

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EXPLORING ESL VOCABULARY
TEACHING AMONG MALAYSIAN
PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS:
STRATEGIES AND PERCEPTION**

**SITI NUR BADRIAH BINTI
MOHD TAHIR**

MA

March 2026

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the
Master in Applied Language Studies

Academy of Language Studies

March 2026

CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS

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I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is an important component in language learning as it supports learners' comprehension and ability to communicate meaningfully especially in ESL primary classrooms. However, vocabulary instruction remains challenging because teachers need to select strategies that suit pupils' proficiency levels while also working within classroom constraints. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the vocabulary teaching strategies used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers by exploring their preferences, perceptions and the factors that influence their instructional decisions. This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design. In the first phase, quantitative data were collected using a questionnaire to identify the most frequently and least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) based on Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy. In the second phase, qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews to further explain the survey findings and to understand the reasons behind teachers' choice of strategies. The findings revealed that teachers commonly used social and memory strategies as these were perceived as practical, engaging and manageable for young learners. In contrast, metacognitive strategies were least utilised due to limited instructional time, curriculum pressure and pupils' lack of independence in vocabulary learning. In addition, teachers reported mixed views regarding the use of the mother tongue (L1) in vocabulary teaching with some supporting an English-only approach while others preferred selective L1 use to support lower proficiency pupils. This study highlights the role of teachers as key decision-makers in vocabulary instruction and provides insight into how vocabulary strategies are implemented in Malaysian primary ESL classrooms. By combining survey and interview findings, this study offers empirical evidence on teachers' strategy preferences and the challenges that shape their practices, contributing to better planning of vocabulary instruction and teacher professional development.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
DSKP	<i>Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran</i> (Curriculum and Assessment Standard Document)
ESL	English as a Second Language
HIP	Highly Immersive Programme
L1	First language / mother tongue
SBELC	Standard-Based English Language Curriculum
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TP	<i>Tahap Penguasaan</i> (Proficiency Levels in CEFR-aligned curriculum)
VLS	Vocabulary Learning Strategies

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Vocabulary has long been recognised as an essential part of language learning. It serves as the essential building blocks of language, providing learners with the tools they need to comprehend and communicate effectively. Earlier language teaching approaches such as the Grammar Translation Method and Audio-Lingual Method had placed a strong emphasis on grammar rules, translation and drills which resulted in vocabulary being treated as a minor component (Richard & Rodgers, 2014). Over time, this view began to change when scholars like Campbell and Wales (as cited in Winch, 2019) highlighted that grammar alone is not enough. They argued that vocabulary knowledge is equally important for developing communicative competence. This shift had led to the rise of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach.

CLT views language as a tool for meaningful communication. In order to communicate effectively, learners would need a functional vocabulary that allows them to express ideas in different situations (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). It is also found in recent studies that vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of success in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Teng, 2020; Tong, Hasim, & Halim, 2023; Ng & Naim, 2023) which shows that vocabulary teaching plays a critical role in language development.

In Malaysia, the teaching of English already follows CLT principles through the Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC). Based on the curriculum, by the end of Year 6, students are expected to communicate confidently and appropriately in both formal and informal contexts (Curriculum Development Division, 2017). The curriculum is aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), an international standard used to describe a person's language ability. It also supports the goals of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (MEB) which aims to produce bilingual and globally competent learners (Ministry of Education, 2013). SBELC highlights the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing as key skills needed to build communicative competence among primary pupils.

Arguably, in order to achieve communicative competence, pupils must have a sufficient vocabulary base. According to Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, vocabulary supports better understanding of language input, which contributes to overall language proficiency. Studies also show that vocabulary development influences learners' performance in other skills. For instance, Ali (2020) found that vocabulary growth supports general language progress while Al-Khasawneh (2019) showed that vocabulary size directly affects reading comprehension. Quines (2023) further reported that pupils with stronger vocabulary performed better in reading and writing compared to those with limited vocabulary.

At the primary school level, vocabulary development is a strong predictor of literacy and academic success as it plays a major role in supporting word reading and reading comprehension (Oulette, 2006). Vocabulary knowledge is important because as children get better at sounding out words, they use less effort to decode and this gives them more mental space to understand what they read, so knowing more vocabulary becomes even more crucial for making meaning (Killingly et al., 2025).

Effective vocabulary instruction involves careful lesson planning including selecting key words, modelling their use, providing repeated practice and integrating vocabulary across language skills (National Reading Panel, 2003). Scholars believe that effective vocabulary instruction should encompass not only incidental exposure but also explicit instruction in which teachers not just intentionally introduce new words but also reinforce the meaning of the words learned (Rasinski & Rupley, 2019; Nation, 2013). Nation (2013) further emphasizes that vocabulary learning requires balanced instruction that includes both meaning-focused input and output. Meaning-focused input relates to students' repeated encounters with vocabulary through listening and reading activities, while meaning-focused output involves opportunities for students to actively use vocabulary in speaking and writing exercises (Dang & Webb, 2020).

In ESL settings like Malaysia, Chiriac (2021) highlights that vocabulary should be taught explicitly and in meaningful contexts to help pupils express themselves confidently in English. Teachers are central to this process as they design and implement lessons that help students develop the vocabulary needed for successful language learning (National Reading Panel, 2003). Furthermore, given the diverse needs and abilities of students, teachers must adapt their methods and assess learners' existing vocabulary knowledge to select appropriate teaching approaches (Saroyan, 2016 as well as help students understand how vocabulary functions so they can apply

their knowledge effectively (McKeown, 2019). It is also important to note that since teachers can only teach a limited number of words directly, combining explicit instruction with rich language experiences such as conversation, read-aloud and independent reading is necessary to ensure that all students including those with limited vocabulary can catch up (Garden, 2022).

Vocabulary can be taught in various ways, one of which is through the use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) which are deliberate techniques or approaches learners use to acquire, retain and effectively use new words (Nation, 2001). The choice of VLS employed by teachers significantly influences how vocabulary is taught and learned by students (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 1997). Different strategies would yield different outcomes depending on how well teachers assess and address their students' specific needs (Oxford, 1990; Chiriac, 2021). For instance, the strategies used to introduce a new word may differ from those aimed at helping students retain and apply that vocabulary effectively (Schmitt, 2000). As McKeown (2019) highlights, effective instruction should extend beyond teaching word meanings; it should equip students with the skills to apply their word knowledge in diverse contexts, thereby fostering deeper understanding and practical use. In light of this, Lai et al. (2022) recommend that teachers complement their direct vocabulary instruction with VLS like identifying meaning clues for sustained vocabulary acquisition.

1.2 Problem Statement

Effective vocabulary instruction is a fundamental component of English language learning, particularly in primary school where learners are still developing basic language foundations. Vocabulary knowledge enables learners to express ideas, understand texts and participate meaningfully in communication across listening, speaking, reading and writing (Nation, 2013). In the Malaysian ESL primary school context, vocabulary development is especially critical as many learners have limited exposure to English outside the classroom and rely heavily on teachers for structured language input (Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021).

Research has shown that vocabulary instruction is most effective when teachers employ a range of strategies, including explicit instruction, contextualised learning, morphological analysis and the integration of digital tools (Karabulut et al., 2024). Such approaches promote active engagement, deeper processing and long-term retention of

vocabulary. However, despite this evidence, vocabulary instruction in Malaysian classrooms often remains limited in scope and practice.

Studies indicate that many Malaysian ESL teachers continue to rely on traditional methods such as direct translation, word lists and rote memorisation when teaching vocabulary (Azman, 2016; Ghazali, 2020). These approaches tend to position learners as passive recipients of knowledge and provide few opportunities for meaningful language use which can reduce learners' motivation and ability to apply vocabulary communicatively (Nation, 2013). As a result, students often struggle to understand lesson content, follow classroom tasks and express ideas effectively, particularly when they possess a limited vocabulary base. This lack of vocabulary knowledge has been associated with low motivation and slower language development among Malaysian ESL learners (Yunus & Saifudin, 2019).

Although Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) have been widely recognised as effective tools for supporting vocabulary acquisition, their systematic use in Malaysian primary classrooms remains unclear. VLS provide structured and varied ways for learners to discover, understand, retain and use new vocabulary (Schmitt, 2000; Graves & Sales, 2013). These strategies include direct approaches, such as memory and cognitive strategies, as well as indirect approaches, such as metacognitive and social strategies (Oxford, 1990, as cited in Griffiths, 2013). Schmitt (2000) further categorises VLS into discovery strategies which support learners in identifying word meanings and consolidation strategies which reinforce vocabulary through repeated and meaningful use (Schmitt, 2008; Nation, 2013). Despite their potential, there is limited evidence to suggest that these strategies are consistently or explicitly implemented in Malaysian primary ESL classrooms.

One contributing factor is the structure of the CEFR-aligned Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) which provides vocabulary wordlists but offers minimal guidance on how vocabulary should be taught or integrated strategically into lessons. Consequently, vocabulary instruction is often embedded incidentally within the teaching of the four main language skills, with teachers relying largely on their Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) to decide how and when vocabulary should be addressed (Hassan & Gao, 2021; Bryan Lim et al., 2023). As highlighted by the National Center on Improving Literacy (2023), decoding and pronouncing words without understanding their meanings can significantly impair comprehension. This

suggests that insufficient attention to vocabulary instruction may undermine learners' overall language development.

Furthermore, the strong emphasis on assessing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in Malaysian classrooms often leads teachers to prioritise observable skill performance over explicit vocabulary instruction (Hassan & Gao, 2021). While this practice aligns with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), it may result in learners performing tasks mechanically without adequate vocabulary to convey meaning accurately. This imbalance may pose a practical classroom problem, where students appear to complete activities but struggle to communicate ideas effectively due to limited lexical resources.

From a research perspective, there is also a lack of comprehensive understanding of how Malaysian primary school teachers approach vocabulary instruction. Existing studies within the Malaysian context have largely focused on the effectiveness of specific vocabulary teaching techniques such as pictorial models or lexical approaches (Swyny & Sulaiman, 2023; Krishenan & Kahar, 2023). Other studies have predominantly examined students' preferences or use of vocabulary learning strategies (Asyiah, 2017; Teng, 2020; Chan & Aziz, 2021; Behforouz & Al Ghaithi, 2022; Cancino & Castillo, 2021). Consequently, limited attention has been given to teachers' actual classroom practices, as well as their beliefs and perceptions regarding vocabulary teaching (Azman, 2016; Ghazali, 2020).

In this study, teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching are understood as teachers' beliefs, understandings and interpretations of vocabulary instruction within their classroom contexts. These perceptions are not formed in isolation but are shaped by teachers' instructional experiences, professional knowledge and the challenges they encounter in practice such as curriculum demands, time constraints, learner diversity and pedagogical preparedness. As such, teachers' perceptions influence how vocabulary instruction is prioritised, adapted and implemented in ESL classrooms.

This lack of insight into teachers' use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies and their beliefs about vocabulary instruction represents a significant gap in the literature. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping learners' vocabulary development and their beliefs and instructional choices directly influence how vocabulary is taught and learned in the classroom (Ghalebi et al., 2021). Understanding teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching therefore requires examining the challenges they face in

implementing vocabulary instruction as these challenges shape teachers' instructional decisions and classroom practices.

Therefore, this study aims to address these practical and research gaps by investigating Malaysian ESL primary school teachers' use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies in their classrooms as well as exploring their beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning. Guided by Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies, this study seeks to provide a clearer picture of current vocabulary teaching practices in Malaysian primary schools and to inform more systematic and effective approaches to vocabulary instruction.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

- i. To identify the types of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) commonly used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers.
- ii. To identify the types of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) least used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers.
- iii. To investigate Malaysian ESL primary school teachers' perception on vocabulary teaching and learning.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What are the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) commonly used by Malaysian primary school teachers?
- ii. What are the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) least used by Malaysian primary school teachers?
- iii. How do Malaysian ESL primary school teachers perceive vocabulary teaching and learning?

1.5 Significance of Study

This study addresses an important gap in vocabulary instruction research by focusing on the strategies used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers, shifting attention from student preferences to teachers' beliefs and practices. This perspective is

significant as teachers play a crucial role in language acquisition; by understanding their approaches to vocabulary instruction, this research offers insights into how vocabulary is taught in Malaysian primary school classrooms, providing valuable implications for pedagogy and policy.

One of the primary contributions of this study is to identify the types of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) teachers employ and examine how these align with the goals of the Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) in Malaysia, which emphasizes communicative competence. By highlighting which strategies are commonly used, as well as those that may be underutilized, the study can provide a basis for curriculum adjustments that enhance vocabulary instruction to better support students' language development. Findings from this study can thus inform curriculum developers and policymakers, ensuring that vocabulary instruction is adequately integrated into language teaching practices in alignment with the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Another significant outcome of this research is the potential to inform targeted professional development opportunities for teachers. By closely examining which vocabulary instruction strategies educators find challenging or are less familiar with, the study identifies areas where additional training and resources could be beneficial. Houben et al. (2025) emphasized that individualized professional development, particularly when focused on vocabulary strategies, can enhance teachers' ability to implement effective language practices in classrooms. This study can therefore support the design of practical, tailored training initiatives that can equip teachers with a wider range of strategies that can support long-term vocabulary retention.

The findings of this research can also benefit fellow educators by encouraging them to explore and diversify their vocabulary teaching practices. Through sharing insights on effective vocabulary strategies, this study may inspire teachers to adopt a broader range of instructional techniques that encourage student participation and motivation. Research suggests that varied, student-centered approaches to vocabulary teaching lead to higher engagement and more sustainable learning outcomes (Nation, 2013; Graves & Sales, 2013).

Finally, this study contributes to the broader field of English as a Second Language (ESL) by examining vocabulary teaching within the unique context of Malaysian ESL classrooms. By using Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies as a framework, the study provides empirical evidence on how these

strategies function in a primary school setting. This evidence can help to expand the understanding of vocabulary instruction in SLA, particularly in similar multilingual and multicultural contexts.

In conclusion, by exploring teachers' beliefs and strategies in vocabulary instruction, this study has the potential to support professional development, curriculum improvement, and enhanced vocabulary teaching practices. The findings aim to provide value not only to teachers and students but also to contribute to creating a more effective and engaging language learning environment in Malaysian primary schools.

1.6 Limitation and Scope of Study

The study examines vocabulary teaching strategies used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers guided by Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies. The scope of the study focuses on two main areas; the types of VLS employed by teachers in the classroom as well as teachers' perceptions of vocabulary instruction and its importance in English language learning.

In terms of participants, the study involved Malaysian primary school ESL teachers. Data were collected in two phases, one involving teachers in different states in Malaysia through online surveys and the second phase involved four teachers teaching in primary schools located in Melaka, Malaysia. The participating teachers represent a range of teaching experiences, school locations (urban and rural) and school types which supports a more varied understanding of vocabulary teaching practices.

Methodologically, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative component consisted of a questionnaire administered to a larger group of primary school ESL teachers to identify commonly and less commonly used vocabulary learning strategies. The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with selected primary school ESL teachers which aim to explore teachers' beliefs, perceptions and classroom practices related to vocabulary instruction in greater depth.

The scope of the study is further defined by its theoretical framework, which is based on Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies. This taxonomy categorises strategies into discovery and consolidation strategies enabling a systematic analysis of the instructional approaches reported by teachers. The study is therefore limited to strategies that fall within this framework and does not examine vocabulary instruction beyond this classification.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the study focuses exclusively on primary school ESL teachers, and therefore the findings may not be directly transferable to secondary or tertiary education contexts. Second, although teachers from multiple regions participated via online surveys, the interview data are limited to a smaller group of teachers primarily from Melaka. As a result, the qualitative findings may reflect contextual characteristics specific to certain regions or school environments.

Another limitation relates to the self-reported nature of the data. Questionnaire responses and interview data are based on teachers' own accounts of their practices, which may be influenced by personal interpretation or social desirability. Teachers may report strategies they perceive as effective or appropriate rather than those consistently implemented in daily classroom practice. While efforts were made to encourage honest and reflective responses during interviews, the possibility of self-report bias cannot be entirely eliminated.

Finally, time constraints imposed on data collection and analysis may have limited the depth of exploration of certain issues. Although thematic analysis was conducted carefully, some nuanced aspects of teachers' practices and beliefs may not have been examined in extensive detail.

In acknowledging these limitations, this study nevertheless provides meaningful insights into vocabulary teaching strategies used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers. The findings contribute to a clearer understanding of current practices and highlight areas for future research particularly studies involving larger and more diverse samples, additional classroom observations and extended research timeframes.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

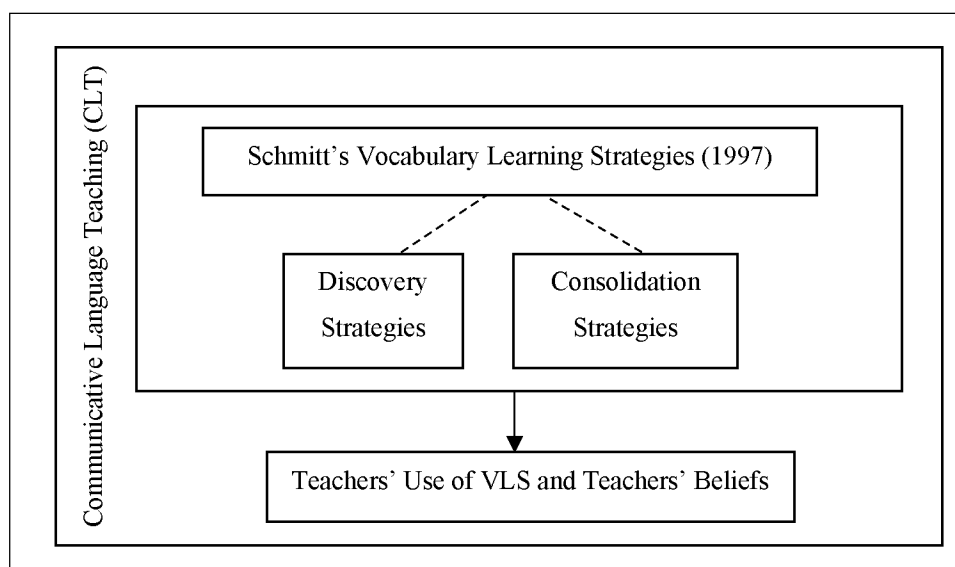


Figure 1.1 Overview of Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is presented in Figure 1.1. The framework is grounded in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which emphasises meaningful communication and the use of language for authentic purposes in second language learning. Within the CLT approach, vocabulary is regarded as a core component that enables learners to understand messages and express meaning effectively during communicative activities. As such, vocabulary instruction plays an essential role in supporting learners' communicative competence in the ESL classroom.

Building on this foundation, the study adopts Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies as its primary analytical framework. Schmitt's taxonomy provides a systematic classification of strategies used in vocabulary learning and instruction, making it particularly suitable for examining vocabulary teaching practices in classroom contexts. The taxonomy categorises strategies into two main types; discovery strategies, which are used to introduce and help learners identify the meaning of new vocabulary and consolidation strategies, which support the retention and use of vocabulary through repeated exposure and meaningful practice.

In this study, Schmitt's taxonomy is used to analyse Malaysian ESL primary school teachers' use of vocabulary learning strategies in their classrooms. The framework enables the identification of specific strategies employed by teachers when introducing new vocabulary and when reinforcing previously learned words. By categorising teachers' reported practices according to discovery and consolidation

strategies, the study provides a structured account of how vocabulary instruction is carried out in the primary school ESL context.

The framework also supports the exploration of teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding vocabulary instruction. Teachers' instructional choices are closely linked to their beliefs about the importance of vocabulary in language learning and their understanding of effective teaching practices. By examining teachers' beliefs alongside their reported use of vocabulary learning strategies, the framework allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers conceptualise and implement vocabulary instruction in their classrooms.

Overall, this theoretical framework positions Schmitt's (1997) Vocabulary Learning Strategies as the central lens through which vocabulary teaching practices are examined. Through this framework, the study aims to generate insights into current vocabulary teaching practices among Malaysian ESL primary school teachers and to contribute to a clearer understanding of how vocabulary learning strategies are applied in classroom instruction.

1.8 Definition of Terms

For clarity and consistency, the following key terms are defined as they are used in this study:

- i. Vocabulary.** Vocabulary refers to words that learners need to understand and use in order to communicate meaningfully in English. In this study, vocabulary is viewed as a core component of language learning that supports comprehension and expression in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- ii. Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS).** Vocabulary Learning Strategies refer to specific techniques and approaches used to discover, understand, retain, and use new vocabulary. In this study, VLS are defined based on Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy and are examined in relation to teachers' classroom practices.
- iii. Discovery Strategies.** Discovery strategies are vocabulary learning strategies used to introduce new words and help learners identify their meanings. In this study, discovery strategies include techniques employed

by teachers to assist pupils in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary during initial exposure.

- iv. **Consolidation Strategies.** Consolidation strategies refer to strategies used to reinforce and strengthen learners' vocabulary knowledge after initial introduction. In this study, consolidation strategies include instructional practices that promote repeated exposure, practice, and meaningful use of vocabulary.
- v. **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).** Communicative Language Teaching is an approach to language teaching that emphasises meaningful communication and the use of language in authentic contexts. In this study, CLT provides the pedagogical context that highlights the importance of vocabulary in supporting communicative competence.
- vi. **Teachers' Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies.** Teachers' use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies refers to the instructional practices reported by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers when teaching vocabulary in their classrooms. This includes the selection and application of discovery and consolidation strategies.
- vii. **Teachers' Beliefs.** Teachers' beliefs refer to teachers' perceptions, views and understanding regarding vocabulary instruction and its role in English language learning. In this study, teachers' beliefs are understood to be shaped by their classroom experiences and the challenges they encounter when implementing vocabulary teaching in practice.
- viii. **ESL (English as a Second Language).** ESL refers to the teaching and learning of English in contexts where English is not the learners' first language. In this study, ESL refers specifically to English language instruction in Malaysian primary schools.
- ix. **Malaysian ESL Primary School Teachers.** Malaysian ESL primary school teachers refer to teachers who teach English as a subject in Malaysian government primary schools. These teachers constitute the participants of the present study.
- x. **CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).** The CEFR is an international framework used to describe language proficiency levels. In this study, CEFR is referred to in relation to the

Malaysian English language curriculum and its influence on classroom instruction.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the background and rationale for the present study which focuses on vocabulary instruction in the Malaysian primary school ESL context. Vocabulary was identified as a fundamental component of language learning, particularly within a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework where learners' ability to communicate meaningfully depends heavily on their vocabulary knowledge. Despite its importance, vocabulary instruction in Malaysian classrooms is often marginalised and inconsistently implemented, resulting in challenges for both teachers and learners.

The chapter outlined the problem statement, highlighting the reliance on traditional vocabulary teaching methods, limited guidance within the CEFR-aligned curriculum and the lack of systematic use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) in primary school ESL classrooms. These issues point to a need for a clearer understanding of how vocabulary is currently taught and how teachers perceive vocabulary instruction in practice. The research gaps were identified, particularly the limited focus on teachers' use of vocabulary learning strategies and their beliefs regarding vocabulary teaching within the Malaysian context.

Finally, the theoretical framework guiding the study was introduced. Grounded in Communicative Language Teaching and centred on Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies, the framework provides a structured lens for examining teachers' use of discovery and consolidation strategies as well as their beliefs about vocabulary instruction.

Chapter 2 will delve deeper into the theoretical framework introduced here. It will review relevant literature on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) to contextualize the study and support its focus on vocabulary teaching within Malaysian ESL classrooms.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of key literature relevant to the study focusing on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, vocabulary learning strategies, vocabulary instruction methods and the challenges teachers face in vocabulary teaching. The review begins with a discussion of CLT and its underlying principles followed by an examination of its implementation within the Malaysian ESL context. The chapter then explores vocabulary learning strategies drawing primarily on Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy which serves as the theoretical foundation of this study. This is followed by a review of vocabulary instruction approaches including explicit and implicit instruction and how these approaches relate to strategy use. The chapter also discusses challenges encountered by teachers in vocabulary teaching. Finally, a conceptual framework is presented to illustrate how vocabulary teaching practices can be examined through the lens of CLT and Schmitt's taxonomy in Malaysian primary school contexts.

2.2 The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach

English Language Teaching encompasses several widely used approaches, such as the Grammar Translation Method, the Audio-Lingual Method and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. Each method emphasizes specific skills in language instruction. This study focuses on the CLT approach, as it has been adopted within the framework of Malaysia's English as a Second Language (ESL) education system.

CLT approach combines different language concepts including sociolinguistics, semantics, functional linguistics and pragmatics (Qasserras, 2023). It aims to develop learners' communicative competence through the application of the language in meaningful and real-life situations (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). CLT is rooted in the belief that effective language learning occurs when learners actively use the language to communicate with others. To ensure this, implementing CLT requires teachers to

encourage students to use English in meaningful ways by incorporating various activities and creating opportunities for students to practice speaking (University of Louisiana Monroe, 2021).

Fattah and Saidalvi (2019) believe that in implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), instructional techniques should engage learners in processes of expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning through communicative tasks. However, teachers often feel unsure about how to effectively implement CLT in classroom environments. This uncertainty leads many teachers to prefer traditional grammar and translation methods or to develop their own versions of CLT based on personal beliefs and practical experiences.

On the contrary, Nam (2023) argues that while CLT presents certain challenges, particularly in large class settings, teachers need to shift their perception that it is difficult to implement and instead embrace CLT to transform students from “passive receivers” into “active constructors” of knowledge. His study highlights that external factors are not the primary barriers to implementing CLT. Teacher competence is the key challenge. Nam emphasizes the importance of teachers taking proactive steps to enhance their teaching skills and resisting the tendency to revert to traditional approaches, such as the Grammar-Translation Method.

Overall, the literature suggests that CLT is not simply a prescribed method but a pedagogical approach that is shaped by teachers’ understanding, beliefs and instructional practices. Although CLT promotes meaningful language use, its effectiveness in vocabulary teaching depends largely on how teachers design activities and support learners’ use of vocabulary in communicative contexts. This highlights the importance of examining teachers’ classroom practices which is a central focus of the present study.

2.3 The Role of the CLT Framework in Malaysian ESL Classrooms

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been a significant approach in Malaysia's English as a Second Language (ESL) education since the 1970s. It is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes the ability to communicate effectively and meaningfully in real-life situations. Rooted in the idea that language is primarily a tool for communication, CLT focuses on developing learners’ communicative

competence rather than solely their grammatical accuracy or linguistic knowledge (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The introduction of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 marked a significant turning point in Malaysia's efforts to enhance English language education. The blueprint outlined key reforms aimed at aligning English teaching practices with international standards (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Among these reforms was the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), a global benchmark for language proficiency that complements the communicative goals of CLT (Savski, 2021).

The adoption of CEFR began with the English Language Education Reform Roadmap 2015-2025, which provided a phased strategy for integrating CEFR-aligned teaching, learning, and assessment. The first phase (2013-2015) focused on improving teachers' English proficiency and strengthening the existing curricula, while the second phase (2016-2020) emphasized aligning teaching materials and assessments with CEFR standards. The ongoing third phase (2021-2025) seeks full integration of CEFR across all educational levels (Lee, Kassim, & Bakar, 2022).

By aligning CEFR with the CLT framework, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has ensured that communicative teaching methods are supported by clear proficiency benchmarks. This alignment promotes consistency in language instruction while enhancing students' communicative competence (Lee, Kassim, & Bakar, 2022). CLT promotes vocabulary learning in meaningful contexts. Rather than memorizing word lists, learners are exposed to vocabulary through authentic materials, such as dialogues, newspapers, and multimedia. Contextualized learning enables learners to understand not only the meanings of words but also their appropriate usage in various situations (Webb, 2007). It can be said that vocabulary aligns with CLT by serving as the building block for communicative competence. Through contextualized learning, integration into skills, and real-world application, vocabulary instruction supports CLT's goals of meaningful interaction and learner autonomy.

Although existing literature highlights English language teaching reforms and policy alignment such as CEFR integration (Lee, Kassim, & Bakar, 2022; Savski, 2021), much of this research focuses on policy implementation and teacher readiness rather than detailed investigations of how teachers implement vocabulary instruction in primary school classrooms. This suggests a gap between policy intentions and

classroom realities highlighting the need for empirical studies that explore how teachers implement vocabulary teaching within a CLT framework in Malaysian primary schools.

2.4 Vocabulary as a Core Component of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Although Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) places strong emphasis on meaningful interaction and the functional use of language, successful communication cannot occur without adequate vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary serves as the primary resource through which meanings are expressed, negotiated, and interpreted in communicative contexts. As Wilkins (1972) famously argued, *“without grammar very little can be conveyed, but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”* (p. 111), highlighting the foundational role of vocabulary in communication.

Within the CLT framework, communicative competence extends beyond grammatical accuracy to include the ability to select and use appropriate lexical items in real-life situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Learners require sufficient vocabulary to participate in communicative tasks such as discussions, role-plays, problem-solving activities and authentic language use. Consequently, vocabulary knowledge directly supports the development of communicative competence, making it an essential component of CLT rather than a peripheral skill.

In CLT-oriented classrooms, vocabulary is typically introduced and practiced in meaningful, contextualised ways rather than through rote memorisation. Learners encounter vocabulary through interaction, authentic texts and task-based activities, which align with CLT principles of learner engagement and real-world language use (Webb, 2007). However, the effectiveness of such instruction largely depends on how teachers select, model and reinforce vocabulary learning strategies during instruction.

In the Malaysian ESL context, the integration of CEFR within the CLT framework further highlights the importance of vocabulary. CEFR descriptors emphasise lexical range and control as key indicators of communicative proficiency across proficiency levels (Council of Europe, 2001). This places increased responsibility on teachers to ensure that vocabulary instruction is systematically integrated into communicative activities to support learners' progression.

Despite the recognised importance of vocabulary within CLT, existing research in Malaysia has largely focused on curriculum reforms and policy implementation

rather than examining how teachers operationalise vocabulary instruction in CLT-based primary classrooms. This highlights the need for empirical studies that investigate teachers' vocabulary teaching practices and the strategies they employ to support communicative competence development among young ESL learners.

2.5 A Review of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) are widely recognized as an important aspect of second language acquisition as they support learners in discovering, retaining and using new vocabulary (Gu & Johnson, 1996). These strategies fall under the broader category of language learning strategies and include a range of cognitive, social and metacognitive techniques. While much of the literature on VLS focuses on learners, classroom-based vocabulary learning is significantly influenced by teachers' instructional practices including how strategies are introduced and reinforced.

Research has shown that learners who use a wider range of vocabulary learning strategies tend to have larger vocabulary sizes and better language proficiency. Alahmadi and Foltz (2020) found that learners with higher vocabulary knowledge reported more frequent strategy use, suggesting that strategy development may be shaped by instructional exposure over time. Similarly, Lee et al. (2022) highlighted the role of motivation and strategy use in vocabulary development, emphasizing that teachers contribute to this process by modelling strategies and encouraging their use during lessons. However, these studies primarily focus on learner outcomes and provide limited insight into how teachers implement strategy-based instruction in classroom contexts.

This study adopts Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies as its main theoretical framework. Schmitt's taxonomy builds on Oxford's (1990) classification of language learning strategies but offers a more detailed and vocabulary-specific framework, making it particularly suitable for examining vocabulary teaching practices. To provide a conceptual background, Oxford's taxonomy is briefly discussed before focusing on Schmitt's taxonomy, which underpins the present study.

2.5.1 Oxford's Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies (1990)

Oxford's taxonomy of language learning strategies, introduced in 1990, is widely recognized as a comprehensive framework for understanding the techniques learners use to acquire a second or foreign language. Oxford (1990) defined language learning strategies as the specific actions learners take to facilitate successful language acquisition.

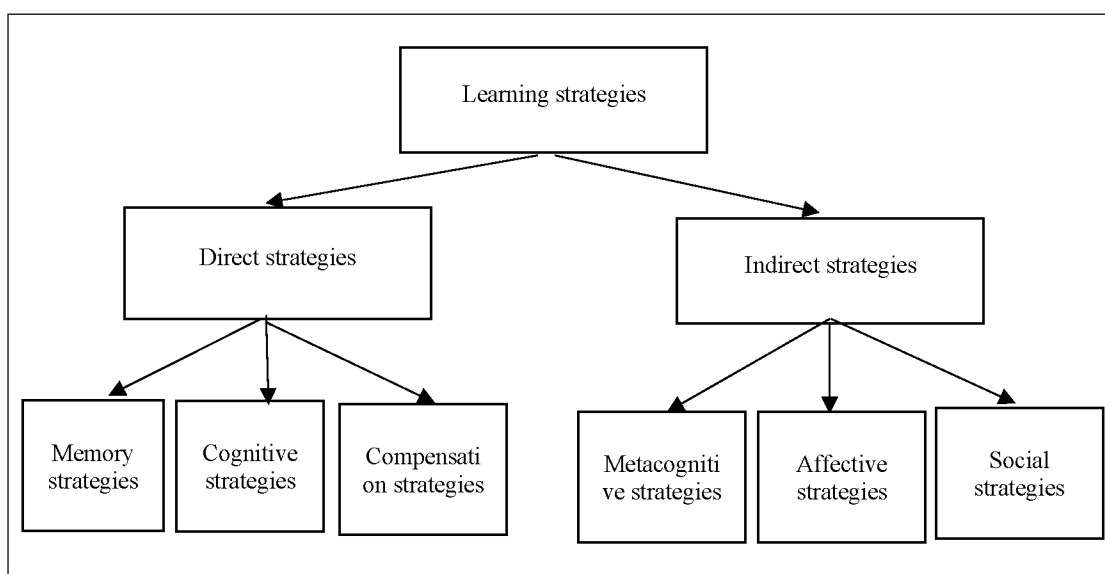


Figure 2.1 Overview of Oxford's Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies

Figure 2.1 illustrates Oxford's (1990) Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies, which classifies strategies into two primary categories: Direct Strategies and Indirect Strategies. Each category comprises specific subcategories that address various aspects of language learning.

2.5.1.1 Direct Strategies

According to Oxford, Direct Strategies are those that involve active engagement with the target language, enabling learners to interact directly with vocabulary, grammar, and other language components to improve their comprehension and communication skills. The first subcategory, Memory Strategies, focuses on techniques that aid learners in retaining and recalling language information effectively. Examples

of these techniques include visual imagery, mnemonics, and associating new vocabulary with existing knowledge to enhance memory retention.

Cognitive Strategies, on the other hand, emphasize active language engagement through practices such as pronunciation exercises, summarizing texts, and identifying patterns in language use. These strategies encourage deeper cognitive processing, enabling learners to construct meaningful sentences and interpret complex texts. Compensation Strategies complement these by helping learners address knowledge gaps. By guessing meanings from context or using non-verbal cues such as gestures, learners can effectively convey ideas even when they lack precise vocabulary.

2.5.1.2 Indirect Strategies

On the other hand, Oxford defined Indirect Strategies as strategies that support the language learning process by creating a favourable environment and helping learners organize, manage, and enhance their learning experience. The first subcategory, Metacognitive Strategies, involves planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning process. Learners use these strategies to set goals, prioritize tasks, and track their progress. Affective Strategies focus on managing emotions and motivation, which are vital for maintaining a positive attitude toward learning. Techniques like self-encouragement, relaxation exercises, and rewarding oneself for achievements help reduce anxiety and sustain engagement.

Social Strategies, the final subcategory, highlight the role of interaction and collaboration in language learning. Activities like asking for clarification, participating in group work, or engaging in language exchanges provide opportunities for authentic communication, enhancing both linguistic competence and interpersonal skills.

Although Oxford's taxonomy offers a comprehensive overview of language learning strategies, it is not exclusively designed for vocabulary learning. From a teaching perspective, the taxonomy highlights the importance of exposing learners to a range of strategies but provides limited guidance on how vocabulary strategies can be systematically taught or integrated into classroom instruction. This limitation led to the development of more specialized frameworks such as Schmitt's taxonomy which focuses specifically on vocabulary learning.

2.5.2 Schmitt's Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (1997)

Building on Oxford's classification, Schmitt (1997) developed a more detailed taxonomy specifically for Vocabulary Learning Strategies. Schmitt divided vocabulary learning strategies into two main types: Discovery Strategies and Consolidation Strategies. Discovery strategies are techniques learners use to uncover the meaning of a new word, such as determination and social strategies. For instance, learners may analyse word parts or context to deduce meaning independently or seek assistance from teachers or peers. Once learners encounter a word, consolidation strategies help them reinforce and retain its meaning through repetition, association, and use in different contexts. These include social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. Figure 2.2 shows the overview of Schmitt's Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies.

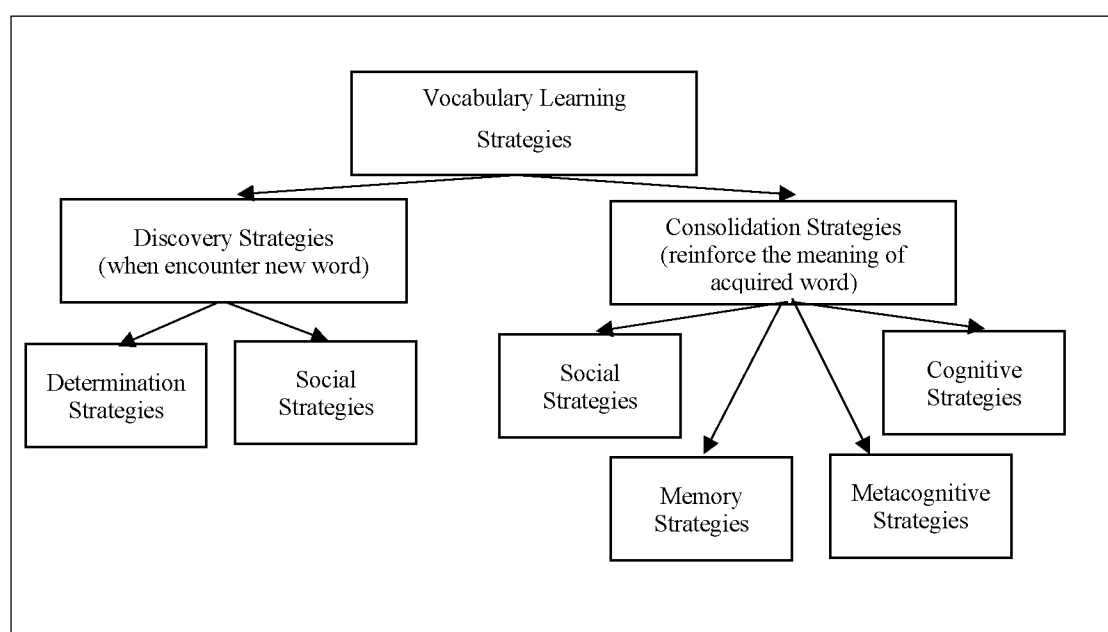


Figure 2.2 Overview of Schmitt's Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

2.5.2.1 Discovery Strategies

Schmitt (1997) categorizes Discovery Strategies into two main types: Determination Strategies and Social Strategies. These strategies are employed when learners first encounter new vocabulary and aim to determine its meaning through individual effort or social interaction. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the sub-strategies included in Schmitt's Discovery Strategies.

Table 2.1
Schmitt's Discovery Strategies

Strategy	Description
Determination (DET)	Analyse part of speech
Determination (DET)	Analyse affixes and roots
Determination (DET)	Check L1 cognate
Determination (DET)	Analyse pictures / gestures
Determination (DET)	Guessing from context
Determination (DET)	Bilingual dictionary
Determination (DET)	Monolingual dictionary
Determination (DET)	Word list
Determination (DET)	Flashcard
Social (SOC)	Ask teacher for L1 translation
Social (SOC)	Ask teacher to paraphrase or provide synonym of new word
Social (SOC)	Ask teacher for sentence containing new word
Social (SOC)	Ask classmates for meaning
Social (SOC)	Discover meaning through group work activity

a) Determination Strategies

Determination Strategies refer to the use of various tools or techniques that allow learners to independently discover the meaning of unfamiliar words. According to Schmitt (1997), these include using dictionaries, guessing word meaning from context, and analyzing affixes, roots, or other word parts.

Research supports the use of determination strategies as an effective means of vocabulary learning, especially in contexts where learners have limited access to support from others. Nation (2001) highlights that strategies like guessing from context and using reference materials are essential for learner autonomy and promote long-term vocabulary development. Additionally, learners who frequently use bilingual or

monolingual dictionaries tend to develop stronger word recognition and retention (Fan, 2003).

However, critics argue that these strategies may not always lead to accurate understanding. Laufer and Hadar (1997), as cited in Hulstijn (2001), found that learners often misinterpret word meanings when relying solely on contextual guessing, particularly in texts with limited or misleading cues. Moreover, some learners may rely too heavily on dictionaries without fully engaging with the context, limiting deeper processing of the word (Hulstijn, 2001, as cited in Schmitt, 2008).

Despite these limitations, determination strategies remain popular, particularly among learners with higher proficiency or those in academic environments (Gu & Johnson, 1996, as cited in Schmitt, 2000).

b) Social Strategies

Social Strategies, as defined by Schmitt (1997), involve interaction with others to determine the meaning of unknown words. These include asking teachers or peers for translations, synonyms, definitions, or example sentences.

Social strategies play a crucial role in facilitating language development, especially among ESL learners who benefit from interactive and communicative environments. Oxford (1990, as cited in Schmitt, 2000) emphasized that negotiating meaning through social interaction enhances learners' ability to comprehend and use the target language effectively. This view is supported by findings from Rahmat et al. (2022), who observed that learners frequently ask questions during English lessons and engage in peer or teacher discussions to clarify meaning.

However, some studies caution that overdependence on social support may inhibit learner autonomy. Alahmadi and Foltz (2020) conducted a study exploring how vocabulary learning strategy usage and skills in the four language domains relate to participants' increase in vocabulary size. They found that participants with lower vocabulary sizes reported asking instructors about word meanings more frequently than those with higher vocabulary sizes. This suggests that excessive dependence on social strategies may hinder the development of independent vocabulary learning skills.

In summary, while discovery strategies such as determination and social strategies support vocabulary development by promoting autonomy and facilitating meaning negotiation, their effectiveness depends on appropriate instructional support.

Without guidance, learners may misinterpret word meanings or become overly dependent on teacher assistance, particularly at lower proficiency levels. This highlights the importance of teachers scaffolding discovery strategies by modelling effective strategy use and gradually encouraging learners to develop greater independence in vocabulary learning.

2.5.2.2 Consolidation Strategies

Schmitt (1997) classified Consolidation Strategies into four sub-categories: Social, Memory, Cognitive, and Metacognitive Strategies. These strategies are used after the initial encounter with a word, helping learners to reinforce and retain vocabulary over time. The following subsections explain each sub-category in greater detail. Table 2.2 provides a detailed breakdown of Schmitt's Consolidation Strategies.

Table 2.2
Schmitt's Consolidation Strategies

Strategy	Description
Social (SOC)	Study and practice meaning in a group
Social (SOC)	Teacher checks students' flash cards or word lists for accuracy
Social (SOC)	Interact with native speakers
Memory (MEM)	Use keyword method
Memory (MEM)	Remember affixes and suffixes
Memory (MEM)	Remember part of speech
Memory (MEM)	Study word with a pictorial representation of its meaning
Memory (MEM)	Associate word meaning with picture
Memory (MEM)	Connect word to personal experience
Memory (MEM)	Associate the word to its coordinate
Memory (MEM)	Connect the word to its synonym or antonym
Memory (MEM)	Use semantic maps
Memory (MEM)	Use 'scales' for gradable adjectives

Strategy	Description
Memory (MEM)	Peg method
Memory (MEM)	Loci method
Memory (MEM)	Group words together to study them
Memory (MEM)	Group words together spatially on a page
Memory (MEM)	Use new word in sentence
Memory (MEM)	Group words together within a storyline
Memory (MEM)	Study the spelling of a word
Memory (MEM)	Study the sound of a word
Memory (MEM)	Say new word aloud when studying
Memory (MEM)	Image word form
Memory (MEM)	Underline initial letter of the word
Memory (MEM)	Configuration
Memory (MEM)	Paraphrase the word's meaning
Memory (MEM)	Use cognates in study
Memory (MEM)	Learn the words of an idiom together
Memory (MEM)	Use physical action when learning a word
Memory (MEM)	Use semantic feature grids
Cognitive (COG)	Verbal repetition
Cognitive (COG)	Written repetition
Cognitive (COG)	Word lists
Cognitive (COG)	Flash cards
Cognitive (COG)	Take notes in class
Cognitive (COG)	Use the vocabulary section in textbook
Cognitive (COG)	Listen to tape of word lists
Cognitive (COG)	Put English labels on physical objects
Cognitive (COG)	Keep a vocabulary notebook
Metacognitive (MET)	Use English language media

Strategy	Description
Metacognitive (MET)	Test oneself with word tests
Metacognitive (MET)	Use spaced word practice
Metacognitive (MET)	Skip or pass new word
Metacognitive (MET)	Continue to study word over time

a) Social Strategies

In the context of consolidation, Social Strategies refer to learners practicing and reinforcing vocabulary through interaction with others. Unlike Social Strategies under Discovery (which focus on seeking word meaning), consolidation-based Social Strategies involve collaborative usage and application of vocabulary in meaningful contexts. For instance, students may study vocabulary in groups, review word lists with peers or teachers, or engage in conversation with native or proficient speakers to reinforce word knowledge (Schmitt, 1997). These strategies allow learners to receive corrective feedback, observe word use in natural discourse, and deepen their understanding through social negotiation of meaning (Nation, 2001).

b) Memory Strategies

Memory Strategies involve associating new vocabulary with existing knowledge, images, categories, or meaningful personal experiences. They are among the most preferred and effective vocabulary strategies because they promote deep processing (Oxford, 2017; Teng, 2020). Learners may create mental images, use the keyword method, categorize words, or build semantic networks. These strategies are popular because they make learning more concrete and memorable, especially for visual or analytical learners (Moody et al., 2018). Teng (2020) reported that primary school learners using imagery, association, and personalization showed higher vocabulary gains and long-term retention.

c) Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive Strategies focus on the mechanical aspects of vocabulary learning, such as verbal and written repetition, keeping vocabulary notebooks, or making word lists. These strategies often appear in formal classroom contexts where repetition and practice are encouraged (Schmitt, 1997). While practical and easy to implement, they are often viewed as less engaging and contextually meaningful (Hill, 2022).

d) Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's own vocabulary learning process. These include setting learning goals, testing oneself, using spaced repetition, and choosing which words to study or skip. Although powerful in promoting learner autonomy, they are not commonly used by younger learners or in teacher-led environments (Teng & Zhang, 2021). However, their role in promoting long-term vocabulary acquisition is significant, especially when learners are trained to use them effectively.

In conclusion, consolidation strategies play an essential role in strengthening vocabulary knowledge after initial exposure by supporting retention, practice and learner autonomy. While memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies have been shown to enhance vocabulary learning, their effectiveness depends largely on how they are implemented in classroom instruction. Research suggests that younger learners, in particular, require explicit guidance in using these strategies, highlighting the role of teachers in selecting, modelling and sequencing consolidation strategies according to learners' proficiency levels. However, existing literature tends to focus more on learners' strategy use than on teachers' instructional practices, indicating a need for further investigation into how teachers facilitate consolidation strategies in Malaysian primary ESL classrooms which is the focus of the present study.

2.6 Recent Studies Related to Schmitt's Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Recent empirical research has consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) in supporting vocabulary acquisition. However, a closer examination of the literature reveals that most studies prioritise learner strategy

use and outcomes with limited attention given to how these strategies are introduced, modelled or reinforced by teachers in classroom contexts.

Research has shown that discovery strategies which involve learners actively identifying and inferring word meanings are effective in supporting vocabulary acquisition. A study by Panjaitan, Sibarani, and Saragih (2021) found that integrating contextual guessing, dictionary use and multimedia resources significantly enhanced learners' vocabulary development. These approaches align closely with Schmitt's discovery strategies, as they require learners to engage cognitively with unfamiliar words through multiple sources of input.

In contrast to discovery strategies, consolidation strategies focus on reinforcing vocabulary knowledge through repetition, practice and application. Behforouz and Al Ghaithi (2022) reported that EFL learners frequently used cognitive strategies such as repetition, note-taking, and sentence construction, which supported long-term retention and deeper understanding of word usage. These findings reinforce the importance of consolidation strategies in moving vocabulary knowledge from short-term to long-term memory.

However, similar to many learner-centred studies, this research does not investigate whether these strategies were self-initiated by learners or explicitly taught by teachers. As consolidation strategies often require structured practice and feedback, the absence of discussion on teachers' roles represents a significant limitation. Understanding how teachers design activities that promote consolidation is particularly important in primary classrooms where learners may lack the autonomy to manage strategy use independently.

Ghalebi et al. (2021) found that high-achieving learners tended to employ metacognitive and cognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their vocabulary learning while lower-achieving learners relied more on social and determination strategies. These findings suggest that higher proficiency learners demonstrate greater strategic awareness and independence. Similarly, Chan and Aziz (2021) reported that high-achieving learners in Chinese vernacular schools frequently used metacognitive strategies including goal setting and self-review. While these studies highlight differences in learner behaviour, they raise important pedagogical questions regarding how learners develop metacognitive awareness. The literature largely assumes that strategic competence emerges naturally with proficiency, yet

provides limited insight into how teachers explicitly foster such strategies through instruction.

With the increasing integration of technology in education, recent studies have also examined how digital tools support vocabulary learning strategies. Teng (2020) demonstrated that captioned videos enhanced vocabulary acquisition by providing contextual and multimodal input, supporting learners' ability to notice, infer and confirm word meanings. Similarly, Zarrati et al. (2024) found that digital flashcards were more effective than traditional paper-based flashcards in promoting vocabulary retention particularly when used consistently.

Gamification has also been shown to positively influence vocabulary learning. Cancino and Castillo (2021) reported that game-based vocabulary activities increased learner motivation and engagement, which in turn supported vocabulary acquisition. Although these studies confirm the potential of technology to enhance VLS use, they tend to emphasise effectiveness rather than instructional integration, offering little explanation of how teachers align technological tools with pedagogical goals or strategy instruction.

Social and memory strategies have also been identified as important components of vocabulary learning. Tang et al. (2021) found that cooperative learning and peer tutoring led to better vocabulary retention, suggesting that social interaction facilitates deeper processing of vocabulary through discussion and shared meaning-making. Hill (2022) similarly reported that mnemonic techniques supported vocabulary retention by helping learners form meaningful associations.

Despite these positive findings, existing studies rarely examine how teachers decide when and how to incorporate social or memory strategies into lessons. In primary ESL classrooms, where learners often rely heavily on teacher guidance, understanding teachers' strategic choices is essential. The lack of focus on instructional decision-making represents a notable gap in the literature.

Taken together, recent studies provide strong empirical support for Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy as a useful framework for understanding vocabulary learning strategies. Across contexts, discovery, consolidation, metacognitive, social and memory strategies have been shown to enhance vocabulary acquisition and retention. However, the literature remains predominantly learner-focused with limited attention paid to teachers' roles in strategy instruction, particularly at the primary school level.

2.7 Vocabulary Instruction in Language Learning

Vocabulary instruction is essential for developing students' overall language proficiency, particularly in second language learning contexts. A strong vocabulary foundation supports learners in expressing themselves more effectively and understanding both spoken and written texts. Without sufficient vocabulary, learners may struggle to engage meaningfully in communication or comprehend content across different subjects. According to Ali (2020), there is a clear link between vocabulary development and broader language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. As vocabulary knowledge increases, learners gain the tools necessary to construct sentences, follow conversations, and grasp academic texts more confidently.

Vocabulary size has also been shown to play a crucial role in reading comprehension. Al-Khasawneh (2019) conducted a study that found a strong positive correlation between learners' vocabulary size and their ability to understand written texts. This means that students with a larger vocabulary are generally more capable of making sense of complex readings, interpreting meaning from context, and identifying main ideas. Vocabulary knowledge acts as a bridge between decoding individual words and understanding the overall message of a passage, making it a key component in reading development.

Quines (2023) further supports this view by highlighting how learners' vocabulary levels directly affect their performance in both reading and writing tasks. Her study revealed that students with only an average range of vocabulary tended to perform at a moderate level in literacy tasks, while those with more extensive vocabulary knowledge consistently outperformed their peers. This finding reinforces the idea that vocabulary proficiency is not just beneficial for language learners but essential for achieving success in other language-related academic areas as well.

Generally, vocabulary instruction can be categorized into explicit and implicit approaches, each with unique characteristics and instructional benefits. Explicit vocabulary instruction focuses on the direct teaching of specific words, definitions, and usage, while implicit vocabulary instruction emphasizes incidental learning, where vocabulary acquisition occurs as a byproduct of exposure to language in context (Fainman & Tokar, 2019).

2.7.1 Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

Explicit vocabulary instruction refers to a structured and intentional approach to teaching vocabulary, where teachers deliberately present new words, explain their meanings, provide examples in context, and offer repeated opportunities for practice. This method ensures that learners are fully aware of the vocabulary being taught and are actively engaged in learning its form, meaning, and usage. The process often involves pre-teaching vocabulary before reading or listening tasks, using definitions, synonyms, translation, contextual sentences, and follow-up activities to reinforce retention.

Research consistently supports the benefits of explicit instruction in enhancing vocabulary acquisition. For instance, Mutia, Sahardin, and Putra (2023) conducted a classroom-based study with senior high school students and found that those who received seven hours of structured vocabulary instruction showed significant improvement in vocabulary test scores. These students not only recognized more words but also demonstrated greater proficiency in using them in context. The results suggest that explicit vocabulary instruction facilitates both retention and productive use, making it especially beneficial for learners who struggle with long-term vocabulary development.

Explicit instruction is especially effective in the acquisition of both academic and technical vocabulary, which often requires focused attention and repeated exposure to be internalized. In a study conducted by Chung (2023), the use of visual aids such as images and flashcards during pre-teaching significantly improved EFL learners' vocabulary retention. These visual supports helped learners form stronger associations with word meanings, thereby aiding both comprehension and long-term recall. Similarly, a local study by Tahir et al. (2021) found that Malaysian Form Two ESL learners demonstrated higher engagement and better vocabulary scores when explicit instruction techniques were employed. These results indicate that clear, targeted teaching not only enhances performance but also sustains motivation, especially in second language contexts.

Beyond word acquisition, explicit instruction also contributes to metacognitive development by teaching learners how to learn vocabulary. Kobayashi and Little (2018) emphasized the importance of explicitly teaching vocabulary learning strategies (VLS), particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts. Their study found that

students benefitted from being taught strategies like affix recognition, root analysis, and categorization. These methods, part of Schmitt's (1997) Consolidation Strategies, empower learners to take greater control of their vocabulary learning process. Teaching such strategies explicitly not only reinforces vocabulary retention but also equips students with tools they can use independently across disciplines.

2.7.2 Implicit Vocabulary Instruction

In contrast to explicit instruction, implicit vocabulary instruction involves incidental learning, where learners acquire new words without direct teaching. Vocabulary is learned through exposure to language in use, such as during reading, listening, conversations, or multimedia engagement, with minimal interruption to explain meanings. In this approach, learners are expected to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words using contextual clues, their prior knowledge, and experience with language patterns.

Schmitt (2000) describes incidental learning as the acquisition of vocabulary that occurs naturally and unintentionally during language use, rather than through memorization or focused practice. The strength of implicit instruction lies in repeated, contextualized exposure. Words encountered multiple times across different settings are more likely to be remembered and understood deeply. Benyahia (2020) found that Algerian EFL teachers used a blend of methods, with implicit strategies proving especially effective when classrooms emphasized authentic communication. Through activities such as storytelling, discussions, or watching videos, students repeatedly engage with vocabulary in different situations, thereby strengthening word familiarity and usage flexibility. This method encourages long-term retention by embedding vocabulary in communicative contexts, making the learning process more meaningful and less mechanical.

2.7.3 Combining Explicit and Implicit Instruction

While explicit and implicit methods each have their strengths, research suggests that a combination of both provides the most effective approach to vocabulary instruction. This blended method allows learners to benefit from the clarity and focus of explicit instruction as well as the contextual richness of implicit exposure. By first

encountering new words in meaningful contexts and then revisiting them through structured activities, learners are more likely to retain vocabulary and understand its usage nuances.

Sinyashina (2020) investigated the impact of combining incidental learning through subtitled videos with intentional vocabulary exercises. Her study revealed that students who first encountered new words incidentally and later engaged in explicit practice performed better than those who only experienced explicit instruction. This suggests that contextual exposure lays a foundation, while targeted practice consolidates learning.

A similar conclusion was drawn by Fainman and Tokar (2019), who examined vocabulary instruction in an Aviation English course. They reported that explicit instruction facilitated immediate learning of technical vocabulary, but it was the implicit exposure through role-plays and simulations that helped students retain and apply the vocabulary in real-world scenarios. This balance between intentional focus and incidental reinforcement ensures that learners not only understand word meanings but can also use them appropriately in various contexts.

This integrated approach aligns well with Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. Discovery Strategies, often associated with implicit learning, allow students to encounter and infer vocabulary meaning through reading or listening. Consolidation Strategies, on the other hand, involve deliberate practice such as repetition, use of mnemonic devices, and strategic grouping. Together, these strategies form a comprehensive framework that supports vocabulary learning from both cognitive and pedagogical perspectives.

2.8 Challenges Teachers Face in Vocabulary Teaching

Pajares (1992) posits that teachers' beliefs function as filters through which classroom experiences are interpreted, shaping perceptions of teaching, learning, and student behaviour. Similarly, Borg (2003) conceptualises teacher cognition as encompassing the beliefs, knowledge, and perceptions that inform instructional decision-making. Guided by these theoretical perspectives, this section reviews literature on the challenges of vocabulary instruction, as such challenges are integral to teachers' classroom experiences and may consequently shape their perceptions, beliefs and instructional practices.

2.8.1 Time Constraints

One significant challenge in vocabulary instruction is the limited time available for teachers to cover new vocabulary in depth. In many ESL classrooms, teachers must balance vocabulary teaching with instruction in other essential language skills such as reading, writing, grammar, and listening, making it difficult to allocate sufficient time to vocabulary alone (Garton et al., 2014). This constraint often results in vocabulary instruction that focuses on basic word meanings without giving students enough opportunities for meaningful practice, which is essential for retention and application (Webb & Nation, 2017).

Effective vocabulary learning requires consistent and repeated exposure to words in varied contexts, but time limitations can reduce these opportunities. When vocabulary is taught in a rushed manner, students may learn word definitions but struggle to use these words confidently in sentences, leading to limited long-term retention (Schmitt, 2008; Laufer, 2017).

Time constraints also impact the range of vocabulary strategies teachers can use. Schmitt's Discovery and Consolidation strategies require time for exploration, practice, and reinforcement. For example, Discovery strategies such as guessing word meaning from context or working with peers to understand vocabulary need time for interaction, while Consolidation strategies like spaced repetition are more effective when practiced over several lessons (Schmitt, 2008; Webb & Nation, 2017). When pressed for time, teachers may have to rely on more straightforward, repetitive methods, which can limit students' ability to develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary.

Additionally, time limitations can restrict differentiated instruction, which is especially important in mixed-ability ESL classes. Teachers may find it challenging to adapt vocabulary activities to support lower-level students adequately or to provide more advanced practice for higher-level learners. Without enough time to tailor activities, some students' vocabulary learning needs may remain unaddressed, which could impact their overall language progress (Garton et al., 2014).

2.8.2 Student Motivation and Attitude

Student motivation and attitudes play a critical role in vocabulary acquisition, impacting both engagement and retention in ESL learning contexts. Research shows

that motivated students are more likely to engage actively in learning tasks, which enhances vocabulary retention and practical usage (Alqahtani, 2015). However, vocabulary learning can often be perceived as tedious, especially when instructional methods rely heavily on rote memorization. This perception can lead to passive learning, where students depend primarily on teacher-led instruction and are less inclined to engage with vocabulary outside of class (Bahrami, Fatehi Rad, & Tajadini, 2022). Without active engagement, vocabulary learning may remain superficial, limiting students' ability to use new words confidently in real-life situations.

Studies have also highlighted the significance of self-efficacy in vocabulary learning. For example, Mizumoto (2012) found that learners with higher self-efficacy are more active in employing vocabulary learning strategies, which leads to better vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Teng and Zhang (2022) demonstrated that self-efficacy and motivation mediate the relationship between self-regulation and vocabulary proficiency, indicating that students with higher self-efficacy are more persistent and perform better in language acquisition.

To support students with lower motivation or self-efficacy, teachers can adopt practices that help build confidence. Research indicates that setting realistic goals and celebrating small achievements can increase students' motivation by allowing them to experience success, which reinforces their belief in their ability to learn and retain new words (Margolis & McCabe, 2006; Schunk, 2003). Additionally, making vocabulary instruction relevant by connecting it to students' interests and real-world situations can further enhance motivation, as students are more likely to retain vocabulary that they perceive as useful and personally meaningful (Alqahtani, 2015).

2.8.3 Curriculum Limitations

Curriculum limitations present a significant challenge in vocabulary teaching, as they can restrict the flexibility teachers need to adapt lessons according to student needs and effective teaching methods. In many ESL programs, vocabulary instruction is often incorporated as part of a broader curriculum focused on language skills like reading, writing, and grammar, often in preparation for standardized assessments. This emphasis on a fixed curriculum can limit the time allocated to vocabulary learning and reduce opportunities to teach vocabulary within meaningful contexts (Schmitt, 2008; Nation, 2001).

A strong focus on test preparation and fixed vocabulary lists may also prevent teachers from fully utilizing strategies aligned with Schmitt's (1997) Discovery and Consolidation methods. Discovery strategies, which involve students uncovering word meanings through context and social interaction, require lesson flexibility and time for exploration. However, curriculum constraints often emphasize rote memorization of predefined word lists, limiting students' opportunities to engage in discovery-based vocabulary learning (Webb & Nation, 2017).

In addition, research indicates that effective vocabulary retention relies on consolidation strategies that involve repetition and varied practice in different contexts, which help reinforce word knowledge and encourage long-term retention (Laufer, 2017; Webb & Nation, 2017). Strict curriculum timelines, however, may hinder teachers' ability to offer the repeated exposure needed for consolidation, as curriculum goals often prioritize coverage over depth of learning (Garton et al., 2014).

Furthermore, curriculum limitations can affect differentiated instruction, which is critical in mixed-ability classrooms. Research suggests that differentiated vocabulary instruction enhances learning outcomes by catering to students' individual needs, which may be difficult to achieve under rigid curriculum structures (Garton et al., 2014). In short, curriculum limitations may impact teachers' ability to employ a range of vocabulary strategies, affecting the overall effectiveness of vocabulary instruction.

2.8.4 Teacher Preparedness

Effective vocabulary instruction requires specialized knowledge and skills, as well as familiarity with diverse teaching strategies. However, research indicates that many teachers feel underprepared to teach vocabulary in a way that goes beyond basic definitions or rote memorization (Shin & Crandall, 2014). For ESL teachers, whose students face unique linguistic challenges, a strong foundation in vocabulary pedagogy is especially important. Teachers who lack this training may struggle to engage students in meaningful vocabulary learning activities, limiting students' ability to retain and use new words confidently.

Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies, which includes Discovery and Consolidation strategies, illustrates the range of methods teachers can use to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Discovery strategies encourage students to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words, while Consolidation strategies focus on

reinforcing vocabulary through varied practice. Both require a nuanced understanding of how students learn vocabulary effectively. Research highlights that well-prepared teachers are more likely to implement a wider range of strategies, which promotes deeper vocabulary understanding and retention (Webb & Nation, 2017).

Additionally, teacher preparedness is linked to the ability to differentiate instruction according to students' varying levels of proficiency. In a typical ESL classroom, students may have different levels of vocabulary knowledge and language skills, which requires teachers to adapt activities to suit diverse needs (Garton et al., 2014). For example, teachers with training in vocabulary instruction are more equipped to identify strategies that support lower-level learners, such as using visuals or bilingual glosses, while challenging more advanced students with context-based or inferential tasks.

Ongoing professional development in vocabulary teaching methods is essential for helping teachers build these skills. Studies indicate that professional development programs focused on vocabulary instruction can significantly improve teachers' confidence and effectiveness, enabling them to create vocabulary lessons that are both interactive and context-rich (Margolis & McCabe, 2006; Laufer, 2017). With access to continuous training, teachers can develop a set of strategies to support vocabulary acquisition and retention, ultimately enhancing their students' language learning experience.

2.9 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on Schmitt's (1997) *Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies*, focusing on how Discovery and Consolidation strategies support vocabulary acquisition in an ESL context. This framework serves as a guide for examining the approaches used by Malaysian primary school teachers in vocabulary instruction and analyzing the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing students' vocabulary knowledge and retention.

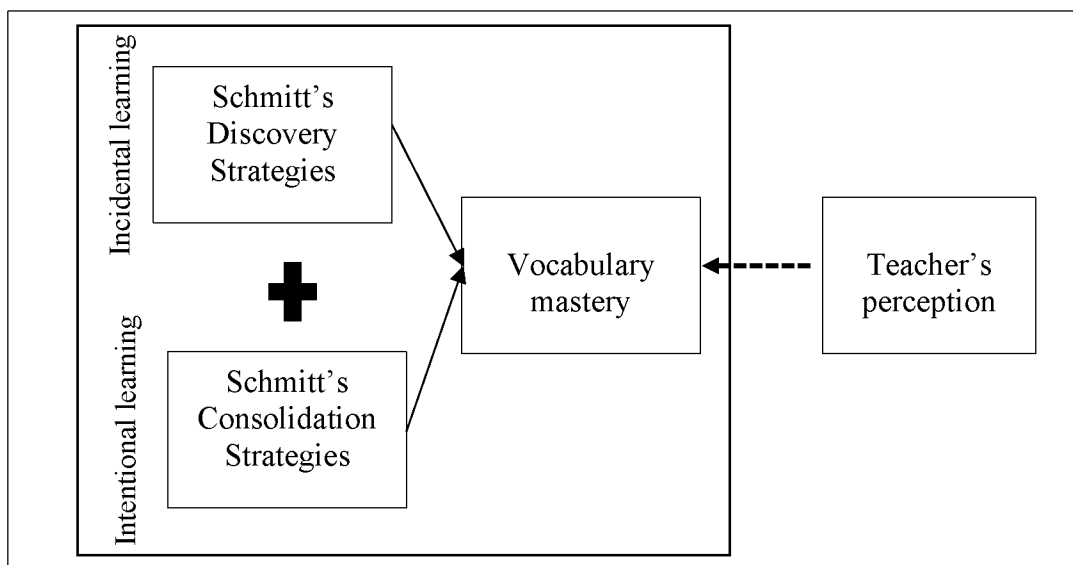


Figure 2.3 Framework based on Schmitt's Taxonomy of VLS

Figure 2.3 illustrates the conceptual framework, which divides vocabulary learning into two main branches: Discovery Strategies associated with incidental learning, and Consolidation Strategies associated with intentional learning. Together, these branches contribute to achieving vocabulary mastery. This structure captures the complementary roles of each strategy, showing how Discovery Strategies introduce vocabulary naturally in context while Consolidation Strategies reinforce learning through structured practice.

2.9.1 Core Components

2.9.1.1 *Discovery Strategies and Incidental Learning*

Discovery strategies are approaches that allow students to “discover” new vocabulary, often through contextual clues, dictionary use, or peer assistance. These strategies represent students’ initial encounters with new vocabulary, helping them deduce meanings without relying solely on memorization. Schmitt (1997) identified Discovery Strategies as essential for early vocabulary exposure, linking them closely to incidental learning, where vocabulary is learned subconsciously through real-world contexts like reading or conversation (Ahmadi, 2017; Ahmed, 2017). In this framework, Discovery Strategies are closely aligned with incidental learning, as both involve

students encountering new vocabulary naturally and meaningfully rather than through direct instruction.

Incidental learning occurs when students acquire vocabulary indirectly, often through reading or conversation, without a deliberate focus on memorization. This type of learning helps students form meaningful connections with vocabulary, enhancing recall and comprehension (Nguyen, 2022). By encountering words in varied contexts, students are more likely to retain vocabulary, as they engage with language naturally and subconsciously, which increases relevance and fosters deeper understanding.

2.9.1.2 Consolidation Strategies and Intentional Learning

In this framework, Consolidation Strategies are closely aligned with intentional learning, as both emphasize structured, deliberate efforts to reinforce vocabulary knowledge. Consolidation Strategies are designed to strengthen students' understanding of vocabulary after the initial encounter, helping them retain and apply new words effectively. Schmitt (1997) categorized these strategies as essential for moving vocabulary from initial exposure to long-term mastery. Through activities like repetition, association with known concepts, and structured practice, Consolidation Strategies create opportunities for students to engage purposefully with vocabulary, which aligns with the principles of intentional learning.

Intentional learning involves a focused, planned approach to vocabulary acquisition, where students practice and revisit words to deepen their understanding and retain vocabulary over time. Research suggests that intentional learning is particularly effective for long-term retention, as it reinforces vocabulary through repeated and varied practice (Sinyashina, 2020; Webb & Nation, 2017). For example, activities such as spaced repetition, mnemonic techniques, and application exercises encourage students to actively consolidate their knowledge of vocabulary, allowing them to use new words more confidently and accurately.

2.9.2 Interrelationship of Components

In this framework, Discovery and Consolidation Strategies function as complementary components in the vocabulary acquisition process. Discovery Strategies, which are aligned with incidental learning, allow students to encounter new

vocabulary in natural, context-rich environments. These strategies help build initial understanding by enabling students to “discover” word meanings through exposure rather than explicit instruction. Conversely, Consolidation Strategies, aligned with intentional learning, provide structured reinforcement through deliberate practice. Together, these approaches create a balanced and comprehensive framework for vocabulary learning.

Discovery Strategies serve as an entry point for vocabulary acquisition by giving students frequent and varied encounters with new words. This incidental exposure encourages students to make initial connections with vocabulary, which is crucial for understanding words in real-world contexts (Schmitt, 1997). However, without reinforcement, these initial encounters may not be sufficient for long-term retention. Consolidation Strategies address this need by allowing students to revisit and practice vocabulary intentionally, which solidifies understanding and ensures that vocabulary knowledge is retained and available for use over time (Laufer, 2017).

That means while Discovery Strategies expose students to a broad range of vocabulary in authentic contexts, Consolidation Strategies deepen this knowledge by encouraging repeated, varied practice. Research suggests that vocabulary acquisition is most effective when students have opportunities to both encounter words naturally and practice them deliberately, which helps embed vocabulary in long-term memory (Ghalebi et al., 2021; Webb & Nation, 2021).

Teachers play a crucial role in helping students navigate these strategies. For example, teachers can encourage Discovery Strategies by promoting extensive reading, where students encounter vocabulary in context, and by encouraging the use of context clues or peer discussions for meaning-making. For Consolidation Strategies, teachers might incorporate vocabulary practice activities such as spaced repetition exercises or mnemonic techniques to strengthen retention (Nation & Webb, 2022).

By combining incidental learning with intentional approaches, this framework supports a comprehensive approach to vocabulary mastery. Discovery Strategies introduce vocabulary in engaging, relatable ways, while Consolidation Strategies ensure that students retain and can accurately use new vocabulary.

2.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed literature related to CLT, vocabulary learning strategies, vocabulary instruction and challenges in vocabulary teaching with particular emphasis on teachers' roles. The review highlights that while existing studies provide valuable insights into vocabulary learning, limited attention has been given to teachers' classroom practices especially in Malaysian primary ESL contexts. Guided by Schmitt's taxonomy and a CLT framework, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining how teachers implement vocabulary teaching strategies in practice.

The next chapter, Chapter 3, will detail the research methodology used in this study. It will outline the research design including the mixed-method approach, instruments, data collection procedures and analytical strategies employed to investigate the research questions. Through this methodological framework, the study aims to provide empirical insights into how teachers apply vocabulary learning strategies in their classrooms and the challenges they encounter in doing so.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The role of vocabulary instruction in language development has long been a central focus in the field of language teaching. Effective vocabulary instruction requires a careful balance between explicit learning and incidental learning. However, despite its recognized importance, the specific strategies that teachers employ in vocabulary instruction remain under-explored, especially in the Malaysian context. Apart from that, there is also not many studies done focusing on Malaysian ESL primary school teacher's perception on vocabulary teaching in learning. Thus, this study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers, guided by Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) as well as understanding teachers' perception on vocabulary teaching and learning. By examining how these strategies are applied in the Malaysian ESL primary classroom as well as teachers' perception, this study seeks to provide insights into the practical approaches and beliefs that shape vocabulary instruction. The research addresses the following questions:

- i. What are the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) commonly used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers?
- ii. What are the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) least used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers?
- iii. How do Malaysian ESL primary school teachers perceive vocabulary teaching and learning?

3.2 Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design which integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches in a systematic sequence to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano

Clark, 2018). In this design, quantitative data are collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data collection to explain and elaborate on the quantitative results.

In the first phase, a quantitative research approach was used to address Research Questions 1 and 2 which aimed to identify the most and least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies among Malaysian ESL primary school teachers. Data were collected through a questionnaire, allowing the researcher to examine patterns and trends across a larger sample and to generalize the findings to the target population (Creswell, 2014).

In the second phase, a qualitative research approach was employed to address Research Question 3, which focused on teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching and learning. Qualitative data were collected to gain deeper insights into teachers' beliefs, experiences and rationales that may underlie the quantitative findings. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring how individuals interpret their experiences and construct meaning within their professional contexts.

The use of an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was considered appropriate for this study as a purely quantitative approach would have provided only a surface-level understanding of teachers' vocabulary teaching practices. Teachers' instructional decisions are often influenced by their beliefs, experiences and contextual factors which cannot be fully captured through numerical data alone. By following up the quantitative phase with qualitative inquiry, the researcher was able to explain why certain vocabulary learning strategies were preferred while others were less frequently used. Therefore, integrating both quantitative and qualitative findings enabled a more holistic understanding of vocabulary teaching practices in the Malaysian ESL primary school context.

3.3 Population

The population of this study comprised English language optionist teachers teaching in Malaysian government-aided primary schools. Government-aided primary schools were selected as they follow a standardized national curriculum under the Ministry of Education Malaysia ensuring consistency in syllabus requirements, instructional objectives and assessment practices across schools. This made them an appropriate and relevant population for examining vocabulary teaching strategies within the Malaysian ESL primary school context.

The target population included English teachers who were actively teaching in government-aided primary schools across Malaysia and were directly involved in vocabulary instruction as part of the English language curriculum.

3.4 Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method, which involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics and their relevance to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). According to Etikan et al. (2016), purposive sampling is particularly effective when researchers need to gather targeted insights from individuals with specific knowledge or experience relevant to the study.

The participants selected for this study were English optionist teachers in Malaysian government-aided primary schools who met the following criteria:

- i. Specialised as English optionist teachers,
- ii. Currently teaching English at the primary school level, and
- iii. Possessed a minimum of two years of teaching experience.

The requirement of at least two years of teaching experience was considered appropriate as teachers with this level of experience are generally assumed to have completed their initial adjustment period and developed foundational instructional practices. Previous studies have indicated that teachers with a minimum of two years of experience are capable of reflecting meaningfully on their teaching strategies and classroom decision-making (Berliner, 2001; Tsui, 2009). Additionally, experienced-based pedagogical knowledge, including strategy selection and adaptation tends to emerge after teachers have had sustained exposure to classroom practice (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Therefore, teachers meeting this criterion were deemed capable of providing informed and reflective insights into vocabulary teaching strategies and perceptions.

Participants were recruited from government-aided primary schools across Malaysia through an online Telegram channel for English primary school teachers, which allowed access to teachers from diverse geographical locations. This approach

enabled the researcher to gather responses from teachers teaching in different states and contexts, thereby enhancing the breadth of perspectives captured in the study.

While purposive sampling limits the generalizability of the findings due to its non-random nature, it was appropriate for this study as the participants were deliberately selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. By focusing on teachers with suitable qualifications and teaching experience within a standardized educational context, this sampling approach ensured that the data collected provided meaningful and in-depth insights into vocabulary learning strategies and teachers' perceptions in Malaysian ESL primary school classrooms.

3.5 Study Participants

The participants of this study were drawn from a specific population of English language option teachers serving in Malaysian government-aided primary schools. In Malaysia, primary education, known as Sekolah Rendah, serves children aged 7 to 12 and represents the first level of formal education. The primary education system spans six years from Year 1 to Year 6, during which learners develop foundational knowledge and skills in core subjects such as Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mathematics, and Science, alongside moral education, history and the arts.

Malaysian primary schools are broadly categorised into two main types. The first category is Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) or National Schools where Bahasa Malaysia is the primary medium of instruction. These schools follow the national curriculum and emphasise bilingual proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia and English. The second category is Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (SJK) or National-Type Schools which include Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (SJK(C)) and Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil (SJK(T)) where Mandarin and Tamil respectively serve as the main medium of instruction. In both school types, English is taught as a compulsory subject in accordance with the national curriculum.

The inclusion criteria for this study required participants to be English language option teachers, be currently teaching English at the primary school level and have a minimum of two years of teaching experience. These criteria were established to ensure that participants possessed sufficient pedagogical knowledge and classroom experience to provide informed and reflective responses. Teachers with at least two years of teaching experience are generally considered to have moved beyond the initial induction

phase and to have developed stable instructional practices and decision-making abilities (Berliner, 2001; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Consequently, participants meeting these criteria were deemed capable of offering meaningful insights into vocabulary teaching strategies and perceptions within ESL primary classrooms.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify participants who met the inclusion criteria. As noted by Patton (2017), purposive sampling allows researchers to intentionally select information-rich cases that are most relevant to the research objectives. Participants were recruited through professional discussion channels on Telegram, including Teacherfiera.com and Ash the Teacher, each of which has approximately 30,000 members nationwide. Although these platforms provided access to a wide pool of potential respondents from across Malaysia, not all members were English optionist primary school teachers. As a result, identifying suitable participants required careful screening based on the established inclusion criteria. Despite these challenges, the platforms proved effective in reaching eligible teachers from diverse geographical locations.

The MEB Annual Report 2022 outlined that the number of English teachers who have obtained C1 level and above in the English language proficiency test is 18,876 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2022). Based on this figure, a sample size is derived using a formula to calculate estimated population proportion (Triola, 2022).

Given:

$E=0.05$ (5% margin of error)

Z is the z-score (For a 95% confidence level)

$P=0.5$ (for maximum variability)

$N=18,876$ (population size)

Thus,

$$E=Z \times nP(1-P)$$

$$N=P(1-P) \times Z^2 \times (N-1) / (E^2 \times N + P(1-P) \times Z^2) \quad (3.1)$$

$$n = (0.25 \times 3.8416 \times 18,875) / (0.0025 \times 18,876 + 0.9604)$$

$$n = 18294.6 / 48.1504$$

$$n = 380$$

Although the MEB Annual Report 2022 states that 18,876 English teachers have achieved C1 level or above in the English language proficiency test, this figure encompasses both primary and secondary school teachers. It was impossible to

determine the exact number of primary school teachers among this population. Despite these challenges, ultimately the researcher successfully recruited 134 respondents who met the strict inclusion criteria.

From this group, four teachers were later selected for interviews to gather qualitative data on their perceptions and beliefs regarding vocabulary teaching and learning. Although six to twelve interviews are often recommended to reach thematic saturation, particularly in focused studies (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017), recent research suggests that saturation can still be achieved with smaller samples, especially when the interviews are in-depth and the sample is homogenous (Malterud et al., 2016).

The interviews involved four teachers from primary schools in Melaka, a state located on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. These schools were within the researcher's professional network, providing accessible and familiar settings that support in-depth qualitative inquiry. While Melaka has a total of 238 primary schools, the selection of four teachers was guided by the study's qualitative focus, which prioritizes depth of insight over sample size. These four teachers were chosen for their relevance to the research objectives, specifically their experience and active engagement in vocabulary teaching within ESL primary classrooms.

3.6 Ethical Committee

Ethical approval and participant consent are essential components of research integrity, ensuring that the study respects participants' rights and adheres to ethical standards throughout. Prior to data collection, this study received ethical approval from the UiTM Research Ethics Committee (REC), which reviewed and approved the research proposal titled "Strategies Used by Malaysian ESL Primary School Teachers in Vocabulary Teaching." This approval, documented through an official letter, enabled the researcher to proceed with data collection in Melaka and via an online survey, affirming that the study met the ethical requirements set by UiTM.

For the quantitative phase, a questionnaire was distributed to primary school ESL teachers. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the study's objectives, data use, and confidentiality measures. This process ensured that participants were aware of their rights and the purpose of their involvement.

In the qualitative phase, interviewees were required to sign a consent letter before participation. This consent letter outlined the study's objectives, the voluntary

nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Additionally, the letter assured participants that their responses would remain confidential and that data would be used solely for academic purposes.

3.7 Research Procedure

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, progressing through three phases: quantitative data collection and analysis, qualitative data collection and analysis, and final triangulation and synthesis of findings. Each phase was designed to answer the research questions and ensure a robust and comprehensive understanding of vocabulary teaching practices in Malaysian ESL classrooms as outlined in Figure 3.1.

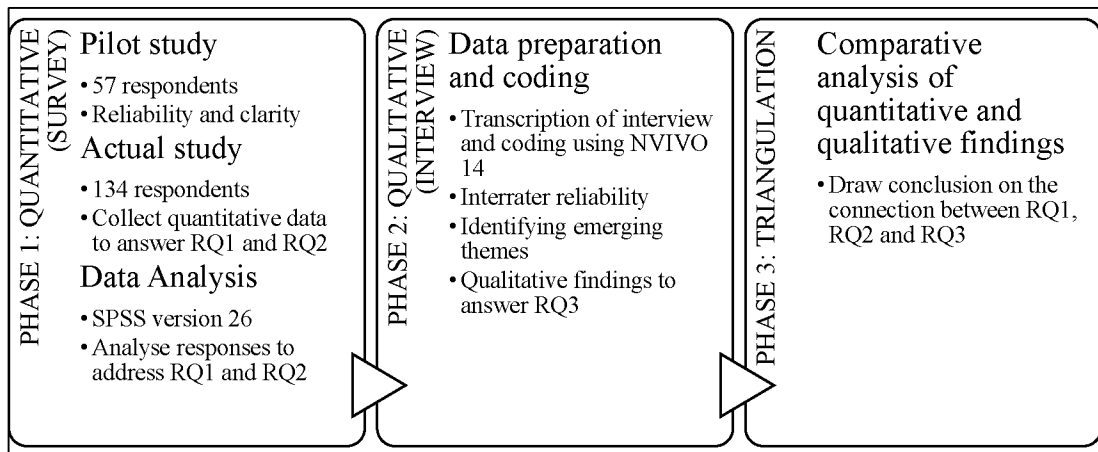


Figure 3.1 Flow of Research Procedure

3.7.1 Phase 1: Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

The quantitative part of this study involved a questionnaire as the main instrument to investigate the VLS employed by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers that was based on Schmitt's Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (1997). The questionnaire was divided into two sections (Section A and B).

Section A of the questionnaire was developed to obtain demographic data of the respondents as well as a filtering tool to filter responses that did not meet the predefined criteria. Table 3.1 shows the items in Section A of the questionnaire.

Table 3.1
Demographic Section of the Questionnaire (Section A)

Item	Question	Answer Format
1	Kindly select your age range:	25 – 29 30 - 34 35 - 39 40 and above
2	Kindly select the type of school you teach at:	SK SJKC SJKT Other
3	Are you an English-option teacher	Yes / No
4	How long have you been teaching English?	2-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years More than 20 years
5	Which standards do you currently teach English for?	MCQ (Standard 1-6)

Section B of the questionnaire was designed to address Research Questions 1 and 2, which examined teachers' most and least frequently used Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS). The questionnaire consisted of 45 items adapted from Bennett (2006), whose study operationalised Schmitt's (1997) Vocabulary Learning Strategies taxonomy in the form of questionnaire statements.

While Bennett's (2006) original instrument focused on learners' use of vocabulary learning strategies, the items in the present study were reworded to reflect teachers' instructional practices. Specifically, learner-centred statements were adapted into teacher-oriented statements to capture how teachers teach and promote vocabulary learning strategies among pupils (see Appendix 3). The classification of strategies into discovery and consolidation strategies was retained to ensure conceptual alignment with Schmitt's taxonomy.

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (5 = always, 4 = often, 3 = sometimes, 2 = rarely, 1 = never). Table 3.2 presents the distribution of items across the VLS categories and their respective labels.

Table 3.2
Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) Statements (Section B)

Category	Strategy label	Number of items
Discovery (Determination Strategies)	DIS-DET	5
Discovery (Social Strategies)	DIS-SOC	5
Consolidation (Social Strategies)	CON-SOC	2
Consolidation (Memory Strategies)	CON-MEM	17
Consolidation (Cognitive Strategies)	CON-COG	9
Consolidation (Metacognitive Strategies)	CON-MET	7
Total number of items		45

3.7.1.1 Pilot Study

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted to assess the clarity, feasibility and reliability of the questionnaire. The pilot study participants were selected using purposive sampling, consistent with the sampling approach employed in the main study. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms and shared across several professional Telegram channels for English language teachers over a period of one month. These channels were selected because they provided access to English teachers from Malaysian government-aided primary schools across different regions.

During the pilot data collection period, responses were received on a voluntary basis. A total of 57 responses were obtained by the end of the one-month distribution period. All responses were subsequently screened using the demographic and inclusion criteria in Section A of the questionnaire, and only responses from English option teachers who were currently teaching at the primary school level and who had a minimum of two years of teaching experience were retained for pilot analysis.

The number of participants in the pilot study was considered adequate, as methodological literature suggests that pilot studies commonly involve between 30 and 60 participants to assess questionnaire clarity and reliability (Hertzog, 2008).

Data collected from the pilot study were analysed using SPSS version 26 to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire, particularly for Section B,

which measured vocabulary learning strategies used by teachers. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, resulting in a high coefficient value of 0.92, which indicates excellent internal consistency and suggests that the items reliably measured the intended constructs.

In addition to reliability testing, feedback from pilot study participants indicated that the questionnaire items were clear and comprehensible, with no major issues reported regarding wording or interpretation. Based on these findings, no substantial revisions were required and the questionnaire was deemed suitable for use in the main study.

3.7.1.2 Quantitative Data Collection

Following the pilot study, the refined questionnaire was administered for the main quantitative data collection. The final version of the questionnaire was distributed online using Google Forms and shared across several professional Telegram channels for English language teachers over a period of two months. These channels were selected as they provided access to English teachers from Malaysian government-aided primary schools nationwide.

Participation in the study was voluntary and respondents were informed of the study's purpose and confidentiality measures before proceeding with the questionnaire. During the data collection period, responses were automatically recorded in the Google Forms platform.

Upon closure of the survey, all responses were screened using the demographic and inclusion criteria in Section A of the questionnaire. Responses from participants who were not English option teachers, were not teaching at the primary school level, had less than two years of teaching experience or provided incomplete demographic information were excluded from the dataset. After this filtering process, a total of 134 valid responses remained and were retained for quantitative analysis.

The final dataset was then exported to SPSS version 26 for statistical analysis to address Research Questions 1 and 2.

3.7.2 Phase 2: Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

Phase 2 of this study employed a qualitative approach through the use of semi-structured interviews to explore Malaysian ESL primary school teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching and learning.

3.7.2.1 Pilot Study

To ensure the effectiveness, clarity and relevance of the interview guide, a pilot interview was conducted with one English language primary school teacher who was not involved in the main study. Conducting a pilot interview with a single participant is considered appropriate in qualitative research, as the primary purpose of a pilot is to test the interview protocol rather than to generate data (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). A single pilot interview is sufficient to identify issues related to question clarity, sequencing, timing and alignment with research objectives.

The teacher selected for the pilot interview met the same inclusion criteria as the main study participants, ensuring the relevance of the feedback provided. Based on insights gained from the pilot interview, several refinements were made to the interview guide (see Appendix 4). Specifically, warm-up questions were repositioned immediately after the demographic section to facilitate rapport-building and a smoother transition into the main discussion. In addition, probing questions were incorporated to encourage richer and more detailed responses. Examples of these probes include questions such as *“Can you describe specific strategies you use to overcome these challenges?”* and *“Do you integrate technology or multimedia resources in your vocabulary teaching? If so, how?”* These revisions enhanced the clarity, flow and depth of the interview protocol.

3.7.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Following the pilot interview, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four teachers who had participated in the questionnaire phase. These interviews were designed to address Research Question 3, focusing on teachers' perceptions, beliefs, instructional strategies and challenges related to vocabulary teaching. Prior to the

interviews, participants were provided with an informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study, ethical considerations and confidentiality measures.

The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions, allowing participants to freely express their views while enabling the researcher to probe for clarification and elaboration when necessary. Each interview was audio-recorded with participants' permission and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3.7.2.3 Thematic Analysis

The qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was selected due to its flexibility and suitability for identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data. The analysis process involved the following steps:

- i. Familiarization with the data: The researcher transcribed each interview and carefully read through the transcripts multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of the content.
- ii. Generating initial codes: Following transcription, NVIVO 14 software was used to code and analyse the qualitative data. Initial codes were developed to categorize the data based on teachers' beliefs, strategies, and challenges in vocabulary instruction.
- iii. Interrater reliability: To ensure the reliability of the coding process, the codes were then reviewed by a second coder. This step was essential in establishing interrater reliability, ensuring that the codes and themes identified were consistent and not biased by the researcher's interpretations alone.
- iv. Searching for themes: Once the coding process was completed, the codes were grouped into broader themes. These themes represented key aspects of the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching and the challenges they face.
- v. Defining and naming themes: Each theme was defined in clear terms, and labels were assigned to capture the essence of the data under each theme.

3.7.3 Phase 3: Triangulation

This phase employed methodological triangulation to integrate findings from the quantitative and qualitative phases. Specifically, a side-by-side comparison strategy was used to align statistical results from the questionnaire with themes derived from the semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed the researcher to examine how qualitative findings explained, expanded upon or contrasted with quantitative trends.

The triangulation process involved comparing the most and least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies identified in the quantitative phase with teachers' qualitative accounts of their instructional practices, beliefs and challenges. Areas of convergence were identified where both data sources supported similar conclusions, while areas of divergence highlighted contextual factors or differing perspectives that were not evident in the survey data alone.

By examining these connections, the researcher gained a more comprehensive understanding of the strategies, challenges, and beliefs of Malaysian ESL teachers. The outcomes of this integration are detailed further in the discussion chapter.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis in this study was structured around each research question to ensure a targeted investigation into the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers:

- RQ1: What are the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) commonly used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers?
- RQ2: What are the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) least used by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers?
- RQ3: How do Malaysian ESL primary school teachers perceive vocabulary teaching and learning?

3.8.1 Phase 1: Quantitative Data Analysis

To answer RQ1 and RQ2, data from Section B of the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS software version 26. Descriptive statistics,

including means and standard deviations, were calculated to determine the frequency of use for each Vocabulary Learning Strategy among the teachers.

For each strategy listed in the survey, frequency, mean, median, mode, standard deviation and variance were calculated as shown in Figure 3.2. This provides insight into how frequently each specific strategy is employed by the participants, as well as the average level of use and variability in responses.

		Statistics							
		1. I ask my students to analyse parts of speech (verbs/nouns/adjectives) and determine the meaning.	2. I ask my students to analyse the root word / prefixes and suffixes. Example: dis + like = dislike.	3. I ask my students to guess the meaning from textual context.	4. I ask my students to use English-Malay / English-Chinese / English-Tamil dictionary to look up the meaning of new words.	5. I ask my students to use English-English dictionary to look up the meaning of new words.	6. I translate the meaning of the word in L1 for my students.	7. I provide a synonym of the word.	8. I provide a sentence example containing the new word.
N	Valid	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.89	3.51	4.25	3.63	3.21	3.53	3.81	4.05
Median		4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode		4	3	4	3	3	3	4	4
Std. Deviation		.976	.947	.662	.957	1.206	.908	.854	.934
Variance		.953	.897	.439	.915	1.455	.825	.730	.872
Minimum		1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

Figure 3.2 Sample Calculation for Each Strategy Using SPSS Version 26

After analysing each individual strategy, the items were grouped into broader strategy types based on Schmitt's Taxonomy (e.g., Determination, Social, Cognitive, Memory, Metacognitive). For each strategy type, the mean and standard deviation were calculated to summarize the central tendency and variability across related strategies as shown in Figure 3.3.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
DET	134	2	5	3.64	.652
DIS SOC	134	2	5	3.81	.595
CON SOC	134	1	5	3.40	.955
MEM	134	3	5	3.81	.532
COG	134	2	5	3.75	.662
MET	134	1	5	3.34	.742
Valid N (listwise)	134				

Figure 3.3 Sample Calculation for Grouped Strategy Using SPSS Version 26

These descriptive statistics were then interpreted to identify which strategies and strategy types were most and least frequently used by the teachers. High mean values indicated commonly used strategies, while higher standard deviations pointed to greater variability in strategy usage among participants. The findings from these calculations will be presented in Chapter 4, where patterns and insights into teachers' use of vocabulary learning strategies are discussed in detail.

3.8.2 Phase 2: Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis employed an inductive thematic analysis approach, guided by the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach allowed patterns and themes to emerge naturally from the data rather than being imposed a priori. To address Research Question 3 (RQ3) on teachers' perceptions, the coding process focused on three overarching thematic categories: beliefs, strategies and challenges. This thematic focus is grounded in educational research that highlights the interconnectedness of teachers' perceptions with their beliefs, the instructional strategies they employ and the challenges they encounter in classroom practice (Pajares, 1992; Borg, 2003).

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, the analysis began with familiarisation with the data, during which the interview transcripts were read multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of the content. This was followed by initial coding where meaningful segments of data related to teachers' beliefs, instructional strategies and challenges were systematically coded. The next stage involved searching for themes during which related codes were grouped to form broader thematic patterns.

These themes were then reviewed, refined and defined to ensure coherence, clarity and alignment with the research objectives.

Pajares (1992) posits that teachers' beliefs function as filters through which classroom experiences are interpreted, shaping perceptions of teaching, learning and student behaviour. Similarly, Borg (2003) conceptualises teacher cognition as encompassing the beliefs, knowledge and perceptions that inform instructional decision-making. Guided by these theoretical perspectives, the identified themes captured how teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching were reflected in their beliefs, reported classroom practices and perceived challenges.

To ensure the reliability and consistency of the coding process, an interrater reliability measure was implemented through the involvement of a second coder. For the purpose of comparison, the second coder recorded their evaluation by indicating either "Agree" or "Disagree" for each coded excerpt in a comparison table (see Table 3.3). This procedure allowed for a systematic assessment of coding consistency between coders. Following this process, percentage agreement was calculated by dividing the number of agreed coding decisions by the total number of evaluated excerpts and multiplying by 100.

The analysis revealed a 100% agreement rate between the primary researcher and the second coder across the reviewed excerpts, indicating a high level of interrater reliability. Minor feedback provided by the second coder focused on refining code definitions rather than disputing code assignments. For instance, the code *Ch_Student Ability* was clarified to better distinguish challenges related to students' language proficiency from teachers' instructional skills, while the definitions of *St_Direct* and *St_Guessing* were refined to clearly differentiate between direct explanation strategies and inference-based approaches.

Given the complete agreement between coders and the relatively small, focused qualitative dataset, more complex statistical measures such as Cohen's Kappa were not deemed necessary. Percentage agreement was considered appropriate for this study, as it provided a clear and transparent indication of coding consistency and is commonly used in small-scale qualitative research (McHugh, 2012). Overall, the high level of agreement confirmed the dependability of the coding scheme and strengthened the credibility of the qualitative findings.

Table 3.3
Sample of Interview Codes Evaluated by Second Coder

No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
1	Ch_Time	Refers to the time constraint or the amount of time taken to teach new vocabulary or concepts.	<i>"I think that's effective but it takes a lot it takes quite some time because in a lesson usually they will have like three or four words they don't know so it might take time." (L25)</i>	√	
2	Ch_Attitude	Refers to students' attitudes, particularly shyness or reluctance to ask questions or engage in class.	<i>"Some of the shy pupils who think they don't understand English they hardly ask you know. Most of the words they don't understand but they don't do anything." (L39)</i>	√	
3	Ch_Student Ability	Refers to students' varying levels of proficiency and their difficulty acquiring vocabulary during group work.	<i>"If you do it in groups, some of the pupils will become passengers, they don't know the words but maybe their friends do so they don't actually acquire the vocabulary." (L45)</i>	√	

3.8.3 Phase 3: Triangulation

To strengthen the validity of the study's findings and to integrate results from the quantitative and qualitative phases, this study employed methodological triangulation using a convergent comparison strategy. Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple methods to examine the same phenomenon, allowing findings from different data sources to be compared and validated (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). In this study, triangulation was used to integrate survey data and interview data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of vocabulary teaching practices among Malaysian ESL primary school teachers.

The triangulation process followed a side-by-side comparison procedure, as recommended in mixed-methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). First, quantitative findings related to Research Questions 1 and 2 were analysed and summarised using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations for each vocabulary learning strategy. These results identified the most and least frequently used strategies among teachers.

Next, qualitative findings addressing Research Question 3 were analysed thematically to identify teachers' beliefs, reported instructional strategies and perceived challenges related to vocabulary teaching. Key themes and representative excerpts were extracted to explain teachers' instructional choices and perceptions.

In the triangulation phase, the researcher systematically compared the quantitative and qualitative findings by aligning statistical trends with corresponding qualitative themes. Specifically, strategies identified as frequently or infrequently used in the survey data were examined alongside teachers' interview responses to determine whether qualitative explanations supported, expanded upon or contrasted with the quantitative results. This comparative analysis enabled the researcher to identify areas of convergence, where findings from both data sources were consistent, as well as areas of divergence, where discrepancies or additional insights emerged.

To support this process, a joint comparison matrix was developed (see Figure 3.4), in which quantitative results and qualitative themes were displayed together to facilitate direct comparison and interpretation. This integration strategy allowed the researcher to explain quantitative patterns through qualitative evidence, thereby enhancing the depth and credibility of the findings.

The results of this triangulation are presented and discussed in Chapter 5, where integrated interpretations of vocabulary learning strategies, teachers' perceptions and instructional practices are examined in relation to the research questions.

Triangulation of Preferred Strategies in ESL Vocabulary Teaching		
Strategy Category	Quantitative (High mean scores)	Qualitative (Teacher Excerpts)
Discovery - Social Strategies	I provide my students a sentence containing the new word (Mean=4.09)	Teachers expressed that peer interactions during vocabulary learning foster a collaborative learning environment.
	I provide a synonym of the word. (Mean = 3.88)	<i>"Yes, or maybe spontaneously when I think they might not know the words. But sometimes some of my pupils also ask me 'Teacher, what's the meaning of this word?' so usually I will pose [the question] to another friend if anyone knows the meaning and share with the class."</i> (T1, L37)
Consolidation - Memory Strategies	I ask my students to relate a word to their personal experience. (Mean=4.17)	Teachers noted that linking vocabulary to personal experiences strengthens retention.
	I ask my students to use the new word in a sentence. (Mean=3.90)	<i>"I ask my students to relate a word to their personal experience. Example: when learning the word celebration, they think of their birthday party / festivals."</i> (T1, L25)

Figure 3.4 Sample Triangulation Achieved Through Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework adopted to investigate vocabulary learning strategies and teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching in the Malaysian ESL primary school context. Guided by the research questions, the study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide both breadth and depth of understanding.

The chapter first described the research design, population and sampling procedures, justifying the use of purposive sampling and clearly defining the inclusion criteria for participants. The quantitative phase involved the use of a questionnaire adapted from Bennett (2006), grounded in Schmitt's (1997) Vocabulary Learning Strategies taxonomy, to identify the most and least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies among Malaysian ESL primary school teachers. Instrument reliability was established through a pilot study, and the procedures for data collection and statistical analysis were detailed.

The qualitative phase employed semi-structured interviews to explore teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching and learning in greater depth. Data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. Measures to ensure trustworthiness including interrater reliability and transparent coding procedures were described.

Finally, the chapter explained the triangulation strategy used to integrate quantitative and qualitative findings. Through methodological triangulation and a side-by-side comparison approach, the study aligned statistical trends with qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive interpretation of vocabulary teaching practices and teachers' beliefs.

The findings derived from these methods are presented in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find out the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) used by ESL primary school teachers in Malaysia and the rationale behind their choices of VLS. This study employed a mixed method approach in which quantitative method was used to find out the strategies used by the teachers and followed by a qualitative approach in which teacher's perception and beliefs on vocabulary teaching and learning were analysed. This chapter will present the quantitative findings (RQ1 and RQ2) followed by the qualitative findings (RQ3).

4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

This study involved 134 ESL primary school teachers who had at least 2 years of teaching experience. The demographic data was obtained through the survey administered to the respondents which included their age range, years of teaching experience, type of school served, option or non-option teacher as well as the Standards they currently teach. The data shows that 57.5% of the participants involved in this study were from the 40 and above age group (as shown in Table 4.1).

Table 4.1
Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Age Range

Age Range	N	Percent (%)
25-29	20	14.9
30-34	20	14.9
35-39	17	12.7
40 and above	77	57.5

Table 4.2
Descriptive Statistics of Teaching Experience

Years of Experience	N	Percent (%)
2-5	32	23.9
6-10	16	11.9
11-15	22	16.4
16-20	23	17.2
> 20	41	30.6

Table 4.2 shows the breakdown of teachers' years of experience in teaching English in primary schools selected in study. The primary schools involved were all located in Malaysia. Primary schools in Malaysia provide a structured education for children aged 7 to 12, with national schools using Malay and national-type schools using Chinese or Tamil as the medium of instruction.

The data shows that the largest proportion of teachers has over 20 years of experience (30.6%) followed by teachers who have 2-5 years of experience (23.9%). The data also reveals a diverse distribution across different teaching experience brackets which might reflect the broader population of ESL primary school teachers in Malaysia.

Table 4.3
Descriptive Statistics of School Type

Type of School	N	Percent (%)
Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK)	109	81.3
Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (SJKC)	11	8.2
Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil (SJKT)	10	7.5
Other (Private School)	4	3.0

Table 4.3 above shows the distribution based on the school the teachers involved in the study serve at. The majority of the respondents (81.3%) are English teachers in Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) which is the primarily known national school in Malaysia. A smaller proportion of teachers serve at Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (SJKC)

(8.2%) followed by 7.5% of the sample population were teachers in Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil (SJKT). Out of the 134 respondents, majority were English-option teachers (88.1%) which implies that they possessed expertise in English language pedagogy which is integral to this study (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4
Descriptive Statistics of English Option Teacher

English Option Teacher	N	Percent (%)
Yes	118	88.1
No	16	11.9

The respondents were also asked about the Standards or Year that they teach (see Table 4.5) which is important as the data could be useful to understand their preferences in terms of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) employed in their classroom. The data showed that the distribution of teachers across Lower Primary classes is relatively balanced, with Standard 3 having a slightly higher percentage (48%) compared to Standards 1 (31.3%) and 2 (26.1%). Among Upper Primary classes, Standard 6 has the highest percentage (53.7%), followed closely by Standard 4 (45.5%) and Standard 5 (44.8%). It is important to note that the total percentage exceeds 100% due to teachers who teach multiple classes which is common in Malaysian education system.

Table 4.5
Descriptive Statistics of Classes Taught by Teachers

Standard	Frequency	Percent (%)
Lower Primary - 1	42	31.3
Lower Primary – 2	35	26.1
Lower Primary – 3	48	35.8
Upper Primary – 4	61	45.5
Upper Primary – 5	60	44.8
Upper Primary – 6	72	53.7

4.3 RQ1: What are the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) commonly adopted by Malaysian primary school teachers?

As mentioned, Schmitt's divided Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) into two main categories; Discovery and Consolidation. The findings from the survey conducted showed the mean values of VLS for both of the categories.

Table 4.6
Most Used Category of Vocabulary Teaching Strategies

Category	Strategy	Mean
DISCOVERY	DETERMINATION	3.64
DISCOVERY	SOCIAL	3.81
CONSOLIDATION	SOCIAL	3.40
CONSOLIDATION	MEMORY	3.81
CONSOLIDATION	COGNITIVE	3.75
CONSOLIDATION	METACOGNITIVE	3.34

According to Oxford's (1990), as cited in Mustapha & Hatta (2018), scoring system, mean score 1.00-2.49 shows low strategy use, mean score 2.50-3.49 shows medium strategy use, and mean score 3.50-5.00 shows high strategy use. Thus, the mean values (as shown in Table 4.6) indicate a moderate to high use of VLS for both Discovery and Consolidation Strategies. Two strategies appeared to be used at a high level which are the Social Strategies (Determination) and Memory Strategies (Consolidation) with both mean value of 3.81.

Social strategies within the Discovery category include teachers translating the meaning of the word in their first language, providing synonym of the word, providing students a sentence containing the word, letting students asking their classmates for meaning and putting students in groups to discover meaning through groupwork. The Social strategies favoured by the teachers are further looked at in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7
Discovery-Social Vocabulary Learning Strategies Preferred by Teachers

Strategy	Statement	Mean
DIS-SOC	I translate the meaning of the word in	3.63
DIS-SOC	I provide a synonym of the word	3.88
DIS-SOC	I provide my students a sentence containing the new word.	4.09
DIS-SOC	I let my students ask their classmates meaning	3.80
DIS-SOC	I put my students in groups and let them discover meaning through group work activity	3.66

All five strategies fall within the high strategy use range, with mean scores above 3.50. The highest mean score was "I provide my students a sentence containing the new word" (mean=4.09), indicating a strong preference for contextual learning. Following closely is the strategy of providing a synonym (mean=3.88), which suggests that teachers tend to offer alternative expressions to help with understanding. Other strategies, such as letting students ask classmates for meaning (mean=3.80) and group work activities (mean=3.66), are also highly favoured, reflecting a collaborative approach to vocabulary learning. Translating the meaning of the word in L1 (mean=3.63) also shows significant use, indicating that teachers see value in leveraging the students' first language to aid understanding.

It is found that Discovery was not the only popular category employed by the teachers. Memory strategies within Consolidation category reported to have the same mean score as Social strategies under Discovery category (mean=3.81). Thus, the sub-strategies under the Consolidation-Memory strategies are also further analysed in Table 4.8 to find out which specific Memory strategies teachers prefer to employ in their vocabulary teaching. Teachers were asked to rate their use of 17 different Vocabulary Learning Strategies under the Consolidation-Memory category.

Table 4.8
Consolidation-Memory Vocabulary Teaching Strategies Employed by Teachers

Strategy	Statement	Mean
CON-MEM	I ask my students to match the word with picture representing the word	4.10
CON-MEM	I ask my students to picture the word's meaning. For example, when learning the word kitchen, they picture their mom cooking	3.71
CON-MEM	I ask my students to relate a word to their personal experience. Example; when learning the word celebration, they think of their birthday party / festivals	4.17
CON-MEM	I ask my students to link the word to its related word. Example; banana, think of other fruits, apple	4.13
CON-MEM	I ask my students to pay attention to the word's synonyms or antonyms (Example: pretty / ugly)	3.96
CON-MEM	I ask my students to classify the words in category (Example: Categorize things into furniture)	3.82
CON-MEM	I ask my students to use the new word in a sentence.	3.90
CON-MEM	I ask my students to combine all the words to form a story.	3.15
CON-MEM	I ask my students to memorize the spelling of the word.	4.31
CON-MEM	I focus on teaching my students pronunciation of the new word.	4.45
CON-MEM	I ask my students to read out loud (say the new word aloud when studying)	4.62
CON-MEM	I ask my students to underline the initial letter of the word.	3.07
CON-MEM	I ask my students to remember the roots, prefixes and suffixes of the words.	3.15
CON-MEM	I ask my students to remember the part of speech of the words.	3.32
CON-MEM	I paraphrase the word to my students. Example; housekeeper - a person who looks after the house	3.92
CON-MEM	I teach my students the word in the form of idiom (Spill the bean - teach them the word spill & bean together)	2.90
CON-MEM	I use body movement when teaching my students a word and ask them to repeat the movement.	4.11

Out of the 17 strategies, 12 strategies received mean score of greater than 3.50 which indicated high use of memory strategies in the classroom. The strategies with the highest mean scores, such as asking students to read a word out loud (mean=4.62), focusing on pronunciation (mean=4.45), and asking students to memorize the spelling (mean=4.31), indicate teachers' preference for auditory and repetitive methods in vocabulary acquisition. Other than that, strategies like linking words to related words (mean=4.13), using body movements (mean=4.11), matching words with pictures (mean=4.10), use new words in sentence (mean=3.90), using synonyms and antonyms (mean=3.96) and classifying words into categories (mean=3.82) may reflect teachers' comprehensive approach in teaching vocabulary in the classroom.

In contrast, strategies with lower mean scores, such as teaching words in idiomatic form (mean=2.90), asking students to underline the initial letter of the word (mean=3.07), and combining all words to form a story (mean=3.15), may be perceived as less direct or more complex.

4.4 RQ2: What are the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) least adopted by Malaysian primary school teachers?

The data from the survey revealed the category of vocabulary teaching strategies least preferred by the respondents as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9
Least Used Category of Vocabulary Teaching Strategies

Category	Strategy	Mean
DISCOVERY	DETERMINATION	3.64
DISCOVERY	SOCIAL	3.81
CONSOLIDATION	SOCIAL	3.40
CONSOLIDATION	MEMORY	3.81
CONSOLIDATION	COGNITIVE	3.75
CONSOLIDATION	METACOGNITIVE	3.34

The strategy least favoured by the teachers is the Metacognitive strategy, categorized under Consolidation (Consolidation-Metacognitive), with a mean score of

3.34. Metacognitive strategies involve learners planning, monitoring, and evaluating their vocabulary learning processes. Learners reflect on the effectiveness of their chosen strategies, select suitable methods for learning new words, and continually assess their own vocabulary comprehension and retention (Jamaris, 2013). The sub-strategies within the Metacognitive category assessed in the study are listed in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

<u>Consolidation-Metacognitive Vocabulary Teaching Strategies Employed by Teachers</u>		
Strategy	Statement	Mean
CON-MET	I ask my students to listen to English songs in my classroom or at home.	4.21
CON-MET	I ask my students to watch English movies at home.	4.07
CON-MET	I provide my students English story books / magazines to learn vocabulary.	3.6
CON-MET	I give my students tasks to read English novels, short stories at their own time.	3.3
CON-MET	I assign my students to read English newspapers in my classrooms / at home.	3.02
CON-MET	I have scheduled vocabulary tests online using application such as Quizizz and Word Wall to see if my students remember the new words learned.	2.88
CON-MET	I give online task for my students to review the vocabularies they learned using Google Form, Wordwall or any other online application.	2.77

Among the seven Metacognitive strategies rated by the respondents, only two received mean scores above 4.0. Despite the overall lower preference for the Consolidation-Metacognitive category compared to other categories like Discovery-Social and Consolidation-Memory, some strategies such as listening to English songs (mean=4.21) and watching English movies (mean=4.07) are highly favoured. This reflects teachers' preference for immersive and engaging activities that incorporate multimedia.

In contrast, strategies with lower mean scores, particularly those involving online applications like Quizizz (mean=2.88) and Google Forms (mean=2.77), may indicate teachers' reluctance to adopt digital tools in vocabulary teaching. Similarly,

assigning students to read English newspapers (mean=3.02) and novels (mean=3.3) shows a moderate to low level of adoption, potentially due to the challenges in ensuring student compliance and the time-consuming nature of these tasks.

4.5 RQ3: How do Malaysian ESL primary school teachers perceive vocabulary teaching and learning?

For this section, findings from selected teachers' interviews were coded and analysed (Refer Appendix 5 and 7). Based on the thematic analysis, three main themes emerged.

4.5.1 Vocabulary is Perceived by Teachers as Essential and Shaped by Differing Instructional Beliefs

This theme reflects Malaysian ESL primary school teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching and learning, particularly their beliefs about how vocabulary should be taught in the classroom. Analysis of the interview data indicates that teachers view vocabulary as a fundamental component of ESL learning. However, their instructional beliefs vary in terms of preferred approaches to vocabulary instruction. These differences are illustrated through contrasting views on incidental versus explicit vocabulary teaching as well as the use of English-only instruction versus the incorporation of the mother tongue. Figure 4.1 presents an overview of the instructional beliefs identified within this theme.

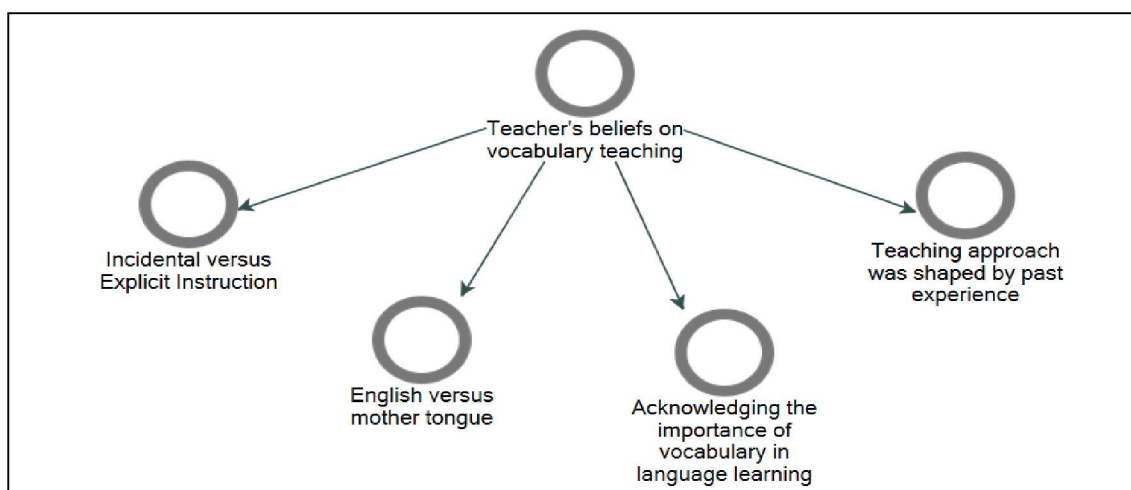


Figure 4.1 Theme 1: Teacher's Beliefs on Vocabulary Teaching

Further analysis of the interview data revealed four sub-themes within this broader perception of vocabulary teaching. The most prominent sub-themes relate to teachers' differing beliefs regarding (a) incidental and explicit vocabulary instruction and (b) the use of the mother tongue versus an English-only approach in vocabulary teaching. These two sub-themes are central to the present study as they provide direct insights into how teachers conceptualise effective vocabulary instruction in ESL classrooms.

4.5.1.1 Teachers Hold Differing Beliefs About Incidental and Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

Among the four teachers interviewed, one teacher expressed a strong preference for teaching vocabulary incidentally. This approach involves integrating vocabulary instruction naturally within the lesson rather than teaching it explicitly. She believes that students learn vocabulary most effectively when they are motivated to discover the meanings of words on their own. For example, she explained:

Yes, incidentally. And you want it. You want to learn it. For example, if you learn, if you listen to music and then you encounter one word that you "tak pernah dengar" (never heard before) on and then you want to know the meaning of the song. So you want to learn, so you find it yourself instead of me telling you hello, today we are going to learn about nail. You need not want to think about. (T3, L45)

In her teaching, she employs strategies that make students eager to learn without directly providing the meanings of words. She shared:

Part of the challenge. That's not a big challenge because that's part of the challenge because I myself have no motivation to actually go through vocabularies. So I myself go around the teaching method so that they learn and they are motivated to learn. They are not learning vocabularies, but I know it's success when we understand the vocabulary that we have to learn, so we are motivated. But then again, I have to make them motivated by having other methods, not explicitly teaching them. (T3, L95)

In contrast, the other three teachers advocate for a mixed approach, combining both incidental and explicit vocabulary instruction. They believe this approach is more effective for various reasons.

Teacher 4, for instance, prefers explicit instruction but acknowledges the inevitability of incidental vocabulary teaching due to the integration of four different language skills. She states:

The most effective for me even though I'm not using that method. It will be combination, but more to explicitly. More explicit. (T4, L48)

Because we are teaching other skills as well. So when we are teaching those other four, those are the, all of the four skills we have to like incorporate with the vocabulary. (T4, L50)

Teacher 1 also supports a mixed approach, recognizing the importance of students' personal motivation to learn vocabulary incidentally. She notes:

I think it's better if it comes from themselves because they have the eagerness, they want to know the meaning of the words I think that's better. (T1, L39)

However, she acknowledges that a mixed approach is necessary to accommodate students' varying proficiency levels. She believes that diverse teaching methods make lessons more engaging.

So, when we have variation in our teaching, I think that is more interesting and hopefully will be easy for the students to get whatever that we are teaching. (T1, L26)

She also added that some students, particularly those who are shy, may not actively seek help, necessitating a mixed approach to cater to different proficiency levels.

...some of the shy pupils who think they don't understand English they hardly ask you know. Most of the words they don't understand but they don't do anything. So that's I give both ways to cater to learning in different levels of proficiency. (T1, L39)

I think it's better if we have mix of approaches. I prefer them to ask me the vocabulary as well as I prefer to give them the vocabulary that I think they need. (T1, L43)

Teacher 2 shares a similar view, emphasizing that combining incidental and explicit teaching benefits students.

In my opinion, because if each and every time if I were to enter the class and then I am going to teach them the direct approach for example, the quiz is very direct, I give them the Malay they give me the English words or just singing I give them the meaning or whatever, for me eventually over time I think that will be a boring thing to do. (T2, L25)

I think students can benefit from both ways meaning from explicit teaching and also indirect approach towards teaching and learning vocabulary. (T2, L23)

She highlights that different language skills may require different approaches, underlining the importance of a mixed method.

So when writing we can go step by step but when we teach focus skill like listening maybe it's more incidental maybe when they don't understand what is the meaning of this word only then you come up with strategies how to make them understand the meaning. (T2, L47)

In conclusion, while one teacher strongly advocates for incidental vocabulary teaching, the majority favor a balanced approach, integrating both incidental and explicit instruction to cater to diverse learning needs and language skills.

4.5.1.2 Teachers Hold Contrasting Beliefs about the use of the Mother Tongue and English-only Instruction

Another prominent belief identified relates to teachers' perceptions of language use in vocabulary instruction specifically the role of the mother tongue versus an English-only approach. The interview findings indicate contrasting views among the teachers on whether the use of students' first language facilitates or hinders vocabulary learning. While some teachers strongly advocate for English-only instruction to promote immersion and habitual language use, others perceive the strategic use of the mother tongue as necessary particularly for supporting comprehension among learners with lower proficiency. These differing beliefs reflect teachers' attempts to balance pedagogical ideals with classroom realities.

Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 strongly advocate for teaching English vocabulary solely in English. Teacher 2 emphasizes that English words and their meanings should be taught in the target language, stating, "I am an avid fan of teaching English in English" (T2, L12). She believes in using English extensively in the classroom,

acknowledging that it may not be feasible to achieve 100% English usage but aiming for around 90%.

Target language, English. I am an avid fan of teaching English in really full English probably not 100% because it's quite impossible to do 100% just around 90% English. (T2, L12)

Teacher 2 allows for some interference of the mother tongue, such as when giving quizzes as a vocabulary teaching strategy. However, she insists that any use of the mother tongue should come from the teacher, not the students. She expects students to use full English, as she believes it prepares them for future workplaces where English is globally used.

No, it's Malay to English, at least the Malay comes from me not from the student side. They are expected to use full English. (T2, L14)

Even if they go for like work interviews if they speak well chances of them being accepted into the workplace is very high so that's what I'm trying to do with my students that's why I think it's very important that I speak full English with my students because if I don't soak them in that environment, if I don't immerse them in the English environment, then who's going to do that if not me, the English teacher? (T2, L78)

In short, Teacher 2 believes that teachers need to have their own realisation that English needs to be taught in English and be motivated to find ways for the students to make it a habit to speak in the language.

So yeah, we need to have that realization that's it. It doesn't matter some teachers get disappointed very quick. Actually if you want to make it a habit for your students to speak in English, you need to be tough you know because sometimes you are disappointed when you tell them over and over to speak English and they always slip. (T2, L85)

Teacher 3 shares this belief, asserting that teaching English words in English is essential for learning new vocabulary. She advocates for the use of monolingual dictionaries over bilingual ones, arguing that bilingual dictionaries encourage students to rely on their mother tongue, whereas monolingual dictionaries facilitate deeper immersion in English.

English-English. That's how we learn new words. (T3, L28)

I think if you're using bilingual dictionary it's you asking them to understand in their own language, their mother tongue but if you ask them to use English-English it's going to let them English.. (T3, L30)

In contrast, Teacher 1 is a strong proponent of using the mother tongue in teaching English. She believes that translating between languages is an effective method, as it reflects her own learning experience.

Okay because I learned from translating. Ahh, because that's why I believe translating is one of the ways because I learned from that. I got my vocabulary today from my experience of translating and writing down the words. So that why I'm not a big fan of translating L2 to L2 because not all understand the word in L2. That's what I believe in. (T1, L31)

Teacher 1 supports a bilingual approach, gradually shifting to monolingual English as students' proficiency increases. Her teaching philosophy was influenced by her lecturer's view that using translation is not detrimental.

Urm, bilingual. I believe in English to Malay. As they understand more words in English, then they can use monolingual. (T1, L82)

My experience in language class when I was in Australia, my lecturer also said that it's not a sin if you use translation because it's their language. So that is what I believe. (T1, L82)

Similarly, Teacher 4 supports using the mother tongue in teaching English. She suggests that starting with the native language can provide a solid foundation for learning English, making it easier for students to understand and relate new English words to concepts they already know. She acknowledges that while it may not be ideal to teach entirely in the mother tongue, it is necessary to consider the students' proficiency levels.

So my technique of letting them know the meaning of the words first and then relating it to the language, one, that is actually helpful for them. Even though we know that it is not good to teach them in L1 when we are teaching them English. However, we have to take into consideration of these pupils' proficiencies as well. If we teach them more than what they can, they will not get anything. So at least for them to be able to at least know the words, they have to be taught in L1, not at most, but little by little. (T4, L26)

In summary, the findings indicate that Malaysian ESL primary school teachers perceive vocabulary as an essential component of language learning, yet their instructional beliefs vary considerably. Teachers differ in their views on the effectiveness of incidental versus explicit vocabulary instruction and on the appropriateness of using the mother tongue alongside English in the classroom. These differing instructional beliefs highlight the absence of a single dominant approach to vocabulary teaching and suggest that teachers' perceptions are shaped by learner needs, classroom contexts and personal teaching experiences.

4.5.2 Teachers Perceive Multiple Contextual and Personal Challenges in Vocabulary Instruction

This section presents teachers' perceptions of the challenges they encounter in teaching vocabulary in ESL primary school classrooms. Analysis of the interview data indicates that teachers perceive a range of contextual and personal factors that hinder effective vocabulary instruction. These challenges include limited instructional time, students' attitudes and motivation towards learning vocabulary, curriculum-related constraints, and teachers' perceived limitations in terms of expertise and instructional capacity. Collectively, these challenges influence how vocabulary is prioritised, delivered and reinforced during classroom instruction. Figure 4.2 provides an overview of the challenges identified within this theme.

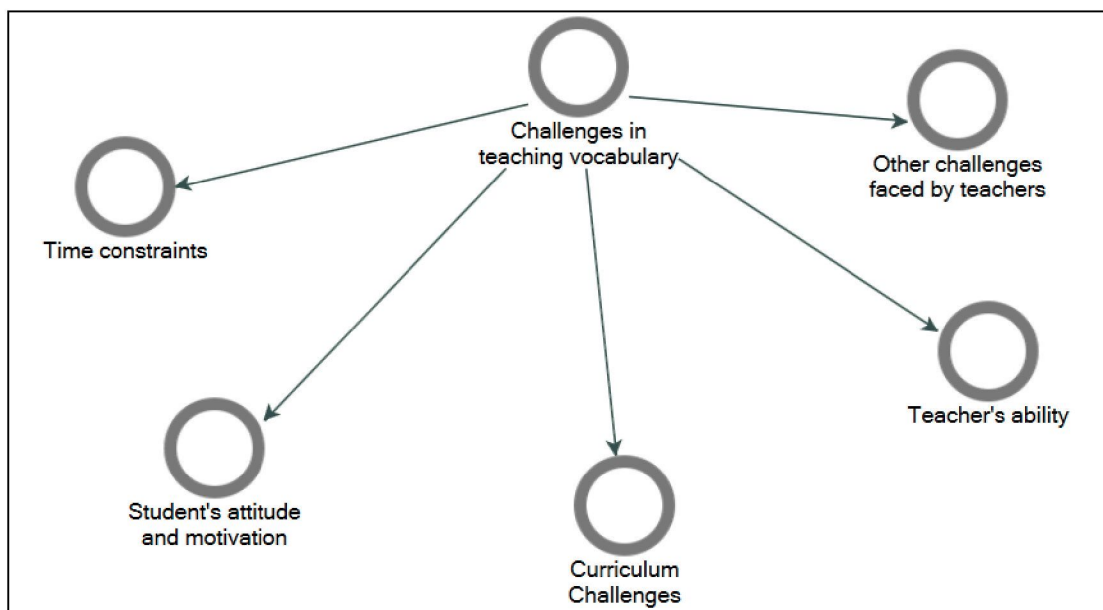


Figure 4.2 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Vocabulary Teaching

4.5.2.1 Challenge 1: Time Constraints

Teacher 1 and Teacher 4 express that time constraints significantly hinder effective vocabulary teaching. Teacher 1, who believes in the effectiveness of having students copy word meanings and write sentences, finds it challenging to implement this strategy fully due to limited lesson time. She acknowledges that while writing the meaning and constructing sentences help reinforce learning, it is a time-consuming process, especially when multiple new words need to be covered in a single lesson.

I told them. What I mean is if we just tell them the translation only not by writing, that's not effective because they tend to forget. But once they know the meaning, for example they don't know the meaning of cradle. So I write cradle means buaian and so they write that down in vocabulary book and then write down a sentence about cradle. I think that's effective but it takes a lot it takes quite some time because in a lesson usually they will have like three or four words they don't know so it might take time. I think if they have more time to do that that would be the most effective considering time isn't a problem. (T1, L25)

Teacher 4 echoes this sentiment, highlighting that classroom priorities such as checking homework and adhering to routines often take precedence over vocabulary activities. She believes in the value of vocabulary books but finds it impractical to prioritize them over other necessary classroom tasks.

Actually, I believe in the vocabulary books, but then the challenges made me think that they are more priorities that I should. The homework, the routine that they have to get used to. Instead of reading the vocabulary book first. (T4,L39)

Teacher 1 further implies that finding a universally effective vocabulary strategy that accommodates all students is difficult, and even when a suitable method is identified, time remains a significant issue.

Honestly, my 13 years of teaching I try I always have like this one lesson where I ask them to read a sentence a paragraph and find words they don't understand in the class itself but honestly it will take time and if you do it in groups, some of the pupils will become passengers, they don't know the words but maybe their friends do so they don't actually acquire the vocabulary. But I think I don't always do that because of time constraints. (T1, L45)

Teacher 1 also implied that the challenge is exacerbated by the varying proficiency levels of students. Higher proficiency students may grasp vocabulary quickly, while lower proficiency students struggle, especially with strategies that involve writing.

You know good students they know all the words, but for the lower proficient pupils they don't understand simple words. Some of them don't even understand even though I kept on telling them. So they tend to forget because it's usually the struggling pupils they took time to write in their notebook. (T1, L48)

Another factor contributing to time constraints is the pressure to cover the entire syllabus. Teachers must balance between focusing on vocabulary and ensuring all topics are taught, often resulting in inadequate time for vocabulary drilling.

If we think we want to finish all the topics, then it'll be a constraint but if we take our own sweet time it's actually enough to focus on the vocabulary, like drill on vocabulary but we will miss maybe the second last and last topic at the end of the year. (T1, L78)

Teacher 1 also emphasizes the importance of independent learning, suggesting that students should take the initiative to learn vocabulary outside the classroom due to the limited time teachers have with them.

Yes, it doesn't really come from the teacher. I don't even remember what my teacher asked me. Not my school teachers. So I understand English more when I do it independently. So that's why when people ask me do you have specific techniques, I cannot really answer confidently because I can't even remember how my primary and secondary school teachers taught me vocabulary because most of the time I did on my own. That's why I sometimes get really sad I can't teach my students to encourage them. I only have one hour with them and it's not one to one, it's the whole class. (T1, L84)

4.5.2.2 Challenge 2: Students' Attitude and Motivation

In addition to time constraints, students' attitudes and motivation emerged as significant themes in this study. It was found that students' proficiency levels influence their motivation to learn vocabulary, thereby challenging teachers to identify effective strategies for vocabulary instruction. Teacher 1 highlights that students with higher motivation tend to excel while the lower ones rely heavily on the teacher.

So for the middle and low, they're struggling because they always rely on their teacher because they don't really like to you know... I still search for the best way on how to teach them because the way I learned it's actually my own..my own time. Only the good students have that motivation to do more. (T1. L68)

Motivating middle and low proficiency students outside of class is challenging, as noted by Teacher 3. As a result, she focuses on fostering motivation within the classroom.

Like, motivation because middle and low, I would say outside of class, it would be hard for me to ask them to do. But some kids, some kids you have to push a bit. For example, my choral speaking kids, not all of them are high proficiency. Some of them, we have to guide them to understand a sentence. For example, so we have a tv at school, I have to open like videos. And everyone was looking, everyone was watching. So they have no choice but to watch also. But then it's by force, but by forcing, actually using the motives. What do they call it? Motivation. (T3, L88)

In terms of vocabulary teaching strategies, Teacher 3 prefers interactive methods to keep her students motivated to learn vocabulary as she knows that her students would not be motivated to learn a more direct vocabulary strategies like keeping a vocabulary notebook.

I think having notebooks, maybe. It's not my thing. I know my kids would not want to do that. Especially I don't want to do that. Things that I do most is games. And sometimes I will also make it a spelling game instead of class. So after the lesson, the next lesson would be them spelling the words. (T3, L79)

Similar to Teacher 3, who focuses on fostering motivation within the classroom, Teacher 2 believes that employing various approaches to encourage students can enhance the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction.

I do actually face this kind of problem whereby students they don't have enough motivation to study on their own effort but as a teacher, what we can do is we can always encourage even by traditional way of being a teacher which is being dominant or fierce or we can use a lighter approach like a friendly approach as if we are the counsellors, you know and like very nicely and then praise them lots and lots. (T3, L68)

4.5.2.3 Challenge 3: Curriculum Related Challenges

Based on the excerpts from the interviews with four teachers, several curriculum-related challenges in teaching vocabulary have been identified. These challenges range from time constraints to a lack of explicit emphasis on vocabulary instruction within the curriculum.

One teacher expressed that focusing on vocabulary teaching might disrupt the overall lesson plan, as students often take too much time writing down vocabulary, leaving less time for other parts of the lesson.

I mean to write the vocab in their notebook they take time. Maybe if I teach them 5 vocab a day they will only get one. And then we need to move on to the gist of the lesson. I still need to teach them reading to ask them.. (T1, L49)

This suggests a need to simplify the topics, as the current curriculum covers too much material, making it difficult for teachers to focus on teaching vocabulary.

Yeah I think so too. I think they should simplify maybe reduce the topics so that we can focus on certain topics only. (T1, L76)

Additionally, there is the problem of how the curriculum is integrated with co-curricular activities, which leaves little time for consistent vocabulary teaching, as mentioned by Teacher 2.

But then as I go older and now that our school is always busy with co-curricular and stuff like that it's quite impossible to implement this these past two three years. (T2, L34)

Aside from that, the lack of clear vocabulary instruction mentioned in the curriculum guide makes it hard for teachers to include vocabulary lessons effectively. Teacher 2 highlights the absence of specific sections in the syllabus dedicated to vocabulary, as well as the lack of emphasis on how to teach vocabulary, as factors leading to inconsistent approaches in vocabulary teaching.

Trying to catch up with the syllabus, if you notice in our syllabus, they don't have any particular section where we are to teach this vocabulary you get what I mean? (T2, L58)

...there's no amplification on this vocabulary teaching there's no one like giving like sort of emphasis like how is the vocabulary lesson you know. (T2, L64)

One teacher admitted that not being familiar enough with the curriculum is a challenge for effectively using strategies like dictionaries in vocabulary teaching.

The other challenges will be maybe the thing that I thought, for example, the teaching dictionary part in DSKP. Yeah, myself. It is the disadvantage for myself. I mean, I didn't, maybe I didn't. Thoroughly look at it. (T4, L55)

The teacher also implied a lack of support and modeling from other teachers as a challenge for effectively incorporating vocabulary teaching strategies, such as the use of dictionaries in the classroom.

I didn't realize. And I used to seek out for my other teachers, other senior teachers. And when I'm looking at my other year, three teachers, I haven't once look at them using dictionary. (T4, L57)

4.5.2.4 Challenge 4: Teacher's Ability

The fourth sub-theme within the challenges theme identified is one that is related to teacher's ability in which is present in all four interviews. One teacher mentioned that while their knowledge is not an issue, there could be issue with how they explain vocabulary concepts that could lead to misunderstandings among students.

My knowledge for me it's not a problem but maybe the way I explain to them is a problem maybe they don't know what I explain. You understand what I mean? (T1, L54)

While knowledge might not be a problem to Teacher 1, Teacher 3 felt otherwise. Teacher 3 admitted that not being expert in vocabulary affects their confidence and ability to teach vocabulary comprehensively. This lack of expertise had led to her preference for integrating vocabulary teaching into other activities rather than focusing it directly.

No. Vocabularies. Okay, I'm not expert in vocabularies. Like if you ask me some words. I may, I may, I may not. I may not know words like synonyms, word synonyms. Like I would know some words I wouldn't know. Like big words, for example. (T3, L57)

Maybe it's my challenge. Is I, me, myself. Okay. Like I said earlier, I'm not really an expert in vocabulary. So by focusing mainly on vocabulary, it's not my thing. Yes. I would find ways, other ways to just include vocabulary. (T3, L90)

There is also the challenge for teachers to find strategy that effectively engage students when teaching vocabulary. One teacher noted the difficulty in finding a single strategy that works for all the students and expressed scepticism about strategies that used traditional tools like notebooks.

Really. Because I don't think I can find one strategy for them because even the notebook is I don't think it's helpful to them. (T1, L72)

Teacher 1 also recognized creative teaching methods used by others but admitted that lack of time and creativity hindered her to implement such methods which reflects teachers' challenges in balancing creativity with constraints like time.

Yeah, so I don't know maybe some other teachers. I used to read somewhere in which country but to teach vocab the teacher would put on different hats every day which has these different words. So she would make little people and put on the hat and ask students the meaning. I'm not as creative as that and I don't have time to prepare those. (T1, L74)

Interestingly, aging and memory issues affect some teachers, leading to the omission of certain vocabulary words during instruction and often times impact the consistency of vocabulary teaching.

Sometimes I will miss out certain words. I tend to forget I think this is the internal struggle that people I having especially as you age, you tend to forget. (T2, L55)

Teacher 2 also mentioned that she felt that she did not emphasize vocabulary sufficiently, often teaching it without reinforcing through repetition which she believed is crucial for effective instruction especially for students whose first language is not English.

And..and another factor if internal also is that sometimes I have a feeling that I'm not stressing the vocabulary enough, like I taught them but it's in one go and obviously for Malay students, I mean I should have done it a few times and sometimes I forgot about it, I taught them once and then okay, that's it so it's not effective. (T2, L56)

When asked about the integration of media such as watching English movies or listening to English songs, one teacher acknowledges that she may not consistently encourage her students to use resources like English TV shows even though she feels that there are beneficial. This reflects a gap in promoting and encouraging strategies and tools in vocabulary teaching and learning.

I will definitely encourage that. But then I haven't told the kids to watch the TV in English. (T4, L41)

Overall, the findings suggest that Malaysian ESL primary school teachers perceive vocabulary teaching as constrained by multiple interrelated challenges. Time limitations and curriculum demand restrict opportunities for sustained vocabulary practice while students' varying proficiency levels and motivation further complicate

instructional decision-making. In addition, teachers' self-perceived limitations in vocabulary knowledge, instructional strategies and creativity affect their confidence in delivering focused vocabulary instruction. These challenges highlight the complex classroom realities faced by teachers and help explain the flexible, mixed and pragmatic approaches to vocabulary teaching identified in the subsequent section.

4.5.3 Teachers Perceive the Use of Multiple Strategies as Necessary for Effective Vocabulary Teaching

This section examines teachers' perceptions of the vocabulary teaching strategies commonly employed in their ESL primary school classrooms. Analysis of the interview data indicates that teachers do not rely on a single instructional approach. They perceive the use of multiple strategies as necessary to support vocabulary learning among learners with diverse proficiency levels. The strategies identified include direct instruction, social and peer-supported learning, independent learning and the use of multimedia such as songs and games. These approaches are often used flexibly and in combination reflecting teachers' efforts to adapt vocabulary instruction to students' needs, classroom contexts and instructional constraints. Figure 4.3 presents an overview of the strategies perceived and implemented by the teachers.

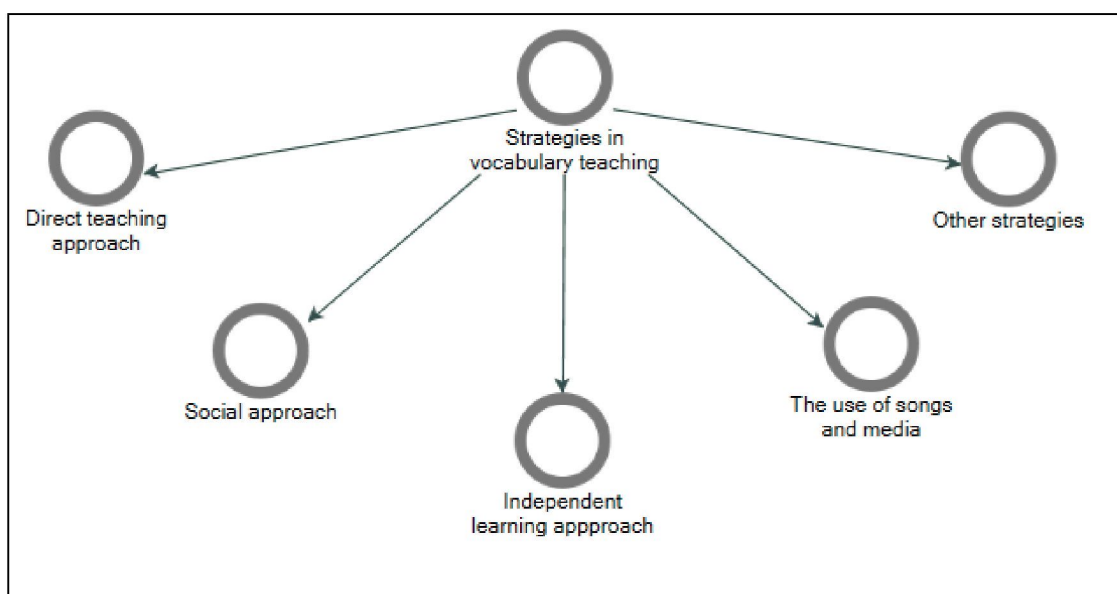


Figure 4.3 Common Strategies Used by Teachers in Vocabulary Teaching

4.5.3.1 Strategy 1: Direct Teaching Approach

Three out of four teachers expressed their preference towards implementing direct teaching approaches when it comes to vocabulary teaching.

Teacher 1 prefers a direct approach to vocabulary teaching by introducing difficult words before students engage with the text or activities. This method ensures that students are familiar with the challenging vocabulary beforehand, which aids in their comprehension of the material.

Okay usually I don't have a fixed routine, but I make sure before I teach the lesson, before I ask them to read text or any activity, I make sure they know the words that I think is difficult for them. I mean I introduce vocabulary first before I ask them to read the sentence. (T1, L12)

Additionally, the teacher appreciates the CEFR textbook's strategy of highlighting potentially difficult vocabulary, allowing them to pre-teach these words.

Okay, what I like about CEFR textbook is before we do the activity they will usually pick certain vocabulary that they think will be difficult for the kids. So I will like go through with them first the words that is in the textbook and then when we come across any other words in the sentence then I will go through that one other than the vocab picked in the textbook. Usually in the textbook they will have pictures right, so it's easier for them and that if the words are verbs, I will ask them to do action with me. (T1, L16)

Along the same line, Teacher 2 highlights the importance of identifying and addressing words that students do not understand as a key part of their vocabulary teaching strategy. While she acknowledges the significant impact of independent reading on vocabulary acquisition, she emphasized that direct teaching especially for difficult words is important and effective to ensure immediate understanding before proceeding to the other parts of the lesson.

Identifying words that they don't understand, so that is one of my effective ways of teaching them vocabulary, but if you are to ask me, it's not related to teaching, I think one of the ways that students can actually get a very high impact from vocabulary learning is through reading but they need to read on their own. (T2, L30)

Teacher 4 also shows a strong preference for directly explaining the meanings of unfamiliar words to students, particularly those who are less proficient. She mentioned that she often provides the meaning of the word immediately to prevent confusion and ensure comprehension. For more proficient students, she encourages them to infer meanings from context, although she emphasized that direct instruction remains the primary method.

Encounter familiar words, I will generally straightaway tell them what the meaning of the words, or else, if they are more proficient pupils, I will ask them to read the previous sentence and then they can relate. They can guess what the actual meaning. But most of my students are weak students, so I will straight away give out the meaning of the word. (T4, L20)

I will explicitly tell them the meanings instead of letting them, letting them know the words by themselves. (T4, L45)

4.5.3.2 Strategy 2: Social Approach

Three teachers also expressed a preference for using social approaches in vocabulary teaching, enlisting the help of other students when someone has difficulty understanding the meaning of a word.

Teacher 1 describes a method where, if a student asks for the meaning of a word, they will often pose the question to the class to see if any other student can provide the answer which reflects teacher's preference towards peer learning as a strategy in vocabulary teaching.

Yes, or maybe spontaneously when I think they might not know the words. But sometimes some of my pupils also ask me "Teacher what's the meaning of this word?" so usually I will pose to another friend if anyone knows the meaning and share with the class and ask them to write down in their vocabulary book. (T1, L37)

Similarly, Teacher 3 also employs a social approach by using group activities and peer explanations. For example, when teaching about a "tail," the teacher uses a combination of hints and peer explanations to help students understand.

Yes, for example, my cat has a long tail. Some kids they don't understand what tail is right. Most kids would know what cat is. So the lower proficiency kids would say kucing like this is something that they know that this is about kucing. And then the higher ones would say this is about kucing with a tail. So what is tail? So some kids they don't understand what tail means. So when we say long, long what? So I would let's say give them hints what is long. Most kids would think long means panjang then they would think by themselves long what? Long whiskers, long legs and I say tail..I would give them clues up until they know that tail is ekor. So that's how I teach vocabulary among other ways. (T3, L20)

Furthermore, in group activities like choral speaking, the teacher facilitates an environment where students are motivated by their peers to understand and engage with the content.

For example, my choral speaking kids, not all of them are high proficiency. Some of them, we have to guide them to understand a sentence. For example, so we have a tv at school, I have to open like videos. And everyone was looking, everyone was watching. So they have no choice but to watch also. But then it's by force, but by forcing, actually using the motives. What do they call it? Motivation. It was something. If anyone. If anyone knows this, I have to know it also. It's not by us forcing them, it's by them forcing themselves to understand. (T3, L88)

Teacher 4, on the other hand, pairs students who need additional help with those who are more proficient. She believes that this approach ensures that less proficient students receive the necessary support from their peers during reading activities.

And in case they are Pemulihan (low proficient kids), I will partner them up with those who are more proficient. So they will get help in reading the text or whatever reading material it is. (T4, L12)

4.5.3.3 Strategy 3: Independent Learning Approach

The interviews with teachers highlight their preference for independent learning approaches to vocabulary teaching. Three out of four teachers emphasized various strategies that encourage students to take an active role in their learning process outside of the traditional classroom setting.

Teacher 1 expresses a willingness to explore new strategies but ultimately supports independent learning as a strategy for students to acquire vocabulary. This

shows a clear preference for students to be encouraged and engaged in self-study when it comes to vocabulary acquisition.

Honestly, I'm always open to try new strategies which one is more effective for vocabulary learning but I always encourage my pupils to learn language in their own time to get more vocabulary. Maybe 15 minutes a day to learn new words. (T1, L64)

Teacher 2 further illustrates this preference through a focus in reading by highlighting that reading can highly impact students' vocabulary.

I think one of the ways that students can actually get a very high impact from vocabulary learning is through reading but they need to read on their own. (T2, L30)

Additionally, Teacher 2 also describes a past practice of making students read regularly which reinforces the importance of independent reading in vocabulary acquisition.

I do. When I was when I first started teaching actually, I make it a compulsory for my students to read like 10 books per week like very thin books not our level books. (T2, L33)

The significant role of independent learning in vocabulary acquisition is also highlighted by Teacher 3 where she shared multiple examples on how she promoted independent learning among her students.

For the, for the most times my TP5s and 6s they love asking me new words that they find. They just show me what does this mean? And I, this is my..this is my most used lah, I would ask them if they understand the sentence, then you have to think about what this sentence about, try guess and if they can guess it right that's how they use their brain to think. And if they want it to be more detailed, I ask them to find in the dictionary. (T3, L26)

Teacher 3 also described an activity involving watching a movie scene and interpreting its vocabulary which she assigned her students to do independently.

I watched this one movie and I asked them to watch this one scene. They have their own smartphones. And I asked them, later on at night, I will send them a video, and you have to watch the movie and not movie like a scene. Is it from the. I don't remember. I asked them to watch the movie. Oh, it's perfect. And I asked them, can you understand the song? Try to understand the song and tell me about the song. (T3, L86)

4.5.3.4 Strategy 4: The Use of Multimedia

The use of multimedia also emerged as a favoured vocabulary teaching strategy, as indicated by three out of the four teachers interviewed.

Teacher 1 describes incorporating nursery rhymes into their teaching which shows that melody and repetition plays a role in vocabulary retention.

Yes, I do. For example, during HIP activities, I gave them lyrics of nursery rhymes and go through with them first and then ask them to sing together. (T1, L86)

Teacher 2 also supported the use of songs, using music to make vocabulary acquisition more enjoyable and memorable.

But I also incorporated quite modern not to say quite modern technique but probably more famous among younger teachers which is singing with the hope that through the lyrics they will get new vocab and they will expand their vocab banks. (T2, L10)

On a similar note, although the primary focus is on games, Teacher 3 also seemed to value interactive and engaging methods suggesting a flexible approach to vocabulary learning that could include media and songs.

Yeah. Games, I think having notebooks, maybe. It's not my thing. I know my kids would not want to do that. Especially I don't want to do that. Things that I do most is games. And sometimes I will also make it a spelling game instead of class. So after the lesson, the next lesson would be them spelling the words. (T3, L79)

4.5.3.5 Strategy 5: Other Strategies Used by Teachers in Vocabulary Teaching

In addition to the four primary strategies used by teachers for vocabulary teaching, several other methods have also been identified as being utilized by teachers.

One teacher mentioned the use of visual aids as well as first language translation for concrete and abstract nouns when teaching vocabulary.

If it's a noun, if concrete noun I will use pictures or I ask one of the good students to come and draw but if it's something abstract, so I would just sometimes I use our first language. If it's a noun, if concrete noun I will use pictures or I ask one of the good students to come and draw but if it's something abstract, so I would just sometimes I use our first language. (T1, L19)

The teacher also emphasizes the importance of writing and translating vocabulary in vocabulary acquisition.

What I mean is if we just tell them the translation only not by writing, that's not effective because they tend to forget. But once they know the meaning, for example they don't know the meaning of cradle. So I write cradle means buaian and so they write that down in vocabulary book and then write down a sentence about cradle. (T1, L25)

Teacher 2 uses quizzes and mix languages when teaching vocabulary especially for weaker students.

I do that is by giving them quiz and then when I enter the class, they will all stand up and translate the Malay words that I give to them and then they are allowed to sit. (T2, L9)

Oh, however, I would like to let you know that I also allow my students especially the weaker ones to use "rojak" language meaning a mixture of Bahasa and English in a sentence because it's quite impossible for them to come up with a full sentence on their own. (T2, L15)

There is also a strategy whereby the teacher focuses on sentence context and build on that to elaborate vocabulary learned by the students as shared by Teacher 3.

Okay, most times in class I would start off using sentences like I mentioned just now but by using sentences, we can actually elaborate more vocabulary. For example, just now tail, so what tail means? A part of the cat's body. So by then I can also ask is there any other body parts that you know on a cat? So some of them could say claws, so what claws mean... or maybe fur, or whiskers. Yeah, things like that maybe four legs..From that, that way I think most kids would understand that's how they make another sentences using another vocabulary. (T3, L22)

Interestingly, Teacher 4 highlights on the use of daily routines in teaching vocabulary as well as reading exercises where she employs brainstorming and direct instruction.

The first thing first that I will usually do is to ask what day is today? So that is my very typical way of teaching. What day is today? So I will teach them. Today is what day? What is the date? Today is 24. March 9th. 24. That will be the most typical way of I am teaching English. Other than that, if we learn using the textbook, I will ask them to read first. If it is for reading lesson, I will give them time to read. (T4, L12)

There are times when I introduce the new words first or else I will trigger them questions such as if we are learning about countries, I will ask them about what countries do they know? Many countries that they know. So they will brainstorm themselves of getting knowing the list of countries meaning relating to. (T4, L16)

In conclusion, the findings reveal that Malaysian ESL primary school teachers perceive effective vocabulary teaching as requiring a varied and adaptable repertoire of instructional strategies. Direct instruction is viewed as necessary for ensuring immediate comprehension particularly for lower-proficiency learners while social interaction and peer support are perceived to facilitate understanding through collaborative learning. Teachers also emphasise the importance of encouraging independent learning beyond the classroom as well as the use of multimedia and games to enhance motivation and engagement.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a detailed analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data to address the research questions comprehensively. The quantitative findings revealed that teachers predominantly rely on social and memory strategies, indicating a preference for collaborative and repetitive learning methods in vocabulary instruction.

These strategies, such as using group activities and emphasizing repetition, were favoured for their practicality and effectiveness in engaging students. The frequent use of social strategies suggests that teachers recognize the value of peer interaction in vocabulary acquisition, while the reliance on memory strategies reflects an emphasis on retention techniques such as mnemonics, flashcards, and rote learning.

Conversely, the findings showed a lower preference for metacognitive strategies, such as utilizing tools like Quizizz and Google Forms, which could be attributed to challenges such as time constraints in preparing materials and integrating these tools into lessons. Despite the potential of these tools to enhance vocabulary learning through self-monitoring and independent practice, many teachers appeared to favor more traditional, teacher-centered methods that require less additional preparation and provide immediate classroom control.

The qualitative findings provided deeper insights into teachers' perceptions, highlighting three main themes: beliefs, challenges, and common strategies in ESL vocabulary teaching. Teachers expressed divided opinions on the most effective methods for teaching vocabulary. While some strongly advocated for incidental learning through exposure and contextual use, others preferred a mixed approach that balanced incidental learning with intentional teaching techniques. The varying perspectives on this issue suggest that teachers' instructional choices are influenced by their teaching philosophies, student needs, and practical classroom constraints.

Additionally, the findings revealed divergent opinions on the role of the mother tongue in vocabulary teaching. Some teachers supported an English-only approach, emphasizing the need for immersion to strengthen students' ability to think and communicate in English. Others, however, believed that incorporating the mother tongue as a scaffolding tool could facilitate better understanding and retention of new vocabulary especially for lower-proficiency learners. This divide reflects the ongoing debate in ESL pedagogy regarding the extent to which first-language support should be used in second language acquisition.

The findings also emphasized the challenges teachers face in vocabulary instruction. Many perceived vocabulary teaching as time-consuming and inefficient, particularly when needing to balance comprehensive vocabulary instruction with the demands of covering an extensive syllabus. This tension often limited their ability to employ certain Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS), especially those requiring additional preparation or classroom time.

Together, these findings offer valuable insights into the strategies preferred by teachers, their beliefs and the challenges they face in implementing effective vocabulary instruction. Building on these insights, Chapter 5 will integrate the quantitative and qualitative findings using a triangulation approach.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS THROUGH TRIANGULATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study through a triangulation approach by integrating quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive interpretation of Malaysian ESL primary school teachers' vocabulary teaching practices. While Chapter 4 presented the findings separately, this chapter focuses on explaining and interpreting those findings in relation to the research questions, existing literature and the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Through triangulation, the discussion moves beyond identifying which Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) teachers use to examine why certain strategies are preferred or avoided and how teachers' beliefs and contextual constraints shape their instructional decisions.

Triangulation allows this chapter to bring together the quantitative and qualitative findings to present a clearer picture of how vocabulary is taught in Malaysian primary ESL classrooms. While the quantitative results show which vocabulary learning strategies are most and least frequently used, the qualitative data explain the reasons behind these choices. Teachers' interview responses highlight how classroom realities, curriculum demands, and personal teaching beliefs shape their instructional decisions. By combining these two data sources, this chapter moves beyond identifying patterns of strategy use to explaining how and why these practices occur in real classroom contexts, in line with the issues discussed in earlier chapters and relevant literature.

5.2 Preferred Strategies: Emphasis on Social and Memory Strategies (RQ1)

This section addresses Research Question 1, which explores the vocabulary learning strategies most preferred by Malaysian primary school ESL teachers. Findings from both data sources show that teachers clearly favour certain strategies over others. In particular, social strategies within Schmitt's Discovery category and memory strategies within the Consolidation category emerged as the most frequently used

strategies. These preferences were consistently reflected in questionnaire responses as well as teachers' interview accounts.

The quantitative findings indicate a strong preference for social strategies used to support vocabulary discovery. Strategies such as providing sentences that include new words (mean = 4.09) and giving synonyms or paraphrases (mean = 3.88) recorded high mean scores. These results suggest that teachers favour strategies that allow vocabulary instruction to take place naturally during classroom interaction rather than as a separate activity.

Qualitative findings further explained this preference. Teachers described frequently involving peers in vocabulary clarification, either by posing questions to the class or encouraging students to explain meanings to one another. This approach was perceived as effective in fostering a supportive learning environment where students feel more confident asking questions and participating actively. Table 5.1 summarizes the alignment between quantitative and qualitative findings of this study on preferred strategies employed by the teachers.

Table 5.1
Triangulation of Preferred Strategies in ESL Vocabulary Teaching

Strategy Category	Quantitative (High mean scores)	Qualitative (Teacher Excerpts)
Discovery - Social Strategies	I provide my students a sentence containing the new word (Mean=4.09) I provide a synonym of the word. (Mean = 3.88)	Teachers expressed that peer interactions during vocabulary learning foster a collaborative learning environment. <i>"Yes, or maybe spontaneously when I think they might not know the words. But sometimes some of my pupils also ask me 'Teacher, what's the meaning of this word?' so usually I will pose [the question] to another friend if anyone knows the meaning and share with the class." (T1, L37)</i>
Consolidation - Memory Strategies	I ask my students to relate a word to their personal experience. (Mean=4.17) I ask my students to use the new word in a sentence. (Mean=3.90)	Teachers noted that linking vocabulary to personal experiences strengthens retention. <i>"I ask my students to relate a word to their personal experience. Example: when learning the word celebration, they think of their birthday party / festivals." (T1, L25)</i>

The use of social strategies aligns closely with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which emphasises interaction, negotiation of meaning and authentic language use as central to language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Through social strategies, vocabulary learning becomes part of communication rather than an isolated drill. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies, which show that peer interaction and teacher-mediated discussion support vocabulary comprehension and increase learner confidence (Rahmat et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2021).

These findings align with studies highlighting the role of contextualized vocabulary instruction in enhancing comprehension and retention. For example, Nation (2020) emphasizes that learning vocabulary in context helps students grasp word meanings more naturally and apply them in various settings, which mirrors the high mean score for providing contextual sentences observed in this study. Teachers' frequent use of contextualizing techniques is further supported by Schmitt (2019), who suggests that contextual vocabulary teaching can lead to more effective retention as students encounter words in meaningful settings.

At the same time, the frequent use of social strategies reflects teachers' practical considerations in managing classroom instruction. Strategies that require little preparation and can be applied spontaneously are often viewed as more manageable within time-constrained lessons. While social strategies are effective and appropriate for young learners, overreliance on them may limit opportunities for learners to develop independent vocabulary discovery skills. Alahmadi and Foltz (2020) caution that excessive dependence on teacher or peer assistance can hinder learner autonomy, suggesting the need for gradual scaffolding toward more independent strategy use.

Memory strategies also emerged as highly preferred strategies for vocabulary consolidation. Quantitative data show high mean scores for strategies such as relating new words to personal experiences (mean = 4.17) and asking students to use new words in sentences (mean = 3.90). These findings indicate that teachers place strong emphasis on reinforcing vocabulary through association, repetition and meaningful use.

Qualitative findings support this trend as teachers described using contextual examples, repetition, songs and links to students' daily experiences to help learners remember new vocabulary. This preference is supported by previous research showing that memory strategies enhance vocabulary retention by encouraging deeper cognitive processing and meaningful associations (Oxford, 2017; Teng, 2020). In a similar vein, Moody et al. (2018) also note that visual imagery and personalisation are particularly

effective for primary learners. The strong reliance on memory strategies suggests that teachers prioritise strategies that produce visible learning outcomes and support immediate recall which may be influenced by assessment demands and curriculum expectations.

5.3 Least Preferred Strategy: Low Use of Metacognitive Strategies (RQ2)

This section addresses Research Question 2, which examines the vocabulary learning strategies that are least preferred by Malaysian primary school ESL teachers and the challenges that influence their use as shown in Table 5.2. The triangulated findings indicate that metacognitive strategies were the least frequently used, particularly those that involve structured planning, monitoring, and evaluation of vocabulary learning. While teachers demonstrated awareness of metacognitive practices, their implementation was limited by a range of practical and contextual constraints.

Table 5.2
Triangulation of Least Preferred Strategies in ESL Vocabulary Teaching

Strategy Category	Quantitative (Low mean scores)	Qualitative (Teacher Excerpts)
Consolidation – Metacognitive Strategies	I have scheduled vocabulary tests online using applications such as Quizizz and Wordwall (Mean=2.88)	Teachers reported limited implementation of online vocabulary tasks due to constraints in classroom practice.
	I give online tasks for vocabulary review using Google Forms (Mean = 2.77)	<p><i>“But then as I go older and now that our school is always busy with co-curricular and stuff like that it's quite impossible to implement this these past two three years.” (T2, L34)</i></p> <p><i>“If we think we want to finish all the topics, then it'll be a constraint... actually enough to focus on the vocabulary, like drill... but we will miss other topics.” (T1, L78)</i></p>

Quantitative findings reveal that the Consolidation–Metacognitive category recorded a lower overall mean score (mean = 3.34) compared to other strategy

categories. Within this category, strategies involving formal digital tools and structured follow-up activities were least preferred. Specifically, the strategy “*I have scheduled vocabulary tests online using applications such as Quizizz and Wordwall*” recorded a low mean score (mean = 2.88), while “*I give online tasks for vocabulary review using Google Forms*” obtained the lowest mean score (mean = 2.77). These findings suggest limited use of metacognitive strategies that require sustained planning, monitoring, and assessment of learners’ vocabulary development.

The qualitative findings provide important insights into this pattern. Teachers frequently cited time constraints as a major factor influencing their limited use of structured metacognitive strategies. They explained that competing instructional demands, co-curricular responsibilities, and pressure to complete the syllabus made it difficult to implement vocabulary activities that require regular monitoring and follow-up. One teacher noted that implementing online vocabulary tasks had become “quite impossible” due to increasing school commitments (T2, L34), while another highlighted the tension between focusing on vocabulary and covering all required topics (T1, L78). These accounts reflect concerns raised in the literature that limited instructional time often results in vocabulary instruction being treated as a secondary component rather than a sustained focus (Garton et al., 2014; Webb & Nation, 2017).

Teachers also acknowledged that vocabulary learning was sometimes addressed without sufficient repetition or review. One teacher reflected that vocabulary was often taught “in one go” and not revisited, despite recognising that repeated exposure was necessary for retention (T2, L56). This aligns with Schmitt’s (2008) and Laufer’s (2017) observations that time limitations often lead to superficial vocabulary learning where words are introduced but not sufficiently consolidated.

Interestingly, the quantitative findings show that not all metacognitive strategies were avoided. Strategies involving informal exposure to English, such as encouraging students to listen to English songs (mean = 4.21) and watch English movies (mean = 4.07) recorded high mean scores. Qualitative data support this trend as teachers reported encouraging students to engage with English media outside the classroom, often without structured follow-up or assessment (T2, L12; T4, L41). This suggests that teachers were more inclined to promote metacognitive practices that are low in preparation demands and do not require systematic monitoring.

This selective use of metacognitive strategies reflects patterns identified in earlier studies. Teng and Zhang (2021) argue that while metacognitive strategies are

powerful in promoting learner autonomy, they are less commonly implemented in teacher-led environments with younger learners, particularly when learners have limited self-regulation skills. In primary ESL contexts, learners often rely heavily on teacher guidance, making strategies such as self-testing, goal setting and independent review challenging to implement effectively. This observation is consistent with Ghalebi et al. (2021), who found that lower-proficiency learners tend to rely more on social and determination strategies rather than metacognitive strategies.

To sum up, the findings suggest that metacognitive strategies were least preferred not because teachers perceived them as ineffective, but because they were difficult to sustain within the realities of primary ESL classrooms. These findings highlight the need for practical approaches to metacognitive strategy integration that are adapted to primary-level contexts, such as short, guided review activities or teacher-scaffolded self-monitoring tasks that do not place additional burden on instructional time.

5.4 How Teachers Perceive Vocabulary Teaching and Learning (RQ3)

This section addresses Research Question 3, which examines how Malaysian primary school ESL teachers perceive vocabulary teaching and learning and how these perceptions influence their instructional practices. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative findings, the discussion highlights three key aspects of teachers' perceptions; the perceived importance of vocabulary in language learning, beliefs about instructional approaches to vocabulary teaching and views on the role of the mother tongue in vocabulary instruction.

A key aspect of teachers' perceptions concerns how vocabulary should be taught particularly the balance between incidental and explicit instruction. Quantitative findings indicate that teachers value strategies associated with both approaches. High mean scores for strategies such as asking students to guess word meanings from context suggest that teachers believe vocabulary can be acquired naturally through exposure and meaningful use. This belief reflects principles of incidental vocabulary learning, where learners develop vocabulary knowledge through repeated encounters with words in authentic contexts (Schmitt, 2000; Benyahia, 2020).

Qualitative findings further illuminate this perception. Teachers described incidental learning as motivating and engaging particularly when students encounter

unfamiliar words during reading, listening or classroom interaction. One teacher noted that vocabulary learning is more effective when it “*comes from themselves,*” indicating a belief that learner curiosity and initiative enhance retention. Such perceptions are consistent with research suggesting that contextualised exposure promotes deeper lexical processing and supports long-term retention (Webb, 2007; Sinyashina, 2020).

At the same time, teachers did not perceive incidental learning as sufficient on its own. Quantitative findings also show frequent use of explicit strategies such as providing synonyms or directly explaining word meanings. These practices reflect teachers’ belief in the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction particularly for ensuring clarity and supporting learners who struggle to infer meaning independently. Explicit instruction has been shown to be especially beneficial for complex or abstract vocabulary and for learners with limited proficiency as it draws attention to form–meaning relationships and reduces misunderstanding (Nation, 2001; Mutia et al., 2023).

Teachers’ interview responses further support this view. Two teachers explained that they provide direct explanations when students appear confused, highlighting the perception that explicit instruction functions as an important scaffold. Rather than viewing explicit and incidental approaches as opposing methods, teachers appeared to regard them as complementary. This balanced perspective aligns with research showing that combining explicit and implicit instruction enhances vocabulary learning by providing both meaningful exposure and structured reinforcement (Fainman & Tokar, 2019; Sinyashina, 2020).

Another important dimension of teachers’ perceptions relates to the use of the mother tongue versus an English-only approach in vocabulary teaching. The findings reveal differing beliefs, shaped largely by teachers’ views of learners’ proficiency levels and instructional needs. Two teachers strongly favoured an English-only approach, believing that sustained exposure to English is essential for developing fluency and communicative competence. This perception reflects the principle that increased target-language exposure supports language acquisition by providing learners with comprehensible input in meaningful contexts (Krashen, 1982; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Teachers who supported English-only instruction viewed immersion as part of their professional responsibility, particularly in contexts where students have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. This belief aligns with research

suggesting that greater exposure to the target language can strengthen learners' ability to process and use vocabulary independently (Turnbull, 2001; Webb, 2007).

In contrast, the other two teachers perceived the mother tongue as a useful instructional resource, especially when teaching vocabulary to lower-proficiency learners. These teachers believed that selective use of the first language could facilitate comprehension and reduce cognitive load. Such perceptions are consistent with studies indicating that limited use of the mother tongue can lower affective barriers and support understanding without undermining second language development (Xu, 2018; Ying & Hong, 2020).

Beyond instructional beliefs and language use, teachers' perceptions of classroom challenges also played a significant role in shaping how they approached vocabulary teaching. Rather than viewing challenges solely as external obstacles, teachers appeared to perceive them as defining features of their teaching context that influenced what they considered effective in practice.

All the teachers interviewed perceived time constraints as a major limitation in vocabulary instruction, particularly in relation to syllabus coverage and lesson pacing. Thus, vocabulary activities that required extended practice, repetition or individual monitoring were often viewed as difficult to sustain within limited instructional time. This perception influenced teachers' preference for strategies that could be integrated quickly into lessons such as contextual explanation or over strategies requiring systematic follow-up. Such views reflect earlier findings that limited instructional time often leads teachers to prioritise immediate comprehension over long-term consolidation (Garton et al., 2014; Webb & Nation, 2017).

Teachers also perceived students' motivation and readiness as a key factor shaping their instructional decisions. The teachers viewed lower-proficiency pupils as highly dependent on teacher guidance and less capable of engaging in independent vocabulary learning. As a result, strategies that relied on learner autonomy, such as self-testing or independent review were perceived as less feasible. This perception aligns with research indicating that younger or lower-proficiency learners tend to rely more on teacher-led and social strategies, while higher-proficiency learners demonstrate greater independence in strategy use (Ghalebi et al., 2021; Teng & Zhang, 2021).

In addition, teachers perceived the curriculum structure as limiting the extent to which vocabulary could be taught explicitly and systematically. Vocabulary was often viewed as embedded within other language skills rather than as a standalone

instructional focus. This perception shaped teachers' tendency to address vocabulary incidentally during reading or listening lessons rather than through planned vocabulary-focused activities. Such views are consistent with concerns that curriculum demands and emphasis on content coverage may restrict opportunities for repeated exposure and reinforcement, both of which are essential for effective vocabulary learning (Schmitt, 2008; Laufer, 2017).

To sum up, while teachers perceive vocabulary teaching as a core component of language learning, their instructional decisions are influenced by both pedagogical beliefs and practical classroom realities. Teachers tend to adopt flexible approaches that balance incidental and explicit instruction, adapt strategies to learners' proficiency and motivation and hold varied views on the role of the mother tongue in the classroom. At the same time, perceived constraints such as time limitations and curriculum demand shape what teachers consider feasible, ultimately influencing how vocabulary instruction is implemented in primary ESL classrooms.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the study through a triangulation approach by integrating quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive interpretation of Malaysian primary school ESL teachers' vocabulary teaching practices. By aligning the discussion with the research questions, the chapter examined teachers' preferred and least preferred vocabulary learning strategies as well as their perceptions of vocabulary teaching and learning.

Findings related to RQ1 showed that teachers most frequently employed social and memory strategies. These strategies were favoured because they could be easily integrated into classroom interaction, supported learner engagement and reinforced vocabulary through meaningful use and personalisation.

In addressing RQ2, the chapter highlighted that metacognitive strategies were the least preferred, particularly those requiring structured planning, monitoring and follow-up such as online vocabulary assessments. Triangulated findings indicated that this low usage was influenced by time constraints, curriculum demands and learners' limited readiness for independent learning. Teachers were more inclined to encourage informal metacognitive practices, such as exposure to English media which required minimal preparation and monitoring.

With regard to RQ3, the findings revealed that teachers perceive vocabulary as a core component of language learning and adopt flexible instructional approaches shaped by their beliefs and classroom realities. Teachers balanced incidental and explicit instruction, held differing views on the use of the mother tongue and employed strategies that they felt suited to learners' proficiency and motivation. At the same time, perceptions of time pressure, curriculum structure and learner dependence influenced what teachers considered feasible in practice.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by revisiting the research questions that guided the investigation into the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) employed by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers. Specifically, the study sought to identify the vocabulary learning strategies most and least commonly adopted by teachers as well as to explore teachers' perceptions of vocabulary teaching and learning in primary ESL classrooms. By drawing together the findings presented in earlier chapters, this chapter provides a comprehensive synthesis of the study's key results and discusses their implications for classroom practice, research methodology and future research directions.

6.2 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that Malaysian ESL primary school teachers predominantly rely on social and memory strategies in vocabulary instruction. Social strategies such as encouraging peer discussion, providing contextual sentences and facilitating classroom interaction were frequently employed to support vocabulary discovery. The consistently high mean scores for these strategies suggest that teachers perceive contextualised and interactive approaches as both effective and manageable within the constraints of primary school classrooms.

In addition, memory strategies emerged as a highly preferred means of vocabulary consolidation. Teachers frequently encouraged learners to relate new vocabulary to personal experiences, repeat words orally or use new words in sentences. This emphasis on association, repetition and meaningful use reflects teachers' belief that vocabulary retention is strengthened when learners actively engage with words in ways that connect to their own experiences.

At the same time, the limited use of metacognitive strategies reflects the challenges teachers face in extending vocabulary learning beyond the classroom. While teachers recognise the value of learner autonomy and independent practice, the findings

suggest that such strategies are often difficult to sustain in primary school contexts where time is limited and learners still depend heavily on teacher guidance. As a result, metacognitive strategies are used selectively, particularly when they require minimal preparation or monitoring, such as encouraging exposure to English through songs or media.

Importantly, the findings reveal that teachers' strategy choices are closely connected to their perceptions of vocabulary teaching and learning. Teachers view vocabulary as a foundational component of language development and generally adopt flexible instructional approaches that balance incidental exposure with explicit support. Differences in beliefs regarding the use of the mother tongue further illustrate how teachers adapt their practices to learners' proficiency levels and comprehension needs.

In summary, it can be said that while teachers demonstrate awareness of a range of vocabulary learning strategies, their instructional decisions are ultimately guided by what they perceive as feasible, practical and appropriate for their learners within the demands of the curriculum and classroom context. This suggests that improving vocabulary instruction is not only a matter of increasing teachers' knowledge of strategies but also of addressing the contextual constraints that shape how and whether these strategies can be implemented in everyday classroom practice.

Based on these findings, the study presents several important implications for classroom practice in Malaysian ESL primary school settings. These implications highlight the need to support teachers in refining their instructional approaches while also ensuring that students' vocabulary learning experiences are meaningful and appropriate.

6.3 Implications for Teachers

The strong reliance on social and memory strategies suggests that teachers are already employing approaches that align well with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. These strategies promote interaction, contextualised learning and learner engagement, making them particularly suitable for young learners. Rather than replacing these practices, efforts to improve vocabulary instruction should build on what teachers are already doing effectively.

At the same time, the limited use of metacognitive strategies points to a need for greater support in helping teachers integrate vocabulary planning, monitoring and

review into daily lessons. Importantly, metacognitive strategies do not need to be implemented as separate or time-consuming activities. Teachers may benefit from incorporating short, guided practices that can be embedded into existing lessons such as brief vocabulary reviews or self-check activities that encourage learners to notice and recall previously learned words.

Professional development programmes should therefore focus not only on introducing different vocabulary learning strategies but also on demonstrating how these strategies can be adapted to suit primary classroom contexts. Training that models practical and time-efficient uses of digital tools may help reduce teachers' hesitancy towards technology-based vocabulary instruction and make metacognitive practices more manageable.

The findings also highlight the importance of informed decision-making regarding language use. Clear pedagogical guidance on how the mother tongue can be used strategically particularly for lower-proficiency learners may help teachers make more confident instructional choices. Emphasising a gradual shift towards increased English exposure as learners' proficiency develops can help support both comprehension and long-term language development.

Not just that, it is also crucial that teachers engage in continuous reflection regarding their vocabulary teaching practices. By regularly assessing the effectiveness of their strategies and remaining open to new approaches, teachers can adapt their methods to better meet the needs of their students. Creating a collaborative community of practice among teachers can also facilitate knowledge sharing and support ongoing professional growth.

6.4 Implications for Students

From the learners' perspective, the findings indicate that students benefit most from vocabulary instruction that is interactive, contextualised and meaning-focused. The frequent use of social and memory strategies creates opportunities for learners to encounter and use new vocabulary in meaningful situations rather than memorising words in isolation. Through peer interaction, sentence construction and personalisation activities, learners are able to connect new vocabulary to familiar experiences which helps increase confidence and supports deeper retention of word meanings.

However, the limited emphasis on metacognitive strategies suggests that many students may not be sufficiently supported in developing independent vocabulary learning skills. Without explicit guidance, learners, particularly at the primary level may rely heavily on teacher-led instruction and struggle to take responsibility for reviewing or extending their vocabulary learning beyond the classroom. Introducing simple, teacher-scaffolded metacognitive behaviours can help address this gap. For example, short routines such as revisiting previously learned words at the beginning or end of lessons, encouraging learners to notice unfamiliar vocabulary during reading or listening tasks or prompting brief reflection on word meanings can gradually build learners' awareness of how vocabulary is learned.

Rather than expecting students to engage in fully independent vocabulary study, teachers can model and guide metacognitive behaviours in small, manageable steps. Over time, this scaffolding can help learners develop habits of noticing, reviewing and monitoring their vocabulary learning which are essential for long-term language development.

For lower-proficiency learners, the selective use of the mother tongue may further support vocabulary learning by reducing cognitive load and preventing frustration. When used strategically, the first language can help learners grasp basic meanings quickly, allowing them to participate more actively in classroom activities. As learners gain confidence and proficiency, increased exposure to English can gradually encourage greater independence and reliance on the target language.

6.5 Methodological Implications

This study demonstrates the value of employing a mixed-methods research design when examining vocabulary teaching practices in ESL contexts particularly at the primary school level. By combining quantitative data from questionnaires with qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, the study was able to capture both the overall patterns of Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) use and the underlying reasons that shape teachers' instructional decisions. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of vocabulary instruction than would have been possible through a single-method design.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data through triangulation strengthened the credibility and interpretive depth of the findings. While the

quantitative data identified which strategies were most and least frequently used, the qualitative findings provided contextual explanations regarding teachers' classroom experiences. This convergence made it possible to move beyond surface-level descriptions of strategy use to explore how teachers' beliefs, time constraints, learner characteristics and curriculum demand interact to influence instructional practice.

In addition, the use of Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies proved to be an effective analytical framework for examining vocabulary instruction. The taxonomy provided a clear structure for categorising strategies into Discovery and Consolidation types, allowing the study to systematically examine both incidental and intentional vocabulary learning practices. This framework also facilitated meaningful comparison between quantitative and qualitative findings, as teachers' reported strategy use could be interpreted in relation to their stated beliefs and classroom challenges.

The methodological approach adopted in this study also highlights the importance of incorporating teachers' voices in research on vocabulary instruction. Many existing studies focus primarily on learners' strategy use, often overlooking the role teachers play in shaping strategy exposure and classroom implementation. By foregrounding teachers' perspectives, this study contributes to a more balanced understanding of vocabulary learning as a process influenced not only by learners' choices but also by instructional design and classroom realities.

6.6 Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study have provided valuable insights into the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) utilized by Malaysian ESL primary school teachers, their perceptions, and the challenges they face in vocabulary instruction. Building on these insights, several recommendations for future research are suggested.

The first part of this research aimed to identify the most and least utilized Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) among teachers in Malaysian ESL primary schools. The findings revealed that metacognitive strategies were the least favoured by teachers. This suggests a need for further investigation into the reasons behind their limited use and how these strategies can be made more accessible and practical for teachers. Future research could explore methods to support teachers in integrating metacognitive strategies effectively into their teaching practices, such as through

targeted professional development programs or the use of technology to simplify planning and implementation.

Additionally, as the finding also revealed how curriculum one of the challenges that hinder teachers from effectively teaching vocabulary, it is crucial that future researches to delve deeper on how the curriculum is built and how it can support or hinder vocabulary instruction so that it can yield insights into necessary curriculum enhancement. Research in this area could assess the alignment between curriculum expectations and teachers' actual classroom practices, identifying gaps that, if addressed, could improve vocabulary learning outcomes and better support ESL learners.

The findings of this study also reveal that teachers heavily rely on their beliefs and experiences, as reflected in their divided opinions on whether English should be taught exclusively in English or with the inclusion of the mother tongue (L1). This highlights the lack of specific guidelines for teaching English in the Malaysian primary school context, leaving teachers to navigate this debated issue on their own. Future research should focus on exploring teachers' beliefs in greater depth to provide a better understanding of this divide. Such studies could contribute to the development of clearer curriculum guidelines, ensuring consistency and support for teachers in making informed instructional decisions.

Another curriculum-related issue highlighted by the findings is the lack of explicit guidance on how vocabulary should be taught. This gap has led teachers to rely on their judgment to determine the most suitable strategies or to teach vocabulary incidentally while focusing on other language skills. To address this, future studies could explore the development of a structured vocabulary monitoring system for teachers to implement in the classroom. By having a system, teachers can ensure that vocabulary is given adequate attention as they are constantly tracking their students' progress and identifying areas needing support.

In line with this, as we now navigate the Artificial Intelligence (AI) era, future studies could explore how AI can support teachers in developing teaching materials and tracking students' progress particularly in vocabulary instruction. By leveraging AI, teachers could save time and create more personalized and effective resources, while also gaining insights into their students' vocabulary development for more targeted teaching.

6.7 Conclusion

This study has attempted to examine vocabulary teaching within the context of Malaysian primary classrooms from multiple perspectives. It serves as an exploration of teachers' strategies, beliefs, and challenges in vocabulary instruction. While the sample size may be small, the research is believed to have opened the door to discussions about issues related to vocabulary teaching that may not have been addressed in detail before.

One significant finding is that teachers face challenges that often lead them to rely on specific strategies, even when they are aware of potentially more effective methods. This does not mean that teachers lack in pedagogical knowledge but rather they are often overwhelmed by other tasks that hinder them from focusing on what they know is essential. This raises an important question: how can we better support our teachers in overcoming these challenges to enhance their vocabulary instruction?

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of vocabulary instruction by extending the discussion of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS), guided by Schmitt's taxonomy into the teacher-centred context of Malaysian primary ESL classrooms. While VLS frameworks are frequently discussed from the learners' perspective, this research highlights how teachers interpret and apply these strategy categories in real classroom conditions where contextual constraints strongly influence instructional decisions. In doing so, this study strengthens current understanding of vocabulary teaching as a practical process shaped by both teacher beliefs and classroom realities.

With that said, the support needed must be aligned with the goals of the Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC), which emphasizes communicative competence through the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Since vocabulary is central to enabling pupils to participate in meaningful communication, strengthening vocabulary instruction directly supports the broader curriculum objectives. Teachers must therefore be equipped not only with teaching materials but also with adequate time and training to apply varied strategies that suit their classroom contexts.

While some may argue that we should not be focusing on vocabulary when we have four other language skills to cover, it is worth mentioning again that vocabulary is the basis of language skill and development. If there is one field that teachers must ensure they are good at, it is equipping their students with enough vocabulary to achieve

communicative competence. This goal is consistent with the aims of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013–2025) which aims to produce a generation of bilingual, confident users of English and Bahasa Malaysia. Without sufficient vocabulary, the ambition of producing proficient English speakers in Malaysia remains difficult to achieve.

This study also revealed the differing views among teachers regarding whether English should be taught through full immersion or in conjunction with the mother tongue. This debate is central to the field of ESL instruction which can be said that both approaches have their own merits and limitations. While full immersion can provide constant exposure to the target language, incorporating mother tongue can also help especially in early stages of learning or with lower proficiency students. How do we make sure that teachers are equipped to determine the best approach for their classrooms?

Given these complexities, professional development and ongoing training play a vital role in ensuring that teachers have the knowledge and strategies to make informed choices. Without proper support and guidance, it is believed that teachers may struggle to implement the most effective approach. In a broader context, this could negatively impact our efforts to produce a nation competent in English, as envisioned in the Malaysian Education Blueprint.

As I conclude this research, I find that I am left with more questions than answers. This just goes to show the complexity of vocabulary instruction and highlight the need for continued investigation into effective teaching practices especially in the context of Malaysian ESL classroom. These unanswered questions reflect the evolving nature of teaching practices and the importance of adapting to meet the needs of both teachers and learners.

Despite these questions, this study has offered meaningful insights into the complexities of vocabulary teaching within the Malaysian ESL primary school context. It has highlighted the use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) among teachers and explored their perceptions of vocabulary teaching and learning. In doing so, it points toward the need for closer alignment between classroom practices, teacher support systems and the communicative goals of the SBELC and MEB. As Malaysia continues to implement CEFR-aligned instruction, understanding and addressing the realities of vocabulary teaching will be key to ensuring students reach the communicative competence envisioned in national education policies.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Ethical Committee Approval

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Pejabat
Timbalan Naib Canselor
(Penyelidikan dan Inovasi)

Reference : 600-TNCPI (5/1/6)
Our reference : REC/01/2024 (PG/MR/11)
Date : 1445H جمادى الآخر 28
8 January 2024

Ms Siti Nur Badriah binti Mohd Tahir - 2019846534
(Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr Nor Fazlin bt Mohd Ramli)
Akademi Pengajian Bahasa
Universiti Teknologi MARA
40450 Shah Alam
SELANGOR

سلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته and Greetings

Ms Siti Nur Badriah

APPROVAL LETTER - UiTM RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Research Ethics Committee (REC). After considering your application, the Committee approved your proposal titled "Strategies Used by Malaysian ESL Primary School Teachers in Vocabulary Teaching" in Melaka and by online survey.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref. number:	REC/01/2024 (PG/MR/11)
Approval Period:	8 January 2024 until 31 May 2024
Authorised personnel:	1. Siti Nur Badriah binti Mohd Tahir 2. Assoc. Prof. Dr Nor Fazlin bt Mohd Ramli

The UiTM Research Ethics Committee operates in accordance to the ICH Good Clinical Practice Guidelines, Malaysian Good Clinical Practice Guidelines and the Declaration of Helsinki. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with these guidelines and declaration.

We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research, must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on the completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed. Amendments, if any, to the study documents are to be submitted to the REC for approval.

If you require further information, please contact the REC Secretariat at 03-55448069/03-55442794 or email at recsecretariat@uitm.edu.my.

اوسمها، تقوى، موليا

"MALAYSIA MADANI"
"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Yours sincerely

EMERITUS PROFESSOR DATO' DR RAYMOND AZMAN ALI
Chairman
UiTM Research Ethics Committee

c.c.: Deputy Dean (PJI), Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, UiTM

Universiti Teknologi MARA
Aras 3, Bangunan Wawasan
40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA
Tel: (+603) 5544 2004/2255
Faks: (+603) 5544 2070



APPENDIX 2

Interview Consent Form

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Siti Nur Badriah Binti Mohd Tahir. This study aims to explore vocabulary teaching strategies, perceptions, and challenges among primary school teachers in Malaysian ESL classrooms. The insights gathered will contribute to a deeper understanding of current practices in vocabulary teaching.

What Participation Involves

- Your participation will involve an interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes.
- The interview will include questions about your teaching practices, beliefs, and experiences related to vocabulary instruction.
- The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes.
-

Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to answer specific questions or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Confidentiality

All information obtained during this study will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be anonymized, and no personally identifying information will be used in any publications or presentations arising from this research.

Data Storage and Security

- The audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and supervisory committee members.
- Upon completion of the research, all data will be securely stored for a minimum of five years as per university guidelines, after which it will be destroyed.

Possible Risks and Benefits

There are no known risks associated with your participation. The insights gained from this study may contribute to improvements in ESL vocabulary teaching strategies and professional development programs for educators.

Informed Consent

By signing below, you are agreeing that you understand the above information and consent to participate in this study. You are also acknowledging that you are aware of your right to withdraw at any time.

Participant's Consent

- I have read and understood the information provided in this consent form.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I understand that I can withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Participant's Name: IZYAN HAMIZAH BINTI MD IZAMAN

Signature: _____

Date: 29 February 2024

Purpose of the Study

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Participant's Consent

- I have read and understood the information provided in this consent form.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I understand that I can withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Participant's Name: NADHRAH A'MILIN BINTI ABDUL RAZAK

Signature: _____

Date: 8 MARCH 2024

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Siti Nur Badriah Binti Mohd Tahir. This study aims to explore vocabulary teaching strategies, perceptions, and challenges among primary school teachers in Malaysian ESL classrooms. The insights gathered will contribute to a deeper understanding of current practices in vocabulary teaching.

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- The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes.
-

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- Upon completion of the research, all data will be securely stored for a minimum of five years as per university guidelines, after which it will be destroyed.

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There are no known risks associated with your participation. The insights gained from this study may contribute to improvements in ESL vocabulary teaching strategies and professional development programs for educators.

Informed Consent

By signing below, you are agreeing that you understand the above information and consent to participate in this study. You are also acknowledging that you are aware of your right to withdraw at any time.

Participant's Consent

- I have read and understood the information provided in this consent form.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I understand that I can withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Participant's Name: BIBI NAHIDA BINTI MARSOAN

Signature: _____

Date: 9 MARCH 2024

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Siti Nur Badriah Binti Mohd Tahir. This study aims to explore vocabulary teaching strategies, perceptions, and challenges among primary school teachers in Malaysian ESL classrooms. The insights gathered will contribute to a deeper understanding of current practices in vocabulary teaching.

What Participation Involves

- Your participation will involve an interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes.
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- The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes.
-

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Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to answer specific questions or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

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- Upon completion of the research, all data will be securely stored for a minimum of five years as per university guidelines, after which it will be destroyed.

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There are no known risks associated with your participation. The insights gained from this study may contribute to improvements in ESL vocabulary teaching strategies and professional development programs for educators.

Informed Consent

By signing below, you are agreeing that you understand the above information and consent to participate in this study. You are also acknowledging that you are aware of your right to withdraw at any time.

Participant's Consent

- I have read and understood the information provided in this consent form.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I understand that I can withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Participant's Name: NUR AIN BINTI ZAILANI

Signature: _____

Date: 15 MARCH 2024

APPENDIX 3

Research Instrument (Questionnaire)

A Survey on Vocabulary Strategies Used among Malaysian Primary School Teachers

Hi and greetings! I am Siti Nur Badriah binti Mohd Tahir from Universiti Teknologi Mara, Shah Alam. I am currently conducting a study on Vocabulary Strategies Used among Malaysian Primary School Teachers.

This study is conducted to identify the use of Vocabulary Strategies among ESL primary school teachers in Malaysia.

This survey consist of 2 sections:

Section A- Demography data

Section B- To identify commonly and least used vocabulary strategies among ESL primary school teachers in Malaysia

Every given answer in this survey will be discreet and only be used for the study. Your cooperation in completing this survey is very much appreciated

g-72514053@moe-dl.edu.my [Switch account](#)



* Indicates required question

Email *

Your email

Kindly select your age range: *

—

Vocabulary Strategies Used by Teachers in the Classroom

Please read the statement given and choose from the scale of 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) how it relates to your vocabulary approach in the classroom.

1. I ask my students to analyse parts of speech (verbs/nouns/adjectives) and determine the meaning. *

- 1 - Never
- 2 - Rarely
- 3 - Sometimes
- 4 - Often
- 5 - Always

2. I ask my students to analyse the root word / prefixes and suffixes. Example: dis + like = dislike. *

- 1 - Never
- 2 - Rarely
- 3 - Sometimes
- 4 - Often
- 5 - Always

3. I ask my students to guess the meaning from textual context. *

- 1 - Never
- 2 - Rarely
- 3 - Sometimes
- 4 - Often
- 5 - Always

Item	Strategy	Statements
1	DIS-DET	I ask my students to analyse parts of speech (verbs/nouns/adjectives) and determine the meaning.
2	DIS-DET	I ask my students to analyse the root word / prefixes and suffixes. Example: dis + like = dislike
3	DIS-DET	I ask my students to guess the meaning from textual context.
4	DIS-DET	I ask my students to use English-Malay / English-Chinese / English-Tamil dictionary to look up the meaning of new words.
5	DIS-DET	I ask my students to use English-English dictionary to look up the meaning of new words
6	DIS-SOC	I translate the meaning of the word in L1
7	DIS-SOC	I provide a synonym of the word
8	DIS-SOC	I provide my students a sentence containing the new word.
9	DIS-SOC	I let my students ask their classmates for meaning
10	DIS-SOC	I put my students in groups and let them discover meaning through group work activity
11	CON-SOC	I encourage my students to study and practice word meaning in a group
12	CON-SOC	I encourage my students to interact with native-speakers outside classroom
13	CON-MEM	I ask my students to match the word with picture representing the word
14	CON-MEM	I ask my students to picture the word's meaning. For example, when learning the word kitchen, they picture their mom cooking
15	CON-MEM	I ask my students to relate a word to their personal experience. Example; when learning the word celebration, they think of their birthday party / festivals
16	CON-MEM	I ask my students to link the word to its related word. Example; banana, think of other fruits, apple
17	CON-MEM	I ask my students to pay attention to the word's synonyms or antonyms (Example: pretty / ugly)
18	CON-MEM	I ask my students to classify the words in category (Example: Categorize things into furniture)
19	CON-MEM	I ask my students to use the new word in a sentence.
20	CON-MEM	I ask my students to combine all the words to form a story.
21	CON-MEM	I ask my students to memorize the spelling of the word.
22	CON-MEM	I focus on teaching my students pronunciation of the new word.
23	CON-MEM	I ask my students to read out loud (say the new word aloud when studying)
24	CON-MEM	I ask my students to underline the initial letter of the word.
25	CON-MEM	I ask my students to remember the roots, prefixes and suffixes of the words.

26	CON-MEM	I ask my students to remember the part of speech of the words.
27	CON-MEM	I paraphrase the word to my students. Example; housekeeper - a person who looks after the house
28	CON-MEM	I teach my students the word in the form of idiom (Spill the bean - teach them the word spill & bean together)
29	CON-MEM	I use body movement when teaching my students a word and ask them to repeat the movement.
30	CON-COG	I ask my students to repeat the word verbally again and again
31	CON-COG	I ask my students to repeatedly copy the word in their book
32	CON-COG	My students have a vocabulary lists that have L1 translation (English words with L1 meanings)
33	CON-COG	I use flashcards in my class to teach new words.
34	CON-COG	I ask my students to take notes in my class.
35	CON-COG	I ask my students to use the vocabulary section in their textbook to learn new words.
36	CON-COG	I ask my students to listen to audio clips of word lists.
37	CON-COG	I put English labels on physical objects in my classrooms.
38	CON-COG	My students have a specific vocabulary notebook where they jot down new words and find their meanings.
39	CON-MET	I ask my students to listen to English songs in my classrooms or at home.
40	CON-MET	I require my students to watch English movies at home.
41	CON-MET	I require my students to read English newspapers in my classrooms / at home.
42	CON-MET	I provide my students English story books / magazines to learn vocabulary.
43	CON-MET	I give my students tasks to read English novels, short stories at their own time.
44	CON-MET	I have scheduled vocabulary tests online using application such as Quizizz and Word Wall to see if my students remember the new words learned.
45	CON-MET	I give online task for my students to review the vocabularies they learned using Google Form, Wordwall or any other online application.

APPENDIX 4

Research Instrument (Semi-Structured Interview)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS REGARDING TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON VOCABULARY TEACHING AND LEARNING (SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW)

RQ3: What are teachers' perception on vocabulary teaching?

- a. What are their beliefs on the importance of vocabulary in language development?
 - a. What is your personal belief regarding the most effective approach to teaching vocabulary?
- b. What are some common challenges you've encountered when teaching vocabulary to primary school students?

PART 1-DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

NO	THE QUESTIONS
1	Please tell me your full name
2	Please tell me your full age
3	Please tell me your qualification
4	Please tell me how long have you been in service
5	Please tell me if you're an option English teacher / non option English teacher

PART 2-PERCEPTION

NO	THE QUESTIONS
1	Could you please describe how do you typically conduct English lesson in your classroom? (Warm up PRE-INTERVIEW)
2	English is our second language. So, we teachers often have to introduce new words to our students. How do you normally teach new vocabulary to them? (Warm up PRE-INTERVIEW)
3	Are there any specific teaching materials or resources that you find especially beneficial for teaching vocabulary? If so, could you provide examples?
4	•
5	Could you explain your reasoning behind your preference for either explicit or implicit vocabulary instruction?

PART 3-TEACHER'S APPROACH

NO	THE QUESTIONS
1	Do you keep track of the list of words in the DSKP (Standards-based Curriculum and Assessment Document) when you teach a certain topic?
2	How do you normally go about ensuring students acquire targeted words in the

	syllabus?
3	Can you elaborate on the strategies or techniques you use to make vocabulary learning engaging and memorable for your students?
4	Could you share any specific activities or exercises you find particularly effective for reinforcing vocabulary learning in the classroom?
5	How do you cater to the diverse learning needs and language proficiency levels of students when teaching new vocabulary?
6	How do you assess students' understanding and retention of new vocabulary? What methods or tools do you employ for this purpose?
7	Can you describe any collaborative or peer-based learning approaches you utilize to support vocabulary development among students?
8	How do you encourage students to actively use newly acquired vocabulary in both spoken and written communication?

PART 4-CHALLENGES

NO	THE QUESTIONS
1	What are some common challenges you've encountered when teaching vocabulary to primary school students?
2	Can you describe any specific difficulties students face in learning new vocabulary?
3	Are there any external factors, such as time constraints or resource limitations, that impact your ability to teach vocabulary effectively?
4	Have you faced any challenges in selecting or adapting vocabulary teaching materials? How do you navigate these challenges?
5	How do you support students who may have difficulty understanding vocabulary within the context of English language lessons?

APPENDIX 5

Interview Transcripts

TEACHER 1		
LINE	TURN	TRANSCRIPT
1	Researcher (R)	Please tell me your full name and your age.
2	Teacher (T)	Okay, my name is Izyan Hamizah binti Md. Izaman. I'm 37 years old this year.
3	R	Please tell me your qualification.
4	T	I got a degree of TESL from Queensland University Australia as well as Institut Perguruan Bahasa in Kuala Lumpur.
5	R	Oh, that's very good. Please tell me how long have you been in service.
6	T	I have been in service for about 13 years I guess if I'm not mistaken, 13 years yeah.
7	R	So are you an option or non-option English teacher?
8	T	Yes. I am an English option teacher and I have been teaching English only so far.
9	R	Normally when you typically conduct your English lesson in your classroom right, could you please describe your typical English lesson?
10	T	Typical English lesson? You want the flow, the lesson or..the things that I teach every day?
11	R	Just the flow, like is there any routine that you stick to...like whenever you come in...
12	T	Okay usually I don't have a fixed routine, but I make sure before I teach the lesson, before I ask them to read text or any activity I make sure they know the words that I think is difficult for them. I mean I introduce vocabulary first before I ask them to read the sentence.
13	R	I see. Normally when you want to start a new topic, you would introduce vocabulary first before you go to the subtopic? It's vocabulary always?

14	T	Yes.
15	R	Good that you mentioned that because English is our second language so because of that we often have to introduce new words first before we teach the students. So when you say you teach them new words, how do you teach them? Like how is the process?
16	T	Okay, what I like about CEFR textbook is before we do the activity they will usually pick certain vocabulary that they think will be difficult for the kids. So I will like go through with them first the words that is in the textbook and then when we come across any other words in the sentence then I will go through that one other than the vocab picked in the textbook. Usually in the textbook they will have pictures right, so it's easier for them and that if the words are verbs, I will ask them to do action with me.
17	R	Okay so first the students associate the sound of the words to the pictures and then if the picture is a verb, you incorporate action>?
18	T	Yes. If the word, the action word for example is in past tense or in continuous then I will ask them to tell me the root verb so that is how I incorporate new vocabulary to them in terms of action verb.
19	T	If it's a noun, if concrete noun I will use pictures or I ask one of the good students to come and draw but if it's something abstract, so I would just sometimes I use our first language.
20	R	Okay so what is your personal beliefs regarding the most effective approach to teaching vocabulary?
21	T	Urm..I don't have one specific approach on how I teach vocabulary effectively because based on my experience learning English, I acquired my vocabulary through reading books and then find the words I don't understand and I jot down in my book. So it's actually done during my free time not in lesson. So, as a teacher, I still believe that it's the most effective way for a learner to learn a language. But as a teacher who is teaching the language, I think the most important thing for the pupils to get the vocabulary is through writing down the vocab I teach and maybe write down on whiteboard, copy in their book and write a sentence related to the word. I think by far not the most but quite effective other than just say the word and give the meaning in Malay. You get what I mean?

22	R	You mean you don't prefer translation from English to Malay but instead for them to copy the word and try use the word in a sentence?
23	T	Yes, try use the vocabulary.
24	R	During that process, you don't tell them the meaning in L1?
25	T	I told them. What I mean is if we just tell them the translation only not by writing, that's not effective because they tend to forget. But once they know the meaning, for example they don't know the meaning of cradle. So I write cradle means buaian and so they write that down in vocabulary book and then write down a sentence about cradle. I think that's effective but it takes a lot it takes quite some time because in a lesson usually they will have like three or four words they don't know so it might take time. I think if they have more time to do that that would be the most effective considering time isn't a problem.
26	T	I normally will ask them to copy the word in their vocabulary notebook and write a sentence at home but you know. Pupils when they are given homework to do at home...
27	R	They're not as motivated as you were when you were their age?
28	T	Oh yeah,they will not do that. (laugh)
29	R	Probably the effects of gadgets but that's a talk for another time. (laugh)
30	R	So you were saying just now you will give them the meaning in L1? Do you think that's the best way..what would you prefer? Translate meaning from L2 in L1 or teach meaning in L2 and meaning in L2?
31	T	Okay because I learned from translating. Ahh, because that's why I believe translating is one of the ways because I learned from that. I got my vocabulary today from my experience of translating and writing down the words. So that why I'm not a big fan of translating L2 to L2 because not all understand the word in L2. That's what I believe in.
32	R	That's your personal belief?
33	T	Yes, that's my personal belief because it's based on my past experience.

34	R	Just now you mentioned writing down words. Normally these words are introduced by you or they find these words?
35	T	It's both ways but most of the time I find the words in the textbook first because I want to introduce to them.
36	R	Meaning the words are already pre-picked before the lesson?
37	T	Yes, or maybe spontaneously when I think they might not know the words. But sometimes some of my pupils also ask me "Teacher what's the meaning of this word?" so usually I will pose to another friend if anyone knows the meaning and share with the class and ask them to write down in their vocabulary book.
38	R	If we dissect whatever you have said just now, it goes down to two different interaction, it's either the teacher pre-pick the words and introduce maybe at the beginning of the class that is kind of explicit instruction. Another one when they find the words maybe when they do activity and don't know the meaning of some words that is some sort of incidental kind of learning. In your opinion, do you think incidental learning like implicit instruction is more effective than explicit instruction? Which one is better for their vocabulary retention?
39	T	Urm.. I think it's better if it comes from themselves because they have the eagerness they want to know the meaning of the words I think that's better. but some of the shy pupils who think they don't understand English they hardly ask you know. Most of the words they don't understand but they don't do anything. So that's I give both ways to cater to learning in different levels of proficiency.
40	R	Would you say in a lesson, a combination of both is the most effective approach in teaching vocabulary?
41	T	Yes, I think so.
42	R	You shouldn't do it explicitly all the way through or incidentally all the way through...
43	T	Yeah yes, I don't use that. I think it's better if we have mix of approaches. I prefer them to ask me the vocabulary as well as I prefer to give them the vocabulary that I think they need.
44	R	And you also incorporate strategies like group work...

45	T	Urm, I try. Honestly, my 13 years of teaching I try I always have like this one lesson where I ask them to read a sentence a paragpgh and find words they don't understand in the class itself but honestly it will take time and if you do it in groups, some of the pupils will become passengers, they don't know the words but maybe their friends do so they don't actually acquire the vocabulary. But I think I don't always do that because of time constraints.
46	T	So mostly I will use the strategies that I told you before.
47	R	So now that you have mentioned time constraint, is that your biggest challenge that you encountered when teaching vocab?
48	T	Yes time constraints as well as the diversity of the pupils' proficiency. You know good students they know all the words, but for the lower proficient pupils they don't understand simple words. Some of them don't even understand even though I kept on telling them. So they tend to forget because it's usually the struggling pupils they took time to write in their notebook.
49	T	I mean to write the vocab in their notebook they take time. Maybe if I teache them 5 vocab a day they will only get one. And then we need to move on to the gist of the lesson. I still need to teach them reading to ask them..
50	R	..the focus skill of the day?
51	T	Yes, the focus skill of the day. So I think time constraint is one of my big challenges.
52	R	Time constraints and diversity in proficiency, those are the two. What about yourself?
53	T	My knowledge. I don't think so because CEFR it's quite easy just basic words they don't have big words that I don't know how to introduce. I don't think I am the problem but maybe the way I explain to them might be a problem.
54	T	My knowledge for me it's not a problem but maybe the way I explain to them is a problem maybe they don't know what I explain. You understand what I mean?
55	R	(laugh). Okay, you mean, in teaching vocabulary, you know what you should do but when you teach, maybe they don't understand? I think it's more on their ability to learn language but not on your ability to deliver a technique?

56	T	Maybe. (laugh)
57	R	But do you think in learning a language, we have a few aspects and vocabulary is one. How important is vocabulary in language learning?
58	T	It's really important. How would you understand a language if you don't understand the word itself? I think vocabulary is the main thing. It is the foundation for someone to understand a language.
59	R	Because there has been studies right..some people lean towards vocabulary being important..but some might think like grammar...
60	T	Grammar? But if you don't know the word itself, how can you make a sentence? It could be grammar but grammar itself comes from a combination of words, vocabulary is word.
61	R	Since you're a hard core believer, vocabulary enthusiast.
62	T	(Laugh) Hard core believer, you can say that..
63	R	And I can see that because you kept repeating that your routine in classroom starts with vocabulary then only you go to other skills and then but when it comes to techniques that you choose, do you always try new strategies?
64	T	Honestly, I'm always open to try new strategies which one is more effective for vocabulary learning but I always encourage my pupils to learn language in their own time to get more vocabulary. Maybe 15 minutes a day to learn new words.
65	R	But when you encourage, do you teach them how to do it?
66	T	I tell them what to do how to do it, find word use dictionary and find meaning. It is effective for middle and low pupils but they don't do it.
67	R	What you're saying is it's effective for students that are interested in learning the language?
68	T	Yes. That's what I say. So for the middle and low, they're struggling because they always rely on their teacher because they don't really like to you know... I still search for the best way on how to teach them because the way I learned it's actually my own..my own time. Only the good students have that motivation to do more.

69	R	In the class you focus on combining strategies to help all the pupils except the good ones can do more out of the classroom.
70	T	I asked everyone to do that but only the ones that have good vocabulary want to do that.
71	R	So now you're finding strategies what to do with the other two groups?
72	T	Really. Because I don't think I can find one strategy for them because even the notebook is I don't think it's helpful to them.
73	R	It boils down to their own motivation and whether they want to be good right?
74	T	Yeah, so I don't know maybe some other teachers. I used to read somewhere in which country but to teach vocab the teacher would put on different hats every day which has these different words. So she would make little people and put on the hat and ask students the meaning. I'm not as creative as that and I don't have time to prepare those.
75	R	Do you think the way our curriculum is structured does not allow us to focus on vocabulary?
76	T	Yeah I think so too. I think they should simplify maybe reduce the topics so that we can focus on certain topics only.
77	R	So is the curriculum, the lesson plan, we have this focus skill, do you think it's too much like instead of focusing of the skills...
78	T	If we think we want to finish all the topics, then it'll be a constraint but if we take our own sweet time it's actually enough to focus on the vocabulary, like drill on vocabulary but we will miss maybe the second last and last topic at the end of the year. But still, even though I took my own sweet time, I still cannot encourage my middle and low students to like I mean work on their own time. Maybe because they also have other subjects to learn or maybe don't like my subject.
79	T	But you know, we cannot give our pupils too much stress right (laugh). Yeah as well as if you don't finish our homework also it's okay nowadays, not like our old times. So yeah, I think I try but it's more on themselves.

80	T	It's better for the students to do well in class as well as to do more at home. Because this is my practise since I was form 1. Actually I wasn't a good pupil when I was in primary because I don't know the meaning of many words and I don't really understand that actually for language, I have to know the words. It didn't come to my consciousness that time but when I was in my Form 1 a good English tuition teacher my mom enrolled me in. This teacher asked me to make a routine to read every day and find 10 words I don't know. I tried that for one month and I suddenly realised that I understand English. English makes sense to me.
81	R	What about when you asked them to use dictionary, is it bilingual or monolingual?
82	T	Urm, bilingual. I believe in English to Malay. As they understand more words in English, then they can use monolingual. My experience in language class when I was in Australia, my lecturer also said that it's not a sin if you use translation because it's their language. So that is what I believe.
83	R	I can say your belief and your approach comes from your experience and also your childhood experience?
84	T	Yes, it doesn't really come from the teacher. I don't even remember what my teacher asked me. Not my school teachers. So I understand English more when I do it independently. So that's why when people ask me do you have specific techniques, I cannot really answer confidently because I can't even remember how my primary and secondary school teachers taught me vocabulary because most of the time I did on my own. That's why I sometimes get really sad I can't teach my students to encourage them. I only have one hour with them and it's not one to one, it's the whole class.
85	R	What about media? Do you encourage or ask your students to watch English film, listen to English songs?
86	T	Yes, I do. For example, during HIP activities, I gave them lyrics of nursery rhymes and go through with them first and then ask them to sing together.
87	R	Alright, I think we're coming to the end of the interview. I can conclude that you believe that the foundation of learning a language is vocabulary which is very important but as teachers, we do have constraints like time, students' diversity...

88	T	Yes, as well as the students' motivation in learning the language.
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TEACHER 2		
LINE	TURN	TRANSCRIPT
1	Researcher (R)	Before we proceed further, can you just let me know your full name and age?
2	Teacher (T)	Bibi Nahida, I'm 33 years old this year and I'm from SRA JAIM Faizin.
3	R	Right. So how long have you been teaching English?
4		I've been teaching English for almost 8 years, going to be eight this year, June.
5	T	Are you an optionist or converted to become optionist?
6		I am an optionist because I studied TESL back then for my degree. So posted as an English teacher and teaching English full time.
7	R	How would you describe when you conduct an English lesson? How do you like typically conduct...in the classroom? Like..do you go in the classroom and start with like your routine?
8	T	Actually, they are a few routines that I have because it changes according to the mood and the need of the class. Sometimes I will go in and do like singing or we will have some vocabulary quizzes.
9		Because I'm teaching all Malay students, it is important to expand your vocabulary, so how do I do that is by giving them quiz and then when I enter the class, they will all stand up and translate the Malay words that I give to them and then they are allowed to sit.
10		That is very traditional <i>lah</i> . But I also incorporated quite modern not to say quite modern technique but probably more famous among younger teachers which is singing with the hope that through the lyrics they will get new vocab and they will expand their vocab banks.
11	R	Meaning totally in the target language, English for the

		singing part?
12	T	Target language, English. I am an avid fan of teaching English in really full English probably not 100% because it's quite impossible to do 100% just around 90% English.
13	R	But when you said just now you did quiz, the quizzes were from English to English?
14	T	No, it's Malay to English, at least the Malay comes from me not from the student side. They are expected to use full English.
15		Oh, however, I would like to let you know that I also allow my students especially the weaker ones to use " <i>rojak</i> " language meaning a mixture of Bahasa and English in a sentence because it's quite impossible for them to come up with a full sentences on their own.
16	R	As long as they understand?
17	T	Exactly. That's improvement, I accept.
18	R	Okay. So now we move on to the one of the two important questions.
19		You already talked to me about like how do you introduce vocabulary through quiz and also singing right? Um, what is your personal belief regarding the most effective approach to teaching vocabulary?
20		I know like sometimes some people say it doesn't need to be explicitly taught it needs to be like whenever you come across words they don't know the meaning of then only we come up with strategies how to know the meaning of these words. So for you what is your belief, should vocabulary be taught in isolation of maybe in the process itself like when we're learning we suddenly come into words we don't..
21	T	Am I allowed to have like a mixed... a mixed principle? Am I allowed?
22	R	Of course.
23	T	Ah, yeah I think, I think both ways. I think students can benefit from both ways meaning from explicit teaching and also indirect approach towards teaching and learning vocabulary.
24		I think both are important to make learning more effective it needs to be both or else our students will be bored.

25		In my opinion, because if if each and every time if I were to enter the class and then I am going to teach them the direct approach for example, the quiz is very direct, I give them the Malay they give me the English words or just singing I give them the meaning or whatever, for me eventually over time I think that will be a boring thing to do.
26		So, when we have variation in our teaching, I think that is more interesting and hopefully will be easy for the students to get whatever that we are teaching.
27	R	So do you have like favorite strategies to use other than singing and quiz when you teach them vocabulary maybe ask them to use new words in a sentence...
28	T	Ah, yes, underlining.
29	R	Underlining? All right.
30	T	Identifying words that they don't understand, so that is one of my effective ways of teaching them vocabulary, but if you are to ask me, it's not related to teaching, I think one of the ways that students can actually get a very high impact from vocabulary learning is through reading but they need to read on their own.
31		They need to read lots and lots of books however you know, the Alpha generation is not very easy for them to do so.
32	R	But do you encourage them to do so?
33	T	I do. when I was when I first started teaching actually I make it a compulsory for my students to read like 10 books per week like very thin books not our level books.
34		But then as I go older and now that our school is always busy with co-curricular and stuff like that it's quite impossible to implement this these past two three years.
35		So now I no longer put as much stress as I used to do last time.
36	R	And also do they keep like a vocabulary notebook or do you ask them to take notes..
37	T	They don't have a particular vocabulary book per se because of we have this KPM thing like the bags policy however because we have two exercise books, each students like me I'm teaching level two students four five six so they have one long book and one short book so the short book the back part, whenever I teach them vocabulary lesson, explicit

		vocabulary lesson, they are to copy the vocabulary list onto the books at the back part.
38	R	I see. They have vocabulary books..
39	T	but it's not specifically for vocabulary due to the KPM policy
40	R	Yeah, it's exercise book.
41		Okay, you actually have described to me very in-depth about your we your approach in your vocabulary teaching. Which is very helpful.
42		But you know right when you see like we explicitly teach vocabulary and all that. We know like we are also required to teach the focus skill maybe like today we need to focus on like maybe listening and a bit of reading. So, do you think for you, it's a challenge to be really explicitly teaching vocabulary?
43	T	During speaking during reading and during writing so far I find it like for the explicit approach it's easier to implement the explicit vocabulary teaching during the writing skill session for me.
44		Yeah because it comes first, it comes with word like word by word you are to translate word by word and then after that I expanded further into sentences so I was able to teach them writing but having the vocabulary part inside you know what I'm saying?
45	R	I think I understand because writing requires a more structured approach.
46	T	Exactly.
47	R	So when writing we can go step by step but when we teach focus skill like listening maybe it's more incidental maybe when they don't understand what is the meaning of this word only then you come up with strategies how to make them understand the meaning.
48	T	Yes, exactly true. And for other skills I think it's more difficult to incorporate the vocabulary part.
49		I mean of course you can translate over whatsoever, you can explain maybe show gestures like charade or something but then for them to take notes I think it's not that how to say suitable for that particular skills in my opinion.

50	R	So the challenge is that for vocabulary to be taught explicitly it depends on the skill, the focus skills?
51	T	Yes, true.
52		
53	R	What about any other constraints maybe it can be internal or maybe like your students' motivation?
54	T	I think internal I think the problem comes from me myself yeah that is sometimes I tend to miss out certain like, like for me right, when I teach vocabulary, I have a set of lists of common vocabs that they are to use so that they will they're gonna have to use these vocabulary in their writing or whatsoever.
55		Sometimes I will miss out certain words. I tend to forget I think this is the internal struggle that people I having especially as you age, you tend to forget.
56		And..and another factor if internal also is that sometimes I have a feeling that I'm not stressing the vocabulary enough, like I taught them but it's in one go and obviously for Malay students, I mean I should have done it a few times and sometimes I forgot about it, I taught them once and then okay, that's it so it's not effective.
57	R	You're saying you know you have to repeat but then you forgot but maybe there's an underlying reason maybe you're overwhelmed with work or...?
58	T	Trying to catch up with the syllabus, if you notice in our syllabus, they don't have any particular section where we are to teach this vocabulary you get what I mean?
59	R	Yeah, it's not part of the four skills.
60	T	It's not part of the textbook it's very very brief so as I'm trying to finish my syllabus, I tend to yeah forget about this vocabulary thing but actually for me vocabulary is like the your bones of the language without the bones, there's no language, the language will fall apart because the important element is not there which is the vocabulary but that's what I tend to forget.
61	R	You believe that it's important so the lesson needs to be well executed?
62	T	Exactly, correct, correct.

63	R	But the thing is the syllabus is a lot and in DSKP it doesn't say..
64	T	..yes, we could teach this vocabulary explicitly also there's no amplification on this vocabulary teaching there's no one like giving like sort of emphasis like how is the vocabulary lesson you know.
65		For me, like vocabulary teaching comes from the teacher's own realization because now what is being talked about over and over again it's always the four skills and whatsoever that's in the DSKP and we tend to forget before we reach the part they can even speak before they can listen before you can read and write, what is it? What is the main component that they need? Vocabulary. Yeah, exactly.
66	R	Of course, right. You are you're actually you are describing exactly my research. So any other challenges other than catching up with the syllabus? What about motivation? Do they like motivated enough to like go home and do on their own to improve vocabulary?
67	T	There's no such thing as 100% perfect in this world, out of 40 students that we have of course we have like two or three those who don't give enough effort for their own you know future.
68		So, yes I do. I do actually face this kind of problem whereby students they don't have enough motivation to study on their own effort but as a teacher, what we can do is we can always encourage even by traditional way of being a teacher which is being dominant or fierce or we can use a lighter approach like a friendly approach as if we are the counsellors you know and like very nicely and then praise them lots and lots.
69		Sometimes these students they have no motivation because they feel like even if they are to learn there's nothing there's no change will happen so we need to know just behind the attitude of each student that's my opinion.
70	R	Just now you mentioned that you're an avid when it comes to teaching English in English. What's your opinion about it? Like we know some teachers may believe otherwise right? Like' it's not a sin to teach in mother tongue. So what is your opinion about that?
71	T	Of course, of course. Okay in my opinion right, I'm highly obsessed with people who can speak English and can speak good English okay, and I think being in this country where

		the majority is Malay.
72		Um, I think the challenges the main stereotype that we have about Malay people is that Malay can't speak English and they can only speak Malay.
73	R	Even if they can write, they cannot speak.
74	T	Yeah, they cannot speak, exactly they can write. So when I come to this school when I'm given this school of full Malay students the first thing that I challenge myself to do is "I'm gonna break the stereotype" because I'm the primary school teacher, right?
75		I'm hoping that if I can break the stereotype here in primary school, they can make it a habit to speak in English when starting their school in secondary school or something here all the way to secondary school and University.
76		Speaking is very important. You know why people say we read on social media people will say like just because they can speak English doesn't mean they are smart and that's just a stereotype? Meaning people realize that there is the stereotype that if you speak good English people think you are smart and that is the common stereotype.
77	R	Right.
78	T	Even if they go for like work interviews if they speak well chances of them being accepted into the workplace is very high so that's what I'm trying to do with my students that's why I think it's very important that I speak full English with my students because if I don't soak them in that environment, if I don't immerse them in the English environment, then who's going to do that if not me, the English teacher?
79		They don't come from English speaking background 99% of them don't come from that background so of course the experience must come from me.
80		The teacher must have realization for them, nobody nobody else the teacher on your own must have that realization that these students, their chance of speaking English, their immersiveness in English must come from the teacher.
81		So, if the teacher doesn't have that realization, then the students don't get the chance the students sadly don't get the chance, they go home they speak Malay.

82		And what saddens us so much is that in Malaysia they started learning English ever since they're in Standard One so that is already six years in primary school, and then another five years in secondary school and yet after SPM they aren't able to speak English so isn't it sad?
83	R	Mostly because the only time that they have is with you I mean if you don't speak English to them, will..
84	T	..will they speak at home? No right? Students' I know <i>lah</i> .
85		So yeah, we need to have that realization that's it. It doesn't matter some teachers get disappointed very quick. Actually if you want to make it a habit for your students to speak in English, you need to be tough you know because sometimes you are disappointed when you tell them over and over to speak English and they always slip.
86		So the English teacher actually should remind them constantly when you want to teach them English, you cannot just like okay I remind them today, they're not listening so tomorrow I'm not going to do it again, no, you have to do it again and again.
87	R	Then you give up you speak in their mother tongue.
88	T	Exactly, exactly because you want to make it easy.
89		If we speak in English, it's actually challenging for us, we become very thirsty especially during Ramadhan you see because we have to explain over and over because they don't understand and sometimes you need gestures and whatsoever to help your students understand you so it's very important that we persevere and don't give up because if we give up easily then?
90		Actually I'm quoting one of the teachers in my school, according to her like she doesn't want to teach them English in full English as I do because in her words, the students got "Jawa" accent.
91	R	It doesn't matter.
92	T	Yeah, it doesn't matter because even if we start off sounding Jawa as time goes by there will be improvement.
93	R	But I think this is like a deep rooted issue that leads to teachers' preference. I find so far preference is based on prior experience so it might be hard to change like if they think that they need to teach in English with Malay translation, it's actually deeply rooted in your mind that

		that's the best way like we think that this is the best way.
94	T	Yeah, exactly, I understand so actually it's actually like you say I totally agree it is a deep rooted problem actually and it's a problem that I think KPM wanted to talk about however is unable to it's like a taboo it's got to do with the perception of the society.
95	R	Okay, this has been such a good discussion. Thank you so much for your such insightful take on the topic.

TEACHER 3		
LINE	TURN	TRANSCRIPT
1	Researcher (R)	Can you tell me your full name?
2	Teacher (T)	My full name? My name's Nadhrah A'amilin binti Abdul Razak.
3	R	And what about your age?
4	T	My age? 28.
5	R	Can you tell me your qualification?
6	T	My qualification? Is it related to teaching English?
7	R	Err..your highest qualification?
8	T	My highest qualification is Bachelor's in Communication and Training. Yeah. And I received my Diploma last year in Teaching English.
9	R	How long have you been in service?
10	T	It's almost four years now. As contract for three years.
11	R	Are you an option English teacher or a non-option?
12	T	I am an option English teacher. I have been teaching English.
13	R	This is just to give you some context. When you conduct your English lesson, what is the typical process?
14	T	When conducting my English lesson?
15	R	Yeah, when you go into the classroom what is your typical

		English lesson, is there any routines?
16	T	Oh, is there any routine. I would ask them general question I think like asking how they're today, anyone absent, asking simple things to like to break the ice.
17	R	So , as you know English is our second language. Often times, we have to introduce new words. Most of the time. How do you normally teach these new words to them?
18	T	How I normally teach? Usually I have multiple (err) we would say this multiple intelligent kids <i>lah</i> . In my school we don't have streaming class so I have TP2s, I have TP6s. So normally I would teach in a sentence first and then I would ask them which word, is it noun, verb adjectives and then by then I would ask them if they understand the sentence. They would pick a word that they know and then they would translate to L1 first. And then the ones with TP6s the higher proficiency kids they would know what the sentence means. For lower proficiency, they would just understand few words or just at least one. Sometimes they don't understand the sentence at all because so they guess..
19	R	Guess from clues or anything?
20	T	Yes, for example, my cat has a long tail. Some kids they don't understand what tail is right. Most kids would know what cat is. So the lower proficiency kids would say <i>kucing</i> like this is something that they know that this is about <i>kucing</i> . And then the higher ones would say this is about <i>kucing</i> with a tail. So what is tail? So some kids they don't understand what tail means. So when we say long, long what? So I would let's say give them hints what is long. Most kids would think long means <i>panjang</i> then they would think by themselves long what? Long whiskers, long legs and I say tail..I would give them clues up until they know that tail is <i>ekor</i> . So that's how I teach vocabulary among other ways.
21	R	So you described to me like some strategies about teaching vocabulary. Now I would like to go to what is your personal belief regarding the most effective approach in teaching vocabulary like the process?
22	T	Okay, most times in class I would start off using sentences like I mentioned just now but by using sentences, we can actually elaborate more vocabulary. For example, just now tail, so what tail means? A part of the cat's body. So by then I can also ask is there any other body parts that you know on a cat? So some of them could say claws, so what claws mean...or maybe fur, or whiskers. Yeah, things like that

		maybe four legs..From that, that way I think most kids would understand that's how they make another sentences using another vocabulary.
23	R	What you mean is..you..directly teach them new words? You are the one that introduces this new word and they think by themselves what's the word meaning?
24	T	Yeah, but using other kids. I love using the other kids' approach how they learn from their friends. Some of them would know what whiskers are and the lower ones would know like oh that's another word. It's whiskers.
25	R	And what about when they..find the words they don't know themselves. Like is there any encounter when they learn English, they find these words they don't know the meaning of, do you think learning vocabulary incidentally when they come across the word they don't know, and then finding meaning by themselves, and you teaching them explicitly..your belief, which one is more effective?
26	T	I think the first one. The first one is more effective. Like for example I mentioned just now, their friends mentioning the words. Like just now whiskers, so the higher ones would know, and that's the first time they encounter the word so from then, they would know what whiskers mean by the help from their friends and me. So that's how they encounter new words that's for them. For the, for the most times my TP5s and 6s they love asking me new words that they find. They just show me what does this mean? And I, this is my..this is my most used lah, I would ask them if they understand the sentence, then you have to think about what this sentence about, try guess and if they can guess it right that's how they use their brain to think. And if they want it to be more detailed, I ask them to find in the dictionary.
27	R	When you asked them to use dictionary, do you ask them to use monolingual (English-English) or bilingual?
28	T	English-English. That's how we learn new words.
29	R	Oh I also want to know your belief on that. Whether you think monolingual is more effective than using a bilingual dictionary.
30	T	I think if you're using bilingual dictionary it's you asking them to understand in their own language, their mother tongue but if you ask them to use English-English it's going to let them English..

31	R	Does it only apply to the higher proficiency students?
32	T	No, actually for lower ones as well. But for lower ones, you have to guide them. You have to put yourself beside them. You have to put yourself, you have.
33	R	To be beside them.
34	T	And you ask them what are the words.
35	R	Let's say they don't know the meaning of this word, but this word and then the meaning. Also some of the words, they don't know the meaning of them. So you will have to guide them. What is the meaning of certain words in the meaning?
36	T	Or most times I would say, for example, using the sentence, this cat has a long tail. Most kids will know, er, what does "a" mean? What does this mean? Cat. If they don't know what cat means, then you can just say a cat is an animal. You know what animal means.
37	T	It's just like teaching...
38	R	So you don't prefer teaching them translating into L1?
39	T	No. I don't believe in.
40	R	The most effective way is to teach vocabulary in the target language?
41	T	Yes.
42	T	Teaching them in the target language. But when it comes to whether you teach them directly or they find words on their own, you find finding words on their own is more effective than you teaching them directly and then they tend to forget?
43	T	Yes, because teaching them directly is for me the most effective way to make people learn or yourself. Not, not learning, not really come across forced.
44	R	It should come naturally?
45	T	Yes, incidentally. And you want it. You want to learn it. For example, if you learn, if you listen to music and then you encounter one word that you "tak pernah dengar" on and then you want to know the meaning of the song. So you want to learn, so you find it yourself instead of me telling you hello, today we are going to learn about nail. You need not want to think about.

46	T	That's why when you are given a sentence and you need to understand the sentence not to understand the word itself, you need to understand the...
47	R	You mean you need to guess the context?
48	T	Yes. You need to guess the context from that. For kids, me, for kids, I love triggering their brain, as in it's a game for them.
49	R	It's like. Yes, it's like a brain game where you think that it's your job to stimulate their. So when their thinking process is more complicated, they tend to remember the vocabulary.
50	T	Well and it's a game between themselves. Like if everyone doesn't know what this means, I will give them hints.
51	T	You didn't, you won't go to straight away translating them into l one. Oh, this is the meaning.
52	R	Okay, so, so you believe that vocabulary teaching is the most important because. Yeah. We need vocabulary to master a language. Do you find it challenging to really teach vocabulary in your classroom?
53	T	In my classroom personally,
54	R	it can be outside factors or it can be yourself.
55	T	Me, myself, I'm not really, I know English, but I'm not, I'm not a person. I teach English because I love grammar, because vocabulary is not really. I'm not an expert on vocabulary. I learn.
56	R	You mean vocabulary instruction techniques?
57	T	No. Vocabularies. Okay, I'm not expert in vocabularies. Like if you ask me some words. I may, I may, I may not. I may not know words like synonyms, word synonyms. Like I would know some words I wouldn't know. Like big words, for example.
58	R	So do you think it's a challenge?
59	T	To teach them primary school students? It's. I would say I learned from them as well. It's an interesting journey for me as a teacher. Like, okay, that's a class. There's an experience. I was in a class and a kid, a girl came to me and asked this one word which I know never heard of, and they ask me, what does this mean? And I say, okay, let's find out. We

		<p>don't know. So let's figure out what does the sentence mean? What does all the words mean? And from then I would give my guess. I give my guess. I think this means this. What do you think? Okay. Okay. Let's find out if it's correct. So I just open my phone and I find the translate. If it's really. How is it really? The meaning is spot on luck. If I know if it was correct, then, yeah, we both are learning the word together for me. So that's why it's. It's a bit challenging for me because I don't have the vocabulary knowledge. But.</p>
60	R	<p>But you don't find it a challenge like your vocabulary knowledge? Although it's a challenge for you, it can pose a challenge certain time. Maybe you don't know the meaning of certain words, but you take it as just an experience to teach them strategy to find you the meaning.</p>
61	T	<p>Yeah. Yeah. Because as a teacher, you learn. You learn also. You learn, too.</p>
62	R	<p>But the challenge, does it bother you that you don't have the vocabulary knowledge?</p>
63	T	<p>Does it bother me? No, because I think it's a learning process. It's not about knowing. It's not about having to know everything that time. It's about. Because I don't force my. My pupils, my students to learn things. I let them.</p>
64	R	<p>You prefer them. The learning comes to them naturally.</p>
65	T	<p>Even teaching vocabulary. Not by force. I don't think it's effective enough. Even to me? Even for me.</p>
66	R	<p>Okay. So, you know, like, we have in our curriculum, we have the last lesson plan that we have to go through like this today. You have to cover listening, maybe? And it's also based on the topic that's in the syllabus. So when you're doing the lesson plan, do you find it's hard to balance, like, when to really focus on the vocabulary or when to really, like, focus on the skill listening, or do you, like, make it a routine for the topic? First thing is for you to introduce the vocabulary, and then you go,</p>
67	T	<p>I would use different ways. You can also mix and match your way of teaching. If today I think that the words are not really hard, maybe I would not make it as important to focus on the vocabularies. Maybe I would. For example, if it's listening, for listening skills, I would just go for listening. And then I would ask them if they understand and maybe let</p>

		them actually present in front, what do they understand from the passage, the things that they. Dialogues that they heard it, that they listen. So from them and from there, yes, we know if they understand the vocabs. And after, last, before we end the class, I would reintroduce the vocab, and sometimes I would use another vocab that has a similar meaning. For example, um, maybe like house or home.
68	R	You mean, um, your way is, um, the same thing as your belief. You can say, um during your lesson, regardless of the focus scale, you tend to have the vocabulary being introduced, incidentally.
69	T	Being a part of the process. Not like, not the main focus, yes, but enough time.
70	R	Whenever you conduct your lesson, do you think enough time to focus on vocabulary or time is a constraint, like, for them to really understand? I mean, if, let's say, a topic has, like, certain vocabularies, they should master. Right? So for you to really make sure that your students master all these new words, remember the meaning and everything, do you think the time that is given to conduct the lesson is a constraint, or is it enough for them to, like, learn vocabulary really well?
71	T	Like I, like I mentioned before, sometimes the words could be. Could be difficult. Like, there are topics, if I can remember topics from year syllabus, from year four, from topic. The ones with the mechanical nightingale. The word nightingale itself is a new word. So sometimes even the kids, the pupils cannot pronounce it properly, can't even spell it properly. So that's. That's something that, if I know it's hard, one of the strategies that I would do is using the words repetitively, repetition. But sometimes, if I know some kids, like my lower proficiency kids, they. They will have, like, other times to understand. So to even pronounce the word. So, yeah, sometimes, if the words are easy, I have enough time to make sure that you really teach the lesson is successful. If I know most of them cannot even pronounce the word properly.
72	R	You do another lesson? Like remedial?
73	T	Yeah.
74	R	Okay, so time isn't a constraint to you?
75	T	Sometimes I think most times, I would not focus on the whole class. Maybe we follow up the lesson and there's

		another lesson, follow up from there. The kids that I know, they still tak master lagi, those are the ones that I go to and focus on them. It's a guidance yang, what do they call it? Extra guidance.
76	R	Intervention?
77	T	Yeah, intervention.
78	R	So do you provide, like, extra strategies for your kids to do when it comes to vocabulary learning? For example, like, do you ask them to have the not good, then, like, jot down words if they read any hunter or you ask them, like, media or whatever. Quizzes.
79	T	Yeah. Games, I think having notebooks, maybe. It's not my thing. I know my kids would not want to do that. Especially I don't want to do that. Things that I do most is games. And sometimes I will also make it a spelling game instead of class. So after the lesson, the next lesson would be them spelling the words.
80	T	And then the next lesson would revise. Whether they remember.
81	T	Yeah, that's what they remember. And how do they pronounce and make sentences with the words?
82	R	What about your students? Like, motivation? I mean, motivation. When it comes to taking learning vocabulary out of the classroom.
83	R	Do you think. They have the motivation to go beyond whatever it's been in the classroom?
84	T	I remember my year three, I taught them the topic, the direction, I think direction, left, right, go straight. I did the lesson outside of the classroom. I blindfolded them, make a map, let them go through the map. And surprisingly, after the class, the same day it was in the same week or in the same moth, there's a boy walking with me towards the canteen. And by the time we have to turn left, he said, now we turn left, and we find. So it's something that we use.
85	R	So that's a good strategy for vocabulary retention. So, meaning, it's an action whenever you can remember well, but what about at home? They learn vocabulary out, or do you encourage them to do independent learning? By independent learning means, meaning you have to read

		books. From these books, you need to find all vocabularies you don't know or you encourage them. You have to watch english movies.
86	T	For my year, six, actually, I don't teach, but I watched this one movie. I watched this one movie and I asked them to watch this one scene. They have their own smartphones. And I asked them, later on at night, I will send them a video, and you have to watch the movie and not movie like a scene. Is it from the. I don't remember. I asked them to watch the movie. Oh, it's perfect. And I asked them, can you understand the song? Try to understand the song and tell me about the song. So I think from. From there, they understand the song by the caption. Listen to the song and watch it. Read the subtitle. So after that, this is a good English speaking English. And he came to me and he said, this is the meaning of this word. He said that this is the meaning of this word. There are a few kids. This is the meaning of this word. How do you know? I find it at Google. So I think he liked the song. I think he liked the song. And then he tried to go, like you said, go beyond to understand what is the meaning.
87	R	I find that sometimes I find that higher proficient pupils, they tend to have..
88	T	Like, motivation because middle and low, I would say outside of class, it would be hard for me to ask them to do. But some kids, some kids you have to push a bit. For example, my choral speaking kids, not all of them are high proficiency. Some of them, we have to guide them to understand a sentence. For example, so we have a tv at school, I have to open like videos. And everyone was looking, everyone was watching. So they have no choice but to watch also. But then it's by force, but by forcing, actually using the motives. What do they call it? Motivation. It was something. If anyone. If anyone. If anyone knows this, I have to know it also. It's not by us forcing them, it's by them forcing themselves to understand. So when we open the song, we ask them, this is a good song, but you have to understand the meaning. So there's like few students who say, oh, this is about this, is it? Is it correct? And I would say, what about you? What. What do you think of this? Then we have to go through. I will not say the answer. Everyone has their own answer, so they have to give us their opinion, their understanding. Most of the times, I will make sure that they all got it right, so that it's motivational for them if they are wrong. And we will say they are wrong. It's something you play with our interest. You let them watch. You let them fight. It's a good fight with their friends.

89	R	Yes. I'm actually wondering, like, when teaching vocabulary, what are your common challenges? Is it students motivation? Because not all students are motivated enough to learn.
90	T	Yes, it's. Is it one? You don't have time to focus on a challenge. Maybe it's my challenge. Is I, me, myself. Okay. Like I said earlier, I'm not really an expert in vocabulary. So by focusing mainly on vocabulary, it's not my thing. Yes. I would find ways, other ways to just include vocabulary.
91	R	Teaching English, you mean you believe that. Can I say your belief is shaped by you? You feeling that you don't have the. You.
	T	but in the syllabus, when you have to teach them, you have to let the kids understand certain vocabularies. That's how I mingle with the other methods.
92	R	Only when the kids encounter words they don't know within the topic itself, then only you, with all these strategies they understand for you to directly teach them the problem. So your biggest challenge would be that. Not mine. Not mine.
93	T	Yes.
94	R	What about your kids motivation? No, because it's hard, you know, because I know they tend to have like their own self willingness to learn, but the other kids aren't motivated enough.
95	T	Part of the challenge. That's not a big challenge because that's part of the challenge because I myself have no motivation to actually go through vocabularies. So I myself go around the teaching method so that they learn and they are motivated to learn. They are not learning vocabularies, but I know it's success when we understand the vocabulary that we have to learn, so we are motivated. But then again, I have to make them motivated by having other methods, not explicitly teaching them.
96	R	Do you think that problem comes from your years of experience teaching English? Do you think by experience, by increasing the number of years of your experience, you will be better at teaching vocabulary?

97	T	<p>Maybe. It's. I would say I don't think so because I like English. Because it's from my years of speaking English and learning English by myself. I'm not. I'm not. I'm a communication person. I learned communication. I learned how to. I don't learn English. I speak English. Learn English. I don't learn English. So maybe that's why my vocabularies are not as.</p> <p>It could be better, but it could. Be better if I really put an effort for. For vocabularies, linguistics.</p>
98	R	<p>I have another question. Last question. Could be for me. Could be. Last question. Just now I talked about like your experiences, in fact, the way you teach vocabulary. Right. Question became my interest now. So let's say we take out your. Your experience, your lack of vocabulary knowledge out of the equation. Do you think. Do you still think that it should happen, incidentally, or if the teachers have enough vocabulary knowledge which would rather pick explicit teaching or do you think it's a combination?</p>
99	T	<p>No, no. It still needs to happen because I learned. The process and I learned. I studied of people that interested in things, how students learn how to make them..forcing them explicitly could not be effective.</p>
100	R	<p>When I say explicitly, I meant for this topic. You remember our textbook? They have like this vocabulary on top of so explicit means. Okay, explain topic and then you introduce teachers.</p>
101	T	<p>Sometimes, but most of the time. Most of the time they will not even realize they're learning vocabulary.</p>
102	R	<p>That is what actually my last question. So thank you so much for opening up to me about your belief. So I end my interview here. Stop recording.</p>

TEACHER 4		
LINE	TURN	TRANSCRIPT
1	Researcher (R)	So I just want to interview you about your vocabulary teaching. But first can you like tell me your full name and also your age?
2	Teacher (T)	My full name is Nur Ain binti Zailani. I am 27 years old.
3	R	Okay. How about your qualification?

4	T	My qualification to teach is through diploma PDPP at IPG Kampus Seremban, Raja Melewar.
5	R	And then prior to that PDPP?
6	T	My degree is English for professional communication.
7	R	Okay. How long have you been in service?
8	T	It has been four years.
9	R	So you are an option teacher?
10	T	Yeah, I am.
11	R	Okay. So normally when you conduct your English lesson in your classroom, like how is the typical your English lesson? Like typical English lesson, you come into the classroom and then what do you do first?
12	T	The first thing first that I will usually do is to ask what day is today? So that is my very typical way of teaching. What day is today? So I will teach them. Today is what day? What is the date? Today is 24. March 9th. 24. That will be the most typical way of I am teaching English. Other than that, if we learn using the textbook, I will ask them to read first. If it is for reading lesson, I will give them time to read. And in case they are Pemulihan, I will partner them up with those who are more proficient. So they will get help in reading the text or whatever reading material it is.
13	R	So you consider that like your routine?
14	T	Yeah, I would say that it's a routine.
15	R	So normally when you want to start a new topic, right, you would introduce vocabulary first or new topic. For example like year three, you need one. So how would you start unit one?
16	T	There are times when I introduce the new words first or else I will trigger them questions such as if we are learning about countries, I will ask them about what countries do they know? Many countries that they know. So they will brainstorm themselves of getting knowing the list of countries meaning relating to.
17	R	They relate to what they already know.
18	T	So that will be brainstorming. Or else I will ask them to look at the new words and I will ask them to do some gesture.

		For example, if it is a new word relating to verb, I will ask. I will teach them the gesture of doing it. This is especially for young, the weak students. Because the weak students, they need to. They usually have a hard time of remembering English words can. So when they do something and then they say out the words, maybe the gestures will help them to remember better.
19	R	So for example, let's say if you ask them to read, read a page first. And then if they encounter the word that they don't know what's the typical process? Like, I mean, like, do they ask you or when they ask you, you ask them to do anything to find out what the meaning or if they.
20	T	Encounter familiar words, I will generally straightaway tell them what the meaning of the words, or else, if they are more proficient pupils, I will ask them to read the previous sentence and then they can relate. They can guess what the actual meaning. But most of my students are weak students, so I will straight away give out the meaning of the word.
21	R	When you say you straightaway give out the meaning, is the meaning in their L1 or the target language?
22	T	L1. Normally it's in L1.
23	R	Nice. Okay, so I also want to ask you, in vocabulary teaching, like introducing these new words and all these techniques that you use, what is your belief about vocabulary? Is it really important for us to really teach or..
24	T	It's really important because once they know the words, they will understand what they read? For me, because most of my pupils, when they do not know the meaning of the words, they will get uninterested to read more. So they will not want to read more. So for me, it is really important for them to get know of the meaning of the words first, and then only we proceed to the next lesson, I mean, of letting them know the meaning of the words and then we proceed to the proceeding lessons.
25	R	Okay, so that means, right? I can say that you acknowledge that vocabulary is important, but how do your techniques relate to your belief that vocabulary is important? Do you think, like, you already give them, like, enough techniques to learn vocabulary or do you think that you could do more but there are challenges..
26	T	I think I could do more, but there are challenges in my new school, especially because they are students from rural area, so they are not exposed to the language. I am quite

		<p>surprised. Compared to my old school, my new school is more. They are not exposed to the language, so they have difficulty of getting to learn the language itself. So my technique of letting them know the meaning of the words first and then relating it to the language, one, that is actually helpful for them. Even though we know that it is not good to teach them in L1 when we are teaching them English. However, we have to take into consideration of these pupils' proficiencies as well. If we teach them more than what they can, they will not get anything. So at least for them to be able to at least know the words, they have to be taught in L1, not at most, but little by little.</p>
27	R	<p>Then if they get better at it, then that's when you start to introduce maybe this word, you can start to give out the meaning in L2 or?</p>
28	T	<p>Yeah, I think that's the way I'm going to do it. I will let them get familiarized with English first. Love the English, love the language. Then only we can get them closer to the language of learning the language.</p>
29	R	<p>Hmm. So like, when you give out the meaning, right. Do they have like vocabulary notebook that they.</p>
30	T	<p>I used to do that when I was in SK Ayer Keroh, but then for this year, I haven't got the chance to do that yet because I am more focused on their discipline, on their routine. I want them to get. I want them to complete their homework first compared to prepare the vocabulary book because that is additional work. So I don't want to focus more on that vocabulary book when they are.</p>
31	R	<p>Does it only apply to the higher proficiency students?</p>
32	T	<p>No, actually for lower ones as well. But for lower ones, you have to guide them. You have to put yourself beside them. You have to put yourself, you have.</p>
33	R	<p>Out of the classroom?</p>
34	T	<p>Out of the classroom because their homework itself is not done and they are not showing interest enough in English. So I think the vocabulary book is not in my.</p>
35	R	<p>So you mean their motivation is also like a challenge for you?</p>
36	T	<p>Yeah, their motivation and the way I teach as well. I must</p>

		not, I must not get too “Bandar” (city-like).
37	T	I mean, I need to still relate the context into what.
38	R	Okay, so it's different from your.. Because your previous school was in city. So meaning you don't believe that you should teach vocabulary out of the classroom. It's not just because their motivation, but also because of their proficiency is not there yet?
39	T	Actually, I believe in the vocabulary books, but then the challenges made me think that they are more priorities that I should. The homework, the routine that they have to get used to. Instead of reading the vocabulary book first.
40	R	What about like reading books at home or like watch movies with subtitles at home? Do you encourage or..
41	T	I will definitely encourage that. But then I haven't tell the kids to watch the TV in English.
42	R	But you believe that it could be a way.
43	T	Yeah, it could be a way. Reading subtitles, reading books.
44	R	But what about like, you know, we have to teach all those skills, right? So when you teach all those skills, do you think like when it comes to vocabulary, it should be explicitly like this word means this one, this one means this one. Or maybe while teaching, maybe reading, writing, when they encounter themselves, only then the vocabulary is being introduced. Or do you think that vocabulary, when you introduce new words, it should be explained explicitly? Like you give them, you have to know these words. This word means this word. Or you think that they should find themselves and when they encounter those words, only then they do something to find out the meaning.
45	T	I will explicitly tell them the meanings instead of letting them, letting them know the words by themselves..
46	T	That's why when you are given a sentence and you need to understand the sentence not to understand the word itself, you need to understand the...
47	R	So you believe that which one is..I know you prefer explicit instruction, but when it comes to like effective vocabulary instruction, do you think explicit instruction is better than the other or incidentally means like. Yeah, incidentally like when we are learning the focus skill, then only we like oh,

		this word means this one.
48	T	The most effective for me even though I'm not using that method. It will be combination, but more to explicitly. More explicit.
49	R	More explicitly. It should be more explicit rather than incidental. Okay, what about like other challenges? Like maybe you have challenge with the syllabus or maybe your time, not enough time to like really focus on vocabulary because you said that vocabulary is important. But then we still have like these skills and all that. So how do we like make sure like really these kids know this vocabulary?
50	T	Because we are teaching other skills as well. So when we are teaching those other four, those are the, all of the four skills we have to like incorporate with the vocabulary.
51	T	In that terms, I will say indirectly when we are teaching other skills and we will incorporate the skills.
52	R	I don't think that's as effective as like focusing on vocabulary.
53	T	It's not as effective, but I will say I will still do it even though it is not effective as yet.
54	R	Challenge is because we have to focus on other skills. So you believe in explicit, but since that we have to focus on other skills, we couldn't do anything. But it needs to be incidental. But you feel like it's not as effective as explicit. I see. All right. Okay. I think other than time and then your motivation and then your level of proficiency of the kids, that's all?
55	T	The other challenges will be maybe the thing that I thought, for example, the teaching dictionary part in DSKP. Yeah, myself. It is the disadvantage for myself. I mean, I didn't, maybe I didn't. Thoroughly look at it.
56	R	Is that a struggle? Maybe you, you didn't realize it.
57	T	I didn't realize. And I used to seek out for my other teachers, other senior teachers. And when I'm looking at my other year, three teachers, I haven't once look at them using dictionary. So I taught present at all the usage of the dictionaries.
58	R	So meaning the challenge is from yourself. Meaning maybe

		your knowledge about the DSKP.
59	T	So I still have to check thoroughly like the DSKP, the usage of the dictionary. Yes.
60	R	Okay. So I think that is about it. Thank you. So much for giving me your insights on vocabulary teaching. So it's already 14 minutes. I stop now.

APPENDIX 6




Survey Data

Statements	Mean	SD
I ask my students to analyse parts of speech (verbs/nouns/adjectives) and determine the meaning.	3.75	0.961
I ask my students to analyse the root word / prefixes and suffixes. Example: dis + like = dislike	3.38	0.995
I ask my students to guess the meaning from textual context.	4.25	0.720
I ask my students to use English-Malay / English-Chinese / English-Tamil dictionary to look up the meaning of new words.	3.58	1.139
I ask my students to use English-English dictionary to look up the meaning of new words	3.25	1.241
I translate the meaning of the word in L1	3.63	0.907
I provide a synonym of the word	3.88	0.814
I provide my students a sentence containing the new word.	4.09	0.871
I let my students ask their classmates for meaning	3.80	1.024
I put my students in groups and let them discover meaning through group work activity	3.66	1.047
I encourage my students to study and practice word meaning in a group	3.68	1.030
I encourage my students to interact with native-speakers outside classroom	3.13	1.253
I ask my students to match the word with picture representing the word	4.10	0.869
I ask my students to picture the word's meaning. For example, when learning the word kitchen, they picture their mom cooking	3.71	1.123
I ask my students to relate a word to their personal experience. Example; when learning the word celebration, they think of their birthday party / festivals	4.17	0.845
I ask my students to link the word to its related word. Example; banana, think of other fruits, apple	4.13	0.839
I ask my students to pay attention to the word's synonyms or antonyms (Example: pretty / ugly)	3.96	0.803
I ask my students to classify the words in category (Example: Categorize things into furniture)	3.82	0.839
I ask my students to use the new word in a sentence.	3.90	0.848
I ask my students to combine all the words to form a story.	3.15	1.058

I ask my students to memorize the spelling of the word.	4.31	0.787
I focus on teaching my students pronunciation of the new word.	4.45	0.644
I ask my students to read out loud (say the new word aloud when studying)	4.62	0.585
I ask my students to underline the initial letter of the word.	3.07	1.184
I ask my students to remember the roots, prefixes and suffixes of the words.	3.15	1.080
I ask my students to remember the part of speech of the words.	3.32	1.121
I paraphrase the word to my students. Example; housekeeper - a person who looks after the house	3.92	0.918
I teach my students the word in the form of idiom (Spill the bean - teach them the word spill & bean together)	2.90	0.917
I use body movement when teaching my students a word and ask them to repeat the movement.	4.11	0.898
I ask my students to repeat the word verbally again and again	4.50	0.691
I ask my students to repeatedly copy the word in their book	3.66	1.183
My students have a vocabulary lists that have L1 translation (English words with L1 meanings)	3.50	1.194
I use flashcards in my class to teach new words.	3.81	1.027
I ask my students to take notes in my class.	3.64	1.120
I ask my students to use the vocabulary section in their textbook to learn new words.	4.25	0.873
I ask my students to listen to audio clips of word lists.	3.93	0.935
I put English labels on physical objects in my classrooms.	3.13	1.149
My students have a specific vocabulary notebook where they jot down new words and find their meanings.	3.33	1.429
I ask my students to listen to English songs in my classrooms or at home.	4.14	0.894
I require my students to watch English movies at home.	3.93	0.915
I require my students to read English newspapers in my classrooms / at home.	2.97	1.201
I provide my students English story books / magazines to learn vocabulary.	3.55	1.073
I give my students tasks to read English novels, short stories at their own time.	3.24	1.138
I have scheduled vocabulary tests online using application such as Quizizz and Word Wall to see if my students remember the new words learned.	2.87	1.149
I give online task for my students to review the vocabularies they learned using Google Form, Wordwall or any other online application.	2.72	1.115

APPENDIX 7

Interrater Reliability of Interview Codes

TEACHER 1 CODES					
THEME : CHALLENGES					
No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
1	Ch_Time	Refers to the time constraint or the amount of time taken to teach new vocabulary or concepts.	<i>"I think that's effective but it takes a lot it takes quite some time because in a lesson usually they will have like three or four words they don't know so it might take time." (L25)</i>		
2	Ch_Attitude	Refers to students' attitudes, particularly shyness or reluctance to ask questions or engage in class.	<i>"Some of the shy pupils who think they don't understand English they hardly ask you know. Most of the words they don't understand but they don't do anything." (L39)</i>		
3	Ch_StudentAbility	Refers to students' varying levels of proficiency and their difficulty acquiring vocabulary during group work.	<i>"If you do it in groups, some of the pupils will become passengers, they don't know the words but maybe their friends do so they don't actually acquire the vocabulary." (L45)</i>		

4	Ch_StudentAbility	Refers to students' struggles in understanding even simple words, particularly lower proficient students.	<i>"You know good students they know all the words, but for the lower proficient pupils they don't understand simple words. Some of them don't even understand even though I kept on telling them. So they tend to forget because it's usually the struggling pupils they took time to write in their notebook." (L48)</i>	✓	
5	Ch_Time	Refers to the balance between teaching vocabulary and moving on with the lesson content.	<i>"And then we need to move on to the gist of the lesson. I still need to teach them reading to ask them." (L49)</i>	✓	
6	Ch_TeacherAbility	Refers to difficulties in explaining concepts to students in a way they understand, despite the teacher's knowledge.	<i>"My knowledge for me it's not a problem but maybe the way I explain to them is a problem maybe they don't know what I explain." (L54)</i>	✓	
7	Ch_Attitude	Refers to the motivation gap between good students and middle/low students.	<i>"So for the middle and low, they're struggling because they always rely on their teacher because they don't really like to you know ... I still search for the best way on how to teach them because the way I learned it's actually my own..my own time. Only the good students have that motivation to do more." (L68)</i>	✓	
8	Ch_Curriculum	Refers to doubts about the effectiveness of current teaching strategies or tools, like the use of notebooks.	<i>"Really. Because I don't think I can find one strategy for them because even the notebook is I don't think it's helpful to</i>	✓	

			<i>them." (L72)</i>		
9	Ch_TeacherAbility	Refers to the teacher's challenges in implementing creative teaching strategies.	<i>"Yeah, so I don't know maybe some other teachers. I used to read somewhere in which country but to teach vocab the teacher would put on different hats every day which has these different words. So she would make little people and put on the hat and ask students the meaning. I'm not as creative as that and I don't have time to prepare those." (L74)</i>	✓	
10	Ch_Curriculum	Refers to the limitation of the syllabus and the need to reduce topics.	<i>"Yeah I think so too. I think they should simplify maybe reduce the topics so that we can focus on certain topics only." (L76)</i>	✓	
11	Ch_Time	Refers to time constraints in covering the syllabus and focusing on vocabulary.	<i>"If we think we want to finish all the topics, then it'll be a constraint but if we take our own sweet time it's actually enough to focus on the vocabulary, like drill on vocabulary but we will miss maybe the second last and last topic at the end of the year. But still, even though I took my own sweet time, I still cannot encourage my middle and low students to like I mean work on their own time." (L78)</i>	✓	

12	Ch_Attitude	Refers to reducing stress for pupils in completing work compared to previous generations.	<i>"But you know, we cannot give our pupils too much stress right (laugh). Yeah as well as if you don't finish our homework also it's okay nowadays, not like our old times." (L79)</i>	✓	
13	Ch_Time	Refers to the teacher's feeling of limitation due to short class periods	<i>"That's why I sometimes get really sad I can't teach my students to encourage them. I only have one hour with them and it's not one to one, it's the whole class." (L84)</i>	✓	
THEME: STRATEGIES					
No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
14	St_Direct	Explicitly teaching difficult vocabulary before starting a reading or activity.	<i>"Before I ask them to read text or any activity I make sure they know the words that I think is difficult for them." (L12)</i>	✓	
15	St_Direct	Teaching vocabulary by going through textbook words and additional unfamiliar words encountered in the lesson.	<i>"Go through with them first the words that is in the textbook and then when we come across any other words in the sentence then I will go through that one other than the vocab picked in the textbook." (L16)</i>	✓	
16	St_Pictures	Using pictures to teach vocabulary when the concept involves concrete nouns.	<i>"If concrete noun I will use pictures." (L19)</i>	✓	

17	St_Translation	Using the first language (L1) to explain abstract concepts in vocabulary teaching.	<i>"If it's something abstract, so I would just sometimes I use our first language." (L19)</i>	✓	
18	St_Translation	Using translation followed by sentence writing to help students retain vocabulary.	<i>"What I mean is if we just tell them the translation only not by writing, that's not effective because they tend to forget. But once they know the meaning, for example they don't know the meaning of cradle. So I write cradle means buaian and so they write that down in vocabulary book and then write down a sentence about cradle." (L25)</i>	✓	
19	St_Independent	Encouraging students to copy vocabulary and write sentences in their vocabulary notebooks as a form of practice.	<i>"I normally will ask them to copy the word in their vocabulary notebook and write a sentence at home but you know." (L26)</i>	✓	
20	St_Independent	Using personal experiences of translating and writing down vocabulary as an effective learning method.	<i>"Ahh, because that's why I believe translating is one of the ways because I learned from that. I got my vocabulary today from my experience of translating and writing down the words." (L31)</i>	✓	
21	St_Social	Encouraging peer learning by asking students to share vocabulary knowledge with each other in class.	<i>"But sometimes some of my pupils also ask me "Teacher what's the meaning of this word?" so usually I will pose to another friend if anyone knows the meaning and share with the class and ask them to write down in their</i>	✓	

			<i>vocabulary book.” (L37)</i>		
22	St_Independent	Encouraging students to take small daily efforts.	<i>"I always encourage my pupils to learn language in their own time to get more vocabulary. Maybe 15 minutes a day to learn new words." (L64)</i>	✓	
23	St_Independent	Teaching students how to use dictionaries to find meaning.	<i>"I tell them what to do, how to do it, find word use dictionary and find meaning." (L66)</i>	✓	
24	St_Media	Using nursery rhymes and singing as a strategy to engage students in vocabulary learning.	<i>"I gave them lyrics of nursery rhymes and go through with them first and then ask them to sing together." (L86)</i>	✓	
THEME: BELIEFS					
No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
25	Be_VocabularyImportance	The belief that vocabulary is fundamental for language comprehension and acts as the foundation for language learning.	<i>"It's really important. How would you understand a language if you don't understand the word itself? I think vocabulary is the main thing. It is the foundation for someone to understand a language." (L58)</i>	✓	
26	Be_L1	The belief that using the first language (L1) in translation helps students understand vocabulary better, especially	<i>"So that why I'm not a big fan of translating L2 to L2 because not all</i>	✓	

		at lower proficiency levels.	<i>understand the word in L2.” (L31)</i>		
27	Be_L1	The belief in a bilingual approach (English-Malay) at initial stages, progressing to monolingual once proficiency improves.	<i>“Urm, bilingual. I believe in English to Malay. As they understand more words in English, then they can use monolingual. “ (L82)</i>	✓	
28	Be_L1	The belief that translation is an acceptable and helpful practice for language learning.	<i>“My experience in language class when I was in Australia, my lecturer also said that it’s not a sin if you use translation because it’s their language. “ (L82)</i>	✓	
29	Be_Mixed	The belief in using mixed methods, combining direct vocabulary instruction with self-discovery approaches.	<i>“So that’s I give both ways to cater to learning in different levels of proficiency. “ (L39)</i>	✓	
30	Be_Mixed	The belief in a mix of vocabulary teaching approaches.	<i>“Yeah yes, I don’t use that. I think it’s better if we have mix of approaches. I prefer them to ask me the vocabulary as well as I prefer to give them the vocabulary that I think they need. “(L43)</i>	✓	
31	Be_Experience	The belief that personal language learning experiences, such as regular reading and vocabulary discovery, shape effective vocabulary development.	<i>“..because this is my practise since I was form 1. Actually I wasn’t a good pupil when I was in primary because I don’t know the meaning of many words and I don’t really understand that actually for language, I have to know the words. It didn’t come to my consciousness that time but when I was</i>	✓	

			<i>in my Form 1 a good English tuition teacher my mom enrolled me in. This teacher asked me to make a routine to read every day and find 10 words I don't know. I tried that for one month and I suddenly realised that I understand English. English makes sense to me.” (L80)</i>		
32	Be_Experience	The belief that vocabulary acquisition through self-directed learning, such as reading and noting unknown words, is an effective method.	<i>“...based on my experience learning English, I acquired my vocabulary through reading books and then find the words I don't understand and I jot down in my book. So it's actually done during my free time not in lesson. So, as a teacher, I still believe that it's the most effective way for a learner to learn a language.” (L21)</i>	✓	

Comments:

Overall, the codes are clear and largely align with the excerpts, offering insight into varied teaching strategies and beliefs. Some consolidation (especially around **Be_EnglishOnly** and **Be_L2**) may enhance the coherence of the coding scheme, particularly for themes where beliefs overlap.

TEACHER 2 CODES

THEME : CHALLENGES

No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
1	Ch_Curriculum	The challenge of balancing teaching with non-academic school activities, making it difficult to implement lessons.	<i>“But then as I go older and now that our school is always busy with co-curricular and stuff like that it's quite impossible to implement this these past two three years.” (L34)</i>	✓	
2	Ch_TeacherAbility	Internal challenge of memory loss, particularly forgetting vocabulary or teaching certain words effectively.	<i>“Sometimes I will miss out certain words. I tend to forget I think this is the internal struggle that people I having especially as you age, you tend to forget.” (L55)</i>	✓	
3	Ch_TeacherAbility	The feeling of not emphasizing vocabulary enough.	<i>“And..and another factor if internal also is that sometimes I have a feeling that I'm not stressing the vocabulary enough, like I taught them but it's in one go and obviously for Malay students, I mean I should have done it a few times and sometimes I forgot about it, I taught them once and then okay, that's it so</i>	✓	

			<i>it's not effective.” (L56)</i>		
4	Ch_Curriculum	The challenge of catching up with the syllabus, which does not have specific sections dedicated to vocabulary teaching.	<i>“Trying to catch up with the syllabus, if you notice in our syllabus, they don't have any particular section where we are to teach this vocabulary you get what I mean?” (L58)</i>	✓	
5	Ch_Curriculum	Lack of emphasis or guidance in the curriculum on how to teach vocabulary effectively.	<i>“..there's no amplification on this vocabulary teaching there's no one like giving like sort of emphasis like how is the vocabulary lesson you know.” (L64)</i>	✓	
6	Ch_Attitude	Students lacking motivation to study and make efforts independently.	<i>“I do actually face this kind of problem whereby students they don't have enough motivation to study on their own effort” (L68)</i>	✓	
7	Ch_Other_Stereotype	The challenge of breaking the stereotype of not using English consistently from primary school through university.	<i>“I'm hoping that if I can break the stereotype here in primary school, they can make it a habit to speak in English when starting their school in secondary school or something here all the way to secondary school and University.” (L75)</i>	✓	
8	Ch_Other_Realization	The challenge arises when teachers don't realize the importance of giving students opportunities to practice	<i>“So, if the teacher doesn't have that realization, then the students don't get the chance the students sadly don't get the chance, they go home</i>	✓	

		English.	<i>they speak Malay. “ (L81)</i>		
9	Ch_Other_Stereotype	The stereotype that students' local accents (e.g., “Jawa” accent) make teaching English less effective.	<i>“Actually I’m quoting one of the teachers in my school, according to her like she doesn’t want to teach them English in full English as I do because in her words, the students got “Jawa” accent.” (L90)</i>	✓	
THEME: STRATEGIES					
No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
	St_Translation	Using translation as a vocabulary learning tool, where students translate Malay words into English to reinforce learning.	<i>“...that is by giving them quiz and then when I enter the class, they will all stand up and translate the Malay words that I give to them and then they are allowed to sit.” (L9)</i>	✓	
	St_Lyrics	Using songs and lyrics to teach vocabulary, with the goal of expanding students' vocabulary through music.	<i>“...singing with the hope that through the lyrics they will get new vocab and they will expand their vocab banks.” (L10)</i>	✓	
	St_L1	Allowing students to use a mix of L1 (Malay) and English, especially for weaker students, to help them construct sentences.	<i>“Oh, however, I would like to let you know that I also allow my students especially the weaker ones to use “rojak” language meaning a mixture of Bahasa and English in a sentence because it’s quite impossible for them</i>		

			<i>to come up with a full sentences on their own.” (L15)</i>		
	St_Direct	Directly teaching vocabulary by identifying unknown words and explicitly teaching their meanings.	<i>“Identifying words that they don’t understand, so that is one of my effective ways of teaching them vocabulary” (L30)</i>	✓	
	St_Independent	Encouraging students to develop vocabulary independently through reading, emphasizing personal effort outside class.	<i>“I think one of the ways that students can actually get a very high impact from vocabulary learning is through reading but they need to read on their own.” (L30)</i>	✓	
	St_Independent	Making independent reading a requirement, assigning students to read a specific number of books each week.	<i>“I do. when I was when I first started teaching actually I make it a compulsory for my students to read like 10 books per week like very thin books not our level books.” (L33)</i>	✓	
	St_Direct	Direct vocabulary teaching where students copy vocabulary lists into their books as part of the lesson.	<i>“whenever I teach them vocabulary lesson, explicit vocabulary lesson, they are to copy the vocabulary list onto the books at the back part.” (L37)</i>	✓	
THEME: BELIEFS					
No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree

Be_VocabularyImportance	The belief that vocabulary is fundamental to language structure and essential for language learning.	<i>“actually for me vocabulary is like the your bones of the language without the bones, there’s no language, the language will fall apart because the important element is not there which is the vocabulary” (L60)</i>	✓	
Be_VocabularyImportance	The belief that vocabulary teaching should stem from the teacher’s own realization.	<i>“For me, like vocabulary teaching comes from the teacher’s own realization because now what is being talked about over and over again it’s always the four skills and whatsoever that’s in the DSKP” (L65)</i>	✓	
Be_EnglishOnly	The belief in teaching English predominantly in the target language (English), with limited use of the first language.	<i>“Target language, English. I am an avid fan of teaching English in really full English probably not 100% because it’s quite impossible to do 100% just around 90% English.” (L12)</i>	✓	
Be_EnglishOnly	The belief that students should be expected to use full English in class, with the teacher using some Malay for explanation.	<i>“No, it’s Malay to English, at least the Malay comes from me not from the student side. They are expected to use full English.” (L14)</i>	✓	

	Be_EnglishImportance	The belief that speaking English well is essential for future opportunities.	<i>“Even if they go for like work interviews if they speak well chances of them being accepted into the workplace is very high so that’s what I’m trying to do with my students that’s why I think it’s very important that I speak full English with my students because if I don’t soak them in that environment, if I don’t immerse them in the English environment, then who’s going to do that if not me, the English teacher?” (L78)</i>	✓	
	Be_EnglishImportance	The belief that teachers should persistently encourage students to speak English.	<i>“So yeah, we need to have that realization that’s it. It doesn’t matter some teachers get disappointed very quick. Actually if you want to make it a habit for your students to speak in English, you need to be tough you know because sometimes you are disappointed when you tell them over and over to speak English and they always slip.” (L85)</i>	✓	
	Be_Mixed	The belief in varying teaching routines and activities to engage students.	<i>“Actually, they are a few routines that I have because it changes according to the mood and the need of the class. Sometimes I will go in and do like singing or we will have some vocabulary quizzes.” (L8)</i>	✓	

	Be_Mixed	The belief that students benefit from both explicit and indirect approaches.	<i>“Ah, yeah I think, I think both ways. I think students can benefit from both ways meaning from explicit teaching and also indirect approach towards teaching and learning vocabulary.” (L23)</i>	✓	
	Be_Mixed	The belief that solely using direct teaching methods like quizzes or singing may become monotonous over time.	<i>“In my opinion, because if if each and every time if I were to enter the class and then I am going to teach them the direct approach for example, the quiz is very direct, I give them the Malay they give me the English words or just singing I give them the meaning or whatever, for me eventually over time I think that will be a boring thing to do.” (L25)</i>	✓	
	Be_Mixed	The belief that variation in teaching methods makes learning more interesting and effective for students.	<i>“So, when we have variation in our teaching, I think that is more interesting and hopefully will be easy for the students to get whatever that we are teaching.” (L26)</i>	✓	
	Be_Incidental	The belief that vocabulary teaching during listening is often incidental and arises when students do not understand certain words.	<i>“when we teach focus skill like listening maybe it’s more incidental maybe when they don’t understand what is the meaning of this word only then you come up with strategies how to make them understand the meaning.” (L47)</i>	✓	

	Be_Mixed	The belief that teachers can use either traditional authoritative approaches or a lighter, more encouraging approach to motivate students.	<i>“as a teacher, what we can do is we can always encourage even by traditional way of being a teacher which is being dominant or fierce or we can use a lighter approach like a friendly approach as if we are the counsellors you know and like very nicely and then praise them lots and lots.” (L68)</i>	✓	
	Be_Explicit	The belief that explicit vocabulary teaching is easier to implement during writing activities.	<i>“During speaking during reading and during writing so far I find it like for the explicit approach it’s easier to implement the explicit vocabulary teaching during the writing skill session for me.” (L43)</i>	✓	

Comments:

The operational definitions generally align well with the excerpts, effectively capturing the various instructional beliefs, strategies, and challenges. However, consolidating some codes and further clarifying definitions may enhance consistency and interpretation.

TEACHER 3 CODES

THEME : CHALLENGES

No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
1	Ch_TeacherAbility	Refers to the teacher's perceived lack of expertise or confidence in teaching vocabulary, particularly in recognizing and using synonyms or advanced words.	<i>"No. Vocabularies. Okay, I'm not expert in vocabularies. Like if you ask me some words. I may, I may, I may not. I may not know words like synonyms, word synonyms..." (L57)</i>	✓	
2	Ch_Attitude	Reflects the students' lack of motivation and resistance to traditional learning tools, such as notebooks.	<i>"I think having notebooks, maybe. It's not my thing. I know my kids would not want to do that. Especially I don't want to do that." (L79)</i>	✓	
3	Ch_Attitude	Highlights the challenge of student motivation, particularly among middle and low achievers.	<i>"Like, motivation because middle and low, I would say outside of class, it would be hard for me to ask them to do." (L88)</i>	✓	
4	Ch_TeacherAbility	Refers to the teacher's personal struggle with vocabulary-focused instruction, citing their own lack of expertise as a significant challenge.	<i>"Maybe it's my challenge. Is I, me, myself. Okay. Like I said earlier, I'm not really an expert in vocabulary. So by focusing mainly on vocabulary, it's not my thing." (L90)</i>	✓	

THEME: STRATEGIES

No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree

5	St_Translation	The strategy where students first identify familiar words and then translate these words into their first language (L1) to aid comprehension of the sentence.	<i>"They would pick a word that they know and then they would translate to L1 first." (L18)</i>	✓	
6	St_Guessing	Refers to the process where students, especially those with lower proficiency, guess the meaning of unfamiliar words or sentences when they don't fully understand.	<i>"For lower proficiency, they would just understand few words or just at least one. Sometimes they don't understand the sentence at all because so they guess." (L18)</i>	✓	
7	St_Translation	The strategy where students rely on translating words they know into L1 to comprehend and deduce the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary in context.	<i>"Some kids they don't understand what tail is right. Most kids would know what cat is...Most kids would think long means panjang...tail is ekor." (L20)</i>	✓	
8	St_Contextualized	Involves teaching vocabulary by using it in meaningful sentences and elaborating on related vocabulary, helping students understand words within a context.	<i>"For example, just now tail, so what tail means? A part of the cat's body. So by then I can also ask is there any other body parts that you know on a cat?" (L22)</i>	✓	
9	St_Independent	Encourages students, particularly higher proficiency ones, to independently discover and guess the meaning of new words through contextual clues or peer input.	<i>"For the most times my TP5s and 6s...they encounter new words...they think about what this sentence about, try guess...then find in the dictionary." (L26)</i>	✓	
10	St_Support	Refers to providing close, personalized guidance to lower proficiency students, ensuring they understand the lesson by being physically and instructionally supportive.	<i>"No, actually for lower ones as well. But for lower ones, you have to guide them. You have to put yourself beside them." (L32)</i>	✓	
11	St_Contextualized	Involves having students present or explain what they understood from listening exercises to demonstrate their understanding of vocabulary in context.	<i>"I would ask them if they understand and maybe let them actually present in front, what do they understand from the passage." (L67)</i>	✓	

12	St_Scaffolding	A strategy where the teacher reintroduces vocabulary, sometimes using synonyms, to help students understand words gradually and through related meanings.	<i>"I would reintroduce the vocab, and sometimes I would use another vocab that has a similar meaning. For example, um, maybe like house or home." (L67)</i>	✓	
13	St_Repetition	The use of repetitive exposure to challenging words to help students learn pronunciation, spelling, and meaning through constant practice.	<i>"If I know it's hard, one of the strategies that I would do is using the words repetitively, repetition." (L71)</i>	✓	
14	St_Support	Extra guidance provided to students who have not yet mastered certain vocabulary or skills.	<i>"The kids that I know, they still tak master lagi, those are the ones that I go to and focus on them. It's a guidance yang...extra guidance." (L75)</i>	✓	
15	St_Game	The use of games, particularly spelling games, as a method to engage students in vocabulary learning.	<i>"Things that I do most is games. And sometimes I will also make it a spelling game." (L79)</i>	✓	
16	St_Independent	Encourages students to independently engage with learning resources.	<i>"They have their own smartphones...later on at night, I will send them a video...can you understand the song? Try to understand the song and tell me about the song." (L86)</i>	✓	
17	St_Independent	Students independently search for the meanings of words or content they find interesting, using resources like Google.	<i>"And he came to me and he said, this is the meaning of this word. He said that this is the meaning of this word...I find it at Google." (L86)</i>	✓	
18	St_Peers	Refers to peer learning, where students, particularly in group activities, motivate each other to understand and learn new vocabulary through collaboration.	<i>"For example, my choral speaking kids...not all of them are high proficiency...If anyone knows this, I have to know it also...forcing themselves to understand." (L88)</i>	✓	
19	St_L1	Refers to the students' use of their first language (L1) to help comprehend vocabulary, often by translating familiar words as a foundation for understanding.	<i>"They would pick a word that they know and then they would translate to L1 first." (L18)</i>	✓	

THEME: BELIEFS

No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
	Be_EnglishOnly	Refers to teaching and learning vocabulary exclusively in the target language (English), without translating into the first language (L1), to reinforce direct English comprehension.	<i>"English-English. That's how we learn new words." (L28)</i>	✓	
	Be_EnglishOnly	Involves encouraging students to use monolingual English dictionaries instead of bilingual ones, promoting better learning by understanding definitions in English.	<i>"If you ask them to use English-English it's going to let them English." (L30)</i>	✓	
	Be_L2 (Renamed Be_English Only)	Refers to teaching students in the target language (English), emphasizing self-discovery of vocabulary as more effective than direct instruction, leading to better retention.	<i>"Teaching them in the target language...finding words on their own is more effective than you teaching them directly." (L42)</i>	✓	
	Be_Incidental	Refers to teaching vocabulary indirectly through various teaching methods, often without explicitly focusing on vocabulary.	<i>"If today I think that the words are not really hard, maybe I would not make it as important to focus on the vocabularies." (L67)</i>	✓	
	Be_Incidental	Vocabulary is learned incidentally through students' curiosity and desire to understand unfamiliar words.	<i>"For example, if you listen to music and then you encounter one word that you 'tak pernah dengar'...you want to know the meaning of the song." (L45)</i>	✓	

Be_Incidental	Refers to teaching vocabulary through incidental learning, where students explore words in context and guess meanings rather than being explicitly taught the words.	<i>"A girl came to me and asked this one word which I know never heard of...okay, let's find out...I give my guess." (L59)</i>	✓	
Be_Incidental	Avoids forcing vocabulary learning explicitly, instead allowing vocabulary acquisition to occur naturally.	<i>"Even teaching vocabulary. Not by force. I don't think it's effective enough." (L65)</i>	✓	
Be_Incidental	Involves indirect methods of motivating students to learn vocabulary without explicitly focusing on vocabulary instruction.	<i>"They are not learning vocabularies, but I know it's success when we understand the vocabulary...I have to make them motivated by having other methods, not explicitly teaching them." (L95)</i>	✓	
Be_Incidental	Suggests that forcing explicit vocabulary learning is not as effective as allowing students to learn incidentally.	<i>"Forcing them explicitly could not be effective." (L99)</i>	✓	
Be_Incidental	Vocabulary learning often occurs incidentally, without students being fully aware that they are acquiring new words.	<i>"Most of the time they will not even realize they're learning vocabulary." (L101)</i>	✓	

Comments:

Overall, the codes are clear and largely align with the excerpts, offering insight into varied teaching strategies and beliefs. Some consolidation (especially around **Be_EnglishOnly** and **Be_L2**) may enhance the coherence of the coding scheme, particularly for themes where beliefs overlap.

TEACHER 4 CODES

THEME : CHALLENGES

No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
1	Ch_Exposure	Refers to the lack of opportunities for students, especially in rural areas.	<i>"especially because they are students from rural area, so they are not exposed to the language." (L26)</i>	✓	
2	Ch_Attitude	Refers to the students' or parents' lack of enthusiasm, interest, or motivation towards learning English or participating in vocabulary-related activities.	<i>"I want them to complete their homework first compared to prepare the vocabulary book because that is additional work." (L30)</i>	✓	
3	Ch_Attitude	Refers to the students' or parents' lack of enthusiasm, interest, or motivation towards learning English or participating in vocabulary-related activities.	<i>"they are not showing interest enough in English." (L34)</i>	✓	
4	Ch_Attitude	Refers to the students' or parents' lack of enthusiasm, interest, or motivation towards learning English or participating in vocabulary-related activities.	<i>"Yeah, their motivation and the way I teach as well. I must not, I must not get too "Bandar" (city-like)." (L36)</i>	✓	
5	Ch_Time	Refers to the challenge of time management where teachers and students prioritize other tasks, such as completing homework, over vocabulary learning activities.	<i>"Actually, I believe in the vocabulary books, but then the challenges made me think that they are more priorities that I should. The homework, the routine that they have to get used to. Instead of reading the vocabulary book first." (L39)</i>	✓	

6	Ch_TeacherAbility	Refers to teachers' lack of skill or capacity to fully utilize available tools and resources, such as watching English TV shows or using a dictionary in teaching.	<i>"I will definitely encourage that. But then I haven't told the kids to watch the TV in English." (L41)</i>	✓	
7	Ch_TeacherAbility	Refers to teachers' lack of skill or capacity to fully utilize available tools and resources, such as watching English TV shows or using a dictionary in teaching.	<i>"The other challenges will be maybe the thing that I thought, for example, the teaching dictionary part in DSKP. Yeah, myself. It is the disadvantage for myself. I mean, I didn't, maybe I didn't. Thoroughly look at it." (L55)</i>	✓	
8	Ch_Experience	Refers to the teacher's lack of prior knowledge or experience in implementing specific strategies, such as using dictionaries, due to not observing or being guided by senior teachers.	<i>"I didn't realize. And I used to seek out for my other teachers, other senior teachers. And when I'm looking at my other year, three teachers, I haven't once look at them using dictionary. So I taught present at all the usage of the dictionaries." (L57)</i>	✓	

THEME: STRATEGIES

No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
9	St_Cognitive	Refers to engaging students in activities that involve understanding, processing, and organizing information, such as reading, guessing meanings, or brainstorming known facts.	<i>"The first thing first that I will usually do is to ask what day is today? So that is my very typical way of teaching. What day is today? So I will teach them. Today is what day? What is the date? Today is 24. March 9th. 24. That will be the most typical way of I am teaching English". (L12)</i>	✓	
10	St_Cognitive	Refers to engaging students in activities that involve understanding, processing, and organizing information, such as reading, guessing meanings, or brainstorming known facts.	<i>Other than that, if we learn using the textbook, I will ask them to read first. If it is for reading lesson, I will give them time to read." (L12)</i>	✓	

11	St_Social	Refers to pairing students, particularly weaker students (Pemulihan), with more proficient peers to encourage peer learning and collaboration.	<i>"And in case they are Pemulihan, I will partner them up with those who are more proficient." (L12)</i>	✓	
12	St_Cognitive	Refers to engaging students in activities that involve understanding, processing, and organizing information, such as brainstorming known facts related to the lesson topic.	<i>"There are times when I introduce the new words first or else I will trigger them questions such as if we are learning about countries, I will ask them about what countries do they know? Many countries that they know. So they will brainstorm themselves of getting knowing the list of countries meaning relating to." (L16)</i>	✓	
13	St_Direct	Refers to explicitly telling or explaining the meaning of words directly to the students. Refers to teacher-led, straightforward explanations of vocabulary where the teacher directly provides the word's meaning to students without requiring inference.	<i>"Encounter familiar words, I will generally straightaway tell them what the meaning of the words," (L20)</i>	✓	
14	St_Guessing	Refers to allowing more proficient students to deduce or infer the meaning of unknown words by relating them to the context or previously learned sentences. Refers to encouraging students to use contextual clues to infer the meaning of unknown words.	<i>"If they are more proficient pupils, I will ask them to read the previous sentence and then they can relate. They can guess what the actual meaning." (L20)</i>	✓	
15	St_Direct	Refers to explicitly telling or explaining the meaning of words directly to the students. Refers to teacher-led, straightforward explanations of vocabulary where the	<i>"I will explicitly tell them the meanings instead of letting them, letting them know the words by themselves." (L45)</i>	✓	

		teacher directly provides the word's meaning to students without requiring inference.			
16	St_Gesture	Refers to using physical movements or gestures to reinforce learning, especially to help weaker students remember English words or concepts.	<i>"This is especially for young, the weak students. Because the weak students, they need to. They usually have a hard time of remembering English words can. So when they do something and then they say out the words, maybe the gestures will help them to remember better."</i> (L18)	✓	
THEME: BELIEFS					
No	Code	Operational Definition	Excerpt	Level of disagreement	
				Agree	Disagree
	Be_VocabularyImportance		<i>"It's really important because once they know the words, they will understand what they read? For me, because most of my pupils, when they do not know the meaning of the words, they will get uninterested to read more. So they will not want to read more. So for me, it is really important for them to get know of the meaning of the words first, and then only we proceed to the next lesson, I mean, of letting them know the meaning of the words and then we proceed to the proceeding lessons."</i> (L24)	✓	
	Be_L1		<i>"So my technique of letting them know the meaning of the words first and then relating it to the L1, that is actually helpful for them. Even though we know that it is not good to teach them in L1 when we are teaching them English. However, we have to take into consideration of these pupils proficiencies as well. If we teach them more than what they can, they will not get anything. So at least for them to be able to at least know the words, they have to be taught in L1, not at most, but little by little."</i> (L26)	✓	

	Be_Mixed		“The most effective for me even though I’m not using that method. It will be combination, but more to explicitly. More explicit.” (L48)	✓	
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Comments:

The operational definitions mostly align with the excerpts and highlight different instructional and motivational challenges. However, refining some definitions for codes like **Ch_Ability** and **St_Direct vs. St_Guessing** might improve clarity in the analyses.

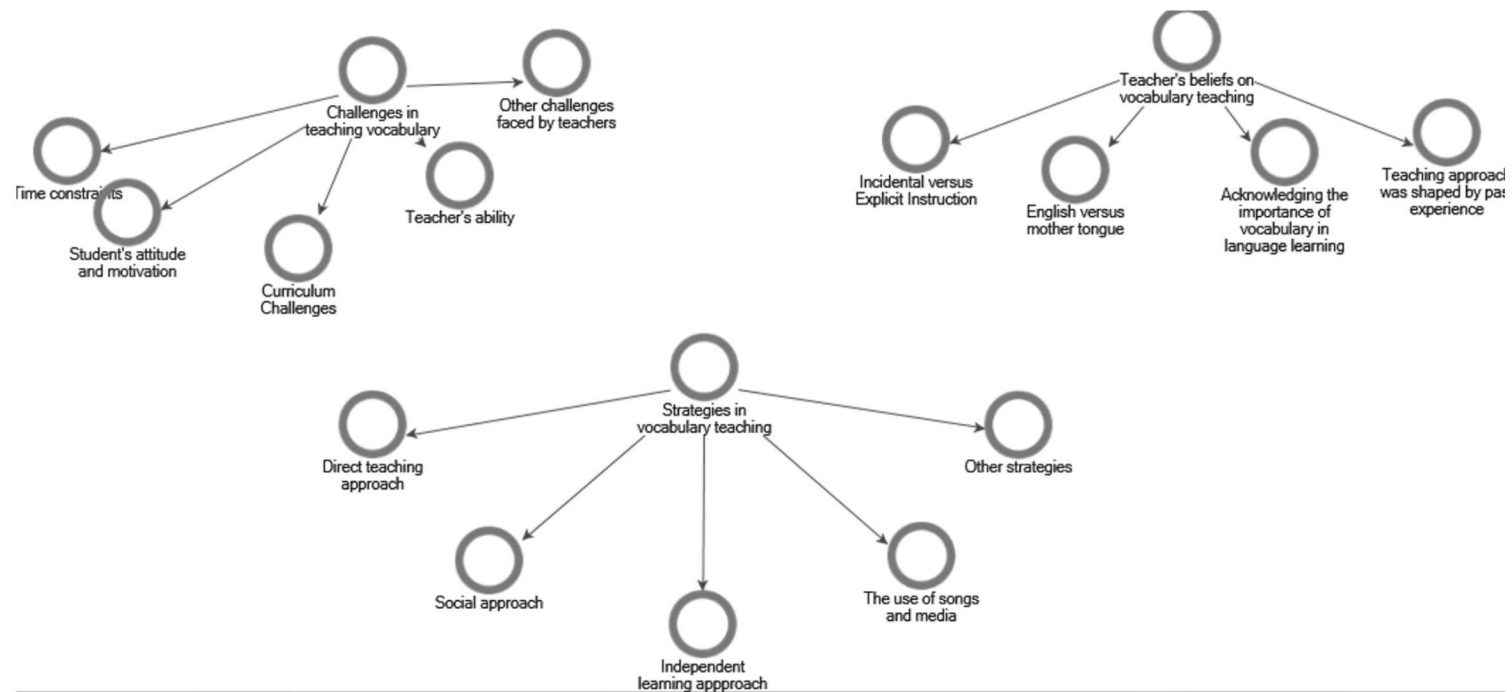
APPENDIX 8

Interrater Profile

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Name of Co Supervisor	Dr. Mohammad Radzi bin Manap
Name of University	Universiti Teknologi MARA
Project Title	Exploring ESL Vocabulary Teaching among Malaysian Primary School Teachers: Strategies, Perception and Challenges
Research Objectives	Investigating Malaysian ESL primary school teachers' perception on vocabulary teaching and learning.
Approach	Semi structured interviews with primary school ESL teachers to explore their vocabulary teaching strategies, perceptions, and challenges.
INTER-RATER	
Name	FARINA NOZAKIAH BINTI TAZIJAN
Institution/ University	UiTM CAWANGAN SHAH ALAM
Area of Expertise	TESL, E-LEARNING
Qualification	<p>MASTER OF ARTS (ENG. LANG.) (SARJANA (MASTER)), UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA</p> <p>BACH. OF EDUC.(HONS)(TESL) 2ND CLASS UPPER (IJAZAH SARJANA MUDA (KEPUJIAN)), UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA</p>

APPENDIX 9

Overview of Themes and Sub-Themes Generated Using Nvivo 14



AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Siti Nur Badriah Binti Mohd Tahir holds a Bachelor's Degree in Applied Language Studies (English for Professional Communication). She further pursued a Diploma Pascasiswazah Pendidikan Bahasa Inggeris at IPG Kampus Raja Melewar, specializing in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). She is currently serving as an English teacher at a Malaysian primary school. Her professional interests include vocabulary instruction, classroom-based language teaching strategies, and learner engagement in ESL contexts.

LIST OF PUBLICATION:

- Tahir, S. N. B. M., Manap, M. R., & Ramli, N. F. M. (2023). Strategies Used by Malaysian ESL Primary School Teachers in Vocabulary Teaching. In M. Rahim, A. A. Ab Aziz, I. Saja @ Mearaj, N. A. Kamarudin, O. L. Chong, N. Zaini, A. Bidin, N. Mohamad Ayob, Z. Mohd Sulaiman, Y. S. Chan, & N. H. M. Saad (Eds.), *Embracing Change: Emancipating the Landscape of Research in Linguistic, Language and Literature*, vol 7. European Proceedings of Educational Sciences (pp. 458-467). European Publisher. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epes.23097.41>
- Mohd Tahir, S. N. B., Nor Fazlin Mohd Ramli, & Mohd Radzi Manap. (2025). Vocabulary Teaching in Malaysian Primary Schools: A Study on Teacher Strategies and Practices. *International Journal of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics*, 9(3). <https://doi.org/10.24191/ijmal.v9i3.5655>



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