

English Instruction Practices of Pre-service Physical Education Students at Dehasen University Bengkulu

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: English instruction, pre-service teachers, physical education, adaptive strategies, EFL</p> <p>DOI: https://doi.org/10.22437/langue.v4i1.51889</p> <p>Received: November 22, 2025</p> <p>Reviewed: Desember 24, 2025</p> <p>Accepted: January 03, 2026</p>	<p>Grounded in Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) principles, this study examines the English instruction practices of pre-service Physical Education (PE) teachers at Dehasen University Bengkulu during action-based lessons, focusing on instruction types, adaptive strategies, and challenges. A descriptive qualitative design was applied with 18 final-year PE students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and lesson plan analysis, and analyzed thematically. Findings show that teachers primarily used verbal commands, such as “Pass the ball!”, “Run to the cone”, and “Stretch your arms”, often supported by visual demonstrations, gestures, and combined verbal-gestural strategies, particularly during fast-paced drills. Adaptive techniques, including vocabulary simplification (“Kick” instead of “Perform a kick”), repetition (“Jump twice, jump twice”), pausing, and selective code-switching (using Indonesian for clarification), facilitated student comprehension. Challenges included limited English proficiency, fast-paced activities, and balancing classroom management with instruction delivery. The study underscores the importance of reflective practice, multimodal instruction, and targeted pre-service training, providing insights for effective English instruction in EFL PE contexts.</p>

1. Introduction

Effective classroom interaction relies heavily on how teachers use language. In EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, the choice of instructional language directly impacts students’ understanding, engagement, and learning outcomes (Islam et al, 2025). In Physical Education (PE), English instructions are particularly important because they guide physical activities, explain rules, maintain safety, and support lesson organization (Priyohutomo et al., 2025). PE lessons require concise, clear, and action-focused language to ensure students can follow instructions quickly during fast-paced exercises (Sari et al., 2023). Consequently, the ability to use English effectively is an essential component of pre-service PE teachers’ professional readiness.

Observations at Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu reveal that pre-service PE teachers frequently combine English and Indonesian during lessons, using a mix for nearly 40–60% of instructional

time. Students report difficulties in understanding instructions for activities such as volleyball drills and group exercises, with 68% experiencing problems comprehending full English instructions, 72% struggling with action-oriented vocabulary, and 65% failing to respond accurately to rapid commands (Putra et al., 2025). These findings indicate that limited English proficiency can hinder active participation in PE activities. Similar trends have been noted in other non-language subjects, where pre-service teachers rely on the first language (L1) to maintain classroom control and support comprehension (Sari et al., 2023).

This study focuses on three research questions: (1) what types of English instructions pre-service PE teachers use, (2) how they adjust instructions to students' comprehension, and (3) the challenges they encounter during action-based PE activities (Metaria & Cahyono, 2024; Putra et al., 2025). Investigating these questions is important because PE classes require rapid communication and safety-sensitive instruction strategies, which differ from general classroom contexts.

Teacher beliefs, prior experiences, and pedagogical knowledge significantly influence how English is used in instruction (Pusparini, Widiati, & Susanti, 2021). Microteaching research indicates that limited English proficiency and instructional competence can reduce clarity, whereas reflective practices enable teachers to adjust their language based on students' needs (Amir, N., 2025; Rozimela, Fatimah, & Fudhla, 2025).

The study draws on Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) to integrate subject expertise with effective teaching strategies (Wang & Lam, 2024), reflective practice for adaptive instruction (Tajeddin & Farrell, 2025), and SLA principles emphasizing comprehensible input and interaction (VanPatten & Williams, 2015). These frameworks guide the analysis of English instruction types, adjustments, and challenges in PE settings.

The research fills a gap by focusing on a non-language subject where English serves as the instructional medium. Findings are expected to provide both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for improving pre-service PE teacher education and classroom practices.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Instructional Language in Physical Education in EFL Contexts

In EFL classrooms, the clarity of teachers' language strongly influences student comprehension and engagement. In PE, this effect is intensified due to the fast-paced and physically demanding nature of lessons (Priyohutomo et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2023). Observations at Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu indicate that pre-service PE teachers often switch between English and Indonesian, using mixed language for nearly half of class time (Putra et al., 2025). This code-switching is generally intended to maintain order and support comprehension, yet students still report difficulties understanding action commands, vocabulary, and rapid instructions.

Research on non-language subjects similarly shows that teachers often rely on L1 to facilitate understanding (Sundari & Febriyanti, 2021). SLA theory underscores the need for comprehensible input, interaction, and feedback, which can help teachers design instructions that students with limited English proficiency can follow (VanPatten & Williams, 2015). In PE, these strategies must be adapted to the dynamic, physically active classroom environment.

2.2 Types and Functions of English Instructions in PE

English instructions in PE serve several purposes, including guiding exercises, explaining procedures, correcting errors, and maintaining safety (Metaria & Cahyono, 2024; Sari et al., 2023). Pre-service teachers typically employ verbal commands, demonstrations, and gestures.

However, many struggle to balance clarity, pacing, and accuracy, particularly during fast-moving drills (Abdillah & Fithriani, 2023; Putra et al., 2025).

In the local PE context, effective strategies include simplifying vocabulary, highlighting key action words, and combining verbal instructions with physical demonstrations (Putra et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2023). These approaches enable students to follow commands more accurately and demonstrate the importance of context-sensitive teaching strategies in EFL PE settings.

2.3 Teacher Beliefs, Proficiency, and Pedagogical Knowledge

Teachers' beliefs about language teaching, their confidence in English, and their prior experiences shape instructional choices, including the degree of L1 use (Pusparini et al., 2021). Microteaching studies show that reflective practices help teachers identify limitations in language use and adjust instructions to students' comprehension levels (Amir, 2023; Rozimela et al., 2025).

Evidence from Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu indicates that pre-service teachers who actively reflect on their instructional methods are better able to combine English commands with demonstrations and gestures, improving student comprehension. This highlights the need for teacher education programs to emphasize both pedagogical content knowledge and reflective practice for developing English instructional competence (Abdillah & Fithriani, 2023).

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks for English Instruction in PE

Several theoretical perspectives inform research on English instruction in PE. Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) stresses the integration of subject expertise with instructional strategies to produce comprehensible lessons (Wang & Lam, 2024). Reflective practice encourages teachers to continuously monitor student responses and modify instructions as needed (Rozimela et al., 2025). SLA theory emphasizes the role of comprehensible input, interaction, and feedback in language acquisition (VanPatten & Williams, 2015).

By combining these theoretical insights with empirical observations from local PE classes, this review addresses a research gap in non-language subjects using English as the medium of instruction. Findings support the design of training programs that equip pre-service PE teachers with strategies to improve student comprehension, engagement, and safety during physically active lessons (Abdillah & Fithriani, 2023).

2.5 Implications from Previous Studies

Previous studies suggest several key points relevant to this research:

- Pre-service teachers often need additional support to deliver clear English instructions in non-language subjects (Abdillah & Fithriani, 2023; Metaria & Cahyono, 2024).
- Combining verbal commands with gestures and demonstrations enhances comprehension, particularly in fast-paced or action-oriented lessons (Putra et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2023).
- Reflective practice and awareness of pedagogical content knowledge improve pre-service teachers' ability to manage classroom communication effectively (Pusparini et al., 2021).

These findings justify the present study's focus on pre-service PE teachers at Dehasen University Bengkulu, aiming to analyze the types, adjustments, and challenges of English instruction in action-based PE lessons.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the English instruction practices of pre-service Physical Education (PE) students at Dehasen University Bengkulu. A descriptive qualitative approach is suitable for exploring the types of English instructions, the adjustments made to support student comprehension, and the challenges encountered during action-based PE lessons. This design allows for detailed descriptions of real classroom practices, enabling researchers to understand instructional phenomena within their natural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Although this study employs a descriptive qualitative design, some frequency counts are reported to illustrate patterns across participants, without implying statistical generalization. These counts serve only to highlight recurring practices, strategies, and challenges observed among pre-service PE teachers, complementing the in-depth qualitative narratives.

By focusing on the actual teaching practices of pre-service teachers, this study provides insights into both linguistic and pedagogical aspects of English instruction in non-language subjects, highlighting patterns, strengths, and areas that need improvement.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study were 18 pre-service Physical Education students enrolled in the teaching program at Dehasen University Bengkulu. These students were in their final year of the PE program and had completed microteaching courses and basic English courses relevant to classroom instruction.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who had experience teaching PE lessons in an EFL context and were able to deliver instructions in English. Purposive sampling ensures that data collected are rich and relevant to the research objectives, focusing on participants most likely to provide meaningful information regarding English instructional practices (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Asmara & Yanto, 2023).

3.3 Instruments

Three instruments were used to collect data:

1. **Classroom Observations:** Pre-service PE lessons were observed to document English instruction types, gestures, demonstrations, and code-switching. Examples of instructions included *“Pass the ball!”*, *“Stretch your arms”*, and *“Run to the cone”*, often accompanied by demonstrations or gestures. Observations were recorded through field notes and audio to capture both verbal and non-verbal strategies (Abdillah & Fithriani, 2023).
2. **Semi-structured Interviews:** Participants were interviewed to explore their perceptions, adjustment strategies, and challenges in delivering English instructions. They also provided examples of instructions, such as *“Jump twice”* or *“Throw the ball to your partner”*, reinforcing classroom observations (Pusparini, Widiati, & Susanti, 2021; Ramadhani & Fithriani, 2025).
3. **Instructional Documentation:** Lesson plans and teaching materials were analyzed to identify how English instructions were embedded in PE activities and to triangulate observation and interview data. Example sentences in the documentation strengthened credibility and transparency.

Together, these instruments ensured **reliability and validity** through data triangulation, while concrete examples of instruction illustrated actual classroom practices in the EFL PE context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis through several steps:

1. Data Preparation: Observation notes, interview transcripts, and lesson plans were transcribed and organized for coding. All instances of English instruction, gestures, demonstrations, and code-switching were highlighted for systematic analysis.
2. Initial Coding: Recurring patterns, phrases, and behaviors related to English instruction, adaptive strategies, and challenges were coded (Nasution & Karimaliana, 2024). Examples of instructions included “*Jump twice*”, “*Pass the ball to your partner*”, “*Stretch your arms slowly*”, and “*Run to the cone*”. Adaptive strategies such as vocabulary simplification, repetition, pausing, and selective code-switching were also coded to capture techniques supporting student comprehension.
3. Theme Development: Codes were grouped into main themes aligned with research questions:
 - Types of English Instructions: verbal commands, demonstrations, gestures, combined strategies
 - Instructional Adjustment Strategies: simplification, repetition, pausing, code-switching
 - Challenges Faced by Pre-service Teachers: students’ limited English proficiency, fast-paced activities
4. Data Interpretation: Themes were interpreted in relation to PCK, reflective practice, and SLA principles, as well as previous studies, to provide insights into instructional practices and teacher education implications (Van Patten & Williams, 2015).
5. Triangulation and Validation: Findings from observations, interviews, and lesson plans were compared to ensure consistency and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ramadhani & Fithriani, 2025).

Including concrete examples of English instructions in coding and theme development strengthens the link between classroom practices and the thematic analysis, providing a clear depiction of EFL instructional strategies in PE contexts.

4. Findings

4.1 Types of English Instructions Used by Pre-service PE Teachers

Classroom observations of 18 pre-service PE teachers showed that several types of English instructions were employed during lessons. These included verbal commands, visual demonstrations, gestural cues, and combined verbal-gestural instructions.

Table 1: Frequency of Instruction Types in PE Lessons

Instruction Type	Frequency (out of 18 lessons)	Percentage (%)
Verbal Commands	18	100
Visual Demonstrations	15	83
Gestural Cues	12	67
Combined Verbal-Gestural	14	78

Observations indicated that verbal commands were used in all lessons, while demonstrations and gestures were applied depending on activity complexity. Combined verbal-gestural strategies were typically employed during fast-paced drills, such as volleyball, relay races, or group-based exercises, particularly when students struggled to follow instructions quickly.

Examples of English instructions observed:

- Verbal Commands: *“Pass the ball!”*, *“Run to the cone”*, *“Stretch your arms”*
- Demonstrations: Teachers demonstrated movements while giving instructions, e.g., showing how to throw or catch a ball while saying *“Throw the ball to your partner”*
- Gestures and Combined Strategies: Pointing, clapping, or hand signals combined with verbal commands to reinforce comprehension

These strategies helped students link language with physical actions, supporting comprehension in a non-language subject context.

4.2 Adjustment Strategies to Support Student Comprehension

Interviews revealed several strategies used to facilitate understanding of English instructions:

Table 2: Frequency of Adjustment Strategies

Adjustment Strategy	Number of Teachers Using (n=18)	Percentage (%)
Simplification of Vocabulary	18	100
Repetition	16	89
Pausing	15	83
Code-switching	11	61

Description and examples:

- Vocabulary Simplification: Replacing complex words with simpler action terms, e.g., *“Kick”* instead of *“Perform a kick”*
- Repetition: Commands repeated for reinforcement, e.g., *“Jump twice, jump twice”*
- Pausing: Short pauses allowed students time to process instructions
- Selective Code-switching: Occasional use of Indonesian to clarify complex instructions

Supporting interview excerpts:

- *“Sometimes I switch to Indonesian for key words if students seem lost, but I try to keep most instructions in English to give them exposure”* (Participant 7, Interview, 2025)
- *“I repeat commands and show gestures together, especially when we do group relays, so everyone can follow safely”* (Participant 12, Interview, 2025)

These strategies align with SLA principles emphasizing comprehensible input and sufficient processing time (Van Patten & Williams, 2015), and reflect reflective practice, as teachers monitored student responses and adjusted instructions in real-time (Rozimela, Fatimah, & Fudhla, 2025).

4.3 Challenges in Delivering English Instructions

Participants identified several challenges during lesson delivery:

Table 3: Reported Challenges in English Instruction

Challenge	Frequency of Reports (n=18)	Percentage (%)
Students' limited English proficiency	15	83
Fast-paced activities	14	78
Difficulty remembering action-specific vocabulary	12	67
Managing class while giving instructions	11	61

Supporting interview excerpts:

- *“It’s challenging to keep everyone safe while giving instructions in English, especially during volleyball drills”* (Participant 4, Interview, 2025)
- *“I sometimes forget the exact action terms in English, so I have to simplify or switch to Indonesian quickly”* (Participant 10, Interview, 2025)

These findings indicate that students’ language limitations and rapid lesson pacing were the most significant obstacles. Teachers also highlighted the difficulty of balancing classroom management with instructional delivery, particularly during physically active lessons requiring simultaneous monitoring and guidance.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that pre-service Physical Education (PE) teachers at Dehasen University Bengkulu predominantly used verbal commands during lessons, complemented by visual demonstrations, gestural cues, and combined verbal-gestural strategies when necessary. This multimodal approach reflects teachers’ efforts to enhance student comprehension during fast-paced PE activities, aligning with the principles of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which advocate integrating subject mastery with effective instructional strategies (Wang & Lam, 2024). The consistent use of verbal commands, such as *“Pass the ball!”* or *“Jump twice”*, highlights the importance of clear, direct language in action-oriented classrooms, while selective multimodal strategies were applied to manage complex drills and ensure accurate student performance.

To support comprehension, teachers employed several adaptive strategies, including vocabulary simplification, repetition, pausing, and selective code-switching. Vocabulary simplification was universally applied to replace complex terms with simple, action-oriented words, ensuring accessibility for students with limited English proficiency. Repetition and pausing provided learners with adequate processing time, consistent with Second Language Acquisition (SLA) principles emphasizing comprehensible input and interaction (Van Patten & Williams, 2015). Selective code-switching, though less frequent, was strategically used to clarify instructions when students struggled, reflecting reflective practice and real-time lesson adjustment (Rozimela, Fatimah, & Fudhla, 2025). As one participant noted:

“Sometimes I switch to Indonesian for key words if students seem lost, but I try to keep most instructions in English to give them exposure” (Participant 7, Interview, 2025).

Despite these strategies, several challenges persisted. Students' limited English proficiency and the fast-paced nature of PE activities were reported as major obstacles, while difficulty recalling action-specific vocabulary and balancing classroom management with instructional delivery also emerged as concerns. These findings support prior research suggesting that teachers of non-language subjects often rely on L1 to maintain classroom control and facilitate understanding (Sundari & Febriyanti, 2021). However, this study extends previous work by providing empirical evidence from the Indonesian PE context, emphasizing how adaptive strategies and reflective practice interact to support student engagement.

The practical implications of these findings are significant for teacher education. Incorporating microteaching sessions, simulations, and reflective exercises into pre-service programs can enhance teachers' ability to deliver clear, action-oriented English instructions. Training should emphasize multimodal instruction, lesson pacing, vocabulary management, and strategic code-switching, equipping teachers to respond flexibly to students' comprehension levels. Such interventions can improve not only instructional effectiveness but also classroom safety and student engagement in physically active lessons (Abdillah & Fithriani, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, this study bridges local empirical observations with broader frameworks, integrating PCK, SLA, and reflective practice to provide a holistic understanding of instructional language use in EFL contexts. By combining classroom observation, interviews, and lesson plan analysis through triangulation, the research confirms that adaptive strategies are essential to mediating language barriers in action-based learning environments. This approach contributes novelty to the field by focusing specifically on PE, a non-language subject, within the Indonesian EFL context—a setting underrepresented in previous studies.

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of strategic, adaptive, and multimodal English instruction in pre-service PE teacher training. The integration of empirical evidence with theoretical perspectives highlights effective instructional practices and identifies areas for improvement, offering guidance for teacher education programs, curriculum developers, and future research. The findings demonstrate that deliberate preparation, reflective practice, and strategic adaptation are key to ensuring students' comprehension, participation, and engagement in dynamic PE lessons conducted in English.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the English instruction practices of pre-service Physical Education (PE) teachers at Dehasen University Bengkulu, focusing on instruction types, adaptive strategies, and challenges. Findings show that teachers primarily used verbal commands, often supported by demonstrations, gestures, and combined strategies, while adaptive techniques such as vocabulary simplification, repetition, pausing, and selective code-switching facilitated student comprehension.

Challenges included limited English proficiency, fast-paced activities, and classroom management demands. The study highlights the importance of strategic, adaptive, and multimodal instruction, reinforced by reflective practice, to enhance student engagement, comprehension, and safety in action-based EFL PE lessons.

Theoretically, the study integrates PCK, SLA principles, and reflective practice, offering insight into effective English instruction in non-language subjects. Practically, it underscores the need for targeted pre-service training that equips teachers to apply multimodal and adaptive strategies effectively.

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