Students' Perception on English Teachers' Teaching style at SMAN 1 Kota Gorontalo: A Qualitative Study
(*Persepsi Siswa Terhadap Gaya Mengajar Guru Bahasa Inggris di SMAN 1 Kota Gorontalo: Studi Kualitatif*)

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Article Info	Abstract

This study aims to explore and describe students' perceptions of English teachers' teaching styles at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Gorontalo. It employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The participants consisted of 21 eleventh-grade students and two English teachers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes. The findings reveal that students generally have positive perceptions of their teachers' teaching styles. The teachers predominantly applied democratic and expressive styles, characterized by a relaxed and comfortable classroom atmosphere, two-way communication, the integration of learning technologies such as videos and presentations, and the use of relevant examples and storytelling. These approaches were found to enhance students' motivation, participation, and confidence in speaking English. However, some students still experienced difficulties in grammar and pronunciation and showed diverse learning preferences. In conclusion, teaching styles play a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions and fostering an effective and engaging English learning environment. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to develop interactive, varied, and student-centered teaching strategies to accommodate diverse student needs.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dan mendeskripsikan persepsi siswa terhadap gaya mengajar guru Bahasa Inggris di SMA Negeri 1 Kota Gorontalo. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Partisipan terdiri dari 21 siswa kelas XI dan dua guru Bahasa Inggris. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi kelas, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan tema utama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa secara umum memiliki persepsi positif terhadap gaya mengajar guru. Guru cenderung menerapkan gaya mengajar demokratis dan ekspresif yang ditandai dengan suasana kelas yang santai dan nyaman, komunikasi dua arah, pemanfaatan teknologi pembelajaran seperti video dan presentasi, serta penggunaan contoh dan cerita yang relevan dengan materi pembelajaran. Gaya mengajar ini terbukti meningkatkan motivasi, partisipasi, dan kepercayaan diri siswa dalam berbicara Bahasa Inggris. Namun, beberapa siswa masih mengalami kesulitan dalam tata bahasa dan pelafalan serta memiliki preferensi belajar yang beragam. Kesimpulannya, gaya mengajar memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk persepsi siswa dan menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang efektif dan menyenangkan. Oleh karena itu, guru disarankan untuk mengembangkan strategi pembelajaran yang interaktif, variatif, dan berpusat pada siswa.

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1.　INTRODUCTION

Teaching style is a crucial determinant of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms (Almira et al., 2025; Rosalia, 2024). Teachers do not merely function as transmitters of knowledge, but also as facilitators who shape classroom climate, manage interaction, and influence students' motivation and engagement in learning (Haris et al., 2022). In secondary education contexts, inappropriate teaching styles may lead to low student participation, increased language anxiety, and limited opportunities for meaningful language use, which ultimately hinder the achievement of English learning objectives.Previous studies have consistently reported that teachers' teaching styles significantly affect students' perceptions, learning motivation, and classroom participation. Democratic and interactive teaching styles have been shown to foster active engagement and enhance students' confidence in using English (Wati et al., 2023; Rigianti et al., 2023). Furthermore, the integration of instructional technology, such as audiovisual media and digital presentations, has been found to improve students' comprehension and interest in learning English (Goswami et al., 2024). In EFL contexts, student-centered and communicative approaches are widely considered more effective than teacher-centered and authoritarian practices.

Despite the growing body of literature, several limitations remain evident. Many existing studies predominantly employ quantitative methods to examine the relationship between teaching styles and learning outcomes, while fewer studies explore students' perceptions in depth through qualitative approaches. In addition, previous findings reveal inconsistencies regarding which teaching style is perceived as most effective, as students' perceptions are influenced by individual factors such as language proficiency, learning experience, and classroom context (Rahmanelli et al., 2023). Qualitative investigations that focus on students' lived experiences in specific EFL classroom settings, particularly at the senior high school level in the Indonesian context, remain limited. These gaps indicate the need for a more contextual and in-depth exploration of students' perceptions of English teachers' teaching styles. The present study addresses this gap by employing a qualitative case study design that combines semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to obtain comprehensive data. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on how students with varying levels of English proficiency perceive teachers' teaching styles and how these perceptions relate to their motivation, classroom participation, and confidence in using English. Unlike previous studies that emphasize outcomes, this study prioritizes students' voices as the primary source of data.

The main research problem addressed in this study concerns how students perceive the teaching styles of English teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Gorontalo. Accordingly, the study aims to analyze students' perceptions of English teachers' teaching styles and their implications for the English learning process. The research is situated in the context of eleventh-grade English instruction, with the unit of analysis focusing on students' perceptions of teaching styles, including aspects of teacher–student communication, instructional methods and media, and classroom atmosphere.This article is organized as follows. The introduction presents the research background, significance, and objectives. The following section reviews relevant literature on teaching styles and students' perceptions in EFL contexts. The research methodology is then described, followed by the presentation and discussion of the findings. The article concludes with conclusions and recommendations for improving English teaching practices.

2.　RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions and experiences within a specific educational context. The case study design was considered appropriate as this research focused on a single setting to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of English teachers' teaching styles in a natural classroom environment.

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Gorontalo during the second semester of the academic year. The duration of the study was approximately two months, including data collection and

preliminary analysis. The researcher played an active role as the primary research instrument, being directly involved in observing classroom activities, conducting interviews, and interpreting the data. The researcher maintained a non-participant observer role during classroom observations to minimize disruption to the teaching and learning process.

The participants of this study consisted of 21 eleventh-grade students and two English teachers. The students were selected using purposive sampling to ensure variation in English proficiency levels and learning experiences. The teachers were chosen based on their active involvement in teaching English to the selected classes. The students served as the main subjects of the study, while the teachers functioned as supporting informants to provide contextual and instructional perspectives.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' perceptions of their teachers' teaching styles, including aspects of communication, instructional methods, classroom interaction, and learning atmosphere. Interviews with teachers were conducted to gain supporting information regarding teaching strategies and instructional considerations. Classroom observations were carried out to document teaching practices, teacher–student interactions, and the overall classroom environment. Observation sheets and field notes were used to systematically record relevant events during the teaching and learning process.

The research instruments included interview guidelines and observation checklists developed based on relevant literature on teaching styles and EFL instruction. The interview questions were designed to be open-ended to allow participants to express their views freely. Prior to data collection, the instruments were reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance to the research objectives. Minor revisions were made to improve the comprehensibility of the questions.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. The process began with data familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes. The data were then coded to identify meaningful units related to teaching styles and students' perceptions. Similar codes were grouped into categories, which were further refined into overarching themes. The analysis was carried out iteratively to ensure consistency and depth of interpretation.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews and observations. Member checking was conducted by confirming key findings with selected participants to ensure accuracy of interpretation. Dependability was addressed by maintaining detailed documentation of the research procedures, while confirmability was ensured through reflective notes to minimize researcher bias. These measures contributed to the reliability and validity of the qualitative findings.

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section elaborates the findings of the study by providing a deeper interpretation of students' perceptions of English teachers' teaching styles and situating these findings within broader theoretical and empirical discussions. The discussion aims not only to answer the research questions but also to contribute to the development of knowledge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy through critical engagement with prior studies.

3.1   Students' Perceptions as Indicators of Instructional Effectiveness

The findings demonstrate that students' perceptions function as a critical and multidimensional indicator of instructional effectiveness in EFL classrooms. Students consistently described their teachers' teaching styles as supportive, interactive, and engaging, suggesting that the learning environment not only facilitated participation but also encouraged active meaning-making and personal involvement in the learning process. This indicates that instructional effectiveness extends beyond measurable academic outcomes and should also encompass how students experience, interpret, and emotionally respond to classroom practices.

More specifically, students highlighted several aspects that shaped their positive perceptions, including the teachers' ability to create a psychologically safe learning environment, their use of clear and relatable explanations, and their efforts to maintain two-way communication. These elements contributed to a sense of inclusion and reduced anxiety, particularly in speaking activities, which are often perceived as challenging in EFL contexts. In this regard, students' perceptions can be understood as reflective of both cognitive engagement (e.g., understanding the material) and affective engagement (e.g., feeling comfortable and motivated).

This finding aligns with learner-centered pedagogical frameworks, which emphasize the centrality of students' subjective experiences in determining instructional success (Borg, 2019). Within this framework, positive perceptions are not merely indicators of satisfaction but represent the degree to which teaching practices are responsive to learners' cognitive needs (such as clarity and scaffolding) and affective needs (such as motivation, confidence, and reduced anxiety). In this study, students' positive perceptions were

strongly associated with teachers' openness, responsiveness to questions, and flexibility in adjusting teaching strategies based on classroom dynamics.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that students' perceptions are shaped through continuous interaction between teaching practices and learner expectations. For instance, when teachers incorporated multimedia resources, storytelling, and contextual examples, students reported higher levels of interest and comprehension. Conversely, challenges related to grammar and pronunciation suggest that while teaching styles were perceived positively, there remains a need for more targeted instructional support in specific language components. This indicates that students' perceptions can also serve as diagnostic feedback for identifying gaps in instructional delivery.

Compared to previous studies that often position students' perceptions as secondary variables—primarily as correlates of academic achievement—this study foregrounds perception as a central construct in evaluating teaching effectiveness. This perspective supports recent calls in EFL research to legitimize learners' voices as essential sources of pedagogical evaluation (Sato & Loewen, 2020). By treating students as active informants rather than passive recipients, this approach provides a more holistic understanding of classroom effectiveness.

Therefore, the findings reinforce the argument that understanding students' perceptions is indispensable for developing effective, adaptive, and responsive teaching practices. Incorporating students' feedback into instructional design can help teachers refine their pedagogical approaches, ensuring that teaching is not only academically effective but also meaningful and engaging from the learners' perspective.

3.2 Democratic and Expressive Teaching Styles in EFL Contexts

The predominance of democratic and expressive teaching styles identified in this study underscores the growing relevance of participatory and humanistic pedagogy in EFL classrooms. Teachers were observed to actively encourage dialogue, invite student input, and create a classroom climate grounded in mutual respect and openness. Such practices positioned students not merely as passive recipients of knowledge, but as active participants in the learning process. As a result, the classroom environment became more inclusive and dynamic, allowing students to express their ideas, ask questions freely, and engage more deeply with the learning material.

More importantly, these teaching styles contributed significantly to the development of a psychologically safe learning environment. Students reported feeling less anxious and more confident when interacting in English, particularly during speaking activities. This sense of safety is crucial in second language acquisition, where learners often experience fear of making mistakes or being judged. By minimizing authoritarian tendencies and promoting supportive interactions, teachers enabled students to take linguistic risks—an essential condition for developing communicative competence.

These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that democratic teaching styles reduce learners' anxiety and enhance their willingness to communicate in a foreign language (MacIntyre et al., 2018; Rigianti et al., 2023). In particular, the results resonate with the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), which suggests that emotional variables such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence can significantly influence language acquisition. A low affective filter—achieved through a supportive and non-threatening classroom atmosphere—facilitates greater language input processing and output production. Although Krashen's theory has faced criticism for its limited empirical measurability, its explanatory power remains relevant in understanding why students in this study reported increased confidence and participation under democratic and expressive teaching conditions.

Furthermore, this study extends the existing literature by demonstrating that democratic teaching styles are not merely abstract or attitudinal constructs but are enacted through concrete and observable instructional practices. These include the use of open-ended and flexible questioning techniques, collaborative learning activities such as group discussions and peer interaction, and the delivery of contextualized explanations that connect learning materials to students' real-life experiences. Teachers also incorporated expressive elements, such as storytelling, humor, and varied intonation, which enhanced students' engagement and helped sustain attention throughout the lesson.

In addition, the expressive dimension of teaching played a complementary role in reinforcing democratic practices. By presenting material in an enthusiastic and relatable manner, teachers were able to humanize the learning experience, making it more enjoyable and memorable. This combination of democratic and expressive approaches suggests that effective teaching in EFL contexts requires both relational sensitivity (how teachers interact with students) and pedagogical creativity (how content is delivered).

Therefore, democratic teaching should be understood not as a fixed teaching personality, but as a dynamic pedagogical stance that is continuously negotiated and manifested through everyday classroom interactions. It involves teachers' ongoing responsiveness to students' needs, their willingness to adapt instructional strategies, and their commitment to fostering an equitable and engaging learning environment.

These findings highlight the importance of integrating participatory principles into practical teaching strategies to enhance both the cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning.

3.3   Instructional Media, Technology, and Contextual Learning

Another prominent finding concerns the role of instructional media and technology in shaping students' perceptions. Students reported higher engagement when teachers integrated videos, slides, and real-life examples into English lessons. Classroom observations confirmed that these practices stimulated discussion and facilitated comprehension, particularly for abstract linguistic concepts.

This finding supports previous research emphasizing the pedagogical value of technology-enhanced language learning (TELT). Studies by Goswami et al. (2024) and Lai and Bower (2020) indicate that multimedia resources can enhance learners' multimodal processing and contextual understanding. In this study, technology functioned not as a replacement for teaching, but as a mediating tool that strengthened teacher–student interaction.

From a sociocultural perspective, instructional media serve as cultural artifacts that mediate learning processes (Vygotsky, 1978). The effective use of media observed in this study suggests that teaching styles are increasingly hybrid, combining interpersonal interaction with technological mediation. This challenges traditional dichotomies between teacher-centered and student-centered instruction and points toward a more integrated pedagogical model.

3.4   Diversity of Learner Needs and Instructional Adaptability

Despite generally positive perceptions, the findings reveal heterogeneity in students' learning needs and preferences. Some students expressed difficulties in grammar and pronunciation, indicating that interactive teaching styles alone may not suffice for all learners. Lower-proficiency students tended to require more structured guidance, while higher-proficiency students preferred communicative and exploratory activities.

This finding resonates with differentiated instruction theory, which emphasizes adapting content, process, and support based on learner readiness and proficiency (Tomlinson, 2014). It also aligns with previous studies reporting mixed perceptions of communicative approaches among learners with varying linguistic backgrounds (Haris et al., 2022).

Importantly, this variation suggests that teaching styles should be viewed as flexible repertoires rather than fixed categories. The findings challenge oversimplified classifications of "effective" teaching styles and instead advocate for pedagogical adaptability. This supports recent arguments that effective EFL teaching involves dynamic adjustment to learners' evolving needs rather than adherence to a single dominant approach (Basturkmen, 2021).

3.5   Reconceptualizing Teaching Style as a Dynamic Construct

One of the key theoretical contributions of this study lies in reconceptualizing teaching style as a dynamic and context-sensitive construct. While previous frameworks often categorize teaching styles into rigid typologies, the findings suggest that teachers fluidly combine multiple styles depending on instructional goals, classroom conditions, and student responses.

This perspective aligns with post-method pedagogy, which rejects prescriptive teaching methods in favor of principled pragmatism (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). In this study, teachers' practices reflected an adaptive orientation, balancing democratic interaction with explicit instruction when necessary. Such hybridity indicates a shift away from static teaching style models toward a more nuanced understanding of pedagogical practice.

By empirically illustrating this adaptability, the study offers a modification of existing teaching style theories. Rather than positioning styles as mutually exclusive, the findings support a continuum-based model in which teachers strategically navigate between styles to optimize learning. This theoretical refinement contributes to ongoing debates regarding flexibility and teacher agency in EFL instruction.

3.6   Comparison with Previous Studies and Empirical Integration

When compared with previous studies conducted in different EFL contexts, the findings both confirm and extend existing knowledge. Similar to studies by Wati et al. (2023) and Rigianti et al. (2023), this research confirms that students favor interactive and supportive teaching styles. However, unlike studies that rely solely on survey data, this qualitative investigation provides contextualized insights into how such styles are enacted and experienced in real classrooms.

Furthermore, while some studies report technology use as a primary driver of engagement, this study demonstrates that technology is effective only when integrated within coherent teaching practices. This finding cautions against techno-centric approaches and underscores the central role of teacher mediation.

By integrating observational data with students' narratives, the study strengthens the empirical basis for understanding teaching styles as lived pedagogical practices. This methodological integration enhances the credibility of the findings and addresses limitations identified in earlier research.

3.7 Implications for Theory and Practice

The enriched findings have important implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, the study contributes to EFL pedagogy by advancing a flexible and learner-responsive conception of teaching style. Practically, the findings suggest that teachers should continuously reflect on students' perceptions as feedback for instructional improvement.

In the Indonesian EFL context, where classroom practices are often shaped by curriculum demands and examination pressures, this study highlights the importance of maintaining pedagogical sensitivity to learners' experiences. Teacher education programs may benefit from incorporating reflective practices that encourage future teachers to critically examine their teaching styles through students' perspectives.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS
4.1 Conclusion

Study investigated students' perceptions of English teachers' teaching styles at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Gorontalo and examined how these perceptions relate to the English learning process. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that students generally perceive their English teachers' teaching styles positively. The teachers predominantly applied democratic and expressive teaching styles, which were characterized by open communication, supportive classroom interaction, and flexibility in instructional practices.

The findings further indicate that these teaching styles play an important role in enhancing students' motivation, classroom participation, and confidence in using English. Students felt more comfortable engaging in learning activities, asking questions, and expressing ideas when the classroom atmosphere was supportive and non-threatening. This suggests that teaching styles that emphasize interaction and student involvement contribute positively to the effectiveness of English language learning.

However, the study also reveals that students' perceptions are not uniform. Differences in English proficiency levels and learning needs influenced how students experienced and responded to teaching practices. While interactive and communicative approaches were generally favored, some students required more structured explanations, particularly in relation to grammar and pronunciation. This finding indicates that teaching styles need to be applied flexibly to accommodate diverse learner characteristics.

Overall, the results of this study answer the research problem by demonstrating that students' perceptions of teaching styles are shaped by both instructional practices and individual learning needs. The study concludes that effective English teaching in senior high school contexts requires a balanced and adaptive approach, in which teachers combine democratic, interactive, and structured instructional strategies. These conclusions are consistent with the objectives of the study and reflect the empirical findings obtained through interviews and classroom observations.

4.2 Suggestions/Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed for educational practice and future research. First, English teachers are encouraged to continuously develop and refine their teaching styles by adopting flexible and student-centered approaches. Democratic and interactive teaching practices should be maintained, as they have been shown to foster positive student perceptions, enhance motivation, and encourage active participation. At the same time, teachers are advised to balance interactive activities with structured instruction, particularly to support students who experience difficulties in grammar and pronunciation.

Second, teachers are recommended to employ varied instructional strategies and learning media to accommodate diverse student needs and proficiency levels. The integration of instructional technology, such as audiovisual materials and contextual examples, should be aligned with clear pedagogical objectives rather than used merely as supplementary tools. By doing so, teachers can create more meaningful learning experiences while ensuring that all students are able to follow and benefit from the instructional process.

Third, schools and educational institutions are encouraged to support professional development programs that emphasize reflective teaching practices. Providing opportunities for teachers to evaluate their teaching styles through student feedback and classroom reflection may contribute to continuous instructional improvement. Such initiatives can help teachers become more responsive to students' perceptions and learning experiences.

Finally, future research is recommended to explore students' perceptions of teaching styles in broader contexts, such as different school levels, regions, or instructional settings. Further studies may also employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to examine how students' perceptions of teaching styles evolve over time and how they relate to learning outcomes. Expanding the scope of research will enrich the understanding of teaching styles in EFL contexts and contribute to the development of more effective and inclusive English language teaching practices.

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