



Students' Perceptions of Grammar's Role in Developing Writing Skills

Lutfiyah, Hardianti, Ezik Firmansah

Universitas Esa Unggul, Indonesia

Emails: lutfiyah@esaunggul.ac.id, hardianti@esaunggul.ac.id, ezik.f@esaunggul.ac.id

INFO ARTIKEL

ABSTRACT

Diterima :

Direvisi :

Disetujui :

Keywords:

Grammar;

Writing Skills;

Student Perceptions;

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of the role of grammar in developing writing skills, particularly among English Language Education students at Esa Unggul University. Despite grammar being a crucial component in writing, many students perceive it as burdensome, which can affect their confidence and writing fluency. This perception gap has rarely been explored from the learner's perspective in academic writing contexts. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of student writing samples involving 11 participants. Thematic analysis revealed that students acknowledged grammar as vital for clarity, coherence, and professionalism in academic writing. However, challenges in applying grammar, such as tense use and sentence structure, were also prominent. Furthermore, students emphasized the importance of contextual grammar instruction over rote memorization. The findings suggest that while students value grammar, their engagement is influenced by how it is taught. Integrating grammar into meaningful writing activities and fostering positive emotional experiences can enhance students' motivation and proficiency. This study provides valuable insights for educators to develop learner-centered instructional strategies that align grammar with writing practices, ultimately contributing to more effective EFL writing pedagogy.

Introduction

Writing is an essential skill in English language learning that affects students' overall communication skills (Ali, 2022; Bora, 2023). Since English serves as a bridge for worldwide communication and as an international language, being able to use it correctly, particularly in writing, is essential for exploring different facets of knowledge and engagement, as well as for properly expressing ideas (Lutfiyah, 2022). According to Hyland (2016), writing skills encompass not only the expression of ideas but also mastery of structure and grammar, which support clarity and coherence in writing. In the context of education, students' understanding of the role of grammar in writing varies greatly, and this affects the quality of their writing. Several studies indicate that students tend to view grammar as burdensome (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010), which can lead them to neglect important aspects of writing. Although many English language teaching programs emphasize the importance of grammar, research on students' perceptions of the role of grammar in writing is still limited. A study by Rahimi and Zarei (2020) found that students' understanding of grammar can affect their confidence in writing. A lack of

understanding of the role of grammar can hinder students' creative processes and self-expression in writing (Cumming, 2001). Therefore, it is important to explore further how students view grammar and its impact on their writing skills.

Writing is regarded as one of the most difficult and cognitively taxing abilities in the field of English language instruction. A strong command of language and coherence are necessary for effective writing, but grammatical precision is also crucial. Grammar, as the system of structural rules that govern language use, is integral to producing clear, organized, and meaningful written texts (Ur, 2012). It serves as a tool that enables writers to communicate their ideas precisely, keep sentences coherent, and engage in academic discourse that adheres to formal standards. Grammar has a significant impact on how well students in higher education, especially those learning English as a foreign language (*EFL*), are able to articulate complex and abstract concepts in writing.

For a long time, the importance of grammar in developing writing skills has been a topic of discussion among educators and researchers. In addition, grammar is seen as essential for accuracy, cohesion, and coherence in writing (Myhill, 2010). However, overemphasis on grammar can lead to writing that is stilted or lacking in fluency, particularly when students become overly focused on avoiding errors at the expense of expressing meaning (Leki, 1992). This tension between writing fluency and grammatical accuracy presents a challenge for many *EFL* learners, who may find grammar burdensome or confusing, even though they understand its importance for academic success, particularly when instruction emphasizes memorization of rules rather than their meaningful application.

How students approach writing assignments is greatly influenced by their views of grammar and its function in the development of writing. Furthermore, research shows that learners' beliefs influence their motivation, strategy use, and willingness to revise or experiment with language in writing (Borg, 2011). Students are more likely to interact with grammar favorably and use it to enhance their writing when they see it as a useful tool for structuring and honing their ideas. In contrast, when grammar is viewed as a disconnected or punitive system, students may avoid risks, limit their vocabulary, or rely heavily on fixed sentence structures—ultimately hindering their writing development (Chen, 2016). Consequently, investigating students' perceptions regarding grammar can yield important information on how to approach writing instruction, particularly at the tertiary level when academic writing is prioritized.

Grammar instruction is frequently given in conventional, prescriptive styles in *EFL* academic contexts. Instead of writing in context, many students are instructed to memorize and apply grammar rules through isolated exercises. Although such instruction may help learners perform well on grammar quizzes, it does not necessarily translate into improved writing proficiency (Ellis, 2006). In an effort to close this gap, a number of studies have examined how students view grammar teaching and how it affects their writing development. Myhill and Watson (2014) emphasized that when grammar is taught in the context of actual writing, rather than in isolation, students demonstrate increased syntactic variety, improved cohesion, and greater clarity in their written texts. They

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argued that teaching grammar should be practical and purpose-driven, assisting students in understanding how grammatical decisions impact the effectiveness and meaning of their writing. Likewise, Ferris (2002) found that explicit grammar feedback, when delivered alongside writing instruction, helped college students become more aware of their errors and encouraged self-editing skills. However, students' perceptions play a major role in how well such instruction is followed. Students may reject assignments pertaining to grammar or disregard constructive criticism if they do not believe that grammar improves their writing abilities. On the other hand, students are more inclined to put in the time and effort necessary to comprehend and use grammatical structures if they believe that grammar is necessary for creating coherent and successful writing. Therefore, investigating students' perceptions not only reveals learning preferences but also informs the design of effective writing curricula that integrate grammar in meaningful ways.

Even though the significance of student perceptions in language learning is becoming more widely acknowledged, little research has been done specifically on how *EFL* college students view the function of grammar in writing development. Less research has been conducted on students' attitudes toward grammar in the particular context of academic writing, despite the fact that many studies have examined grammar education generally. College writing assignments frequently call for sophisticated sentence structure, argument development, and textual coherence; therefore, it is important to know how students perceive grammar's role in meeting these requirements. Students' perceptions can also differ based on their exposure to various teaching methods, language competency, and previous educational experiences. In order to better support writing development, teachers might modify their lessons by learning more about their students' views.

Despite the growing body of literature emphasizing the role of grammar in English as a Foreign Language (*EFL*) instruction, previous studies have largely focused on grammar teaching methods and error correction strategies, with limited attention given to how students perceive the role of grammar in the specific context of academic writing (Myhill & Watson, 2014; Rahimi & Zarei, 2020). This creates a research gap in understanding learners' affective and cognitive responses to grammar instruction in relation to writing development. Moreover, existing studies often emphasize either grammatical accuracy or writing fluency without exploring the nuanced ways in which students reconcile both within their academic experience. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on capturing *EFL* college students' lived experiences and attitudes toward grammar in the context of developing academic writing skills—an area underexplored, particularly within Indonesian tertiary education settings. By employing a qualitative descriptive approach, this study examines student perceptions through interviews, observations, and writing samples, offering holistic insights into how grammar is internalized and applied. The results are expected to contribute to theory by enriching learner-centered perspectives in applied linguistics, while also providing practical benefits for curriculum designers and educators. These include more responsive grammar

teaching strategies that increase motivation and reduce the stigma surrounding grammar. In turn, this research contributes to improving students' writing proficiency, enhancing their communication competence in global settings, and supporting their readiness for academic and professional success.

Furthermore, the main issue in this study is the lack of understanding of how students view the role of grammar in writing. Although grammar is considered important for achieving clarity and accuracy in writing, many students feel burdened by its rules. This raises the question: How do students' perceptions of grammar affect their writing skills? The importance of this issue lies in its impact on English language teaching in the classroom. Understanding students' perceptions will help educators design more relevant and engaging teaching strategies, which can reduce negative stigma toward grammar. In addition, this research will provide insights into how students' learning experiences influence their attitudes toward grammar, which in turn can improve their writing skills. Thus, this issue is not only relevant to improving the quality of English language education but also to the development of broader literacy among students. This study is expected to answer questions related to student perceptions and provide useful recommendations for educators on how to integrate grammar teaching into the writing process in a more effective manner.

This study aims to investigate how college students view grammar's contribution to writing proficiency. The goal of the study is to find out how students think about grammar in relation to writing, whether they think it helps or hinders their ability to write, and what teaching strategies they think work best for incorporating grammar into writing. By capturing students' perceptions, this research aims to provide a learner-centered perspective that can inform grammar pedagogy in writing-focused *EFL* classrooms. Furthermore, by understanding students' perceptions, it is hoped that grammar teaching can be more integrated into the writing process, so that students feel more motivated and confident in their writing skills. The results of this study are expected to be an important reference for the development of the English language curriculum and teaching practices in the future.

This research is expected to provide significant benefits across various aspects, both in the development of science and technology and in their practical applications in society. From a scientific perspective, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge in English language education, particularly in understanding the intricate relationship between grammar mastery and writing proficiency. These findings may serve as a reference point for future research exploring other dimensions of language teaching and literacy development. In terms of pedagogical impact, the study offers valuable insights for educators in designing more effective and student-centered teaching methods that respond to learners' perceptions. By adopting a more contextual and engaging approach to grammar instruction, it is hoped that students' motivation to learn English will increase, thereby enhancing their ability to master writing skills more effectively. On a broader social level, the improvement of students' writing abilities through grammar integration can strengthen their English communication skills, a critical competency in

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the globalized world. Enhanced communication proficiency opens greater opportunities for students in higher education and the professional realm, contributing to the development of high-quality human resources. Economically, better English language skills can improve students' competitiveness in the job market, increasing their chances of securing quality employment and participating in the global economy, which ultimately supports economic growth and development.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to gain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives in a natural setting. This method enabled the researchers to explore the meaning of participants' experiences and obtain rich, meaningful data through direct interaction.

Several instruments were used to collect data. Field notes were taken throughout the research process to record observations, reflections, and descriptive data. These notes documented situations, interactions, and participant responses during data collection, including questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation. Interviews were conducted using guidelines containing open-ended questions designed to explore students' views on the role of grammar in writing more deeply. In addition, samples of students' writing were collected to examine how they applied grammar in their writing, which were then compared with their stated perceptions.

The study was conducted at Esa Unggul University and involved 11 English Language Education students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. To gather detailed information about students' perceptions of grammar's role in developing writing skills, the researcher used the instruments described above. The interview consisted of 11 questions, covering both general aspects of English language learning and grammar, as well as specific questions related to grammar and writing (Normawati, A., 2023).

Table 1. General Questions about English Language Learning and Grammar

No.	Questions
1	How long have you been learning English?
2	Why do you learn English?
3	What is grammar? What do you think about grammar?
4	Is grammar crucial to effective communication?

Table 2. Questions Related to Grammar and Writing

No.	Questions
1	Is grammar important in writing?
2	How important is it?
3	What do you believe the function of grammar in writing is?
4	How can grammar improve your written communication?
5	Do you need accuracy in writing?
6	Do you take notice of your grammar when you write? Why or why not?
7	Among the components of writing by Brown (2004): organization, content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics, which do you pay attention to the most when writing? Why?

The data collected from interviews, field notes, and written results will be analyzed using a qualitative approach.

1. Interview Analysis: After the interviews are recorded and transcribed, data analysis will be conducted using thematic analysis. The researcher will identify the main themes that emerge from the interviews related to students' perceptions of the role of grammar in writing skills. Each theme that emerges will be analyzed to find specific patterns or trends relevant to the research objectives.
2. Field Notes Analysis: Field notes will be analyzed using a descriptive approach, where the researcher will summarize and categorize observations made during the data collection process. The researcher's reflections and interpretations will also be included to understand the context of student interactions and responses related to grammar in writing.
3. Student Writing Samples: Student writing samples will be used as supporting data in this study.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Interview

The results of the interview instrument in this study were analyzed using Atlas. Ti. This analysis aimed to identify patterns and main themes that emerged from students' responses regarding their perceptions of the role of grammar in developing writing skills. The data obtained were categorized based on the main themes that emerged, such as attention to grammar, the importance of grammar in written communication, challenges in using grammar, and motivation in learning English. With this approach, the study can provide a deeper understanding of how students view grammar as a factor that influences their writing skills, both in academic and non-academic contexts.

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Table 3 Comprehensive Analysis of Themes

Themes	Main Findings
Attention to Grammar	Many students pay attention to grammar to avoid mistakes and improve clarity.
Attention to Vocabulary	Vocabulary is considered essential to convey meaning effectively.
Noticing Grammar in Writing	Students notice grammar while writing, particularly in formal contexts.
Grammar Improves Written Communication	Grammar plays a crucial role in ensuring coherence, professionalism, and clarity.
Attention to Content	Some students focus more on content, considering it the core of writing.
Motivation to Learn English	Motivation to learn English is driven by academic needs, career opportunities, and global communication.
Accuracy in Writing	Accuracy in writing is emphasized to ensure correctness and avoid misunderstandings.

Moreover, below is the distribution of themes in “Students’ Perceptions of Grammar in Writing,” which illustrates how often various aspects of grammar were mentioned by students in their interview responses. The percentage of mentions reflects the level of importance and emphasis given by students to each theme.

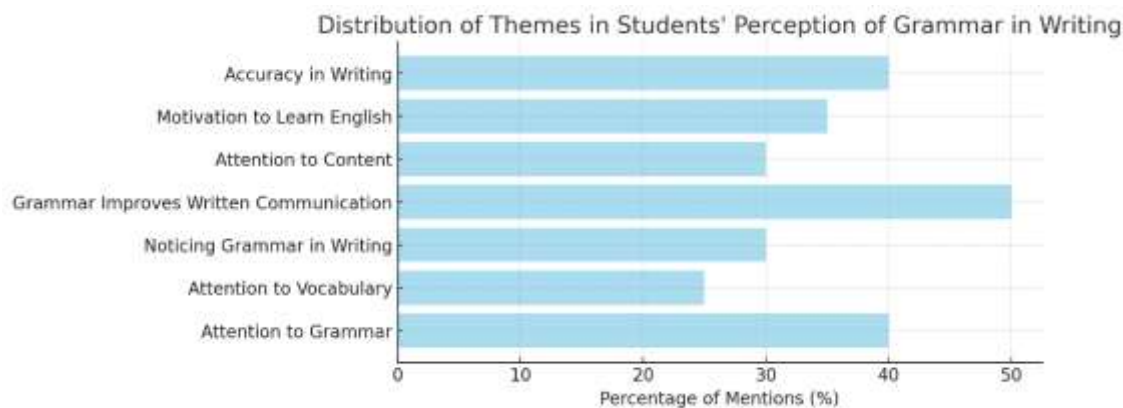


Figure 1. Distribution Proportion of themes in students’ perception of grammar

In addition, below is a pie chart depicting the distribution of students’ perceptions of the role of grammar in writing, based on the interview results. The percentages in the chart show how often each theme was mentioned by students, reflecting its level of importance.

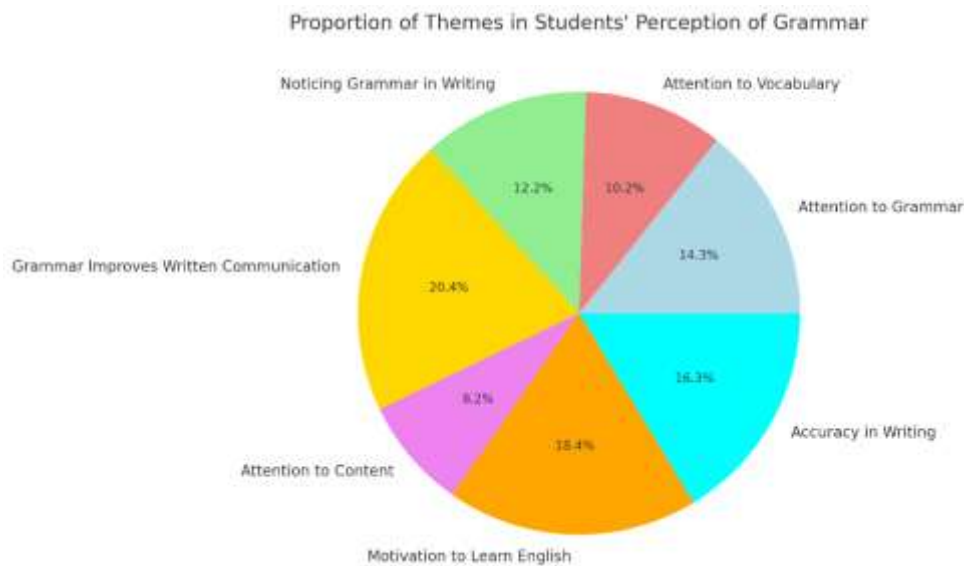


Figure 2. Proportion of themes in students' perception of grammar

Here is an explanation of the diagram above:

- 1) Grammar Improves Written Communication (20.4%): This was the most frequently mentioned theme, indicating that respondents consider grammar to be an important element for clarity, coherence, and professionalism in writing. Many respondents believe that correct grammar improves readability, prevents misunderstandings, and makes writing more structured.
- 2) Motivation to Learn English (18.4%): A large number of respondents mentioned that academic reasons, career opportunities, and global communication were the main drivers for improving their grammar skills. This shows that grammar is not only considered a writing tool, but also a gateway to broader opportunities.
- 3) Accuracy in Writing (16.3%): Many respondents emphasized the importance of accuracy in academic and professional writing. They believe that good grammar ensures accuracy, credibility, and prevents misunderstandings in written communication.
- 4) Attention to Grammar (14.3%): Some respondents are aware of the importance of grammar when writing, especially in academic and formal contexts. They try to avoid mistakes, meet academic standards, and ensure that their writing is grammatically correct.
- 5) Awareness of Grammar in Writing (12.2%): A small number of respondents stated that they actively pay attention to and correct their grammar when writing. This shows that some students prioritize grammar, but still face difficulties in applying it.
- 6) Attention to Vocabulary (10.2%): Although grammar was the main focus, some respondents also highlighted the importance of vocabulary. They argued that choosing the right words is just as important as correct grammar in conveying ideas clearly.
- 7) Attention to Content (8.2%): This percentage of respondents prioritized content and

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structure over grammar, as they believed that the message being conveyed was more important than grammatical accuracy. This shows that some of them view writing as an idea-based process, rather than simply a set of grammatical rules.

1. Observation

These observations are explained in several ways:

- a) Student Interaction in Class: Students who are more confident in grammar appear to complete tasks more quickly, while those who experience difficulties often stop to ask questions or look for references. Some students prefer to discuss with friends before writing, especially to ensure that their sentence structure and word choice are correct. Students who are less confident in grammar seem to focus more on the content of their writing, without paying too much attention to grammar rules.
- b) Challenges in the Writing Process: Some students experience obstacles in organizing their ideas before starting to write. Some have difficulty adjusting their grammar to the type of writing they are doing. Students who are less proficient in grammar often avoid using complex sentence structures and prefer simple sentences.
- c) Class Dynamics During Writing Activities: Most students appeared serious and focused while working on their assignments. Some students asked their lecturers or friends for help in checking for grammatical errors. Others were more relaxed and wrote more freely, without worrying too much about grammar rules.

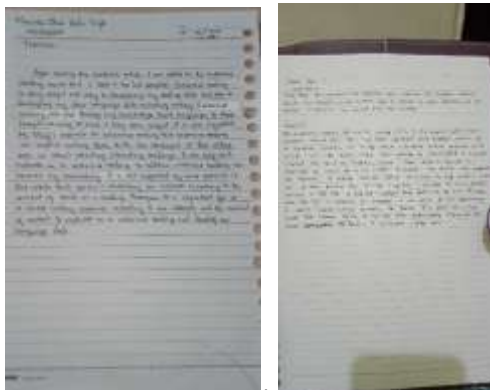


Figure 3. Student Writing

3. After reading “The Benefits of Extensive Reading in Language Learning” by Paul Nation, I gained valuable insights about reading that can help language learners. The article highlights that reading a lot of books, especially books we like, can improve our language skills. For example, when we read books, we can get new vocabulary. Additionally, reading interesting books can motivate us to read better. Therefore, I think reading feels more enjoyable and relaxing. The article also says that reading a lot can improve our writing skills. This shows that reading and writing are connected. Through this article, I realized the importance of reading habits. Overall, the article convinced me that reading widely is an effective and enjoyable way to master a language.

4. Reading this article also made me more aware of how complex the topic is and how the theories I have learned have a bigger impact in real life. The article helped me understand new perspectives that I had not thought about before, which made me see and analyze problems in a different way. It also motivated me to find more references to deepen my understanding, especially about parts that were still unclear or not explained in detail. Reading this article not only gave me new knowledge but also encouraged me to think more critically and reflect on academic concepts.

5. Reflecting on this article and my experience, extensive reading is a great approach that gives benefits in language learning. It enhanced my motivation because I can choose the book that interests me. Furthermore, it can lead to improvements in reading fluency and vocabulary acquisition. I got many new vocabulary words that developed my language use. Moreover, my reading habit started to form because I want to continue exploring another book. Extensive reading is adaptable for various language levels and a flexible class program. It gives me the opportunity for learning outside the classroom. Also, it has the affective benefits; for example, it increased confidence and enjoyment in language learning. I can enjoy my reading and easily comprehend the content of the book. Also, as a student, it can increase my writing abilities. Overall, extensive reading is a valuable tool for improving language learning.

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that good grammar contributes to the coherence of writing, but it is not the only factor that determines the quality of writing. Coherent writing requires not only good grammar but also an understanding of paragraph structure, effective use of connecting words, and the ability to construct arguments logically. Therefore, in writing instruction, it is important not only to emphasize grammar but also to focus on writing strategies that support the integration of ideas and clear logical flow.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that respondents recognize grammar as a crucial element in developing writing skills, particularly for ensuring clarity, accuracy, and professionalism in academic and professional contexts. Students believe that correct grammar enhances the clarity and effectiveness of written communication, while grammatical accuracy is seen as vital for maintaining credibility and coherence. However, many students face challenges in applying grammar, especially regarding tense selection, sentence structure, and punctuation, and their attention to grammar varies depending on whether the context is formal or informal. Although grammar is highly valued, students also acknowledge the importance of content, idea organization, and vocabulary in effective writing. These findings suggest that students' perceptions of grammar significantly influence their writing practices, confidence, and motivation. Therefore, adopting a more balanced and contextual approach to writing instruction is essential. For future research, it is recommended to explore how integrating grammar instruction with

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content and creative writing activities can further enhance students' writing proficiency and engagement.

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