



Adaptive Teaching Strategies of Indonesian Pre-Service Teachers in Teaching English at Thai Schools in Krabi, Thailand

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-03-27 Revised: 2026-05-26 Accepted: 2026-06-17 Keywords: Adaptive Teaching Strategies, Pre-Service Teachers, EFL, Intercultural Teaching DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.10001 Corresponding Author: Salsabiila Alifya Khasanah salsabiilaalifya@gmail.com Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. HAMKA	<i>This study examines the adaptive teaching strategies employed by Indonesian pre-service English teachers when teaching English in Thai schools in Krabi, Thailand. Teaching in a multicultural and multilingual EFL context requires teachers to be flexible and responsive to students' linguistic abilities, cultural backgrounds, and learning needs. This research focuses on how pre-service teachers adapt their instructional strategies, address cultural and pedagogical challenges, and develop professional competence during their teaching internships. This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design involving ten Indonesian pre-service English teachers from a private university in East Jakarta who joined KKN & Magang Internasional in Krabi, Thailand. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the participants demonstrated readiness to adapt their teaching methods, utilize various instructional media and materials, and integrate cultural awareness into their teaching classroom practices. These adaptive strategies in response to students' needs, classroom environment, and language proficiency levels, contributed to improved student engagement and the development of intercultural competence learning effectiveness.</i>

1. Introduction

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in multicultural and multilingual contexts presents significant challenges that require teachers to continuously adapt their instructional strategies to diverse learners' needs. These challenges become more complex in international teaching environments, where differences in language proficiency, cultural norms, and educational systems intersect. For Indonesian pre-service English teachers undertaking teaching internships in Thai schools, such adaptability is essential to ensure effective classroom management, communication, and student engagement.

Adaptive teaching refers to teachers' ability to modify instructional practices in response to learners' varying needs, backgrounds, and classroom situations. This approach emphasizes flexibility, responsiveness, and the use of diverse teaching methods to improve learning outcomes. In EFL contexts, adaptive teaching is particularly important due to students' differing levels of English proficiency and limited exposure to the language. Empirical evidence suggests that adaptive teaching can significantly enhance student engagement, motivation, and achievement, especially in diverse learning environments (van Geel et al., 2023).

The concept of adaptive teaching is strongly supported by established educational theories. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) highlights the importance of social interaction and scaffolding, where teachers support learners within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Similarly, Tomlinson's Differentiated Instruction (2014) emphasizes the need to adjust teaching methods, materials, and assessment to accommodate individual learner differences. These frameworks underline the importance of responsive and flexible teaching practices in heterogeneous classrooms.

In cross-cultural teaching contexts, adaptive teaching is closely linked to intercultural competence and cultural awareness. Teachers must not only adjust their instructional strategies but also understand students' cultural norms, communication styles, and learning behaviors. Developing such awareness enables teachers to design inclusive lessons and manage classrooms more effectively (Almutawa, H., & Alfahid, 2024). For Indonesian pre-service teachers in Thailand, this includes interpreting nonverbal communication, adapting to local classroom dynamics, and integrating culturally relevant content into English instruction.

Several studies have explored adaptive teaching practices among Indonesian EFL teachers in international contexts. For instance, (Maulidya et al., 2023) found that pre-service teachers utilized visual media, interactive games, and contextualized materials to improve Thai students' vocabulary learning and engagement. Similarly, (Kuncahyo et al., 2023) reported that cultural differences and classroom norms required teachers to engage in reflective practice and collaborative problem-solving to enhance adaptability.

Furthermore, (Haryadi & Wilang, 2025) highlighted the importance of emotional adjustment and intercultural empathy in supporting effective teaching in Thai classrooms.

Additional research also emphasizes the role of intercultural experiences in shaping teacher development. (Maesaro & Wijirahayu, 2025) revealed that teaching in multicultural environments strengthened pre-service teachers' intercultural competence and confidence. Meanwhile, (Mustakim et al., 2024) stressed the importance of bilingual instructional strategies and the use of locally relevant materials, particularly in rural Thai school contexts.

Despite these valuable contributions, existing studies largely focus on general adaptive teaching strategies or broad international teaching experiences. There remains limited research that specifically examines how Indonesian pre-service English teachers adapt their teaching practices within a particular localized context, especially through a multiple-case study perspective in regions such as Krabi, Thailand. Moreover, the dynamic interplay between adaptive teaching, intercultural challenges, and professional development in this specific setting has not been thoroughly explored.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how Indonesian pre-service English teachers from Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA) adapt their teaching strategies during their internships in Thai schools in Krabi. Using a multiple-case study approach, this research aims to explore how these teachers respond to cultural and linguistic challenges, implement adaptive teaching practices, and develop professionally within a multicultural educational environment.

Although previous studies have examined adaptive teaching in EFL contexts, most have focused on in-country settings and experienced teachers. Limited attention has been given to how pre-service teachers adapt their teaching practices during international teaching internships, particularly in multilingual and cross-cultural classrooms such as those in Thailand.

Furthermore, few studies have explored how adaptive teaching strategies vary across different educational levels within such contexts. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating adaptive teaching strategies employed By (Gobel et al., 2022) Indonesian pre-service teachers across elementary, junior high, and senior high school settings in Thailand.

2. Method

This research was conducted in Krabi Province, Thailand, where Indonesian pre-service English teachers from Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA) carried out their teaching internships under international teaching programs. These schools served as authentic classroom environments in which the participants practiced teaching English to Thai students at various educational levels. The study was conducted from November 2025 to January 2026,

encompassing both the teaching internship period and the data collection phase.

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to explore the adaptive teaching strategies of Indonesian pre-service English teachers during their internship experiences in Thai schools. This design was selected to enable an in-depth exploration of each participant's adaptive practices, challenges, and strategies within real teaching contexts, while also allowing cross-case comparisons among the ten participants.

A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it facilitates a deeper understanding of participants' teaching practices, cultural adjustments, and classroom innovations in authentic settings. As stated by (John W. Creswell; J. David Creswell, 2018), qualitative research focuses on exploring individuals' experiences and understanding the meanings they ascribe to specific phenomena. In this study, the phenomenon under investigation is how Indonesian pre-service teachers adapt their teaching strategies to pedagogical and cultural challenges in Thai classrooms.

The participants of this study consisted of ten Indonesian pre-service English teachers selected through purposive sampling. The selection criteria included their participation in an international teaching internship program in Thailand, active involvement in classroom teaching, and willingness to participate in the study. The participants included eight female and two male pre-service teachers who taught at different educational levels, including elementary, junior high, and senior high school, allowing for diverse teaching contexts and experiences.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to ensure comprehensive data coverage. The interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, challenges, and adaptive teaching strategies, with each session lasting approximately 30–45 minutes. Classroom observations were carried out to examine actual teaching practices and teacher–student interactions, while document analysis, including lesson plans and teaching materials, was used to support and validate the findings.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and key themes related to adaptive teaching. The analysis began with data familiarization, in which interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were reviewed repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. This was followed by the coding process, where meaningful units of data were identified and labeled. The codes were then organized into broader categories reflecting aspects such as students' needs, classroom environment, teaching strategies, and cultural adaptation.

These categories were further refined into overarching themes that represented patterns across cases. Cross-case analysis was subsequently conducted to compare similarities and differences among participants, allowing for deeper insights into how adaptive teaching strategies were implemented in

different contexts.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. Triangulation was achieved by using multiple data sources, including interviews, observations, and documents, to validate the findings. Member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the interview data and interpretations. In addition, peer debriefing was carried out through discussions with colleagues to reduce potential bias and enhance the credibility of the analysis.

3. Results

Research Context

This study was conducted in several schools in Thailand where Indonesian pre-service English teachers from Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (UHAMKA) carried out their teaching internship programs. The participating schools included elementary, junior high, and senior high school levels, representing both public and private institutions.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the learning environment in Thai schools is strongly influenced by local cultural values, including respect for teachers and collectivist classroom norms. English is taught as a foreign language, and students generally have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, which affects their confidence and communicative competence.

In terms of socio-economic and institutional conditions, the schools represent diverse backgrounds, ranging from urban to semi-rural areas. Many classrooms have limited access to technological facilities such as projectors, language laboratories, and digital learning media, particularly at the elementary level. These contextual factors shape how pre-service teachers implement adaptive teaching strategies in their classrooms.

Table 1. presents the distribution of schools and their educational levels involved in this study

School	Level
Duangkew Islamic School	Elementary School
Bankhlongrua School	Elementary School
Phattana Witthaya Foundation School	Senior High School
Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School	Senior High School
Adameesuksa Vittaya School	Junior High School
Doctor Nueng Intercare Krabi School	Senior High School

Saengtham Wittaya Foundation School	Senior High School
Anubanwangmai Sartsanasart School	Elementary School
Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School	Senior High School
Eakkapapsassanawich School	Senior High School
Duangkew Islamic School	Elementary School

Research Findings

This section presents detailed narratives of each respondent based on the interview results. The findings are described individually to provide an in-depth understanding of how each pre-service teacher implemented adaptive teaching strategies in their respective teaching contexts.

Linguistic Adaptation

Linguistic adaptation emerged as a dominant strategy across participants, particularly in response to students' low English proficiency. Most teachers simplified their language, used slower speech, and frequently repeated instructions to enhance comprehension. In several cases, participants also incorporated students' first language or other familiar languages to bridge communication gaps. For example, R1 and R10 reported using very simple or "broken" English to ensure students understood basic instructions, while R3 and R4 combined English with students' mother tongue to support meaning-making.

In addition, some participants utilized translation tools or peer assistance to facilitate communication. R5, for instance, used translation applications, while R1 and R9 encouraged peer-assisted learning, allowing more proficient students to support their classmates. These findings indicate that linguistic flexibility is essential in multilingual EFL classrooms, where comprehensibility often takes precedence over linguistic accuracy. This suggests that adaptive teaching in this context prioritizes communicative effectiveness over grammatical accuracy, particularly in the early stages of language learning.

Multimodal Strategies

Multimodal strategies were widely employed to enhance students' understanding and engagement. Participants integrated various visual and interactive elements, such as pictures, videos, gestures, flashcards, and games. These strategies were particularly effective for students with limited English proficiency, as they provided alternative ways to access meaning.

For instance, R4 and R6 used videos and digital media to contextualize vocabulary and grammar, while R8 relied on visual materials and structured activities to support young learners. Similarly, R10 emphasized the use of pictures and body language to reinforce explanations. The use of multimodal resources allowed teachers to present content in more engaging and accessible ways, reducing students' reliance on verbal instruction alone. This reflects the importance of multimodal input in facilitating comprehension, especially in contexts where linguistic input alone is insufficient.

Instructional Flexibility and Classroom Management

Instructional flexibility was evident in how participants adjusted their teaching approaches based on classroom conditions, including class size, student behavior, and available facilities. In smaller classes, teachers tended to apply more interactive and personalized approaches, while in larger or less controlled classes, they adopted more structured and teacher-centered strategies.

R1 and R3, for example, reported difficulties in managing large classes due to communication barriers, leading them to prioritize structured instruction over interactive activities. In contrast, R6 and R7 implemented group work and collaborative learning to manage participation in larger classrooms. These findings suggest that adaptive teaching involves balancing student engagement with effective classroom management to maintain a conducive learning environment. This indicates that adaptive teaching is highly context-dependent, requiring continuous adjustment based on situational classroom dynamics.

Affective Adaptation

Affective adaptation played a crucial role in maintaining students' motivation and confidence. Many participants noted that students were often hesitant to participate, fearing they would make mistakes or lack confidence in using English. As a result, teachers created supportive learning environments through encouragement, positive reinforcement, and engaging activities.

R2 and R6, for instance, emphasized the importance of maintaining students' motivation by incorporating enjoyable and meaningful learning activities, such as games and interactive tasks. Similarly, R7 and R8 focused on creating a fun and less intimidating classroom atmosphere to increase student participation. These strategies helped reduce anxiety and foster a more positive attitude toward learning English. This highlights that emotional support is not peripheral but central to successful language learning in EFL contexts.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings demonstrate that adaptive teaching among Indonesian pre-service teachers in Thai classrooms is a multidimensional and dynamic process. Across all cases, participants continuously adjusted their teaching strategies in

response to students' language proficiency, classroom conditions, and emotional needs.

Four major patterns emerged: linguistic adaptation to address communication barriers, multimodal strategies to enhance comprehension, instructional flexibility to manage diverse classroom contexts, and affective adaptation to support student motivation and confidence.

These strategies are interconnected and often implemented simultaneously, reflecting the complexity of teaching in multicultural EFL environments. The findings highlight that effective adaptive teaching requires not only pedagogical knowledge but also cultural awareness, flexibility, and reflective practice. These findings also suggest that adaptive teaching is not a single strategy but an integrated pedagogical approach that responds to both cognitive and socio-emotional dimensions of learning.

Table 2. Themes of Adaptive Teaching Strategies

Theme	Sub-Theme	Evidence	Respondents
Student Needs	Learning confidence	Students need confidence and a basic understanding of English to participate in learning activities	R1, R4, R6
Classroom Environment	Classroom atmosphere	Teachers adjust activities and teaching strategies when the classroom becomes noisy or less conducive	R1, R4, R5
Language Proficiency	Simplified instruction	Teachers simplify language, slow down explanations, and use bilingual support to enhance comprehension	R1, R3, R4, R5
Teaching Methods	Interactive activities	Games, discussions, role-play, and collaborative learning improve student participation and engagement	R2, R6, R8, R9
Teaching Materials	Visual support	Pictures, videos,	R4, R6, R8,

films, and gestures R10
support students'
comprehension,
especially for low-
proficiency learners

The table presents key factors influencing adaptive teaching strategies implemented by pre-service teachers in multilingual classrooms. These factors include student needs, classroom environment, language proficiency, teaching methods, and teaching materials, highlighting how teachers adjust their instructional practices in response to contextual challenges.

Student needs, particularly in terms of learning confidence, play a crucial role in shaping instructional decisions. The findings indicate that many students struggle with low confidence due to limited language proficiency, which affects their participation in classroom activities. As a result, teachers tend to create supportive learning environments and apply strategies that gradually build confidence. The classroom environment also significantly influences teaching practices. Teachers adjust their strategies depending on classroom conditions, especially when the learning atmosphere becomes less conducive. This suggests that adaptive teaching requires continuous monitoring and responsiveness to classroom dynamics.

Language proficiency emerges as a central factor, as teachers frequently simplify instructions, slow down explanations, and use bilingual support to enhance comprehension. This reflects the importance of prioritizing clarity in EFL contexts where students have limited English exposure.

In terms of teaching methods, interactive activities such as games, discussions, and collaborative learning are commonly used to increase engagement. However, their effectiveness depends on students' understanding and classroom conditions, requiring teachers to adapt their implementation accordingly.

Teaching materials, particularly visual support, also play a significant role in facilitating comprehension. The use of pictures, videos, and gestures helps students grasp meaning more easily, especially those with low proficiency.

Overall, these findings indicate that adaptive teaching is influenced by multiple interconnected factors. These factors complement the previously identified strategies, reinforcing that adaptive teaching is a dynamic and context-sensitive process.

4. Discussion

Findings from elementary-level classrooms (R1, R2, R8) indicate that adaptive teaching was primarily linguistic and visual in nature. Due to students' limited English proficiency and developing cognitive abilities, teachers relied heavily on scaffolding, translation, simplified instruction, drilling, and visual

reinforcement. Recent studies confirm that scaffolding and multimodal support significantly enhance comprehension in young EFL learners (Puspitasari et al., 2025) (Muhammad et al., 2025), while visual aids and structured repetition improve vocabulary retention and cognitive processing (Peng & Xie, 2021).

Translation and peer mediation in multilingual classrooms have been found to function as strategic pedagogical tools rather than obstacles, particularly in low-proficiency contexts (Pham & Nguyen, 2024). These practices align with socially mediated learning principles rooted in Level Vygotsky's theory (Jack C, 2022).

These patterns occur because young learners are still developing both linguistic competence and cognitive readiness, requiring concrete input and structured support. Therefore, adaptive teaching at this level primarily focuses on ensuring comprehension and building foundational knowledge rather than promoting independent language use.

As students progress to higher levels, adaptive teaching strategies shift toward increasing engagement and participation. The findings indicate that these strategies were generally effective in improving students' understanding, engagement, and confidence, as reflected in students' participation and responses (Pratiwi et al., 2020). R1 highlighted the effectiveness of peer-assisted learning, noting that students better understood explanations when supported by peers. This supports social constructivist perspectives that emphasize learning through interaction (Allahyarova, 2025)

In addition, affective factors become more prominent, as students' willingness to participate is strongly influenced by emotional comfort. R6 emphasized that students were reluctant to speak when the teacher appeared too strict, supporting the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which highlights the role of emotional safety in language learning (Li & Zhou, 2023) Similarly, structured sequencing of instruction, as observed by R8, facilitates comprehension by gradually moving from simple to more complex tasks (Abdi Tabari & Miller, 2021) However, as noted by R9, increasing student autonomy must be balanced with sufficient guidance, as insufficient explanation can lead to confusion (EPPENDI et al., 2025).

This shift occurs because learners begin transitioning from dependence to partial autonomy, requiring a balance between guidance and participation. As a result, adaptive teaching at this stage emphasizes engagement, interaction, and scaffolded independence.

In senior high schools (R3, R4, R6, R7, R9, R10), adaptive teaching becomes more pedagogically complex. Teachers implement differentiated instruction, bilingual explanations, collaborative learning, and stronger affective support. Research shows that differentiated instruction improves learning outcomes in heterogeneous classrooms (Purnamaningwulan & Purwanto, 2025) (Komang et al., 2021) (Tanjung & Ashadi, 2019), while affective adaptation supports

communicative risk-taking and engagement (Lee et al., 2024).

Collaborative learning also enhances intercultural awareness and higher-order thinking skills (Apriliyani & M, 2023) (Permatasari, 2023). These differences emerge because learners at this level demonstrate greater cognitive maturity, more diverse abilities, and increased readiness for independent learning. Consequently, adaptive teaching extends beyond linguistic adjustment to include pedagogical differentiation, emotional regulation, and intercultural responsiveness.

Overall, the findings demonstrate a clear developmental progression in adaptive teaching strategies, moving from linguistic and cognitive support at the elementary level, to guided participation at intermediate levels and finally to differentiated and intercultural pedagogy at the senior high level. This progression suggests that adaptive teaching is not static but evolves in response to students' developmental, linguistic, and contextual needs. These findings reinforce the view that effective teaching in multilingual EFL contexts requires not only instructional flexibility but also cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Table 3. Level Comparison of Adaptive Teaching Strategies

Level	Dominant Adaptation	Strategic Focus
Elementary	Translation & Visual Support	Linguistic survival & cognitive foundation
Junior High	Communicative simplification	Transitional autonomy & engagement
Senior High	Differentiation & Affective Support	Pedagogical, emotional & intercultural development

The comparison presented in Table 3 shows that adaptive teaching strategies vary significantly across educational levels in terms of both dominant adaptation and strategic focus. These differences indicate that teaching adaptation is closely related to students' developmental stages, language proficiency, and readiness for independent learning.

At the elementary level, adaptive teaching focuses on building basic linguistic and cognitive foundations. Students at this stage require concrete, structured, and highly accessible input due to their limited language proficiency and developing cognitive abilities. As a result, teachers rely on simplified explanations, repetition, and visual support to ensure comprehension. This suggests that the primary goal at this level is not fluency, but establishing fundamental understanding and learning readiness (Haryadi & Wilang, 2025).

At the junior high school level, adaptive teaching reflects a transitional phase, where students begin to develop partial autonomy. While guidance remains necessary, teachers increasingly encourage participation and interaction. This shift

indicates a movement from teacher-centered instruction toward more student-centered learning, where learners gradually take a more active role in the learning process (Condeza, 2025).

At the senior high school level, adaptive teaching becomes more complex and differentiated, reflecting students' higher cognitive capacity and diverse learning needs. Teachers are required to adjust instruction not only to support understanding but also to develop higher-order thinking and intercultural competence. In addition, affective support becomes more critical, as students' confidence and willingness to participate significantly influence learning outcomes (Maesaro & Wijirahayu, 2025)(Pratiwi et al., 2020).

Overall, these findings suggest that differences in adaptive teaching strategies are driven by the progression of learners' cognitive development, linguistic competence, and readiness for autonomy. This highlights that adaptive teaching is not a fixed set of strategies but a developmental and context-sensitive process that evolves across educational levels.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the adaptive teaching strategies employed by Indonesian pre-service English teachers during their teaching internships in Thai schools. Using a qualitative multiple case study design, the findings reveal that the participants actively adapted their teaching practices to address students' low English proficiency, diverse learning needs, and the demands of a multicultural classroom context. These adaptations demonstrate that teaching in international settings requires not only pedagogical knowledge but also situational awareness and flexibility.

The results indicate that adaptive teaching was manifested through multiple dimensions, including instructional flexibility, scaffolding and language support, the integration of visual media and interactive activities, differentiated instruction, as well as affective and intercultural sensitivity. These strategies enabled the pre-service teachers to create more inclusive, responsive, and supportive learning environments. As a result, students showed increased engagement, improved confidence, and better comprehension of English lessons, particularly in classrooms with limited language proficiency.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that adaptive teaching is not a single strategy but a dynamic and continuous process. Teachers were required to constantly evaluate classroom situations, respond to students' reactions, and modify their instructional approaches accordingly. This reflective and responsive practice indicates the development of adaptive expertise among pre-service teachers, which is essential for effective teaching in real-world classroom settings.

The study also confirms that successful teaching in EFL contexts is strongly influenced by the integration of cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors. While scaffolding and language simplification supported comprehension, affective strategies such as creating a positive classroom atmosphere and reducing students' anxiety played an equally important role in encouraging participation. In addition, intercultural awareness helped teachers bridge differences in language, behavior, and learning expectations, making the learning process more meaningful and contextually relevant.

In line with these findings, adaptive teaching strategies can be seen as a practical realization of learner-centered pedagogy, where instruction is tailored to meet students' needs, abilities, and backgrounds. This reinforces the importance of preparing future teachers not only with theoretical knowledge but also with adaptive competence, reflective skills, and intercultural understanding.

In conclusion, adaptive teaching strategies are not only necessary but fundamental for pre-service English teachers working in international and multilingual contexts. The ability to balance instructional clarity, student engagement, emotional support, and cultural responsiveness is key to achieving effective learning outcomes. This study contributes to the growing body of research on adaptive and intercultural teaching by providing empirical insights from Indonesian pre-service teachers' experiences in Thailand.

Finally, it is recommended that future research involve a larger number of participants, incorporate longitudinal designs to examine the development of adaptive teaching over time, and include students' perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how adaptive strategies impact learning in international EFL classrooms.

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