

What EFL Students Think about Methods Used to Instruct Their Language

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Abstract

EFL classes are offered at the secondary school level in Indonesia. To ensure the success of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, educators in the field must use effective pedagogical practices. Assessing teachers' performance in the classroom can have far-reaching implications on the quality of education in the classroom. A useful strategy is to analyze the pupils' perspectives. Research was therefore done to detail which techniques students found useful and which they found less, as well as the reasons behind these judgments. Twenty-nine college students participated in this study via a systematic random sampling strategy. Focus group discussion (FGD) was used to collect data, which was then analyzed descriptively using a qualitative methodology. The results show that some methods of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) are viewed positively by students. The communicative method, interactions amongst students, and well-structured programs all fall under this category of methods. The value of engaging in activities that foster genuine communication was stressed by the students. They also emphasized the teacher's part in making learning easier and more understandable. These results are consistent with other studies that have highlighted the value of student-centered and communicative methods of language instruction.

Keywords: students' perceptions, EFL, teaching methods

Introduction

English as the international language becomes a foreign language taught at all school levels in Indonesia and secondary school. It is taught three years in junior high school and three years in senior high school. Whereas, some primary schools also involve English as one subject at an early age. English is different from *Bahasa*. Therefore, English teachers in Indonesia need to find the appropriate teaching method. English teachers need various teaching methods, especially at the

secondary level. Teaching English as a foreign language is extremely different from teaching *Bahasa* as the first language in Indonesia. *Bahasa* is used daily by the students while English is only learned at school. Therefore, students will not have adequate time to learn and acquire English. Then, English as a means of international communication requires English teachers to be more professional in developing their classrooms by choosing appropriate teaching methods to accommodate students' needs.

The teaching method is assumed to achieve something in the teaching process. Through the appropriate method, teachers can achieve the objective of the teaching plan. Many teaching methods have been introduced to English teachers in Indonesia. Many types of research about an effective method of teaching the English language have been conducted in English language skills or English language elements. Teachers only need to learn the teaching methods that meet their students' needs. In Saudi college research, Liton (1987) found that EFL teachers should employ multiple techniques to satisfy students' unique demands. When constructing the teaching technique, the expert considered specific language teaching and learning principles.

Another approach for gauging the efficacy of classroom instruction is the students' evaluations. According to Obanya in Etuk et al. (2013), an instructional strategy's efficacy is largely contingent on how well it is implemented and how it resonates with the learner, which is reflected in the latter's behavior and outlook. It has been shown that students are more likely to perform well in class when they positively perceive their teachers. Almost no studies have been completed to characterize how students feel about how their teachers teach. In-class evaluations that focus on students' perspectives might yield useful information for educators to use in shaping their practice.

In contrast, teachers can learn much about refining their approach to teaching English to speakers of other languages by soliciting feedback from their pupils (EFL). Given the preceding, the purpose of this study was to characterize the instructional strategies that students found helpful and those that they found ineffective. To explain why students liked some tactics and disliked others.

This research addresses a knowledge gap in the research literature by focusing on the effectiveness of different teaching methods for EFL students. This research is innovative since it seeks to learn about students' perspectives and preferences on

teaching methods by soliciting their direct comments. Insights gained from this method can help EFL educators hone their practices and raise standards for their students. The research questions from this research are: (1) What instructional strategies do students find helpful and ineffective in learning English as a foreign language? (2) What are the students' perceptions and preferences regarding teaching methods in EFL education?.

Research Methodology

A descriptive research methodology was used in this study's qualitative analysis. Descriptive research, as defined by Gay et al. (2006:11), identifies and reports the status quo. The goal of qualitative research is to gain insights into a phenomenon of interest by the gathering, analysis, and interpretation of detailed narrative and visual (non-numerical) data, as defined by Palys & Atchison, Creswell (2017), and Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, and Walker (2018). Consequently, a descriptive research design in a qualitative method reports the way a phenomenon is through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of non-numerical data.

The gathering of data for this study was accomplished through the use of focus group discussions (FGDs). According to Dawson (2002: 76), the purpose of a focus group is to bring together a number of individuals to do research through an in-depth discussion about a certain subject that has been predetermined. According to Bungin (2007: 223), a Focus Group Discussion, often known as a FGD, is one approach of gathering qualitative data that can be used to acquire a general sense of a topic based on the members' combined expertise in the field. The focus group method is a good fit for this research's topic. During the focus group discussion, the researcher conducted only semi-structured interviews.

The technique of data analysis employed in this research was done based on the FGD's transcript made. Microanalysis as suggested by Bungie was used in this analysis. In this analysis, some steps have done. They were: (1) the researcher did coding for the same perception found, (2) determining the same perception in different context, (3) defining the same term used, (4) classifying and categorizing the perception of FGD's subjects in the discussion, (5) relating the all the category made into discussion focus of this research, and (6) preparing report draft of FGD to be discussed in bigger group to gather more information about the findings.

The subject of this research is the students of SMK Darussalam Makassar. The School was founded in 2004 based on the agreement letter of the government head of education and culture Makassar No. 425/03310DPK/II/2005 on February 24th, 2005. This private school is located on Jalan Perintis Kemerdekaan KM 19 Makassar. The vision of this school is to make SMK Darussalam Makassar one of the main chosen for Makassar society and surrounding. Moreover, its mission is to create a creative, independent, faithful human. The vocational schools try to impress a competent alumnus in all skills by implementing a competency-based curriculum maximally supported by many modern teaching facilities.

The school also provides more than 100 professional teachers with a communicative and interactive approach. There are five-skill aspects in this school. They are Technology and Engineering (Teknologi dan Rekayasa), Art, Industry, and Tourism (Seni, Kerajinan, dan Pariwisata), Information Technology and Communication (Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi), Healthy (Kesehatan), Business and Management (Bisnis dan Manajemen). Every skill aspect has its own skill program and skill competence. It can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1 The kinds of Skill Competence in SMK Darussalam Makassar

No.	Skill Aspect	Skill Program	Skill Competence
1.	Technology and Engineering	Automotive Technique (OT)	OT of easy transportation
			OT of Large machinery
			OT of Motorcycle
2.	Art, Industry and Tourism	Electricity technique	Technique of electricity installation power
3.	Information Technology and Communication	Tourism	Computer technique and network
			Software engineering
4.	Healthy	Healthy	Nursing
5.	Business and Management	Administration	Official administration

Indicators utilized in the study are not specified in the research. The research questions and emphasis on instructional strategies suggest, however, that student opinions on the usefulness of various pedagogical approaches, student preferences

for particular instructional activities, and feedback on the impact of these strategies on learning outcomes could all serve as useful indicators. The article does not provide the number of people who will be interviewed. However, compared to quantitative research, qualitative studies often use a lower sample size. Until no new information or themes emerge from the interviews or observations, the sample size in qualitative research is governed by the principle of data saturation. Accordingly, the number of interviewees would be determined by the point at which data saturation is attained and no further insights or themes emerge from the interviews.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

1. Students' Perceptions of Some Effective Teaching Methods

An effective strategy is crucial to the students' success when teaching English as a foreign language. At SMK Darussalam Makassar, all students who participated in the FGD were aware of it, despite their varying skill levels. They noted that when their teacher used an approach that may get them more involved in learning English, they could better grasp the material covered in class. All the students had ideas about how the EFL instructor could have better conveyed the subject matter. The researcher chose an instruction approach based on the students' assessments of what worked best for them. Based on what they've observed, we can conclude:

a. Theory of Language

The student realized that a teaching method should consider the communication aspect to achieve the English language teaching goal. One of the interviewees perceived that the theory of language was that language was a means of communication.

b. Aspect of Acquisition

An aspect of how the students acquire the language in the teaching and learning process also becomes important in employing the teaching method. Students realized two aspects of acquisitions should be involved in EFL class. They are: 1) Meaningful vocabulary: In using a language, the students believe they need vocabulary for that. Most of the students argued it in an interview. They stated so because they thought they could use the vocabulary they translated when he translated the text when practicing English. Therefore, it is helpful in the teaching and learning process. Vocabulary as a significant part of understanding and practicing

the English language raised the students' awareness. It was because they felt difficult to understand and practice English when they did not know the vocabulary used. 2) Simple grammar and structure: in arranging an appropriate sentence, applying grammar and structure will become a significant case to realize. The students also had a consciousness about that. However, they thought it did not mean they should study more grammar and structure in English teaching and learning. Because they believed that using language was more important than learning its grammar or its structure.

c. Teaching and Learning

As students who experienced many kinds of teaching and learning processes in the classroom, seven main categories of teaching and learning are found in the data gained as follows:

In term of theory of Learning (Discovery learning), some students also believed that everyone had their abilities. They said that to understand the lesson, they should use their ability to solve their problem. They could discover it by themselves. They believed they could solve their problems when given a chance. In addition, a teacher in the teaching and learning process should apply it.

In another hand, in term Language teaching focused on communication practice, among all students' perceptions, practicing English through communication became the most arisen by students. They believed learning English through practicing the language in speaking, conversation or dialogue, would make them understand how to use English well. Because through practicing, they could use the language as they could.

Therefore, they thought their teachers involved them in some practices in the teaching and learning process. They can be fully successful in the English teaching and learning process. In term of good Interaction (Student-student interaction), the students assumed two kinds of interaction that could bring them success in the learning process in the classroom. They were working in-group and work in pair. In working in-group or in pairs, they said that they could share knowledge one another. They could discuss what they did not understand. They could also find a solution together.

In the Student-teacher interaction, the student can ask the teacher which part they need to explain again. The teacher also can check whether the students understand the lesson or not. This interaction can also be done when the student

works in a group or a pair. They can have some help from their teacher when they have difficulties. Thus, the teaching method should put this interaction in its employment.

In the part of Right Teacher Role, the teacher has an important aspect affecting the success of the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Students at SMK Darussalam Makassar also assumed it. The teacher had a main role in assigning which method to meet the students' needs. The students were also aware of their teachers' role should be in their perception. They were: 1) Facilitating the students, where students felt the teacher should facilitate them in teaching and learning. They thought that the teacher should provide some help for them in the classroom. Especially when they were learning a lesson. 2) Controlling the students, The teacher also becomes a controller in the teaching and learning process. A good controller should be involved in the classroom to know the students' work on the task, whether they understand or not. The students also realized it. They stated that the teacher had to control the students in the classroom so that they could follow all the teaching and learning processes well. 3) Knowing students' needs, as a teacher, knowing the students' needs becomes an important aspect to be done in teaching and learning process. It is because every student has the same need. Teaching different students will assign the teacher to prepare differently in order to reach the objective planed before. Students believed that a teacher teaching in the classroom should understand his/her students' needs. It would lead them to be successful students because their teacher had his/her way of handling them in the classroom.

In repeating the previous lesson, they wanted their teacher to repeat what they had learned before. They thought the teacher should check the students' understanding of the previous lesson before continuing the lesson. The students also felt they needed to strengthen the previous lesson before coming into a new one.

According to the students' perception, in an effective method, the teacher also should provide a detailed explanation. They hoped that the teacher explained the lesson carefully as simple as possible in the order they could understand the lesson easily.

d. Good Course Design

The researcher found five sub-terms related to Good course design. They were: 1). The course must be designed differently in every meeting. Most students thought

the teacher's method should be changed because they always used the same method in every meeting. While they felt that when they were taught like that. They had willing to learn English as creative as should be. They would not be motivated. 2). Must include activities that involve real communication. English as the means of communication requires the students to realize that they need such activities to involve them in real communication. The students believed that when they did such practice, they could easily practice it in the real communication. Therefore, they stated they wanted more practice, such as in real communication in teaching and learning. As students of the vocational school, they realized that English was needed as a communication skill. Therefore, they thought English as communication practice should be provided in an efficient teaching method especially when teaching EFL in the classroom. They also should master it as their future preparation in their work later. 3). Must include activities that encourage, motivate and relax the students. Most students also need to be encouraged, motivated, and relaxed when they are taught. They put these subterms on their perceptions as some of the aspects determining an effective method. They said they needed a teaching method to build their motivation to study. Even, they thought that an effective method would encourage them to study English better than before. Moreover, the most among three (encouraged, motivated, relaxed), they really wanted to be relaxed in teaching and learning process. It was because the teaching and learning process they found since they were taught English until now did not make any sense for them. Therefore, they need a relaxation through a game related to the lesson.

The students who argued the statement above thought that the teacher should relax them before studying because they had any other lessons in a day. Therefore, they needed to be relaxed before starting the English lesson.

This statement was the student's feeling when a teacher who made them interested in studying taught him. The student believed that when he felt interested because of the games given in teaching and learning process; they could enjoy the entire lesson. Therefore, they can understand the lesson easily. In conclusion, they like to study English when they are in such situation.

Both of the students argued that games should vary a teaching method. Those games should relate to the lesson taught at the time. They believed that they could learn English easily through that game because they enjoyed the lesson. 4) Must use visual or interesting media to support activities in the course design

Teaching method, as one significant way of determining the successfulness on the teaching and learning process in the classroom, requires the teacher to be selective in providing media to support activities in the school. The students argued that as a teacher, he/she should provide an interesting media in their teaching and learning process so that it can encourage the students to learn English effectively.

It showed that the teacher who was always explaining in the classroom would only make the students bored. So that, teaching method employed in the classroom should consider the interesting term before deciding a teaching method employed in the classroom.

1) Thinkable Classroom Set

Classroom set cannot be separated from an effective teaching method. A good classroom set becomes the best support to an effective teaching method. It was also found in the students' perception such as below:

(a) Using task-based materials and simulation

These subterms emerged when the students asked about what they were going to do when they were an English Teacher. The student thought that they should be taught a task-based material related to their skill competence. It was such a simulation related to their skill competence. It would be more effective according to them.

(b) Sometimes learning outside the classroom

Studying outside the classroom also becomes one thing should be considered when assigning an effective teaching method. They believed that studying outside the classroom could refresh their mind. They could study the lesson freshly. They also thought it would be more interested. Through this setting, they could directly interact or visualize the words they were studying. As a foreign language, practicing or memorizing its vocabularies needs some memorable activities. It can help the students to remember them. Learning outside the classroom becomes a simple way to do in teaching and learning process.

2) Appropriate Procedures and Technique

There were some procedures or techniques the students perceived should be in an effective teaching method employed. They were:

(a) Communicative activities, dialogues, questions and answers and discussion

Some communicative activities that the students thought successfully lead them into understandable lesson were dialogue, question, and answer, and discussion. They considered that through these activities they could practice the English language better. Those techniques could challenge them to understand the English lesson given.

(b) Group work, pair work, individual work, task, and role-play.

Students also thought that other activities, group work; pair work; individual work; task and role-play, should be involved in teaching method employed by the teacher. They supposed those activities could lead them to become successful students in the classroom. According to the students' interviewed above, working individually would make them study hard to solve her/his own problem. Therefore, they could challenge her/his own self in the order they could complete at the task given by the teacher well. As stated before, working in-group could bring much more benefit for the students. Through working in-group, they could share knowledge and solve the problem they found in doing a task together. The students above meant an activity such as a role-play. They could practice the conversation as in the real situation. These activities could bring them into real communication in real life.

(c) Language game and more practice to pronounce the words.

Providing language games and more practice so the students can learn how to pronounce the English words well should be put in this term. They thought that these activities could bring much more assistance. They realized that EFL was different from Bahasa, so they needed to learn how to pronounce English words well. From those statements above, the researcher found that an effective teaching method should provide some activities that could lead the students to learn to pronounce the English words. Then practicing the language becomes such a good example of applying. It was based on the students' perception before.

3) Good Error Correction

In fact, teaching and learning process cannot be separated from error correction. The students also have their own perception about that. The student above believed the teacher should correct them when they were making errors. She thought that the correction would make them remember the error. Therefore, when doing such a thing, she could fix it by herself.

2. Students' Perception of Some Ineffective Teaching Methods Employed

On the contrary, the students also have their own perception of the ineffective methods. From their perception, some teaching methods are linked to knowing the ineffective method intended. a) Sitting / Whiteboard explanation, the way the teacher explains the lesson also becomes the students' consideration. Teaching method used should prepare the way teacher explains the lesson well. Explaining a lesson means starting pouring knowledge into students' mind. Therefore, the teacher should prepare it carefully. The students believed that the way teacher explained the lesson would determine their understanding of the lesson given. Such as, explaining the lesson on the seat or only standing up in front of the whiteboard, it would make the students bored. The teachers did not have an interesting thing that could make them focus on. Moreover, it was also caused when the teachers always did the same method every meeting.

Based on those statements above, the researchers found that in an effective teaching method, the way teacher explain should be an important consideration. Therefore, well planning should be done before teaching in the classroom. b) Too much grammar or structure, In this term, the students felt ineffective in learning EFL when they were taught too much grammar or structure. They thought that learning EFL was not about its grammar or its structure. It would make them bored. However, it was about how to practice the EFL in real communication. Therefore, they believed giving more grammar and structure would only prepare them to be failed English speakers in real communication. c) Using English without translation, The students believed practicing the EFL would make it easier to understand the language. However, it did not mean that their teacher should speak English with them all the time when they were taught EFL in the classroom. They faced some difficulties when their teacher did it. They realized that English should be customized in the classroom. However, it did not mean without translation. They thought that they were not foreigners. Therefore, the teacher should translate what they were

saying into Bahasa or another language the students could understand. d) Too much assignment, In FGD, most of the students in every group agreed that more practice was more important than doing many assignments. They felt that more practice would lead them into successful EFL students. As stated before, English needs more practice to speak than doing the assignment.

Discussion

The Effective Teaching Methods Perceived by Students

This research reveals numerous approaches to EFL instruction that students find helpful in acquiring the language. Students argued that it is more important to focus on communicative approaches, in which language is used to convey ideas and concepts, than on linguistic correctness per se. Dialogue, questions and answers, discussions, group projects, pair projects, individual projects, task-based learning, and role-playing were all activities that helped them better their command of the English language. Students were able to practice their speaking abilities through these interactive exercises (Asassfeh, Khwaileh, & Al-Shaboul, 2012).

The research also found that pupils preferred increased practice to fewer assignments. They were convinced that the only way to perfect their English pronunciation was to play language games and do pronunciation drills. Students also highlighted the value of a student-centered approach, in which instructors promote student-student interactions and demonstrate an awareness of each learner's unique requirements. They also stressed the value of a carefully crafted course that makes use of activities that encourage genuine conversation, inspiration, and the application of visual or engaging media.

This study's results are consistent with those of other studies that have shown the value of communicative language instruction for EFL students. Teachers can improve their methods of education and design a more stimulating and productive classroom by listening to and responding to students' opinions and preferences. Teachers can do more to help their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students succeed by adopting some of these student-centered approaches (Aytac & Kula, 2020; Mgeni, 2013).

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were used as a means of collecting qualitative information for this study. Experts in the field of English as a foreign language (EFL) were able to have in-depth conversations using focus groups (FGDs), yielding

valuable information about the perspectives and preferences of EFL students (Akyildiz & Ahmed, 2021; Okwach, Indoshi, & Korros, 2013). Participants' views were coded, categorized, and compared as part of the data analysis process. Although participant numbers were not reported, the study's utilization of focus groups allowed for a thorough examination of students' views on efficient EFL pedagogy.

As a result of this research, we now have a better understanding of how EFL students themselves characterize the most effective forms of instruction. The findings stress the significance of courses that are well-designed to encourage genuine conversation and inspiration among their students. These realizations have the potential to change how we teach English as a foreign language. More study is needed to determine how well these methods work in various classroom settings and how they affect students' language learning outcomes (Yuliana, 2012; Budiman & Apriani, 2019).

The Ineffective Teaching Methods Perceived by Students and the Reasons

This study's results are consistent with those of other studies that have shown the value of communicative language instruction for EFL students. Students' views and preferences on communicative language teaching activities such conversation, question and answer, discussion, group work, pair work, solo work, task-based learning, and role-play are in line with these concepts (Khursyid & Ansari, 2012) The goal of communicative language instruction is to give students extensive opportunities to utilize the target language in authentic situations.

In addition, the students' concentration on communicating in practice rather than grammar and structure is consistent with the notion of second language learning. The theory of language acquisition states that language is learned through participation in socially significant interactions and exchanges. This lends credence to the notion that students of a foreign language should put an emphasis on communicative activities that place the language to use in real-world settings

The pupils' preference for a student-centered method and a well-structured curriculum is consistent with past research. Learning results improve when teachers adopt a student-centered pedagogy in which they encourage student-to-student interactions and tailor instruction to the requirements of each student. In addition, research has shown that a well-designed course can significantly increase student enthusiasm and performance (Green & Harrington, 2020; Siddiqui, & Umer, 2013).

The results of this study mostly agree with those of earlier studies and accepted views of what works best in EFL classrooms. Successful language learning outcomes can be attributed, in part, to the prevalence of communicative language education, student-centered methods, and well-structured programs.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Multiple inferences can be made from the research presented above. The primary purpose of this research was to identify the most effective and least effective methods for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) based on student feedback. Descriptive qualitative analysis was employed as the research approach, which entailed the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data that was not numerical in nature.

The research showed that students thought particular approaches were helpful in improving their language skills. The communicative approach was one such way; it stressed the importance of language as a means of communication and emphasized the use of concrete examples and clear constructions. The significance of peer learning and the teacher's facilitation were also highlighted by the students.

The significance of sound pedagogical planning for successful language training was also emphasized. Students thought that a well-designed course would incorporate activities that encouraged and motivated students, made use of visual or engaging media, and required authentic connection between lecturers and students.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to collect data for the study because they allowed for in-depth discussions and the collection of a general sense of the topic based on the participants' knowledge. Coding, categorizing, and linking the participants' thoughts to the study's central theme were all parts of the data processing process.

As a result of this research, we now have a better understanding of which methods of teaching English as a foreign language are most appreciated by their student participants. The results highlight the significance of a communicative strategy, peer engagement, and course design for successful language acquisition. The results of this study can help EFL educators better their practice and the education of their students.

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