

## **INVESTIGATING EFL LECTURERS' PERCEPTION AND STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING EFFECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A CASE STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) needs a strategy and an approach to enhance the effective teaching process. This research aims to gain deeper insight into effective methods of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in a university context. This study used case study research involving structured interviews via Google form with four EFL lecturers at Universitas Muslim Buton, Baubau, Southeast Sulawesi. The data in this study used a thematic analysis. The results of this study reveal a rich understanding of the views and teaching strategies used by EFL lecturers. In interviews, the lecturers outlined teaching approaches they believed were effective in improving students' English language skills, how they select the learning materials and the challenges and adjustments in teaching. This study found that the EFL lecturers use communication-based techniques and the contextual approach in choosing the materials learning to enhance classroom practice. In addition, this research also identifies the challenges EFL lecturers face in implementing these teaching practices and creating an effective learning environment. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide valuable

guidance for developing training programs and improving EFL teaching practices in university settings.

*Keywords:* EFL Lecturer, Perceptions and Strategies, Effective Teaching

## INTRODUCTION

English, one of the world's most dominant languages, is an essential subject in higher education in various parts of the world (Altbach, 2004; Isma, Hermansyah, et al., 2023; Phillipson, 2006). In many countries, such as Indonesia, English as a foreign language (EFL) learning programs have become compulsory in university curricula (Isma et al., 2022). University EFL lecturers are vital in helping students develop their English language skills (Ka-kan-dee & Kaur, 2015; Ridho, 2020). In improving the quality of English language teaching in university settings, it is crucial to understand how EFL lecturers approach their tasks and develop their teaching practices (Kim, 2014; Qamarya et al., 2023). Improving the quality of EFL teaching is about delivering material effectively and creating a learning environment that motivates and supports students (Cahya et al., 2023; Isma, Rasmin, et al., 2023).

Previous research has investigated various aspects of English language teaching, but there is a crucial role in understanding EFL lecturers' perspectives and strategies. EFL lecturers have unique practical experience and insight in dealing with students from various backgrounds and English language proficiency levels (Achieng, 2023; Azarfam & Baki, 2012; Isma, Rasmin, et al., 2023). Therefore, a more in-depth study of EFL lecturers' views, strategies, and challenges in teaching can provide valuable insights for improving students' learning experiences. According to Dincer *et al.* (2019), EFL lecturers' perceptions of their classroom role and learning objectives can majorly impact their teaching methods. He notes that lecturers who see themselves as facilitators of learning are more likely to employ task-based approaches that encourage active student participation, whereas lecturers who see themselves as classroom leaders may be more likely to use more teacher-centred teaching methods.

Richards and Lockhart (1994) also stated that EFL lecturers' perceptions of the importance of interaction in the classroom can influence their approach to teaching. They note that instructors who value interaction between students and feel it is an integral element of English language learning tend to create a more open environment for discussion and group-based activities. Furthermore, teaching strategies in EFL contexts have been the focus of extensive research. Larsen-Freeman (2000) highlights the importance of using a task-based approach in English language teaching, where relevant and meaningful tasks are given to students to motivate them to speak English more fluently and communicate better. Research by Nation and Chung (2009) shows that technology, such as language learning software, can effectively expand vocabulary comprehension and reading abilities.

Adaptive approaches in EFL teaching have also emerged as an essential theme in the literature. Richards and Rodgers (2001) emphasize that effective English language teaching requires the teacher's ability to adapt teaching strategies to students' needs and ability levels. This finding becomes relevant in the EFL context, where students can have varying ability levels. In addition, the relevant literature highlights the complexity of the relationship between EFL lecturers' perceptions and their chosen teaching strategies. Understanding how these perceptions influence EFL teaching practices can help design more effective and relevant learning experiences for EFL students in university settings (Isma, 2023; Isma et al., 2022; Sudewi & Isma, 2023). In this research, the researchers further explore the perceptions and strategies of EFL lecturers and the challenges of their teaching practices, with the hope of making a valuable contribution to understanding and developing English language education in academic settings.

Concerning this research, it is crucial to understand that EFL lecturers' perceptions may influence their teaching strategies. Lecturers who believe students should be more active in their learning may use teaching methods encouraging student participation, such as group discussions or group-based projects. In contrast, lecturers who view their role as classroom leaders may be more likely to use more teacher-centred teaching methods. This research aims to fill this knowledge gap by undertaking an in-depth qualitative study of the views and practices of EFL lecturers at a university. Through structured interviews, this research will answer critical questions about how EFL lecturers understand their teaching approaches, strategies, and challenges in the EFL classroom environment. With a deeper understanding of English language teaching by EFL lecturers, it is hoped that this research will provide valuable guidance for developing training programs, curriculum updates, and improving EFL teaching practices in university settings. Thus, this research contributes to efforts to improve the quality of English language education at the tertiary level and helps students achieve a higher level of English language competency.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Drawing from the results of the thematic analysis, the researchers identify three key themes: 1) the variety of the teaching approach of the EFL lecturers, 2) the selection of learning materials of the EFL lecturers, and 3) challenges and adjustment in EFL teaching. The four EFL lecturers explained how they design the teaching approach, select the teaching materials, their challenges in EFL teaching, and how they can overcome them. How they create an approach to teaching and select the learning materials will help them enhance classroom practice and an effective learning environment.

## 1. Variety of Teaching Approaches of EFL Lecturers.

This study's results identified various approaches used by EFL lecturers. Most respondents emphasized a communication-based contextual approach, emphasizing interaction and active speaking practice in the classroom as an effective way to develop students' English language skills. In teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), lecturers can use several teaching approaches. The result of the interview about the teaching approach finds that some EFL lecturers prefer a communicative approach, as the lecturer's statement below:

NH: *"In the teaching process in the classroom, the approach usually chosen is the communicative activities approach, which makes students more active in interacting using English."*

Besides that, lecturers always encourage students to communicate to encourage active speaking. Lecturers use bilingual instruction interaction patterns to make communication more effective in class. They have some reasons why they tend to prefer a communicative approach in enhancing classroom practice.

First, a communication-based approach views language as a communication tool, not just a grammatical structure. Lecturers who adhere to this approach focus on developing students' speaking skills and oral comprehension. They believe that the primary goal of learning English is to enable students to communicate effectively in real-life situations. Therefore, lecturers who prioritize communication in their teaching prefer to design activities that encourage active interaction in the classroom, such as role-playing, discussions, and simulations of communicative situations.

Besides that, the communicative approach also encourages collaboration and cooperation between students. Lecturers who use this approach organize group activities where students must communicate with each other in English to achieve specific goals. This approach creates an environment that supports actual communication practice and allows students to learn from each other.

Furthermore, a communicative approach often provides a more dynamic and relevant learning experience. The lecturers can use contextual and applicable teaching materials, such as news articles, video clips, or material related to everyday life. This approach helps students see the connection between what they learn in class and how they use English in the real world.

Additionally, a communicative approach often involves technology and online resources in their teaching. The lecturers can use online platforms, applications, and software that support interaction and communication in English. This approach reflects the evolution of language education that is more suited to today's digital era.

Besides the communicative approach, lecturers adopt a contextual approach in their learning process, as the statement of a lecturer below:

*AR: "A contextual approach is often applied in the learning process. This approach provides an accurate picture of what is experienced in everyday life, which is then connected to the learning material".*

. This approach, also known as Contextual Language Learning, emphasizes the importance of context in language learning. The following explains why the lecturers use a contextual approach in their classes.

First of all, the contextual approach considers language as a communication tool that must be understood in the context of real situations. Lecturers apply this approach by choosing teaching materials relevant to everyday life and conditions that can be encountered in real life. They believe students will be better prepared to communicate in various life situations by understanding and practising language in appropriate contexts.

Furthermore, in a contextual approach, lecturers often use stories, dialogue, or scenarios that create communicative situations. Students are invited to be involved in specific roles in the context of this story or dialogue. This approach helps students understand how language is used in everyday situations, such as talking to friends, communicating at work, or making transactions in a shop.

Additionally, a contextual approach often allows students to develop speaking skills naturally. They are invited to participate in conversations related to specific situations. This approach creates opportunities for students to practice speaking English more confidently and effectively because they see a direct relevance between what they learn and real-life use of the language.

Next, the use of a contextual approach can increase student motivation. Material relevant to their lives is more likely to motivate students to learn and actively participate in class. They can see the practical value of what they know, and this can increase their interest in understanding English.

Furthermore, the EFL lecturers use a contextual approach because they see its added value in helping students understand the language in real situations, improving speaking skills, increasing student motivation, and making learning more relevant. They consider that this approach creates a deeper and more meaningful learning experience for students, helping them become more confident in using English in the various contexts of their lives.

Respondents emphasized the importance of using various teaching strategies in the EFL classroom. This teaching strategy includes using technology, games, and group activities to increase student engagement.

Teaching strategy-oriented learning approaches, as identified in the results of this study, reflect the importance of variation in teaching methods. This finding aligns with the idea in ELT that no single teaching method is suitable for all situations (Chen, 2014; Gultom, 2016). In the

ELT approach theory, flexibility in using various teaching strategies is recommended to accommodate individual differences in learning styles and student needs (Kang, 1999; Skehan, 1991).

## 2. Selection of Learning Materials of EFL Lecturers

The selection of material in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is essential for creating an exciting and practical learning experience for students (Dai, 2011; Nguyen & Stracke, 2021). The selected material must follow the themes and learning outcomes set out in the curriculum. This study found that lecturers chose interesting learning materials per the course's themes and learning outcomes, as the statement of the lecturer below:

HR.: *"To choose the material to be taught, we set a theme and then look for references that match the theme at each meeting."*

Before determining learning materials and pieces, lecturers conduct observations of students to ensure the level of language proficiency and the relevance of students' needs and skills. The selection of material according to the theme and relevant to students' needs has quite important reasons; one is that selecting material according to the article will build a suitable context for learning English. When students see the connection between the material and the discussed theme, they tend to be more engaged in learning.

Furthermore, selecting material appropriate to the theme helps achieve the specified learning outcomes. For example, if one of the learning objectives is to improve students' ability to talk about specific topics, such as tourism, then choosing material that focuses on tourism, such as articles about holiday destinations or students' travel experiences, will support achieving this goal.

In addition, selecting material that is relevant to students' themes and needs can increase student motivation. Students tend to be more enthusiastic about learning when they feel the material relates to their interests and experiences. Therefore, EFL teachers should look for materials that reflect students' interests, give them opportunities to talk about topics they like and encourage them to share their personal experiences in English.

The choice of material can also allow for variation in teaching. Using various types of materials, such as reading texts, videos, audio, images, or role plays, can motivate students with different learning styles. By integrating diverse materials, teachers can meet the needs of students with other learning preferences.

Furthermore, selecting material relevant to the theme can help develop broader language skills, for example, by choosing material that involves listening to interviews, reading articles, and talking about the same topics, such as tourism and culture. In this way, students can hone various language skills in the same context, such as oral comprehension, reading, and speaking skills.

To ensure that the material they receive from lecturers is relevant, students and lecturers provide opportunities for students to give criticism and suggestions regarding the selection of material presented. With a model like this, lecturers try to build active student interaction patterns.

Selecting material appropriate to the theme and learning outcomes is essential in creating an exciting and practical learning experience for EFL students. Theme-relevant materials help establish relevant context, achieve learning objectives, increase student motivation, allow variety in teaching, and develop various language skills. Thus, a wise selection of materials is crucial in successful English language teaching.

This research's results align with the context-based approach theory in ELT (Moradkhani & Shirazizadeh, 2017). EFL lecturers tend to choose material relevant to everyday life and real-world contexts of English use. Understanding that the material must be relevant to students' lives helps create a more relevant and helpful learning environment (Isma, Hermansyah, et al., 2023; Sieberer-Nagler, 2016).

### **3. Challenges and Adjustment in EFL Teaching**

From the interview of some lecturers, it was found that the main challenges identified by EFL lecturers dealing with differences in ability levels within a class. Some lecturers also need to continually develop their skills to remain relevant to developments in English language teaching.

The research results found that one of the challenges in classroom learning is English vocabulary skills, as the statement by the lecturer below:

AR: *"The main challenge is students' limited vocabulary".*

. This challenge is one of the obstacles for students to speak more actively. Therefore, one of the things that lecturers do is do lots of tricks to increase students' vocabulary by always practising spoken and written English. Next, lecturers also do a lot of self-reflection to prepare materials that can improve students' skills in English, especially those related to the four basic skills of language. Therefore, lecturers adjust learning strategies to increase students' active roles and abilities.

Concrete steps taken by lecturers to increase activity in class include practice and discussions with other lecturers related to EFL teaching to get other references about developments in EFL teaching. Besides that, lecturers also provide self-reflection on weaknesses in the learning process. By holding reflection, lecturers hope to improve their abilities in the EFL learning process. Adapting teaching approaches in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is critical to ensure

that each student receives a practical learning experience appropriate to their needs and skill level (Galante & Thomson, 2017; Isma, Rasmin, et al., 2023; Shumin, 2002).

The interview results found that one of the lecturer's first steps was to conduct observations to adjust the learning process in class. The EFL lecturers can clearly understand student skill levels and design instruction to suit individual and group needs.

For example, if a lecturer has a class with beginning students, a more structured approach and focus on basic grammar may be necessary. The lecturer will choose primary material and introduce simple words and phrases. The lecturer will use activities that focus on understanding the basic structure of sentences and correct pronunciation. Visual components, such as pictures and word cards, will aid comprehension.

On the other hand, if the lecturer is teaching advanced students, a more open and communication-oriented approach can be used. More complex material, such as news articles, interviews, or recorded speaking, may be part of the curriculum. Students will be expected to participate in in-depth discussions, analyze complex texts, and communicate in English in more real-world contexts.

Besides ability level, lecturers also pay attention to individual needs. Some students may focus more on developing speaking skills, while others may be more interested in improving writing skills or listening comprehension. To adapt teaching to these needs, lecturers will provide a variety of activities and assignments that enable students to develop in their areas of interest.

Flexibility in teaching approaches is also essential (Finney, 2002). The lecturer is always ready to adjust the teaching plan if students need more time to understand a particular material or show a deep interest in one topic. This flexibility means that the curriculum is not fixed and locked but can be adapted to class dynamics and student needs.

Furthermore, providing constructive and personalized feedback is essential in adapting teaching approaches (Alqahtani et al., 2023). By understanding individual strengths and weaknesses, the lecturer can give appropriate feedback that helps students continue to improve. Depending on the skills being assessed, it may also involve using different evaluation tools, such as written tests, individual conversations, or group projects.

Finally, encouraging active participation is a critical element of adapting teaching approaches. The lecturers create a classroom environment that supports interaction, collaboration, and functional communication. Activities such as group discussions, role plays, or group-based projects provide students with opportunities to practice English in real situations, which is essential for developing their communication skills.



In this way, adapting the teaching approach in EFL allows the lecturers to respond flexibly to students' needs and skill levels. This item helps create a more effective learning experience, motivates students, and enables them to achieve a higher level of English language competency according to their learning goals.

The challenges EFL lecturers face, such as problems with student motivation and managing classes with varying levels of ability, can be seen as challenges in implementing a student-centred learning approach in ELT. In this approach, students are considered the centre of learning, and lecturers are expected to create learning experiences that suit their needs and interests. Therefore, the results of this study provide insight into how EFL lecturers face these challenges in the English language learning context.

## **CONCLUSION**

First, this research emphasizes the need for an appropriate approach to the professional development of EFL lecturers. In an ever-changing world, lecturers must continually update their knowledge and share best practices. It also identified that the quality of teaching directly impacts students' learning experiences, so greater attention to the development of EFL lecturers could significantly impact student learning outcomes. To improve the quality of education in class, EFL lecturers try to apply learning strategies and methods that are considered adequate. EFL lecturers use many communicative and contextual approaches to improve the quality of teaching in EFL classes. This communicative approach is suitable for growing students' motivation and self-confidence to improve their English language skills. Apart from the lecturer's approach to improving the quality of learning in class, lecturers also apply contextual learning by linking the learning process in class to real life.

Furthermore, this research identifies the importance of selecting effective and enjoyable learning materials for students with exciting themes. The lecturer's strategy in selecting lecture materials is actively interacting with students. Apart from that, lecturers observe students' abilities to find out the extent of students' language skills. This observation is essential to do as a mapping in improving teaching practices in the classroom. In addition, the findings highlight challenges in EFL classroom learning. The problem that many lecturers face is the lack of language skills for students, for example, vocabulary. Therefore, lecturers have adjusted learning strategies and methods to improve English language skills to overcome these challenges. Besides that, the lecturers collaborate and discuss how to improve the quality of learning in class. The lecturers also carry out self-reflection by improving previous teaching weaknesses and analyzing feedback from students to adopt better strategies to improve the quality of the learning process so that learning outcomes in class can be achieved optimally.

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