Conventional Pedagogies in EFL Higher Education: A Critical Inquiry into Lecturers' Beliefs and Student Voices

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Abstract

Conventional teaching methods, such as grammar-translation and learning through memorisation, summarisation and lectures are still often applied in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). However, the effectiveness of these methods in improving students' language proficiency is still a matter of discussion. This study aims to examine teachers views on conventional teaching methods in EFL and their effects on students' participation, enthusiasm and learning outcomes. This study applied a qualitative approach through interview techniques. Information was obtained from six EFL students who had experience of traditional methods in their classes. Data were analyzed through thematic method to find the main patterns in the teachers' views and experiences. The findings indicated that the traditional method was successful in improving students' grammar comprehension and writing skills. However, many teachers recognized that this approach is not effective in improving students' speaking and listening skills. In addition, traditional approaches often lead to boredom and lack of student participation in learning activities. Thus, many teachers choose to combine traditional methods with communicative approaches or technology to enhance the learning effect. This study recommends the application of blended learning methods that integrate grammar structures with active communication exercises to produce more interesting and effective learning for EFL students.

Keywords: *Conventional Methods; EFL; Student Motivation; Student Engagement; English Language Learning*

Introduction

Mastery of foreign languages, including English, requires not only theoretical knowledge but also consistent practice (Zulfa & Utami, 2021)). The success of English language learning is greatly influenced by how educators—whether teachers or lecturers—establish an engaging and practical learning environment (Paniagua & Istance, 2018). Lecturers, in particular, have the responsibility not only to deliver content but also to design teaching approaches that stimulate learners' creativity and critical thinking. However, many still rely on conventional teaching approaches that emphasize lecturing, summarising, and memorising—methods that may hinder active engagement and contribute to student boredom and demotivation (Rifai & Nabhan, 2017) The beliefs held by lecturers about the most effective teaching methods greatly shape how they plan lessons, interact with students, and assess learning outcomes (Saputra et al., 2020). If these beliefs are misaligned with students' learning preferences, the result may be disengagement, reduced motivation, and ultimately low learning outcomes (Mardiha & Alibakhshi, 2020).

Numerous recent studies have explored English language teachers' beliefs and their impacts on instructional practices. For example, (Sari et al., 2020) examined teachers' engagement with professional development, revealing that such beliefs support lifelong learning efforts to improve teaching quality. Another study by Fakhomah et al. (2020) focused on how English teachers integrate web-based learning into their instruction, showing that positive beliefs about digital tools can foster innovative practices. Similarly, Arifin (2023) investigated how a teacher's belief in the deductive method influenced her consistent teaching practices, even as she adopted minor innovations. These studies affirm the importance of teacher beliefs in shaping classroom practices and highlight their potential to improve or hinder student outcomes.

Despite these contributions, most existing literature emphasizes positive or constructive beliefs held by teachers. There remains limited discussion about the impact of *mistaken* or *outdated* beliefs—particularly those favoring conventional approaches such as rote memorisation, passive lectures, and note-taking. While these methods are still widely practiced, their negative effects on student engagement and learning motivation are often overlooked. Moreover, studies rarely address how students themselves perceive and respond to such practices, especially in the context of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms in higher education.

This research fills that gap by focusing on how EFL lecturers' belief in conventional teaching methods is implemented in the classroom, and how these practices are perceived by students. Unlike previous studies that largely emphasize innovation and professional development, this research critically examines the

fallacy of traditional approaches and their impact on learners' motivation and engagement. Specifically, it investigates how lecturer-centered teaching hinders students' language development and confidence, while also exploring students' critical responses to these methods.

Accordingly, this study aims to address the following research questions: (1) How is the EFL lecturers' belief in conventional teaching approaches implemented in the EFL classroom? and (2) What are the impacts of EFL lecturers' belief in conventional teaching approaches as voiced by EFL students? The objectives of this study are: (1) to describe the implementation of conventional teaching approaches influenced by lecturers' beliefs, and (2) to explain the students' perspectives on how these approaches affect their learning experience. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on *students' critical voices* toward outdated teaching methods and its emphasis on examining the *negative implications* of lecturer beliefs that have long been taken for granted in EFL education.

Method

This research employed a qualitative research design with a case study approach. The case study method enabled the researcher to explore in depth how EFL lecturers' belief in conventional teaching methods is implemented in classrooms and how it influences students' motivation, engagement, and English proficiency. This approach was selected to allow the collection of detailed, real-life insights from EFL students about their learning experiences under conventional teaching methods, such as memorising, summarising, and lecturing.

The participants of this study were six English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students from the English Department of a private university in Surabaya. These students were selected from a preliminary survey distributed to approximately 60 students across three different academic batches. The researcher then selected six participants randomly from the survey responses to be interviewed for the study. These students served as the sample population and were considered appropriate due to their direct experiences with the teaching approaches being studied.

The data collection techniques used in this research were semi-structured interviews and documentation. The interviews served as the primary source of data and were conducted face-to-face over the course of one week, depending on the availability of participants. Each interview lasted between 5–10 minutes, aiming to explore students' perspectives and experiences with EFL lecturers who implement conventional teaching methods. A set of 12 open-ended questions was developed to guide the interview sessions. These questions were carefully reviewed and validated by two lecturers who are experts in qualitative research and English language education to ensure their effectiveness and relevance to the

research questions.

The interviews were recorded using an audio recorder, and notes were taken during the sessions to support accuracy. The questions addressed various aspects, including students' experiences, perceptions, feedback, and observations regarding lecturers' conventional teaching approaches. This process allowed for flexibility in responses while ensuring that relevant and in-depth information was collected. In addition to interviews, documentation was used to support data triangulation. Documentation consisted of interview audio recordings, field notes, and participant background information such as prior English exposure and educational history. These documents served to enrich the data and provide contextual depth to the analysis.

Once interviews were completed, they were transcribed and prepared for analysis. The data were organised into a classification table that included responses aligned with the research questions and categorized by conventional teaching components (memorising, summarising, and lecturing) and their associated impacts (demotivation and disengagement). The table format helped identify which student responses aligned with which aspects of the research focus.

For the data analysis, this study employed thematic analysis to identify and interpret patterns or themes that emerged from the student interviews. Thematic analysis was chosen because it allowed for the systematic coding and interpretation of qualitative data, particularly in understanding how students experienced conventional teaching methods.

The analysis followed six steps: (1) data familiarisation, (2) initial coding, (3) theme identification, (4) theme reviewing, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) final write-up of the findings. The researcher selected responses that were especially critical or reflective to represent key insights into the impact of lecturers' beliefs on students' learning experiences. By employing a carefully structured methodology, this study provides a comprehensive account of how conventional teaching methods are perceived and experienced by EFL students. The results offer insight into the practical effects of such methods and suggest possible areas for pedagogical development in English language education.

Results

The EFL Lecturers' Belief in Conventional Teaching Approaches

The analysis of six student interviews revealed that many EFL lecturers continue to implement conventional teaching approaches, primarily focusing on grammar instruction, translation tasks, repetition, and textbook exercises. These approaches are rooted in lecturers' beliefs that traditional methods provide a strong foundation for learning English, especially in grammar and writing. Four out

of six participants noted that their lecturers relied heavily on methods such as the grammar-translation method and rote memorisation.

As *A.M.* stated, "I think conventional methods like grammar translation are the backbone of learning a new language. I believe they help students understand the structure of English deeply, so I often use them in my classes" (A.M., Q1). Similarly, *G.C.* acknowledged, "They give students confidence because they can rely on rules and patterns" (G.C., Q1). When describing how these methods were applied in the classroom, all six respondents provided similar examples. *E.V.* explained, "When I use conventional methods, it's usually with translation exercises. I'll give students sentences in their native language to translate into English" (E.V., Q2). Meanwhile, *G.C.* described the typical lesson involving "a lot of drilling," such as "writing a sentence on the board and asking the students to repeat it or change the verb tense" (G.C., Q2).

Views on the effectiveness of these approaches were divided. Half of the participants found them somewhat beneficial for grammar mastery but inadequate for real communication. *A.M.* pointed out that "they are effective for understanding grammar, but they don't help much with speaking fluency" (A.M., Q3), whereas *A.L.* dismissed them as "outdated," arguing that "students today need methods that focus on interaction and creativity" (A.L., Q3). In balancing conventional and modern strategies, several participants noted attempts by lecturers to blend both approaches.

G.C. shared, "I use conventional methods for theory and modern methods for practice. For example, I explain a rule first, then have students practice it in conversations" (G.C., Q4). Likewise, *R.Y.* stated, "After a grammar lesson, I might use a digital quiz to make it more fun" (R.Y., Q4). On the topic of academic performance, students observed an improvement in written tasks but a lack of speaking proficiency. *A.M.* remarked, "Students who ace grammar tests often struggle with oral exams" (A.M., Q5), while *G.C.* added, "One student scored high on a grammar test but couldn't answer basic questions in English" (G.C., Q5).

When asked about student motivation, the majority (four out of six) expressed those conventional methods led to boredom and disengagement. *E.V.* noted, "Many students become demotivated because they feel the lessons don't relate to their real-life needs" (E.V., Q6), and *A.L.* observed that "students get frustrated and less active in class when I rely too much on traditional methods" (A.L., Q6).

The Impacts of EFL Lecturers' Belief in Conventional Teaching Approaches

The data also highlighted a number of challenges experienced by students due to the persistence of traditional teaching methods. Common problems included repetitive lessons, lack of interaction, and slow progress in communication skills.

E.V. mentioned, "The biggest challenge is making students see the value of these methods. They often ask for more interactive activities" (E.V., Q7). *R.Y.* added, "Some students struggle with memorization, so traditional methods don't work for them" (R.Y., Q7). In terms of student response, reactions to conventional lessons varied but leaned toward dissatisfaction. *A.L.* stated, "They resist it. They want to practice speaking or do group activities instead" (A.L., Q8). While some, like *R.Y.*, said "it depends," the consensus indicated that overly traditional classes fail to keep students engaged.

With respect to curriculum alignment, all six participants agreed that conventional methods fall short in meeting modern curriculum demands. *E.V.* commented, "Most modern curricula emphasize communicative competence, so conventional methods don't fully meet those expectations" (E.V., Q9), while *H.N.* observed, "They fit the theoretical parts of the curriculum but need to be supplemented for speaking and critical thinking skills" (H.N., Q9). Students also reflected on the impact of these methods on their learning experiences, citing strong grammar knowledge but weak communication ability. *G.C.* remarked, "Students become good at grammar and reading, but they struggle with speaking and listening" (G.C., Q10), and *A.L.* added, "They're good for passing exams but not for real-life conversations" (A.L., Q10). Regarding feedback from students to lecturers, most participants reported expressing dissatisfaction with overly conventional lessons. *E.V.* explained, "They often say the methods feel too old-fashioned and want more interactive activities" (E.V., Q11), and *H.N.* said, "They often tell me they want more opportunities to practice speaking" (H.N., Q11).

Finally, when asked about the need for pedagogical evolution, all six participants agreed that change is necessary. *A.M.* shared, "Yes, I think I need to integrate more communicative methods to make lessons more engaging and practical" (A.M., Q12). *A.L.* was more decisive: "Absolutely. I want to replace most of the traditional methods with task-based learning and role-playing activities" (A.L., Q12).

Discussion
The EFL Lecturers' Belief in Conventional Teaching Approaches

The findings from this study reveal that many EFL lecturers still adhere to conventional teaching methods such as memorising, summarising, and lecturing, driven by the belief that these approaches provide a foundational understanding of language structure. While some students acknowledged the value of these methods in improving grammar and writing proficiency, most expressed concern over their limited impact on speaking fluency and real-world language use. These findings align with Saputra et al. (2020) who noted that lecturers' beliefs significantly shape

classroom instruction and, ultimately, influence students' learning outcomes—positively or negatively.

Memorising

The practice of memorising continues to be a dominant feature in EFL classrooms, particularly in grammar instruction. Students reported being asked to memorise rules, vocabulary lists, and textbook content. While memorisation can support initial language acquisition (Imsa-ard, 2020) overreliance on it can lead to mechanical learning that lacks context. Students may know the rules but struggle to apply them in spontaneous speech. This is consistent with the concerns raised by Wang (2023) who emphasized that memorisation without deep understanding undermines critical thinking and adaptive communication.

Moreover, excessive memorisation was associated with demotivation. As one respondent (A.M.) noted, repetitive grammar drills "do not help much with speaking fluency," indicating the gap between passive knowledge and practical application. Firman and S. (2024) also highlighted how memorisation-centric learning can become a burden, especially when students feel pressured to recall isolated facts without understanding usage.

Summarising

Summarising, while useful for reinforcing comprehension, was also seen as limited when used excessively or without variation. As students were repeatedly assigned summarisation tasks, many felt that the learning process became monotonous and disengaging. This supports Alaofi (2020) claim that summarising can deepen understanding but must be supplemented with tasks that develop all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Participants shared that summarising alone did not prepare them for real-life conversations. While it enhanced their grasp of content, it often failed to promote interaction or creativity. Hidayah et al. (2023) similarly argued that unvaried summarisation methods could lead to student fatigue and lower classroom participation. Without opportunities to speak or engage in collaborative work, learners may become passive and disengaged. This also aligns with Waluyo et al. (2020) who warn that a summarising-heavy approach limits students' critical thinking and reduces opportunities for original expression.

Thus, while summarising can aid retention and comprehension (U.A, 2024) lecturers must ensure it is balanced with more active, practical tasks such as group discussions, presentations, or interactive simulations—activities that require the application of language in communicative contexts.

Lecturing

Lecturing remains a central component of conventional teaching approaches in the context of this study. Students reported that many lessons were still dominated by one-way delivery, with limited student interaction. While this method allows for the delivery of large volumes of material, it restricts opportunities for real-time communication practice and interactive learning. This corroborates (Elsayed, 2022), who pointed out that excessive lecturing can reduce the dynamic elements of language education.

Many participants expressed that the lack of discussion made learning feel passive and disconnected from authentic language use. Ruswandi et al. (2024) observed that while material distribution gives students access to more resources, it may hinder collaborative learning. Participants like A.L. and E.V. emphasized how students often became "frustrated" or "disengaged" when lecturers relied too heavily on lectures, a pattern echoed in the findings of Badah et al. (2024) who underlined the role of dialogue and discussion in developing communication confidence.

Furthermore, excessive lecturing risks weakening the relationship between lecturers and students. RIAD (2023) emphasized the importance of interaction for clarifying difficult concepts and providing timely feedback—key components missing in a lecture-only format. While some students, particularly those with strong self-discipline, may benefit from lecture materials, the majority require interactive engagement to build their speaking and listening proficiency. As Puspitasari et al. (2023) noted, communication skills flourish in environments that promote active participation and peer collaboration.

Therefore, a more balanced pedagogical strategy is needed—one that integrates lectures with interactive tasks such as debates, role plays, and peer discussions. This would provide students with structured input while also offering the chance to apply language skills in meaningful, contextualized ways. Pavlovskaya et al. (2022) argue that effective language learning requires both theoretical grounding and real-life practice, a claim strongly supported by this study's findings.

Conclusion

This research explored *EFL lecturers' belief in conventional teaching approaches* by voicing the perspectives of EFL students. The research specifically examined how conventional methods—namely memorising, summarising, and lecturing—are implemented in the classroom, and what impacts these methods have on students' learning engagement and motivation. Findings revealed that while memorisation helps in the acquisition of basic vocabulary and grammar, an

overemphasis on rote learning without conceptual understanding leads to mechanical learning, decreased motivation, and limited practical language use.

Similarly, summarising supports material retention but, when overly relied upon, restricts the development of essential skills such as speaking, listening, and critical thinking. Lastly, lecturing provides structured knowledge access but tends to limit student interaction and communicative competence when not complemented with active engagement strategies. Across all three methods, it was clear that students benefit more from a balanced instructional approach—one that integrates conventional foundations with interactive and communicative techniques such as group discussions, presentations, and simulations.

This hybrid approach supports holistic English language learning, enhancing both linguistic and cognitive development. Future research should broaden the scope of this study by involving a larger and more diverse sample across multiple institutions and regions. Comparative studies between institutions that rely heavily on traditional teaching methods and those that implement communicative or blended approaches could offer deeper insights into how teaching beliefs influence student outcomes.

Additionally, further studies may explore how lecturers' professional development and exposure to modern pedagogies affect their teaching philosophy and openness to adapting instructional strategies. Such research could contribute to the development of more effective, student-centered EFL instruction models.

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