and improvement-oriented feedback is consistent with the need to make adolescent participation less threatening.

Interaction-focused strategies were also generally endorsed, although a small amount of disagreement appeared in several items. Pair or group work received high support (Q01: M = 4.28; Agree+SA = 92.5%; N = 7.5%; D/SD = 0.0%), as did peer interaction for solving language tasks (Q04: M = 4.22; Agree+SA = 90.0%; N = 7.5%; D = 2.5%) and varied activities such as discussion, games, role play, and projects (Q07: M = 4.32; Agree+SA = 87.5%; N = 10.0%; D = 2.5%). Step-by-step support was also strongly supported (Q03: M = 4.28; Agree+SA = 87.5%; N = 12.5%; D/SD = 0.0%). These distributions show that interaction and scaffolding were widely valued, but a small number of responses suggest caution, possibly because interactive tasks may become difficult to manage in adolescent classrooms. This interpretation fits the sociocultural view that learning is mediated through interaction and guided support, but such mediation still depends on classroom conditions (Vygotsky, 1978).

For skill-based strategies, participants generally supported contextual and guided instruction, but the response patterns were not equally strong across all items. Teaching vocabulary through context was highly endorsed (Q13: M = 4.12; Agree+SA = 90.0%; N = 10.0%; D/SD = 0.0%), and short speaking tasks were also positively viewed (Q14: M = 4.20; Agree+SA = 87.5%; N = 12.5%; D/SD = 0.0%). Guided writing activities received a more moderate pattern (Q15: M = 4.00; Agree+SA = 75.0%; N = 25.0%; D/SD = 0.0%), while activities requiring adolescents to explain opinions or reasons in English showed some variation (Q16: M = 4.05; Agree+SA = 80.0%; N = 15.0%; D = 2.5%; SD = 2.5%). These results suggest that participants did not reject higher-demand language tasks, but they may have viewed them as requiring more support, preparation, and classroom readiness. This is consistent with studies emphasizing the importance of repeated exposure, interaction, and guided task design in vocabulary, speaking, writing, and critical thinking-oriented EFL activities (Putri et al., 2022).

The most mixed responses appeared in textbook-related and assessment-related items. Adapting textbook activities received only moderate endorsement (Q10: M = 3.75; Agree+SA = 60.0%; N = 25.0%; D = 15.0%; SD = 0.0%), indicating that some participants were willing to adapt textbook tasks, while others were neutral or disagreed. The item on relying heavily on the textbook because it feels safer was the most divided (Q12: M = 3.35; Agree+SA = 50.0%; N = 17.5%; D = 30.0%; SD = 2.5%). This means that textbook reliance should not be interpreted as a generally accepted strategy; instead, responses were clearly split between participants who saw textbook dependence as practical and those who did not endorse it. Self-assessment was moderately endorsed (Q18: M = 3.90; Agree+SA = 72.5%; N = 17.5%; D = 10.0%), while peer assessment showed greater caution (Q19: M = 3.75; Agree+SA = 67.5%; N = 25.0%; D = 5.0%; SD = 2.5%). These patterns suggest that assessment-related strategies were viewed as useful, but not uniformly easy to implement with adolescents. The interview data below help

explain this caution by showing that participants associated textbook adaptation and peer assessment with classroom management, student confidence, and the need for clear structure.

Factors Shaping Strategy Choice in Practicum Context

Following a qualitative descriptive orientation, the interview findings are reported in a straightforward manner to foreground participants' classroom reasoning and practical decision-making (Sandelowski, 2000). Themes were developed through iterative coding and pattern identification (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Across five interviewees (teaching Grades 7–9), the narratives consistently showed that strategy choice was shaped by student energy levels, mixed proficiency, classroom management demands, and the participants' own confidence during practicum.

Theme 1: Participation is built through "safe" interaction structures

All five participants described participation as more attainable when interaction is structured and psychologically safe. They commonly used pair work, group work with roles, information-gap tasks, gallery walks, and short role plays to reduce speaking pressure while still creating communication opportunities. Vygotsky (1978) positioned interaction as a core site where learning is mediated through support and collaboration, which fits how participants used peers as a "safer" space before whole-class performance. Fitriani et al. (2025) noted that innovative speaking instruction often relies on purposeful communicative formats rather than long unstructured talk, and the present participants echoed that logic by keeping speaking tasks short, guided, and role-supported. Participants also indicated that adolescents respond better when tasks feel meaningful or socially relevant (e.g., surveys, "lost and found" role play, poster creation). Dörnyei & Kubanyiova (2014) argued that motivation is strengthened when teachers build a supportive environment and a clear sense of purpose for learning, which parallels the participants' repeated focus on "making English feel useful" and not overly intimidating. Takagi (2022) similarly showed that pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching are strongly shaped by prior learning experiences, which may explain why the participants frequently prioritized engagement and comfort as the first condition for participation.

Theme 2: Scaffolding is enacted as modeling, sentence support, and task chunking

Participants consistently reported that adolescents struggle when instructions are long, tasks feel too difficult, or vocabulary gaps block performance. In response, they described practical scaffolding moves: demonstrating tasks, rewriting instructions in simpler language, using brief L1 support for key directions, providing sentence starters, and chunking complex writing into smaller steps (word list → sentences → short paragraph). Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that learning develops through guided support within students' reachable range, and participants' "step-by-step" and "sentence frame" strategies reflect this guided progression.

This theme also connects with how pre-service teachers develop classroom decision-making during practicum. Li et al. (2023) portrayed practicum learning as shaped by interacting factors (students, mentors, time, classroom dynamics), which matches participants' accounts of adjusting support when noise increased or time became limited. Glaser & Martínez-Flor (2025) traced how a pre-service teacher's knowledge and beliefs evolve through classroom experience and perceived challenges, and the present participants similarly described strategy shifts as they learned what adolescents could realistically do in one lesson.

Theme 3: Textbook use is selective, and adaptation is driven by relevance and manageability

Participants did not reject textbooks, but they rarely followed them "as-is." They described keeping the topic or target language while adjusting task length, simplifying output expectations, or changing contexts to match students' lives (e.g., replacing "winter holiday" scenarios with local holiday experiences). Richards & Rodgers (1986) noted that classroom procedures are often adapted in practice to fit teaching goals and learner conditions, and participants treated textbook activities as flexible resources rather than fixed scripts. Jemadi et al., (2024) highlighted that pre-service teachers frequently evaluate coursebooks through

practicality and learner fit, which closely mirrors participants' emphasis on "relatable context" and "manageable steps."

Equity considerations also appeared indirectly when participants discussed mixed ability levels and uneven participation (dominant vs. quiet students). Chen & Abdullah (2022) argued that teacher cognition shapes how equity is enacted in everyday decisions, and participants' use of group roles, prompts, and structured turn-taking can be read as practical attempts to distribute participation more fairly.

Theme 4: Skill teaching is multi-modal, recycled, and constrained by learner confidence

For vocabulary instruction, participants described visual supports, matching games, mini word walls, vocabulary notebooks, repeated exposure across activities, and teaching chunks/collocations rather than isolated words. Putri et al. (2022) noted that vocabulary learning benefits from varied strategies and repeated encounters, which aligns with participants' emphasis on recycling and multi-modal presentation. Liu et al. (2024) compared traditional and personalized TPR-based approaches and highlighted the value of learner-friendly, action-supported vocabulary learning, which resonates with participants' frequent use of movement, visuals, and game-like formats.

For speaking, participants tended to use guided dialogues, short role plays, rehearsal time, and "think time" before performance. Fitriani et al. (2025) observed that speaking innovation often depends on design choices that reduce fear while sustaining communicative purpose, reflecting participants' preference for brief, structured speaking. For writing, participants used outlines, sentence limits, and staged drafting. Bllaca & Villarreal (2025) reported that interaction patterns affect language-focused episodes and writing outcomes, which helps explain why participants often embedded writing within pair/group support rather than assigning long independent writing.

Participants also reported that adolescents sometimes avoid English when vocabulary is missing or when they fear grammar errors. Attia & Algazo (2025) noted that anxiety can suppress participation, which fits participants' observation that students become silent when worried about being wrong. Rosi et al. (2024) described obstacles pre-service teachers face in promoting higher-order thinking in EFL contexts, and the participants' reliance on prompts and structured "opinion + reasons" tasks suggests they were attempting to elicit reasoning while still protecting students from overload.

Theme 5: Feedback and assessment are valued, but peer assessment must be tightly structured

All participants described feedback as needing to be encouraging and selective (e.g., praise first, correct one priority point, use "one positive + one improvement"). Brown (2000) emphasized that correction practices should support learner confidence while guiding development, which matches the participants' preference for gentle and focused feedback. Participants also used rubrics, symbols for writing errors, and checklists to make feedback actionable.

Self-assessment appeared more acceptable than peer assessment, especially with younger adolescents. Ariyanti et al. (2025) examined how self-assessment is understood and implemented in language classrooms, and participants similarly treated self-assessment as a simple reflection tool ("Today I can... / I still need help with..."). Hernández-Ocampo et al. (2025) reported that pre-service teachers often equate assessment with testing and become especially sensitive to feedback quality, which parallels the participants' strong emphasis on feedback that supports improvement rather than judgment. Fitriyah et al. (2022) discussed differences in classroom-based assessment literacy and professional development needs, and participants' reliance on checklists and rubrics suggests an emerging effort to make assessment practices clearer and more teachable.

Peer assessment was used cautiously and only with strong structure (e.g., simple rubric, spelling/punctuation checks, or short checklist prompts). Aminin et al. (2025) explored pre-service teachers' perceptions and practices of peer assessment in public speaking contexts, and the present participants similarly treated peer feedback as viable only when criteria are explicit and behavior is guided to avoid teasing or superficial comments. Díaz Larenas et al. (2025) examined emotions and accountability in language assessment scenarios, which helps

interpret why participants emphasized “not embarrassing” students and why they framed assessment as socially and emotionally sensitive classroom work.

Theme 6: Strategy decisions are filtered through confidence, emotion, context, and practicum demands

Participants repeatedly stated that their confidence and mood shaped how interactive they could be, with lower confidence leading to more controlled tasks. Xue (2022) examined how self-efficacy and emotional resilience relate to teachers' appraisal of learning success, and this connects with participants' accounts of “safer” choices when they felt nervous. Seyri & Ghasvand, (2025) explored teachers' emotions and regulatory strategies in technology-influenced instruction, and participants similarly described emotion-driven adjustments (e.g., simplifying lessons when tired, choosing calmer tasks when noise increased).

Contextual constraints were also central: classroom management, limited time, mentor expectations, and facilities (e.g., projector/internet access) shaped what strategies felt realistic. Burhan et al., (2024) discussed how broader contextual and resource conditions influence EFL teaching recommendations, and participants' “switch to printed materials” decisions reflect this practical adaptation. Saputro et al. (2023) highlighted how professional competence develops through practicum experiences, and the participants' narratives show competence emerging as the ability to adjust plans, manage time, and keep instruction aligned with mentor requirements. Almutawa & Alfahid (2024), reported that reflective practices such as journaling help pre-service teachers make sense of practicum experiences, and the participants' explicit reflections on what worked (and why) show a similar reflective stance toward classroom learning. Iliasova et al. (2025) noted that microteaching can train teachers to rehearse instructional moves in controlled settings, and participants' reliance on modeling, routine lesson staging, and “controlled first, freer later” sequencing resembles the kind of skill decomposition often practiced in microteaching.

CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes to the understanding of how pre-service English teachers conceptualize teaching strategies for adolescent learners in EFL classrooms. Rather than viewing instructional strategies as fixed techniques that can be applied universally, the participants perceived them as flexible and context-dependent practices that must be adapted to learners' developmental characteristics, classroom dynamics, and instructional constraints. The findings highlight the importance of balancing pedagogical goals with practical classroom realities, suggesting that effective teaching for adolescents requires sensitivity to students' emotional needs, learning readiness, and opportunities for meaningful participation. From a sociocultural perspective, the study reinforces the idea that teaching practices are shaped through interaction, mediation, and the broader educational environment in which teachers operate. The study also provides implications for teacher education programs, emphasizing the need to prepare pre-service teachers not only with methodological knowledge but also with adaptive decision-making skills that enable them to respond to diverse classroom situations. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the study, as they were derived from a single practicum setting and relied primarily on self-reported data. Future research may extend this work by incorporating classroom observations and multiple institutional contexts to gain a deeper understanding of how teaching beliefs and instructional practices develop during professional preparation.

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