

# EFL Students' Perspectives on Learning Grammar through English Conversation

Rizki Ika Febriyanti<sup>1</sup>  
Fairuz Nadhifah Izdihar<sup>2\*</sup>  
Monera A. Salic Hairulla<sup>3</sup>

Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang, INDONESIA<sup>1,2\*</sup>  
MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, THAILAND<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

*This research aims to find out the EFL students' point of view on the importance of using grammar in a conversation. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. The data collection technique uses semi-structured interviews to explore EFL students' points of view. The subjects of this research were thirty students who are enrolled in the second-year English department class at Muhammadiyah University Semarang. Based on the interviews that have been conducted, the known results are that the majority of EFL students have the perspective that the use of grammar in speaking English is very important. EFL students recognize the importance of using useful grammar to understand meaning when speaking English. For them, being able to speak with perfect grammar is proof of someone's success in learning English.*

**Keywords:** *EFL students, perspective, grammar, conversation*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The use of mobile technology as part of the application of mobile learning has encoLearning English for English student is certainly something they do regularly and even becomes their daily bread. Many people assume that an English student is someone who is an expert in English, but in fact, learning a language is not as easy as it is said, especially a foreign language that is not our mother tongue (Albino, 2017; Nurjannah & Sudarwinoto, 2020; Rajendran & Yunus, 2021). Learning English is not just being able to speak English with tourists or foreigners but also being able to know and understand the meaning and significance of spoken expressions. One of the results of the development of learning a language is being able to speak that language, in this context being able to speak English which is usually called 'speaking'.

Speaking is an effective and easy means to communicate with other people. Speaking is defined as the process of creating and communicating meaning or significance in expressions using verbal and non-verbal symbols. The act of composing words that other people can understand is also called speaking. There are many meanings to speaking itself (Budiastuti & Wijayatiningsih, 2022; Sonia et al., 2021). Speaking is the process of communicating verbal meaning to other people using words, intonation, and body language. Moreover, speaking is the ability to express thoughts and feelings verbally using appropriate language that is easy for other people to understand (Aisah et al., 2023; Assauri et al., 2022; Dwiymtini, 2023;

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Corresponding Email: [fairuznadhifah12@gmail.com](mailto:fairuznadhifah12@gmail.com)

Jupri et al., 2022). The definition of speaking can vary depending on each perspective and focus.

For EFL students, fluency in speaking English is one of the goals to be achieved and a success for students learning English. One way of success in learning English can be measured by English speaking skills (Dana & Aminatun, 2022; Farhanah Pratiwi & Ayu, 2020; Fitria Brilianti & Fithriyani, 2020; Haliwanda, 2021; Kashinathan & Abdul Aziz, 2021; Maulana et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2022; Sulistyowati, 2024; Thi & Oanh, 2021). In speaking English, of course, there are rules and regulations called grammar. This raises the question: does speaking English always have to be grammatically correct?

Some students state that grammar is very important to speak English well and correctly. They believe that grammar is the main foundation for speaking English. According to (Kusumawardani & Mardiyani, 2018) grammar is very important because it plays a major role in the use of English. It is said that the correct use of grammar reflects the intelligence, professionalism, and fluency of a speaker. Fluency is a person's ability to speak spontaneously without pauses fluently and confidently (Dana & Aminatun, 2022; Maji et al., 2022; Mashfufah et al., 2024; Muharikah et al., 2022; Mulyadi et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2022). With this, grammar and speaking fluency have a very close relationship. As we can see, an English student who understands grammar will tend to speak more fluently compared to other students who do not understand grammar.

On the other hand, speaking fluency is more important than perfect grammar. In the context of communication, the most important thing is to focus on conveying meaning and understanding to other people (Anggraeni & Faqihuddin Assafary, 2020; Crisianita & Mandasari, 2022; Farhanah Pratiwi & Ayu, 2020; Kashinathan & Abdul Aziz, 2021; Thi & Oanh, 2021). Many people do not have a perfect understanding of grammar but are able to communicate well in English. This shows that grammar is not the only important factor in communication (Aimah et al., 2020; Muhfiyanti et al., 2021; Mulyadi, Wijayatingsih, et al., 2020; Susilowati et al., 2017; Wijayatiningsih et al., 2020). Some will stop speaking because they feel their ability to understand grammar is lacking. This is certainly proof that focusing too much on grammar can hinder communication skills.

EFL students' perspectives on whether it is essential to use grammar in English conversation may vary. Some students assume and believe that grammar is very important for understanding the expressions that will be spoken because grammatical errors can cause misunderstandings in conveying expressions and make the speaker sound unprofessional (Dewi et al., 2020; Erya & Pustika, 2021; Sonia et al., 2021). Meanwhile, some other students are more concerned with the ability to communicate effectively without focusing on using perfect grammar. They think that focusing too much on grammar will hamper their self-confidence and communication skills. It is therefore important for EFL teachers to understand these various perspectives in order to adapt appropriate teaching to suit students' needs.

## 2. METHOD

This current study employed a descriptive quantitative approach to understand EFL students' perspectives and experiences in using appropriate grammar when speaking in an English conversation. This approach was chosen because it digs deeper into the views of EFL students, which can provide insight into how important the use of grammar is when engaging in an English conversation with other people. As well as providing teachers with an understanding of students' views so they can adjust appropriate teaching according to student's needs.

The data collection instrument used a combination of questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire included several questions to obtain qualitative data about EFL students' perspectives on how important the use of grammar is in English conversation which adopted from (Mulyadi et al., 2021; Rohimah et al., 2021; Wijayatiningsih et al., 2021). The interviews were conducted using semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper and more complex understanding of EFL students' perspectives. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian by researchers to facilitate communication. Students who have filled out the questionnaire will be randomly selected to be interviewed (Budiastuti & Wijayatiningsih, 2019; Dewi et al., 2020; Mulyadi, Arifani, et al., 2020a, 2020b; Mulyadi, Wijayatingsih, et al., 2020; Pratiwi et al., 2023; Wijayatiningsih et al., 2023). Each interview was recorded with the consent of the respondent and then transcribed for further analysis.

The questionnaire was distributed to participants, namely students registered in the second-year English education major at one of private university in Indonesia. Interviews was conducted with five selected students. The subject selection was carried out using a purposive sampling technique to select students who actively participated in speaking activities in class and had various experiences in using English.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, to find out the perspective of EFL students regarding how important it is to use grammar through English conversation, there are ten statements related to the importance of using grammar in conversation by students with a background majoring in English education at the Muhammadiyah University of Semarang and this aims to to measure students' perspectives about the importance of using grammar in an English conversation. As presented in the previous chapter, the subjects of this research to answer the ten research questions were 30 students from the English language education department at the Muhammadiyah University of Semarang who were taken randomly in the fourth semester. The following is the data obtained to answer the first question in the research:

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't agree	Strongly Disagree	Results	Response
1	14	16	-	-	99.0%	+
2	10	18	2	-	93.3%	+
3	2	6	20	2	73.7%	+
4	12	18	-	-	100%	+
5	9	16	6	-	83.3%	+
6	6	22	1	1	93.3%	+
7	7	20	3	-	90.0%	+
8	6	22	2	-	93.3%	+
9	5	23	2	-	93.4%	+
10	3	24	3	-	90%	+

The first statement "*I feel it is important to learn grammar in English*" received a positive response with a percentage of 90.0% of the total respondents. In other words, all respondents agreed that grammar is important in English so students learn it. The second statement "*I really like English lessons*" also received a positive response with a percentage of 93.3%. This means that almost all respondents who are English language education students like lessons related to English.

Statement number three "*I feel that grammar in English is not that difficult*" got a negative response with a percentage value of 73.7%. This means that more than half of respondents with a background majoring in English education stated that grammar in English is not easy because negative questions are responded to negatively, resulting in a positive meaning. The fourth question, namely "I feel grammar is very helpful in perfecting English" received a perfect percentage of 100%. This indicates that all 30 student respondents stated that grammar really helped them in perfecting their English. Furthermore, statement number five, namely "I have to master grammar to be more fluent in using English" received a percentage score of 83.3% with a positive response. This states that almost all respondents who came from students majoring in English education, studied grammar to be more fluent in using English.

The sixth statement "My view is that the use of grammar is very important to master and learn" received a positive response from research respondents with a percentage of 93.3%. This means that students have a perspective on the importance of using grammar so that students learn it. Furthermore, the seventh statement "In class you are always taught to use English", this statement received a positive response from students with a percentage of 90.0%. With this, students with backgrounds majoring in English education stated that in class they were always taught to use English (Burns, 2016; Rajendran & Yunus, 2021; Wijayatiningsih et al., 2021). The eighth statement related to "In my opinion, every English language learner must use grammar to make it more focused and easier to understand" received a percentage of 93.3% with a positive response. Almost all of the 30 student respondents agreed that in every lesson you must use grammar to make it easier to understand English.

The ninth statement, namely "Not all grammar is always used, but it is best to learn all of it", this statement received a positive response from respondents with a percentage obtained is 93.4%. Almost all students who participated agreed that it would be best to learn all the grammar even though not all of it is always used. The tenth final statement "I think using grammar is easier for listeners and interlocutors to understand" received a positive response with a percentage of 90% from 30 participants. This shows that more than all student participants stated that grammar is important for understanding and being understood by interlocutors and listeners.

From the data presented above, there are ten statements related to EFL students' perspectives regarding the importance of using grammar in an English conversation. Of the ten statements, it was found that nine items out of ten questions received positive responses from students who were research respondents. With this, it can be said that EFL students' perspective on how important the use of grammar is in English conversation is positive.

Next, the researcher conducted interviews aimed at exploring further EFL students' perspectives on how important the use of grammar is in English conversation. Researchers asked 3 questions to 5 randomly selected students in the second-year English education major at Muhammadiyah University Semarang.

### **Do you always have to speak English with proper grammar?**

All student respondents agreed that speaking English must always be grammatically correct. Students consider the use of appropriate grammar to be important to maintain clear and effective communication. They believe that grammar errors can misinterpret the message they want to convey.

... Our grammar must be correct, especially if we speak like that to foreign students or foreign students like that. Because if our grammar is not

sequential... it's not quite right, they won't understand what we're saying... (student 1).

### **How important is it to use grammar when speaking**

Half of all respondents stated that it is very important to use grammar when speaking. They stated that using grammar helps them prevent confusion and misunderstandings that may occur due to incorrect sentence structure or inappropriate use of words.

... In my opinion, it is very important because we are afraid that those we are talking to will not understand what we are talking about. Later, huh? Huh? Hah? Huh? Hehe... (student 3)

However, two out of five respondents thought that the use of grammar was not very important. They assume that speaking English is the most important thing about conveying meaning or messages to the person you are talking to, grammar errors are not the main focus for expressing yourself in speaking English. They emphasized that the most important thing is to have the ability to communicate fluently and a good understanding of word pronunciation.

... Actually, grammar is not that important... I think grammar is not that important because as long as we understand what people mean, that's enough. The most important thing is that we dare to speak English, that way we can be involved in an English conversation. For grammar, it might be in formal conditions... (student 4)

### **What are the challenges faced in using proper grammar when speaking English?**

One of the main challenges students face is difficulty understanding, confusion, or fear when speaking English, especially when they focus too much on grammatical errors.

... the challenge is being afraid to speak English, being afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation and being afraid that the grammar will be wrong and the person we are talking to will not understand what we are talking about... (student 2)

Several student respondents admitted that being too aware of grammar often makes them feel insecure in speaking and this can hinder them from expressing themselves in speaking English.

... the challenge is that when we want to start talking, we are often afraid or don't understand, afraid of making grammatical mistakes, and the challenge is that it is difficult to understand what message the other person is conveying... (student 5)

Another challenge felt by student respondents was regarding pronunciation in speaking English. They admit that they have difficulty pronouncing vocabulary and find it difficult to get the right intonation and accent when speaking English, this is a challenge they have to face, especially for those who study English as a foreign language.

... the challenge is from the pronunciation and the vocabulary; we have to be able to know a lot of vocabulary... (student 1)



All in all, this research found positive perspectives from the EFL learners to explore their knowledge in speaking skill.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The results of research that has been carried out using a questionnaire and interviews with 30 students majoring in second-year English education at one of private university in Indonesia regarding the views of English as a foreign language (EFL) student regarding how important grammar is through conversation in English. This research found that the majority of students gave positive value to the use of grammar in English conversation. They consider the use of grammar in conversation to be very important to understand the meaning and message they want to convey to the person they are talking to. They feel more involved and motivated when grammar is taught contextually through everyday conversations.

However, some students think that using correct grammar in English conversations is not very important. For some of them, the most important thing is the courage to start speaking in English, even though this ignores the use of grammar. There are always challenges in every process that students have to face, including difficulties in overcoming their confidence in speaking English. In addition, difficulty in applying grammatical rules in formal or informal conversation situations

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