Investigating the Correlation Between EFL Learners' Perceptions of Teaching Methods and Their Sentence Construction Ability

Erika Agustina
Universitas Islam Kadiri, Indonesia
erikaagustina556@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the correlation between students' perceptions of teaching methods and their ability to construct sentences in English. A quantitative correlational approach was applied to 33 eighth-grade students from SMPN 3 Wates. Students' perceptions were measured using a validated questionnaire consisting of 19 items, while their sentence construction ability was assessed through a short paragraph writing task. The written work was evaluated holistically based on sentence structure, variety, clarity, vocabulary use, and proper punctuation. To provide additional context, a semi-structured interview was also conducted with the English teacher to gain insight into the instructional methods commonly used in the classroom. The Pearson correlation analysis showed a very strong and statistically significant relationship between the two variables, with a correlation coefficient of r = 0.773 and a significance value of p = 0.000. These results indicate that students who perceive their teacher's instructional methods positively tend to demonstrate stronger sentence construction skills, highlighting the importance of aligning teaching approaches with students' learning perceptions.

Keywords: EFL learners, teaching methods, student perception, sentence construction, English writing skills

Introduction

Writing is considered one of the most essential skills in English language learning, especially for students learning it as a foreign language (EFL). Among the various components of writing, the ability to construct grammatically and logically correct sentences serves as the foundation. When students are unable to form proper sentence structures, their ideas often become unclear to the reader, regardless of their vocabulary. This difficulty in constructing sentences remains a common issue for many EFL students, even at the junior high school level. It shows that mastering grammar alone is not sufficient without the ability to produce coherent and logical sentences.

On the other hand, language learning is not solely dependent on individual student ability; it is also shaped by the teacher's instructional approach. A well-suited teaching method can create a more supportive and engaging learning environment, encouraging students to actively participate in the learning process. When teachers are able to adjust their methods according to student needs, learning outcomes are more likely to improve. Students' perceptions of their teacher's methods serve as a valuable indicator of how effective those strategies are in practice. Understanding these perceptions offers useful insight into how teaching styles influence learning, especially in writing.

Previous studies have shown that successful language learning is not only determined by access to technology or learning materials, but also by how effectively teachers implement appropriate strategies. Metruk (2022) argued that although tools like smartphones are increasingly used in EFL classrooms, learning outcomes remain largely dependent on how teachers facilitate the process. Both teachers and students must be prepared to adapt to modern learning environments to ensure technology serves as a meaningful support rather than a distraction (p. 5). This underscores the importance of instructional methods in shaping students' writing development. Without contextually relevant strategies, student potential may remain underdeveloped.

In addition to technical readiness, emotional and social support from teachers also contributes significantly to student motivation. Li (2022) emphasized that students who feel supported and encouraged by their teachers tend to show higher levels of confidence and persistence in facing the challenges of foreign language learning. Such support extends beyond academic content; it includes emotional reassurance, which is vital in building learners' resilience. When students feel respected and secure in the classroom, they are more likely to improve their skills, particularly in writing and sentence construction. Therefore, the teacher's role as an empathetic facilitator cannot be separated from student success in the EFL context.

Collaborative approaches have also been shown to increase student engagement and a sense of ownership in the learning process. Alkhannani (2021) highlighted that students who are actively involved in classroom decisions and discussions tend to feel more in control of their learning outcomes. This involvement strengthens responsibility and leads to improved performance, especially in writing. In English language learning, active participation helps students internalize grammar and

structure more effectively through practice. Thus, learner-centered methods can support EFL students in improving their sentence construction abilities.

Moreover, teachers must recognize that each student comes with different learning needs and challenges. Al-Wossabi (2024) stated that mismatches between teaching methods and student needs can hinder language acquisition rather than support it (p. 536). For this reason, teachers are encouraged to regularly assess students' needs and adapt their instruction accordingly. Using flexible, student-oriented strategies allows learners to engage in ways that suit their preferences and contexts. In this sense, the teacher's role extends beyond delivering content; it involves designing meaningful and responsive learning experiences.

Yang (2022) also pointed out that direct interaction between teachers and students, such as in writing conferences, can significantly enhance students' writing skills. Through this approach, students receive personalized and specific feedback, while also gaining opportunities to express their struggles and ask for clarification. This kind of dialogue fosters students' metacognitive awareness of their writing and helps them improve sentence structure through meaningful revision. As Weissberg (in Yang, 2022, p. 11) noted, writing conferences provide an unparalleled opportunity to deliver individualized instruction in EFL writing classrooms. Such methods are worth exploring as part of efforts to enhance students' sentence construction skills.

Although various studies have addressed teaching methods and English writing instruction, few have directly examined the relationship between students' perceptions of teaching methods and their sentence construction abilities, especially at the junior high school level. Most research has focused on overall writing proficiency without specifically analyzing sentence-level skills. Yet, the ability to build correct and meaningful sentences is a key component of effective writing. Therefore, it is important to explore whether students' perceptions of teaching methods are linked to measurable writing performance. This study was conducted to fill that gap and provide insights that can help improve teaching practices in EFL classrooms.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to investigate the relationship between students' perceptions of teaching methods and their ability to construct English sentences in an EFL context. The research was non-experimental

and based on data gathered from a natural classroom setting without any intervention. SPSS version 25 was used to perform statistical analysis and to ensure data accuracy and objectivity. This design was chosen to identify patterns between two variables and provide insight into how teaching methods may influence student writing performance. The goal was to draw conclusions based on existing classroom realities.

Participants in this study were 33 eighth-grade students from class 8C at SMPN 3 Wates, selected using purposive sampling. These students had been taught by the same English teacher throughout the semester, providing consistent instructional exposure. They had also received prior instruction on basic writing elements, such as paragraph structure and sentence construction. Their shared learning experience was considered ideal for examining the relationship between their perceptions and their actual writing outcomes. This sample size was deemed sufficient to conduct a correlational analysis using standard statistical procedures.

The data collection involved two primary instruments: a student perception questionnaire and a writing task. The questionnaire originally contained 20 items using a four-point Likert scale, but after expert validation, 19 items were confirmed valid and used for analysis. Students also completed a short paragraph writing task on a free topic, which was used to evaluate their sentence construction ability in terms of grammar, structure, and coherence. Both instruments were administered online through Google Forms during a one-day school visit. To support the quantitative data, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the English teacher to explore the types of teaching methods commonly used in class.

The data collection took place in one session during a scheduled English class. The teacher opened the session and introduced the research, then left the classroom due to other duties, while the researcher remained to supervise. Despite the teacher's absence, the classroom atmosphere remained focused and orderly. Students completed both the questionnaire and the writing task independently, while the researcher ensured instructions were clear and provided support when needed. Afterward, the researcher conducted the teacher interview to gather additional context regarding instructional approaches used in the classroom.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics were used to describe students' responses to the questionnaire. To determine whether a significant relationship existed between students' perceptions and their sentence

construction ability, a Pearson product-moment correlation test was applied. A 0.05 level of significance was set as the benchmark for statistical interpretation. This analysis was expected to provide empirical evidence of whether teaching methods, as perceived by students, correlate with their actual writing performance. The findings aimed to inform teaching practices and support improvements in EFL instruction.

To complement the quantitative data, the researcher also conducted a semi-structured interview with the English teacher to explore the teaching approaches used in class. The interview provided additional context on how writing was taught and how students were encouraged to express their ideas. According to the teacher, she frequently implemented communicative and project-based strategies, including group discussions, free writing tasks, and short classroom presentations. She also noted that students were often allowed to choose their own writing topics, which helped foster their creativity and build confidence. Insights from the interview were used to enrich the interpretation of the questionnaire results and to offer a more complete picture of the instructional environment.

Following the findings and contextual insights gained, the next phase of this study involved integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to develop a more comprehensive understanding. By combining statistical analysis with the teacher's perspective, the researcher was able to explore the connection between students' perceptions of teaching methods and the instructional strategies used in class. According to the teacher, communicative and project-based approaches—such as group discussions, free writing exercises, and brief classroom presentations—were frequently employed. These strategies appeared to align with students' generally positive responses in the questionnaire. This alignment suggests that when teaching methods are perceived as engaging and relevant, students' writing abilities, particularly in sentence construction, are more likely to improve. The results of the correlation test, whether strong, moderate, or weak, were interpreted within the broader context of classroom dynamics and authentic learning conditions. The use of purposive sampling also enhanced the study's credibility, as all participants shared a consistent instructional environment. Although the study did not implement experimental controls, its naturalistic design enabled an accurate observation of real classroom interactions. The teacher interview added valuable depth to the findings by supporting the interpretation of student responses and providing insight into the teaching methods

used. Overall, the study highlights the importance of aligning instructional practices with learners' preferences and needs, especially in the EFL context where writing presents unique challenges. Future researchers are encouraged to expand on this work by involving larger samples or exploring additional variables such as student motivation or prior English learning experiences.

Result and Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between students' perceptions of their teacher's instructional methods and their ability to construct sentences in English. The participants were 33 eighth-grade students from SMPN 3 Wates. Student perceptions were measured using a validated questionnaire consisting of 19 items. Meanwhile, sentence construction ability was assessed through English paragraph writing tasks, rated holistically on a four-point scale (2–5). The evaluation focused on five criteria: sentence structure, sentence variety, clarity of meaning, vocabulary use, and punctuation and capitalization.

The data were analyzed using the Pearson correlation test via SPSS version 25. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of r = 0.773 with a significance value (p) of 0.000. This result indicates a very strong positive relationship between the two variables. Since the significance value is below 0.05, the relationship is considered statistically significant. In other words, the more positively students perceive their teacher's instructional methods, the better their ability to construct clear and grammatically correct English sentences.

These findings support previous research suggesting that positive perceptions of teaching strategies can influence student learning outcomes. Li (2022) emphasized that students' motivation and engagement tend to increase when teaching methods align with their needs. Similarly, Alkhannani (2021) argued that learning approaches that actively involve students and are relevant to their context contribute significantly to writing skill development, including sentence construction. Therefore, student perception of teaching quality should be viewed as a key factor in designing effective instruction.

To illustrate the correlation more clearly, the following table presents the Pearson correlation result between the two main variables. It shows that the correlation between student perception and sentence construction ability reached 0.773 with a p-

value of 0.000. This indicates that the relationship is both strong and statistically reliable. The analysis included all 33 students who completed both the questionnaire and the paragraph writing task. This outcome serves as a solid basis for drawing valid conclusions within the scope of this study.

Table 1: Correlation between Students' Perceptions and Sentence Construction Ability

Variable	Student Perception	Sentence Construction Ability
Student Perception	1	0.773**
Sentence Construction Ability	0.773**	1
N (Number of Students)	33	33
Significance (2-tailed)	-	0.000

Note:

r = 0.773, p = 0.000, N = 33

(**) Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results of this study indicate that students' perceptions of their teacher's instructional methods play a meaningful role in shaping their writing abilities. Recognizing the value of perception can help teachers reflect on and adjust their teaching strategies to better suit their students' needs. When students feel comfortable and engaged with the teacher's methods, they are more likely to take their learning seriously, especially in writing activities. This supports the view that effective teaching is not solely based on the materials used, but also on the emotional and relational connection built between teachers and students. Moving forward, educators are encouraged to adopt more student-centered and responsive approaches in their teaching practices.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insight into how students' perceptions of teaching methods relate to their sentence construction skills in an EFL context. The strong correlation found highlights the importance of aligning instructional strategies with learners' needs and experiences. While this research was limited to a small group of participants in one school, the findings suggest broader implications for improving writing instruction through student-centered approaches. Future studies may consider exploring similar relationships across different educational levels or integrating other language skills. It is hoped that the results of this study can contribute meaningfully to the ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of English language teaching and learning.

This research offers meaningful insights into the connection between students' perceptions of teaching methods and their ability to construct sentences in an EFL setting. The positive correlation identified emphasizes the value of tailoring instructional strategies to match students' experiences and learning preferences. Although the study focused on a relatively small sample within a single school, the implications may extend more broadly, particularly in efforts to enhance writing instruction through student-centered approaches. Future research is encouraged to explore similar dynamics in varied educational contexts or to examine additional language skills alongside writing. It is hoped that the present findings can contribute constructively to ongoing efforts in improving the effectiveness of English language education.

Additionally, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data provided a more nuanced understanding of how classroom practices are received by students and how these perceptions impact learning outcomes. The teacher's use of diverse and interactive teaching methods appeared to support student engagement and confidence in writing. Activities that promoted creativity, allowed for topic choice, and encouraged collaboration contributed to a more dynamic and supportive classroom atmosphere. These observations highlight the importance of reflective teaching and the continuous adaptation of pedagogical techniques. As EFL instruction progresses, studies like this can offer valuable foundations for developing more responsive, inclusive, and effective learning environments.

Biography

Erika Agustina is an undergraduate student in the English Education Department at Universitas Islam Kadiri, Indonesia. She has teaching experience as a tutoring instructor at SDN 2 Puncu for seven months, where she had the opportunity to engage directly with elementary school students and apply practical teaching strategies. Her research explores the relationship between students' perceptions of teaching methods and their sentence construction ability in English. The study was conducted with eighth-grade students at SMPN 3 Wates as part of her undergraduate academic project.

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