

Portraying Young Learners' Language Learning Strategies: A Case Study from EFL Teachers' Voices

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Autonomous language learning, EFL, teaching strategies, young learners</p> <p>DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v9i2.1806</p>	<p><i>This study aims to investigate how EFL teachers decide on and adapt teaching strategies for young learners in ELT classrooms and explore strategies teachers use to encourage independent language learning. The research was conducted as a case study in an academic English course in Batam and involved three experienced EFL teachers. Data collection methods included observation checklists, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of lesson plans. Descriptive analysis was applied to observation checklists and document reviews, while thematic analysis was used for interview data. The findings underscore the importance of flexible teaching methods that emphasize student engagement and align instructional activities with learning goals. They highlight the necessity of customizing teaching strategies to students' backgrounds and interests and efficiently utilizing classroom resources to promote active learning and enhance educational outcomes in EFL contexts, thereby fostering autonomous learning among students. In conclusion, effective EFL teaching involves integrating student engagement, active learning strategies, customized teaching approaches, and adequate classroom resources. The implications stress the importance of a holistic approach to EFL learning that prioritizes student engagement, active and independent learning, effective technology use, and continuous professional development for EFL teachers.</i></p>
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1. Introduction

Teaching strategies are crucial in the classroom, significantly impacting the learning process. Effective strategies not only facilitate student engagement but also make learning activities more exciting and compelling, thereby aiding in the achievement of learning goals (Rafika et al., 2021; Syafryadin et al., 2020). Hence, creative and adaptable strategies are essential for teachers to address students' needs and promote deeper understanding, particularly in English Language Teaching (Ulumudin et al., 2023).

Sanjani (2021) emphasizes that appropriate learning strategies make education more active, encouraging students to work individually or in groups, participate in discussions, and develop problem-solving skills. Properly implemented strategies help teachers maximize learning components, leading to more effective and efficient classroom management. Conversely, ineffective strategies can disrupt learning, causing misconceptions, disinterest, and poor academic performance (Kiftiah, 2019; Rafika et al., 2021).

Recent studies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms have highlighted several issues. Researchers found that teachers often rely on monotonous, teacher-centered methods, focusing heavily on textbooks without implementing strategies to enhance student skills. This approach causes students to become overly dependent on the teacher, leading to a passively inactive class environment. Therefore, students struggle with pronunciation and vocabulary, frequently reverting to their native language to understand unfamiliar terms (Odit et al., 2023). The strategy, which includes techniques like Present-Practice-Produce (PPP) and grammar drills, focuses on memorization rather than meaningful understanding and creativity, leading to student boredom and disengagement (Markina & Mollá, 2022; Qochqorova & Qizi, 2023). Studies have shown that such approaches result in students becoming overly reliant on teachers and lacking critical thinking skills.

The reliance on direct teaching methods limits student autonomy and engagement, causing academic underperformance and disinterest. Students' lack of active participation in these settings leads to distractions, such as using phones, and overall disengagement. Furthermore, students who do not actively engage in learning are less likely to succeed academically (Shafi & Masood, 2023).

Current studies have highlighted the importance of innovative teaching strategies, interactive learning approaches, and diverse assessments to improve language teaching and learning outcomes (Bagus et al., 2020). Effective teaching methods are shown to encompass diverse strategies to engage learners, boost critical thinking in learning, foster understanding, and promote lifelong learning (Gulamova, 2024; Yazidi, 2023). Moreover, researchers believe teachers need to select appropriate strategies to create a fun and comfortable learning environment, especially for young learners (Zaid et al., 2019). Hence, previous research resulted in recommendations emphasizing the importance of understanding subject content student characteristics and using active learning strategies such as cooperative student-centered learning and peer tutoring. Researchers noticed the context of adapting an appropriate teaching strategy and how the teachers foster autonomy to a student still a few.

Based on the background of the problem that has been explained above, it can be proposed to the research questions:

- 1) How do EFL teachers select and adapt an appropriate strategy in ELT for young learners?
- 2) How do EFL teachers foster autonomous language learning through implemented strategies?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Importance of Teaching Strategies in ELT

As defined by Richards & Rodgers (1986), a teaching strategy refers to a plan, technique, or sequence of actions to achieve specific learning objectives. Dzo et al. (2020) expand this definition to include actions taken by teachers or educational tools like computers or textbooks to facilitate learning. It encompasses educators' efforts to transfer knowledge to students through various methods and processes effectively. Rafika et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of teachers employing effective strategies to enhance the learning process and continuously updating their skills to adapt to different materials and objectives. However, transitioning from traditional, teacher-centered approaches to student-centered learning can pose challenges, as some students may resist active participation, preferring a more passive role in the classroom (Nasir, 2019). Overcoming these challenges is essential for creating engaging and interactive learning environments that promote meaningful student achievement.

2.2 ELT Strategy for Young Learners

Nasir (2019) mentions that an English teacher plays a vital role in fostering an active learning environment where students engage through reflection, discussion, and participation. This approach is crucial for effective language acquisition, as it involves direct communication between students and teachers (Hilmi & Summiyani, 2023; Rahmawati & Suryadi, 2019). Thus, active learning, characterized by student participation in reading, writing, discussing, and problem-solving, enhances understanding and retention of the English language (Ayu et al., 2021; Cosner, 2020). Active learning involves students taking responsibility for their learning, collaborating with peers, and engaging in activities facilitated by teachers. This method contrasts with traditional, passive learning, where students merely listen and complete exercises. As Holec (1979) and Little (1998) described, autonomous learners take charge of their learning by setting objectives, choosing activities, and working independently. Practical strategies that promote autonomy can enhance student engagement and interest in EFL classes (Marsevani, 2021). Moreover, student participation in discussions and teamwork is crucial for knowledge acquisition and academic success (Dunn & Kennedy, 2019; Sholikah & Harsono, 2021). Research indicates active learning strategies are more effective than traditional methods in fostering student involvement and collaborative learning (Alqasa & Afaneh, 2022; Dogani, 2023; Dunn & Kennedy, 2019).

2.3 The Challenges in Implementing ELT Strategy for Young Learners

Altun (2023) states that ineffective teaching practices can lead to several issues, as teacher-centered education, which is not tailored to individual student needs and interests, can be less inclusive and result in a one-size-fits-all approach that overlooks different learning preferences. This approach may be particularly problematic for students who need extra help, as it fails to promote student autonomy, ownership, and responsibility for their learning. Despite its benefits, student-centered learning presents challenges in English Language

Teaching (ELT) classrooms. Bonwell & Eison (1991) noted that covering all required material in the given time can be challenging, necessitating more teacher preparation, while large classes can hinder active learning strategies and effective student participation.

Maffea (2020) also highlights that inadequate access to necessary resources further complicates teaching. Creative problem-solving and resource allocation are essential to address these challenges. Teachers must still guide, supervise, inspire, and consult with students, addressing misconceptions and errors through focused feedback on student performance. However, implementing these approaches can be contentious, particularly regarding low student achievement (Kardena et al., 2022), and the readiness of teachers and students to adopt learner-centered instruction is a significant issue (Daflizar & Petraki, 2022a). In Indonesia, traditional practices have long placed teachers as the central authority in the classroom (Lidar et al., 2020), making the shift to student-centered education challenging due to deeply ingrained beliefs about the teacher's role.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Researchers opted for a case study approach to understand better how EFL teachers select and implement teaching strategies that impact student engagement. Case studies, a qualitative research method, according to Coombs (2022), aim to comprehensively explore current problems or phenomena within specific, often constrained environments. This method allows researchers to delve deeply into EFL teachers' decision-making processes regarding effective strategies for young learners and their influence on student learning outcomes. Case studies are invaluable for providing nuanced insights, drawing logical conclusions, and maintaining continuity in research. They contribute significantly to theory development, practical application, and a nuanced understanding of real-world educational dynamics.

3.2 Participants

This study took place in an academic English course in Batam chosen for its use of Cambridge University Press materials and a dedicated computer lab, which enhances technology integration in teaching. This unique setup underscores the course's commitment to providing high-quality English education in Indonesia.

The participants were three experienced EFL teachers, including Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. A, who were selected using purposive sampling. In this case, the criteria for selection were their extensive experience in teaching young students and their proficiency in handling various competency levels over four years. Their participation ensured a comprehensive pedagogical perspective and facilitated deeper insights into effective teaching strategies.

Mr. M is a thirty-year-old male teacher who has been teaching English courses for about five years. He recognized Cambridge Press University material as the curriculum of the English course. Mr. O is a twenty-eight-year-old male teacher who has been teaching English for about four years. He had a background in psychology and loved to teach young learners, so he acknowledged Cambridge Press material as well. Ms. D is a female teacher who has been teaching English for about five years. She has background knowledge, so she could also define Cambridge Press material.

3.3 Instruments

This study employed three primary tools to investigate the topic comprehensively. Firstly, an observation checklist was used to capture the dynamics of EFL classrooms and identify common challenges. Based on Dignath & Veenman (2021), systematic classroom observations provide insights into teaching practices within a natural setting. Researchers conducted three methodical observations to understand student engagement and identify teaching obstacles. The checklist facilitated efficient data gathering in real-time, allowing researchers to discern patterns in teaching and learning methods. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with EFL teachers to gather detailed insights. Mashuri et al. (2022) highlight that such interviews offer flexibility while ensuring focus on research objectives, enabling thorough data collection through open-ended questions. 26 questions were adapted from various sources (Azhariah et al., 2023; Cooper & Ozansoy, 2022; Dita, 2020; Kurniawan, 2022; Ridha & Komariah, 2022; Sejati, 2019) to meet study goals, with responses recorded for analysis. Thirdly, document analysis of lesson plans provided additional insights into teachers' strategies and preparations for teaching in the academic English course.

3.4 Data collections

The researchers employed a meticulous multi-stage approach to study teaching and learning dynamics in EFL classrooms comprehensively. Initially, they conducted three classroom observations after securing ethical permissions from teachers and students, ensuring transparency and respect. In adopting a non-participant observer role, researchers used an observation checklist to record student behaviors, teaching strategies, and classroom atmosphere to evaluate teaching effectiveness and student engagement. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather detailed insights from teachers (Mr. M, O, and Ms. A) on their pedagogical decisions and strategies for promoting student autonomy. These interviews, recorded and noted for accuracy, allowed flexibility in exploring emerging themes and gathering in-depth perspectives. Additionally, researchers analyzed lesson plans to support insights into teaching strategies and logical presentation of materials, as Farhang et al. (2023) suggested. Overall, the study integrated observational data with interview findings to comprehensively understand EFL teaching practices.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

To analyze the observation checklist, researchers used descriptive analysis. They were involving a list of objectives in teaching activities. Thus, while the teachers were instructing the young students, the researchers marked and classified the teacher's performance three times. The rating scales were divided into five categories: 1) very poor, 2) poor, 3) fair, 4) good, and 5) very good. The researchers marked with a checklist mark when the teacher meets or exceeds the criteria listed on the observation sheet. The lesson plans were examined by researchers as though gathered from the three teachers who were also interviewed. Researchers also employ descriptive analysis to review the lesson plan in compliance with Reiser & Dick (1996), which covers the aims, procedures, goals, and activities of the process of teaching and learning. To analyze the interview data, researchers chose thematic analysis. Thematic analysis identifies patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Choosing a thematic analysis provides flexibility, patterns the data, and makes it more organized.

4. Results

4.1 EFL Teachers' Selection and Adaptation of Effective Strategies for Teaching Young Learners in ELT Classroom

In this section, researchers elaborate on the answers to the question of how EFL teachers select and adapt an appropriate strategy. These questions are divided into three sections. The first section, described in 4.1.1, discusses students' background constraints. The second section in 4.1.2 is about students' learning objectives. The third section in 4.1.3 is about classroom facilities. The last section, described in 4.1.4, is the students' learning interests. All these sections were elaborated from the instruments gained by researchers.

4.1.1 Students' Background Constraints

Based on the results of observations by the researchers, the students in the class seem to become passive, with the teacher becoming the central figure. It leads to constraints on students' backgrounds. Young learners have a limited attention span and are naturally active, often moving around the classroom. In this section, the researchers explained that student engagement can encourage active participation in the class, making it a priority for teachers to select and adapt appropriate teaching strategies for young learners.

Mr. M mentions that student engagement means being part of the student. While engaging with them, it is essential to set boundaries to maintain a professional relationship. Moreover, Mr. M has always used a student-teaching approach that actively involves his students in learning. He emphasizes that, with the small classroom, he believes that it is essential that student engagement is the main thing to prioritize.

Excerpt #1 (Mr. M)

For me, student engagement means that we, as teachers, need to engage with the students. Also, being part of them. However, we also need to set boundaries with them. I believe student engagement is important. Actually, the boundaries mean, like, we need to know when we need to stop. [...] In my teaching career, I think I started with student-centered, so I never really tried teacher-centered learning because I always try to involve my students.

The result differed from the observation of teacher X, who taught students using teacher-centered learning and could not build an engagement at first. While engaging with students, setting boundaries to maintain a professional relationship is crucial. Thus, Mr. M also mentions another aspect related to student engagement.

Excerpt #2 (Mr. M)

[...] Smaller class, smaller environment. I believe that student engagement must be the priority here.

With a smaller area to study, it seems easier to build a connection between students and teachers. Mr. M seems to believe that it is the main thing to prioritize. Thus, Mr. O also shares his perception of students' engagement.

Excerpt #3 (Mr. O)

For me, engagement refers to students' interest, attention, and participation level when immersed in their learning activities. I believe it is quite essential since it fosters active learning, improves retention of information, and enhances overall academic performance.

Mr. O defines engagement as the degree to which students are attentive in their learning activities, which can enhance students' overall academic performance. Meanwhile, Ms. D also shares her knowledge about student engagement.

Excerpt #4 (Ms. D)

[...] to stimulate students or we need to ask some questions for us to be our warming up. So, when it connects to their life, feelings, and activities, even to their information and situation, it will be easier for them and us. I mean, for them and for us as teachers to get engagement. Right. This is a connection.

Asking questions that relate to students' lives, feelings, activities, and situations is aimed at stimulating and engaging them as the first step of the teaching-learning process. Furthermore, Ms. D claims teaching is about delivering material, building emotional connections, and educating. This practice of asking about students' emotions and well-being indicates a commitment to fostering student engagement. Hence, when students are well-engaged, the learning process can run smoothly, and they are better prepared to absorb knowledge.

Hence, this aligns with Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D's lesson plans. In the procedure section, Mr. M conducts a warm-up activity to discuss what the students have studied at school, asking about their favorite school subject and reasons for liking or disliking them, then reviewing the last material they have done in the classroom. Similarly, Mr. O and Ms. D use the same procedure, which involves reviewing the materials to recall the memory that they have learned previously. Before reviewing these materials, they like to ask the students about their feelings, activities in school, and other similar topics. They aimed to activate engagement, making the classroom's teaching and learning process run smoothly.

4.1.2 Students' Learning Objectives

Hence, to create fun learning for young learners, teachers must determine the learning objectives to align with the teacher's expectations and classroom goals. Adjusting the starting point based on students' capabilities while keeping the overall goals constant.

Mr. M emphasizes that although students' starting points may vary, the objectives remain unchanged.

Excerpt #5 (Mr. M)

Modifying student learners' objectives depends on the student's capability in the class. If I feel they need to start from the basics, then we will start from the basics, but the objectives and goals remain.

As Mr. M discussed above, adjusting the starting point based on students' capabilities while keeping the overall goals constant. He emphasizes that although students' starting points may vary, the objectives remain unchanged. Therefore, Mr. O added his perception in setting his learning objectives.

Excerpt #6 (Mr. O)

I modify students' learning objectives by assessing their proficiency levels, interests, and learning styles. I then tailor the objectives to be challenging yet achievable, ensuring they align with the overall curriculum goals. For example, I might simplify objectives for younger

or less advanced students and provide more complex tasks for those who are ready to be challenged.

Moreover, Mr. O highlights that by assessing individual proficiency levels, interests, and learning styles, he ensures that modified objectives still need to be aligned with the curriculum and provides regular feedback. Besides, Ms. D also added her voice.

Excerpt #7 (Ms. D)

It depends on students' needs. Since I teach in a small class with a small number of students, it isn't hard to analyze and fulfill their needs.

As Ms. D mentions, based on her students' needs, she finds it easier to fulfill them in a small class setting. She ensures that analyzing and fulfilling needs is part of the teaching process. It is in line with the observation conducted by researchers, who found that she managed small classes well compared to large ones.

Based on the results above, the three teachers share the practice by adjusting students' objectives based on their capabilities, interests, and learning styles. Thus, researchers inquired about students' learning objectives that teachers consider when selecting and adapting strategies. Whether through different strategies, approaches, or processes, the end goal or objectives are consistent and unchanged, leading to the same result. In contrast, Teacher X's classroom observations revealed a different reality. When Mr. M advocates adjusting starting points based on his student's capability, Teacher X fails to implement this flexibility. The heavy reliance on monotonous and textbook-driven instructions means that students' individual needs are not considered. There is evidence described by Mr. M and Mr. O, that learning goals are tailored based on students' proficiency levels or learning styles. Another contradicting point is where Mr. O stresses the importance of creating challenging yet achievable objectives based on the student assessment. However, in Teacher X's classroom, the lack of student-centered strategies, such as group work interactive activities, leads to boredom and disengagement. Besides, Ms. D's strategy of fulfilling students' needs in a small class setting allows her to assess individual capability. Meanwhile, Teacher X's methods make students overly reliant on the teacher and reinforce a passive learning environment. As a result, this prevents students from progressing effectively, making it difficult to achieve the same end goals that Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D strive to maintain flexible and adaptive strategies.

4.1.3 Classroom Facilities

Aside from teachers' activities, student engagement, and learning objectives, as a teacher, the classroom environment also supports the teaching and learning process to be successful.

Mr. M, on his justification, agrees that the current resources and facilities are sufficient to support students' educational requirements effectively.

Excerpt #8 (Mr. M)

Yes, they do, and for me, currently, the facilities are enough to accommodate students' needs.

Therefore, Mr. O and Ms. D also state the same about the course facilities. Mr. O observes that his students are enthusiastic about attending the course. The interview results can be seen in Excerpts #11 and #12.

Excerpt #9 (Mr. O)

Yes, my students generally show enthusiasm about attending the course, and I believe the adequate facilities play a significant role in this. A well-equipped classroom with interactive whiteboards, a comfortable seating arrangement, and ample learning materials creates a conducive learning environment that keeps students engaged and motivated.

Mr. O agrees that a well-equipped classroom, such as whiteboards, comfortable seating, and ample learning materials, can foster an engaging and motivating learning environment. Thus, Ms. D suggests a focus on creating a positive and engaging learning environment with attractive facilities, technology integration, and incentives for student participation.

Excerpt #10 (Ms. D)

They do. Course facilities are enough to attract them to study with small corners to play while waiting for class to start or for their parents to pick up, ICT integrated in the class, and also ice cream as a reward to them after finishing their class in a meeting.

The similarity across all three teachers is acknowledging the importance of facilities and resources in supporting students' educational needs and fostering a positive learning environment. Thus, the results of teacher X and the participants did not match. A monotonous environment that teacher X had, it seemed the students did not enjoy and shifted their focus away. However, the participants recognized that the availability of adequate facilities contributes to boosting students' enthusiasm and preventing disinterest. They highlight specific aspects such as well-equipped classrooms, comfortable seating arrangements, technology integration, and incentives like rewards for participation, which all play a role in creating conducive learning environments.

Overall, they agree that sufficient resources are essential for effectively meeting students' educational requirements and promoting active participation in the learning process. PCs (personal computers) are the main technology used to teach, and it is easier to support students' understanding by showing information from the internet. In addition, teachers also highlight the way classroom facilities can influence teaching strategies.

4.1.4 Students' Interest

After engaging with a student, appropriate learning objectives, and classroom activities, as a teacher, students' interest should also be the priority in teaching young learners. Earlier, teachers should expand the best strategies to engage students in the first place.

To perform well in English, teachers need to seek students liking and behavior in learning. In classroom observations conducted by researchers, Mr. M uses short movies to engage students. After watching a short movie, students are required to retell the story they have seen. They can also talk and share their thoughts.

Excerpt #11 (Mr. M)

[...] by watching a short movie, students need to retell the movies that they have seen. And they can also talk to each other, share with each other. And later on, based on my experience, they will interact with each other. It also comes back to the student engagement part where I, we are making ourselves as part of them.

Based on Mr. M's experience, this activity encourages student interaction. This strategy relates to his student behavior and learning styles to gain engagement by involving the teacher in the student's learning experience. Mr. M also added a testimony related to a strategy he used related to students' interests to make the students actively engage.

Excerpt #12 (Mr. M)

[...] Then, I always make it more student-centered. But, if there is any question in in the book, I will directly give it back to them. I need them to answer it by themselves, one by one, and each one of them must answer the question. Mostly, we discuss the questions together.

He employs an open discussion where other students can hear what the peer says, and he also checks student understanding by asking them individually. It is also supported by Mr. O statements about choosing a strategy based on learners' interests.

Excerpt #13 (Mr. O)

Mostly, I use a student center because I want the class to be more interactive. [...] Usually, for warm-up, I always play audio. Then, are we going to sing? Since my students really like to sing. Aside from singing, I like doing mini-games because incorporating games into teaching can enhance engagement, reinforce learning objectives, and provide opportunities for practice in a fun and interactive way. And for me, because they are still really small, I would like to develop my vocabulary first. Then, for grammar skills, I use my PPP strategy (Present-Practice-Produce), which really helps my students become more active. First, I will show images from the computer, then explain by giving an example, and last, I will ask them to create sentences in a worksheet.

Mr. O adapts auditory teaching styles for the students, such as the students' liking to sing and incorporating mini-games to make the classroom more fun. Thus, for teaching grammar, Mr. O uses the Present-Practice-Produce (PPP) strategy to make the students more active in learning. His students were active when Mr. O asked students to play a mini-game. Therefore, Mr. O also adds a testimony where he shows happiness when his students confidently speak in front of the class.

Excerpt #14 (Mr. O)

In my class, maybe I will read some poems or a story because in our upcoming books, there are poems and books. And then I always tell them to make their own stories. My student loves to do a presentation. This really makes me happy also, because they really like going to the front to read their answers.

He emphasizes that his student loves to do a presentation and are confident with themselves in front of the class. Besides, Ms. D used a different strategy in her teaching lesson.

Excerpt #15 (Ms. D)

Since they are still young learners, I usually use Concept Checking Questions (CCQ). I like this strategy because I want to know that my students are confident, aside from their age. Just want to make sure that, do they understand the structures. Because for every structure or for the order of the structure in the sentence, I believe they are still learning [...], then I also apply for the student center. So, by checking them by a question and asking

them yes to some questions, it will make them easier to analyze and think to yes. The most powerful thing is thinking about things. The explanation is not only by the teacher. The teacher just guides them and then puts them in the right direction. So yeah, That's effective for me.

Ms. D uses CCQs to ensure that her young learners understand the concepts and structures that are being taught. This strategy helps her assess their comprehension and build their confidence, showing enthusiasm in the classroom. Ms. D emphasizes the importance of students understanding the order and structure of sentences, recognizing that they are still in the learning process. The strategy encourages students to think and analyze on their own. Instead of just explaining the material, she sees her role as guiding students and pointing them in the right direction, allowing them to develop their understanding.

Therefore, here is the table where the researchers found obstacles and how three teachers have their way to have an effective teaching strategy. It can be seen in the table below.

Table 1: Obstacles Identified in Young Learner Classroom and Strategies Employed by Three Teachers

Obstacles	Teacher M's Strategies	Teacher O's Strategies	Teacher D's Strategies
Lack of Group Work Implementation	Implemented group discussions and collaborative tasks.	Utilized small group projects to enhance collaboration.	Encouraged peer-to-peer learning through group activities.
Strict Adherence to Book Instructions	Integrated additional resources and interactive media.	Supplemented book instructions with real-world examples.	Adapted the curriculum to include student input and ideas.
Monotonous Teaching Methods	Introduced varied teaching methods, such as games and role-playing	Employed multimedia and hands-on activities	Used diverse instructional strategies, including aids and technology.
Teacher-Centered Learning	Shifted to student-centered approaches, promoting active participation and student engagement.	Facilitated discussions and encouraged student autonomy.	Implemented inquiry-based learning and facilitated self-directed tasks.

The table above encapsulates how teachers address specific teaching obstacles through tailored strategies. Teachers believe in choosing strategies based on their students' interests and styles. Some strategies mentioned are storytelling by watching a short movie, PPP (Present-Practice-Produce), and CCQ (Concept Checking Question). The students in Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D's class were all actively engaged, happy, and excited to meet them in every meeting.

Creating a fun strategy engages the learning environment and motivates students to participate. However, based on the observation checklist, Teacher X relies on teacher-

centered learning, focusing on textbook and grammar drills through methods like PPP without incorporating activities, with a monotonous manner that focuses on rote memorization rather than students' creativity or interaction. That is why Teacher X fails to capture the student's attention and makes the student feel the English course place is the only place to do a course. Meanwhile, Mr. O's use of PPP was combined with fun, interactive elements such as games, which helped students to take some time to enjoy during the learning process.

On the other hand, observations showed that Teacher X's students struggle with their pronunciation and vocabulary due to a lack of engaging strategies. It is a direct result of the teacher's failure to incorporate activities based on student interests since the students will have difficulty expressing themselves or exploring topics that interest them.

In summary, the teachers believe in choosing strategies based on their students' interests and styles. However, the strategies used by Mr. M, Mr. O and Ms. D contrast with those employed by Teacher X. Teacher X relied solely on a direct method during the three times observed lessons by researchers, with little variation. Therefore, in addition to selecting and adapting appropriate teaching strategies for young learners, researchers also highlighted how teachers promoted autonomous language learning these strategies.

4.2 EFL Teachers' Ways of Promoting Autonomous Language Learning through Tailored Strategies

As EFL teachers, it is better to have a condition where students' minds are built at an early age to have good self-esteem in learning. Thus, this part is divided into three different sections. The first section, as described in 4.2.1, discusses individual and group activities. The second discussion, as described in 4.2.2, is about the use of technology, followed by 4.2.3, which describes teachers' reinforcement. The main data was still from the interviews with three teachers. They are followed by the lesson plan and observation checklists as the supporting tools.

4.2.1 Individual and Group Activities

Implementing several strategies that promote self-directed learning, boost learners' confidence, and provide them with the necessary abilities to learn independently are essential to fostering autonomous language learning in EFL students. Moreover, researchers want to seek how teachers modify their students to gain insight into learning English language autonomy related to indoor and outdoor activities.

Mr. M elaborates that indoor activities can be found, such as watching videos related to the story in the book. The excerpt can be seen below.

Excerpt #16 (Mr. M)

[...] I watch with them, I watch with them, in the class. Let's say that in our book, there will always be a part where it is a story part, a story like a fairy tale. Basically, after we read those stories, we also watch the stories again and find external resources about the story. Then we watch the story.

From the excerpt above, Mr. M elaborates that indoor activities can be found, such as watching videos related to the story in the book. Besides, Mr. M also mentions related to outdoor activities below.

Excerpt #17 (Mr. M)

[...] Other than learning English inside of this course, This English course also provides an outdoor activity where students can interact with other people, like going to a sushi place and making sushi using English, which my students really confidence with their English skills makes them good in performing English.

He believes that by doing outdoor activities like outside the course, students can practice their English well and build their confidence. However, Mr. M also expanded his answers related to group activities. He underscores the importance of maintaining a supportive and structured environment for young learners. By implementing strategies like supervision, time limits, clear instructions, and examples, teachers can enhance the effectiveness of group work, ensuring that it is both enjoyable and educational. This balanced approach helps in fostering a productive learning atmosphere where young learners can thrive. Therefore, based on the problem that the researchers have done the observation checklist, the teacher did not implement group work and attach it to the book instructions.

By making group work can guide young learners to build social skills and friendships to bring out their enthusiasm and creative ideas. Moreover, Mr. O ensures that group work is productive and aligned with learning objectives. This balanced approach enhances academic learning and supports the holistic development of young learners.

Ms. D also shared her thoughts related to group work activities. Ms. D highlights the importance of group work for young learners to foster socialization and teamwork skills. Despite occasional arguments, students complete their tasks successfully, especially when working with close friends. Throughout her teaching experience, Ms. D has encountered no major issues, noting that even quieter students finish their work on time through interaction and individual effort.

Excerpt #18 (Ms. D)

Young learners need to be able to work in a group since they are young to help them socialize and help each other in teamwork. Even though there must be things that some of them argue, they still finish successfully in the end. Moreover, if the group consists of close friends, there is no major issue so far during my teaching-learning process. Even when they don't interact that much, they still finish their work on time because some are quiet and some are active. They still study it, and they make trial and error. Yet, since they are still young, remembering their mistakes and learning from them isn't easy. I could say that they commonly learn from their mistakes. Not really. They still adapt.

While trial and error are part of their learning process, young learners often find it challenging to remember and learn from their mistakes, indicating that they are still in the adaptation phase. Overall, Ms. D's observations underscore the value of group work in developing essential social and collaborative skills despite the ongoing need for support in learning from errors. Therefore, researchers also found teachers several answers related to individual activities.

This result was in line with the respondents' observation. Mr. M's approach to teaching involves encouraging students to independently research information, exemplified by a recent activity on the geography of Indonesia. By having students find information independently and then discussing it as a class, he successfully motivates them to engage in

self-directed learning. This method enhances their research skills and fosters a sense of autonomy and intrinsic motivation to learn. Hence, Mr. O also implemented a Storybird for individual activity. Mr. O leverages educational technology and creative activities to promote independent learning and excite students. By incorporating educational apps and games like Cambridge One, Duolingo, and Storybird, he creates a fun and interactive learning environment where students can practice at their own pace.

Additionally, creative writing prompts encourage students to write their stories, fostering creativity and enhancing writing skills. These strategies effectively engage students and support their autonomous learning development. Moreover, Ms. D combines creative expression with language learning. Ms. D effectively engages her young students by incorporating drawing and coloring activities into vocabulary lessons. The strategy that she used not only excites the students but also reinforces their vocabulary retention. Testing them afterward ensures they have internalized the new words, making this approach enjoyable and educationally effective. Another thing that triggered young learners to foster learning by themselves is using technology.

At this point, teachers like Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D agree on how group activities can foster students to help each other and have the initiative to learn by themselves. Besides, Teacher X, in the class, keeps maintaining to have an individual task rather than a group discussion.

4.2.2 The Use of Technology

Nowadays, children love to play with phones and gadgets. However, researchers have found that most of them bring their phones inside the course. Hence, researchers believe that the use of technology is common for young learners, especially when doing homework or school tasks. Therefore, researchers asked teachers to use students' technology in learning English.

Excerpt #19 (Mr. M)

I do implement technology for my students. However, I think to learn by their own, it should be easy for them to use their phone nowadays to look for information. However, I don't agree that ICT helps students learn more easily by themselves since, most of the time, students just use it for entertainment. So, the use of ICT will still need to be under the supervision of parents or adults in terms of learning.

Mr. M acknowledges the role of technology in education but expresses skepticism about its effectiveness in promoting independent learning. He believes that students can easily use their phones to find information but often divert to entertainment instead of educational purposes. Consequently, Mr. M emphasizes the need for supervision from parents or adults to ensure that technology is used constructively for learning. This perspective highlights the importance of guided use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) to balance its potential benefits and distractions.

Therefore, Mr. O shared his opinion. Mr. O believes by leveraging educational apps, online tools, and interactive platforms, educators can create dynamic and flexible learning environments that cater to individual student needs.

Excerpt #20 (Mr. O)

I regularly implement the use of technology in my teaching. It helps make lessons more interactive and engaging and provides access to a wealth of resources and tools that can enhance learning. Technology offers numerous ways to support and enrich the learning

experience, from educational apps to online quizzes and interactive games. For younger students, I use age-appropriate educational apps and websites that are designed to be engaging and intuitive. Tools like interactive storybooks, phonics apps, and language learning games can be very effective. I strongly agree that the use of ICT helps students learn more easily, even on their own. Technology can provide personalized learning experiences, immediate feedback, and various resources catering to different learning styles. It also fosters independent learning by giving students access to information and tools they can explore at their own pace, making the learning process more flexible and accessible.

Moreover, technology empowers students to take ownership of their learning journey by providing opportunities for independent exploration and immediate feedback. As we continue to embrace the advancements in ICT, it's evident that technology will play an increasingly crucial role in shaping the future of education and preparing students for success in an ever-evolving digital world.

These statements align with Ms. D, who uses computers and internet connectivity, supplemented by video and audio resources sourced from books and YouTube.

Excerpt #21 (Ms. D)

The only one we used was a computer and an internet connection. I play video and audio based on the book provided and also add some video resources on YouTube to support if needed.

Ms. D sees YouTube as a valuable tool for independent learning, providing students with additional material related to the lesson's objectives. Ms. D believes integrating ICT simplifies learning, especially for young learners attracted to visual stimuli. By harnessing ICT, educators can enhance the learning experience and encourage self-directed exploration, fostering curiosity and engagement among students.

4.2.3 Teachers' Reinforcement

Aside from asking and repeating student answers, motivating young learners is indispensable to creating a conducive learning environment where students are actively engaged, confident with their abilities, and motivated to achieve their full potential in learning. Furthermore, the teacher rarely asked the students to appreciate their classmates' opinions in the observation checklists. It may develop a narrow perspective and hinder students' ability to think from different viewpoints, resulting in struggles to empathize with others' experiences and perspectives.

Providing reinforcement and feedback plays a pivotal role in shaping behavior, reinforcing learning, and motivating young learners in their learning of English. Motivation serves as the driving force that propels students forward, igniting their curiosity, engagement, and determination to master the language. By offering encouragement, recognition, and constructive feedback, teachers reinforce desired behaviors and learning outcomes and cultivate a positive learning environment where students feel supported, empowered, and inspired.

Mr. M highlights the significant role of motivation in recognizing students' achievements and providing appreciation through awards or prizes.

Excerpt #22 (Mr. M)

Motivations: I think I couldn't give it in every lesson, but let's say that in this one lesson, he or she couldn't catch up with the lesson. But then, they could catch up in the next part of the lesson. Well, then there I should give he or she break him up. His or her place. [...] Giving awards or prizes? Yes. It's part of, appreciation. Yeah. Part of appreciation for them which will motivate them as well. Not regularly, but I think once in a while, I would. Yeah. Because it really motivates them.

While not given in every lesson, these motivational boosts can inspire students to keep up their efforts and catch up with the lesson. Unlike Mr. O, he stresses the positive impact of feedback on student motivation and improvement.

Excerpt #23 (Mr. O)

Personally, giving the student feedback boosts motivation and provides opportunities for improvement. Motivation for students who haven't performed well. Something might also include setting achievable goals, providing personalized support, and emphasizing improvement rather than grades. So it's more like, in my class, especially the I don't say the greatest doesn't matter. For me, their understanding is that, like they understand English, they pronounce the word correctly. It's the most important for me. The process matters the most.

Mr. O believes in providing personalized support and setting achievable goals. The process of studying matters the most. Besides, Ms. D acknowledges the need to differentiate between motivating good and bad performance. While she praises the good one, she cautiously approaches feedback from the poor one.

Excerpt #24 (Ms. D)

Okay, I am giving motivation for the bad and good ones. For the good ones, I always do 'Oh! That's great. Good job! kinda like that. But for the bad one, I need to know the situation first. We don't know the self-esteem or the situation of that student, right? When we give feedback, for example, "emm Nicholas that's bad, " we don't do that because it will destroy their self-esteem. So, I prefer to see situations first, [...] I need to convey, share, and give feedback to the bad ones because it will build their improvement right.

She emphasizes the importance of considering students' self-esteem and individual situations before giving feedback. It is to support students' improvement without undermining their confidence.

Overall, the teachers agree that motivation, whether through recognition, feedback, or personalized support, is essential for fostering student improvement in the EFL classroom. It will encourage students to strive for progress and excellence in their language-learning journey. Besides, on the observation checklists, Teacher X results are contradicted with the participants, which shows the teachers seldom motivated students to express and discuss their thoughts in the teaching and learning process carefully. It make students rely more on the teacher since they lack confidence in their answers. Perhaps it can lead to disengagement, limited critical thinking, and missed opportunities to share their ideas.

5. Discussion

5.1 EFL Teachers' Selection and Adaptation of Effective Strategies for Teaching Young Learners in ELT Classroom

Based on the observations that were made in Teacher X's class, the passive behavior appeared to stem from students' background constraints. The observation checklists revealed that Teacher X failed to have a connection, which is crucial for fostering engagement in the classroom. Since Teacher X uses a direct teaching strategy, controlling and having a clear, structured learning path is easier. However, it limits students from having the opportunity to engage and lack of collaboration with peers actively. This observation aligns with the challenges Nasir (2019) identified, where traditional teacher-centered approaches limit active student participation. The literature emphasizes that young learners have a limited attention span and are naturally inclined to be active (Rahmawati & Suryadi, 2019). Consequently, maintaining a teacher-centered classroom environment may reduce student engagement and hinder the learning process, as it contradicts the inherent behavior of young learners.

Thus, from the findings, Mr. M and Mr. O emphasized student engagement and tasks that encouraged student participation. Hence, Ms. D integrated students' emotions and daily experiences to foster a supportive learning environment. Mr. M focuses on adapting lessons to student's interests, which helps maintain student interest and participation (Klein, 1991; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Besides, Mr. O's approach promoted active learning, where students were involved in analyzing and evaluating information in the classroom. It is consistent with the views of Cosner (2020), who states that active learning involves students in tasks that incorporate analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, leading to better retention and understanding of material.

Meanwhile, Ms. D's practice of integrating students' lives helped stimulate motivation and participation, aligning with Dunn & Kennedy (2019) findings on emotional connections in the classroom. Moreover, researchers can imply that the observation checklist highlighted that not all teachers had the confidence to implement student-centered strategies fully. Even though teachers were comfortable using teacher-centered learning strategies, they needed to understand how to elaborate on the material to create a fun environment and vibes, especially in teaching young learners.

Furthermore, Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D use warm-up activities and discussions, which help students recall previous knowledge and prepare for new material. These methods resonate with the active learning highlighted in the literature, such as visual-based instruction, writing in class, problem-solving, computer-based instruction, cooperative learning, debates, drama, role-playing, games, and peer teaching (Bessadet, 2022; Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Bransford et al., 1984; Khamouja et al., 2023; Komal & Atta, 2024; Meyers & Jones, 1993; Tran et al., 2019; Whitman, 1988). It leads to better knowledge absorption, aligning with the findings of Hilmi & Summiyani (2023) and Marsevani (2021). Interviews with the participants further emphasize the importance of engaging students in discussions and interactive learning tasks.

The recent research findings regarding student learning objectives reveal significant contrasts with traditional teaching methods, particularly those employed by Teacher X. While Teacher X's reliance on monotonous, teacher-centered approaches often leads to student

disengagement and dependency on the teacher (Odit et al., 2023) the strategies utilized by Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D highlight more effective practices. Mr. M emphasizes foundational understanding through interactive resources like short movies and open discussions, fostering engagement and comprehension. In contrast, Mr. O tailors his objectives to individual student needs, incorporating auditory activities and the PPP strategy to promote autonomy and critical thinking. Ms. D, on the other hand, employs concept-checking questions (CCQs) to reinforce understanding while maintaining alignment with established curriculum guidelines. These methods align with findings from previous studies (Gulamova, 2024; Yazidi, 2023), which stress the importance of innovative and interactive teaching strategies that enhance student participation and promote meaningful learning experiences. In contrast to Teacher X's focus on memorization and rote learning, the approaches taken by Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D not only boost student interest but also encourage autonomy and a deeper understanding of content (Zaid et al., 2019)

Aside from considering students' background constraints and learning objectives, the role of classroom facilities in supporting teaching strategies emerged as a significant theme in this study. Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D highlighted the importance of having access to technology, such as PCs, interactive whiteboards, and internet connectivity, which facilitate the implementation of dynamic and interactive teaching methods. Moreover, the study found that well-equipped classrooms with flexible seating arrangements and dedicated group activity spaces significantly influence teaching strategies and student engagement. This finding aligns with the literature, suggesting that the physical learning environment supports effective teaching and learning (Rahmawati & Suryadi, 2019; Sholikah & Harsono, 2021). Thus, inadequate access to required supplies, tools, or resources also makes teaching more difficult (Maffea, 2020). Therefore, classroom facilities are also why teachers select and adapt appropriate teaching strategies for young learners. In the same condition, Teacher X also used a computer to teach students, especially when delivering materials.

As demonstrated by these teachers, integrating student interests and preferences into instructional planning aligns with the literature's assertion that personalized learning experiences enhance student engagement and motivation (Rafika et al., 2021). Contradicted with Teacher X, the limited use of interactive strategy has led to a less dynamic classroom environment. Hence, by adapting their teaching strategies based on student's interests, teachers foster a positive and supportive learning environment and promote autonomy and ownership of learning, as discussed by Daflizar & Petraki (2022b). Furthermore, the emphasis on interactive and engaging activities, such as discussions, games, and presentations, corresponds with the literature's recommendation of active learning strategies for ELT, which enhance student participation and knowledge acquisition (Cosner, 2020).

The strategies employed by Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D resonate with the importance of student-centered teaching approaches, personalized learning experiences, and active engagement strategies in promoting effective English language learning. By involving students in discussions, encouraging them to answer questions independently, and guiding them to think critically, these teachers help students develop the skills needed to learn independently. It is particularly important in language learning, where continuous practice and self-motivation are key to proficiency.

5.2 EFL Teachers' Ways of Promoting Autonomous Language Learning through Tailored Strategies

Integrating individual and group activities is critical in fostering autonomous language learning. Mr. M emphasizes the importance of both indoor and outdoor activities, such as watching videos related to storybooks and engaging students in real-world contexts like making sushi in English. It aligns with the literature, which suggests that experiential learning enhances language acquisition (Rafika et al., 2021). Mr. O echoes this by providing structured group work that encourages collaboration and social skills, fostering an environment where students learn from each other and build confidence (Daflizar & Petraki, 2022b). In contrast, Teacher X predominantly relies on individual tasks and seldom incorporates group discussions. This approach may limit students' opportunities for social interaction and peer learning, essential for language development. Cosner (2020) states active learning strategies, including group work, significantly enhance student participation and knowledge retention. Teacher X's methods might inhibit engagement and reduce opportunities for collaborative learning, which are vital for developing autonomy in young learners.

Varying opinions among the teachers. Mr. O advocates using educational apps and interactive platforms to create engaging and personalized learning experiences. He notes that technology empowers students to take ownership of their learning (Rafika et al., 2021). Similarly, Ms. D effectively uses video and audio resources to reinforce lessons, recognizing that visual stimuli can capture young learners' attention.

Conversely, Teacher X was noted for rarely utilizing technology or supplementary resources like images or videos from the internet. This limited use can lead to a lack of engagement and interest among students, potentially leaving them feeling disconnected from the material. As highlighted in the literature, effective integration of ICT can significantly enhance the learning experience and foster self-directed (Daflizar & Petraki, 2022a). Teacher X's reluctance to embrace these tools may hinder students' ability to learn autonomously.

Moreover, by balancing the benefits of technology, teachers will need reinforcement, which will make students feel complete and enable them to successfully do their learning on their own. It is supported by Al-Khasawneh et al. (2024) that supporting students to have their courage in enhancing their English language skills, students will have a lot of confidence in learning independently. Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D all recognize the importance of providing feedback and rewards to boost student motivation. Mr. O emphasizes constructive feedback and goal setting as essential components for fostering a growth mindset (Daflizar & Petraki, 2022a). When providing feedback, Ms. D is sensitive to individual student circumstances, ensuring that it supports rather than undermines self-esteem. Despite the clear benefits of motivational reinforcement, observation checklists from Teacher X have revealed inconsistencies in their application. Teacher X rarely asks students to appreciate their classmates' opinions, which could hinder their ability to think from different viewpoints and empathize with others. A lack of encouragement for expressing and discussing thoughts may lead students to rely more on the teacher, feel less confident in their answers, and potentially disengage. This deficiency can lead to a reliance on the teacher for answers, inhibiting students' critical thinking and reducing their willingness to participate actively in the learning process. Literature indicates that effective reinforcement fosters a positive learning environment and encourages students to take initiative in their learning (Cosner, 2020).

Therefore, Teacher X's methods may not cultivate the autonomy and engagement necessary for effective language learning.

Therefore, while Mr. M, Mr. O, and Ms. D utilize various strategies that promote autonomy through collaborative activities, technology integration, and motivational reinforcement, Teacher X's reliance on individual tasks and limited engagement strategies may restrict students' learning experiences. The literature supports the effectiveness of active learning and technology in enhancing student motivation and autonomy, suggesting a need for Teacher X to dive into and adopt more interactive and supportive approaches in the classroom.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores how teachers can select and adapt teaching strategies that suit young learners, especially the importance of fostering student engagement, active learning strategies, and technology that can promote autonomous language learning in EFL classrooms for young learners. Teacher-centered approaches often result in passive student behavior. In contrast, teachers' student-centered strategies have actively encouraged participation and autonomy. By tailoring lessons to students' interests, integrating collaborative tasks, and capitalizing on feedback, teachers can encourage students to take charge of their learning, cultivating motivation and independence. These practices are critical to improving language acquisition and enhancing overall teaching outcomes. Hence, researchers hope these recent findings and insights can provide good information for future studies on how teachers use diverse teaching methods to choose teaching strategies for teaching young learners. Since research in this area remains limited, further exploration is necessary to enhance educational outcomes, particularly in EFL classrooms for young learners.

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