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Students' Perceptions of English Teacher Strategies and Reading Skills amid Limited Facilities

Aliva Sakinah Humairah[1], Sari Wulandari[2], Rahayu Prasetyaningsih[3]

Corresponding Email: yayuprasetyaningsih@gmail.com

[1,2,3]Universitas Muhammadiyah Palu

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Abstract

Limited facilities require teachers to adopt adaptive teaching strategies. This research describes students' perceptions of English teachers' strategies and examines their relationship with reading skills at Madrasah Aliyah Muhammadiyah Toaya, a school without a library or adequate reading materials. This quantitative correlational study involved all 25 eleventh-grade students and used a 15-item perception questionnaire, a 10-item reading test, and Spearman Rank correlation. Perceptions were moderate (M = 2.69), and reading skills were low (M = 32.00). Perceptions were not significantly associated with reading achievement (r_s = −0.171; p = 0.414; 95% CI [−0.53, 0.24]). Teacher strategies may need to be accompanied by adequate reading materials and sustained reading practice.

Keywords: *students' perceptions; teacher strategies; reading skills; limited facilities*

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill in learning English as a foreign language (EFL), yet many students struggle to comprehend texts because of limited vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and motivation, particularly where English is rarely used outside the classroom (Tarigan & Hasibuan, 2024). Various approaches have been examined to improve EFL reading comprehension (Millenia & Mukhrizal, 2024), including scaffolding with visual aids or graphic organizers (Darmawati et al., 2026; Pérez Buelvas, 2024) and the QAR and SQ3R strategies (Novita & Sirait, 2023).

Most of these studies examine the effect of a strategy on reading outcomes. How students perceive the strategies they experience is a different question, because perception and effectiveness are not the same: students may rate a strategy positively because it is enjoyable or easy to follow without showing better reading performance. If perceptions are positive while reading performance remains low, teachers need to know that using a strategy may not be enough. The relationship between students' perceptions of teacher strategies and reading achievement under limited learning resources has received little statistical attention.

This study examines four strategies: skimming, scanning, questioning, and discussion. Skimming and scanning are techniques for grasping the gist and locating specific information (Grabe & Stoller, 2019), whereas questioning and discussion involve students actively in constructing meaning (Nazara et al., 2023). If students perceive these strategies as helpful, they may read more attentively and practice more; a positive relationship with reading scores was therefore expected.

The study was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Muhammadiyah Toaya which, based on the researchers' preliminary observation, has no library, language laboratory, adequate English reading materials, or reading corner. Limited facilities are treated as the study context, not as a variable or cause of reading ability, and the study offers context-specific evidence from one school and a small sample. It aims to describe eleventh-grade students' perceptions of four English teacher strategies (X) and to test their correlation with reading skills (Y). The null hypothesis (H_0) states that there is no significant correlation, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) states that there is.

Method

This study used a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between students' perceptions of the English teacher's strategies (X) and their reading skills (Y) without manipulating either variable. The teacher's strategies were not observed directly; the study measures students' perceptions of them, not their actual implementation or effectiveness. The study was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Muhammadiyah Toaya in June 2026. The school's lack of a library, language laboratory, adequate English reading materials, and reading corner was established through the researchers' preliminary observation. The sample comprised all 25 eleventh-grade students (13 male and 12 female) who took part in English reading lessons (total sampling).

Perceptions were measured with a researcher-developed, 15-item, four-point Likert questionnaire (strongly agree = 4 to strongly disagree = 1) covering skimming (items 1–4), scanning (items 5–8), questioning (items 9–11), and discussion (items 12–15). The indicators follow common definitions of the four strategies (Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Murphy et al., 2009; Rosenshine et al., 1996). Reading skills were measured with a 10-item multiple-choice test (four options)

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based on one informational passage, "Cacti," taken from the EnglishForEveryone (n.d.) informational reading series.

The items were written for this study, one of them adapted from the source's own questions, and covered main idea (items 1–3), specific information (items 4–6), inference (items 7–8), and conclusion (items 9–10). The passage is short (249 words in 22 sentences; mean sentence length = 11.3 words) and easy by readability standards (Flesch Reading Ease ≈ 90, at the boundary between "easy" and "very easy" on Flesch's (1948) scale), although such formulas were developed for native-speaker readers and underestimate difficulty for EFL learners with limited vocabulary. The score was the proportion of correct answers multiplied by 100. Lesson plans, achievement records, and classroom activity logs were consulted only as background documentation and were not included in the statistical analysis.

Before use, both instruments were consulted with the supervisor or experts. Questionnaire item validity was tested by correlating each item with the total score using Spearman Rank correlation, with an item considered valid when the calculated coefficient was at least the table value at $\alpha = 0.05$ (Sugiyono, 2017).); number of the 15 items met this criterion. Reliability was tested with Cronbach's Alpha, with $\alpha \geq 0.60$ considered reliable (α = 0,910. The validity of the reading test instrument was assessed using an expert judgment technique, involving specialists in the field of English language instruction.

The experts' review indicated that the 10 multiple-choice questions concerning the topic of "Cacti" covered all the targeted reading comprehension indicators and were structured with appropriate grammar and formatting. Overall, the reading test instrument was deemed valid in terms of both content and appearance (face and content validity), requiring no major revisions.

Data were analyzed descriptively (mean, standard deviation, median, and range) and inferentially using Spearman Rank correlation, chosen because the questionnaire data are ordinal and the sample size is small (N=25). Normality of the raw data was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Perception scores were normally distributed (W=0.98, p=0.886), whereas reading test scores deviated significantly from normality (W=0.91, p=0.025). This non-normal distribution in reading performance, combined with the ordinal scale of the questionnaire and small sample size, justified the application of non-parametric Spearman Rank correlation. Before the analysis, the monotonic relationship between the two variables was checked using a scatterplot.

Perception means were categorized into equal intervals of 1.00 per band based on the four-point Likert scale formula $\frac{4-1}{3} = 1.00$, yielding low (1.00-2.00 moderate (2.01-3.00), and high (3.01-4.00) perception levels, and also reading scores were divided into five equal 20-point categories. Correlation strength was interpreted using Guilford's (1956) classification, and hypotheses were tested at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Results

Students' Perceptions of the Teacher's Instructional Strategies

Students' perceptions of the English teacher's strategies were moderate overall (*M* = 2.69, *SD* = 5.97/15=0.40. range = 2.00-3.67, slightly above the midpoint of the four-point scale (2.50). In practical terms, students on average leaned toward agreeing with the statements about the strategies, without strong agreement. Table 1 presents the mean for each indicator. All four fall in the moderate category: discussion (*M* = 2.76), skimming (*M* = 2.72), scanning (*M* = 2.64), and questioning (*M* = 2.64). The difference between the highest and lowest indicators is 0.12.

Table 1 Mean Scores of Students' Perceptions by Strategy Indicator

No.	Indicator	Mean Score	Category
1.	Discussion	2.76	Moderate
2.	Skimming	2.72	Moderate
3.	Scanning	2.64	Moderate
4.	Questioning	2.64	Moderate
	Overall mean	**2.69**	**Moderate**

At the item level, item 14 "Group discussions help me understand difficult English texts" and Item 6 had the highest mean (*M* = 2.84), remaining within the moderate category. Conversely, Item 2 had the lowest mean (*M* = 2.48). These values show how positively students rated each strategy; they do not show how effective each strategy was.

Students' Reading Skills

Students' reading scores were low (*M* = 32.00, *Mdn* = 30.00, *SD* = 12.58, range = 10–60). As Table 2 shows, no student fell in the high or very high categories; three students (12%) were in the moderate category, 14 (56%) in the low category, and eight (32%) in the very low category. In total, 88% of students scored below 41. Because the test had 10 items, scores took only six distinct values, and 21 of the 25 students scored between 20 and 40. The mean of 3.2 correct answers was only modestly above the 2.5 expected from random guessing on four-option items (one-sample $t(24) = 2.78$, $p = 0.010$), and the spread of scores (*SD* = 1.26 items) was close to the 1.37 items expected from guessing alone.

Table 2 Frequency Distribution of Students' Reading Skills

Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
81–100	Very high	0	0%
61–80	High	0	0%
41–60	Moderate	3	16%
21–40	Low	14	56%
0–20	Very low	8	28%

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Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Total		**25**	**100%**

Correlation between Perceptions and Reading Skills

Spearman Rank correlation produced a coefficient of $r_s = -0.171$ ($p = 0.414$, $N = 25$; Table 3). An approximate 95% confidence interval, based on the Fisher z transformation, is [−0.55, 0.26]. The relationship is very weak (< 0.20; Guilford, 1956) and not statistically significant, and the wide interval includes zero. Because p is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 3 Spearman Rank Correlation between Students' Perceptions and Reading Skills

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r_s)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	95% CI
Perceptions × Reading Skills	−0.171	0.414	25	[−0.55, 0.26]

Discussion

Moderate Perceptions of Teacher Strategies

Students' perceptions of the teacher's strategies were moderate, which means that the strategies were received fairly positively but not enthusiastically. Discussion was rated highest, and item 14 had the highest mean among all items. This is consistent with Hidayat and Fitriani (2024), who reported that discussion and cooperative learning increase student engagement where resources are limited. Discussion may be easy to carry out without extra materials, since one shared text can be discussed together. However, a high rating shows only that students valued the activity most; it does not show that discussion is the most effective strategy or that it is superior to the others.

Scanning received the lowest item mean (item 8, $M = 2.44$) and questioning the lowest indicator mean ($M = 2.69$). One possible interpretation is that students had few opportunities to practice locating specific information in different texts, but this remains an interpretation rather than a demonstrated finding, and a low rating does not mean that scanning was ineffective. The narrow range across indicators (2.69–2.92) also suggests that students may not have clearly distinguished the strategies, perhaps because they were used together in the same reading activities. Classroom observation or interviews would be needed to examine this.

Low and Concentrated Reading Scores

Students' reading skills were low ($M = 32.00$), and 84% scored below 41. This is in line with Naniwarsih and Andriani (2018), who reported difficulties in literal reading comprehension, and with Wahyuni (2023), who discussed the challenges

of teaching reading in under-resourced schools. The absence of a library and reading materials at the school may limit students' reading opportunities, but facilities were not measured in this study, so they cannot be identified as the cause of the low scores. Vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and motivation (Tarigan & Hasibuan, 2024), reading habits (Sari & Prasetyo, 2022), and exposure to English outside the classroom may also contribute.

No student reached the high category, and the highest score was 60. The low scores are therefore widespread across the class rather than limited to a few students, which has consequences for the correlation analysis discussed next.

A Non-Significant Correlation as the Central Finding

The central finding is that students' perceptions were not significantly associated with their reading scores (r_s = −0.171, p = 0.414). The relationship is very weak and the confidence interval is wide, so the data are compatible with no relationship and with a weak-to-moderate relationship in either direction. Several explanations are possible, none of which this design can confirm. First, with N = 25 the test has low statistical power, so a small relationship would be hard to detect. Second, the scores are concentrated in the low range (88% below 41), which restricts variation and makes any relationship harder to detect. Third, perceptions varied moderately between students (*SD*=0.40; range=2.00–3.67), so restricted variation in perceptions is a less likely explanation than restricted variation in reading scores. Fourth, reading achievement depends on factors not measured here, such as vocabulary knowledge, reading habits, motivation, and exposure to English outside the classroom (Sari & Prasetyo, 2022; Tarigan & Hasibuan, 2024; Tarique & Anthony, 2022; Utami & Rahmat, 2023).

The negative sign should not be read as evidence that positive perceptions harm reading ability; with a coefficient this small, it most likely reflects chance variation in a small sample.

Perceptions versus Instructional Effectiveness

This result illustrates the difference between perceiving a strategy positively and benefiting from it. Students may like a strategy because it is enjoyable or easy to follow, but measurable reading gains depend on how much and how well they practice. Studies that evaluated scaffolding or reading-strategy instruction directly (Darmawati et al., 2026; Novita & Sirait, 2023; Pérez Buelvas, 2024) assessed learning outcomes, whereas the present study assessed perceptions of strategies already in use. Its results therefore neither contradict nor confirm those studies. Positive perceptions are valuable because they may support engagement, but by themselves they are not sufficient to produce measurable reading achievement.

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Limited Facilities and Strategy Implementation

The school's lack of a library, language laboratory, reading materials, and reading corner is the context of this study, not an established explanation of its results. Teachers may partly compensate for limited physical resources through low-cost approaches such as collaborative learning and creative adaptations (Hidayat & Fitriani, 2024; Wahyuni, 2023), as well as photocopied passages or digital materials, and pictures can serve as a low-cost medium (Nggolaon & Sari, 2020). Yabie et al. (2021), writing in this journal, examined how English teachers' experience shapes the implementation of learning models, a reminder that classroom practice depends on teachers' circumstances. Providing resources alone, however, will not automatically improve reading skills; resources need to be integrated into structured and sustained reading activities.

Pedagogical Implications

For teachers in resource-limited schools, the findings suggest combining several low-cost activities rather than relying on a single strategy: short printed reading passages, peer discussion of those passages, skimming and scanning exercises with varied texts, question-generation activities, and low-cost digital reading resources. These suggestions arise from the study context and were not tested here. They need to be organized as structured and sustained reading practice, supported by simple reading materials that the school can provide.

Limitations and Future Research

This study involved only one school and 25 students, which limits generalizability. Its correlational design cannot establish causation, the teacher's strategies were not observed but only perceived by students, and perception was the only predictor. The analysis was conducted at the level of overall perception, as planned in the design; it did not examine each strategy separately. Future studies could use larger and more varied samples, include vocabulary knowledge, motivation, reading habits, exposure to English, and access to reading materials as additional predictors, and use longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs to test whether particular strategies improve reading performance.

Conclusion

Eleventh-grade students at Madrasah Aliyah Muhammadiyah Toaya held moderate perceptions of their English teacher's strategies, while their reading skills were low. Perceptions were very weakly and not significantly correlated with reading skills, so the null hypothesis was not rejected.

In this sample, positive perceptions did not correspond to higher reading scores. This suggests that teacher strategies may need to be accompanied by adequate reading materials and sustained reading practice. Future studies should use larger samples and examine vocabulary, reading habits, motivation, and exposure to English as additional factors.

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