

**Investigating the Correlation between Prescriptive Grammar Knowledge
and Speaking Ability in EFL Students**

Zahrani Bunga Shafira

Universitas Riau

E-mail: zahranibunga11@gmail.com

Novitri

Universitas Riau

E-mail: novitri.syam@lecturer.unri.ac.id

Maria Safriyanti

Universitas Riau

E-mail: maria.safriyanti@lecturer.unri.ac.id

Submitted: 02-06-2025

Accepted: 11-06-2025

Published: 08-08-2025

Abstract

Prescriptive grammar knowledge refers to established rules and guidelines that define the proper and standardized use of English. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, grammar mastery significantly shapes students' speaking ability. However, an overemphasis on grammatical accuracy may affect learners' confidence due to anxiety and social pressure, especially in academic settings. Speaking becomes one of the most challenging skills when students feel pressured to speak correctly. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is a significant correlation between students' perception of prescriptive English grammar and their speaking ability. The sample were 38 fourth-semester English Department students at *Universitas Riau*, selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected through a questionnaire that measured students' perception of prescriptive grammar and a speaking test assessed by three independent raters. All of the data in this study were analyzed and confirmed using SPSS 30.0. Validity testing showed all questionnaire items exceeded the critical value (0.3202), indicating validity. The reliability coefficient was 0.777, surpassing the 0.6 threshold. Inter-rater reliability coefficient was confirmed with a significance value of 0.000. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted in this research. The results showed a strong positive correlation between students' perceptions and their speaking performance ($r = 0.957$, $p = 0.000$). These findings support the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and reject the null hypothesis (H_0). This study informs how learners' views about grammar may influence their speaking ability and offers practical ideas for improving EFL teaching, especially in the Indonesian context.

Keywords: correlational study, prescriptive grammar, speaking ability, EFL students, language instruction

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in English learning, especially for students learning English as Foreign Language (EFL). It is not just about producing sounds, but about organizing ideas using correct grammar and vocabulary (Hia et al., 2016). Grammar, in particular, plays a key role in helping learners build accurate and meaningful sentences when speaking. However, when grammar rules are nervous or afraid to make mistakes, which affects their confidence and fluency (Putri, 2023).

In English teaching, grammar is often approached from two perspectives: prescriptive grammar and descriptive. Prescriptive grammar refers to fixed rules about what is considered the “correct” use of English. These rules are usually based on traditional norms and are common in formal education (Knüsel & Schotmans, 2022; Walkden, 2022). In other words, prescriptive English grammar, with its roots in the standardization movements of the 18th century, has long dictated what is considered “correct” usage within the English language. It enforces rules concerning sentence structure, word choice, and syntax, often framed by historical, cultural, and ideological influences (Knüsel & Schotmans, 2022; Walkden, 2022). For many English learners, especially in formal educational contexts, these rules are not only taught but internalized as non-negotiable benchmarks of proficiency. In this light, grammar becomes more than a linguistic tool; it is a social filter that shapes one’s perceived fluency and legitimacy as a language user (Andas, 2020).

The teaching of grammar has long been a critical component in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, particularly in contexts where learners depend on structured language input. Alharbi (2022) demonstrates that grammatical awareness plays a significant role in language performance, with notable differences observed across gender groups. Studies such as Şahinkaya (2024) and Xu & Li (2022) further support the effectiveness of explicit or form-focused instruction, highlighting its impact on grammatical development in EFL contexts. These findings are echoed by Amirian & Sadeghi (2012), who found that grammar consciousness-raising tasks significantly enhance learners’ performance, reinforcing the argument that formal grammar instruction is still pedagogically valuable.

Nazari & Allahyar (2012) explored the tension between grammar abstinence and formal instruction, revealing that many EFL teachers still prioritize rule-based grammar in practice. Arif et al. (2024) found that learners’ beliefs align with this approach, emphasizing grammar’s role in building linguistic confidence. Raikhapoor (2020) and Pawlak (2021) both suggest that teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices strongly influence the extent to which grammar is integrated into speaking-focused tasks. Moreover, the impact of grammar instruction on writing accuracy—as examined by Saadi & Saadat (2015)—points to a broader relationship between formal grammar knowledge and language production. Taken together, these studies suggest that investigating the correlation between prescriptive grammar knowledge and speaking ability in EFL students is not only timely but essential for optimizing language pedagogy in formal settings.

On the other hand, descriptive grammar takes a different approach. Instead of focusing on rules that tell learners what is right or wrong, descriptive grammar looks at how English is *actually* used by native and non-native speakers in everyday situations. It describes language as it naturally occurs, including regional varieties, informal expressions, and common patterns in real communication. This approach is more flexible and often more supportive of learners’ communicative development. Descriptive grammar accepts that language changes over time and adapts based on context, purpose,

and audience (Sasomsub, 2021). Both approaches have their advantages. While prescriptive grammar provides structure and helps students speak more accurately, descriptive grammar helps them speak more naturally and confidently. The challenge lies in finding a balance between the two teaching rules without making students feel afraid to express themselves.

For many learners, mastering grammar rules is seen as a sign of being a “good” English speaker (Andas, 2020). However, recent studies suggest that this mindset can also create pressure. An overemphasis on grammatical perfection can determine learners’ confidence in speaking due to anxiety and social expectations, particularly within formal academic environments. It is also aligned with Crisianita & Mandasari (2022) that stated learners may hesitate to speak due to fear of making grammatical mistakes and being judged. Therefore, a balanced approach is necessary, where grammar should be taught not merely as a set of rigid rules but as a tool that supports learners in expressing their ideas confidently in real-time communication (Saputri, 2023). This shift encourages students to view grammar as an enabler of communication, not to it. Sasomsub (2021) found that both students and teachers often value grammar rules, but they also recognize the importance of fluency and suggest a more balanced, communicative approach.

In the context of English language teaching in Indonesia, grammar instruction remains a dominant component of the curriculum. The national education system still heavily emphasizes rule-based grammar learning, often reflected in textbook-driven instruction and high-stakes examinations Al-Rushaidi (2020). As a result, classroom practices to prioritize accuracy over fluency with students focusing more on mastering grammatical structures than on developing communicative competence (Eickhoff, 2016). It is aligned with Milad et al., (2022) study that found students still view English as a subject focused on grammar as a set of rules they must memorize, rather than as a tool for real-life communication. Although recent pedagogical discourse more communicative and student-centered approaches is not yet fully realized in many schools. Factors such as large class sizes, limited resources, and the pressure use correct grammar. Consequently, learners may graduate with strong theoretical grammar knowledge but limited ability in speaking English spontaneously and effectively in real-life situations (Milad et al., 2022).

While grammar and speaking have been studied separately, there is still a lack of research on the direct correlation between students’ perceptions of prescriptive grammar and their speaking ability. For instance, Hilma et al., (2023) reported a strong correlation between grammar proficiency and speaking fluency, but did not explore how students’ attitudes or feelings about grammar might influence their speaking ability. This highlights the need to investigate more closely how grammatical knowledge, particularly in its prescriptive form, contributes to students’ ability to communicate effectively in spoken English.

This study aims to fill that gap by examining the correlation between EFL students’ perceptions of prescriptive grammar and their speaking ability at *Universitas Riau*. It investigates whether students who hold strong beliefs in grammar rules tend to speak more fluently and accurately, or whether these beliefs might actually cause anxiety and limit communication.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive correlational design to examine the relationship between EFL students’ perception of prescriptive grammar and their speaking ability. The correlational approach was chosen because it is appropriate for

exploring the straight and direction of the correlation between two variables without manipulating them. As stated by Hatch & Farhady (1982), correlational research helps determine whether and how two variables move together, which suits the aim of the study. A descriptive element was included to provide a clear picture of students' overall perceptions and speaking performance.

The research was conducted at the English Education Study Program of *Universitas Riau*, located at the *Bina Widya* Campus, KM 12.5 *Simpang Baru, Tampan* District, *Pekanbaru* City, *Riau*, during the 2024-2025 academic year. The population consisted of 116 fourth-semester students from batch 2023, spread across three classes: 4A (38 students), 4B (40 students), 4C (38 students). A random cluster sampling technique was used to select participants. In this method, one class was randomly selected as a representative cluster. All students from that class participated in the study. This sampling approach was selected due to its practicality in classroom-based research and its ability to ensure that each group (cluster) had an equal chance of being selected (Sugiyono, 2017). The resulting sample consisted of 38 students, which is considered sufficient for small-scale correlational research (Creswell, 2018).

The perception questionnaire was adapted from Sasomsu (2021) which itself was based on the framework by Eickhoff (2016). It contained 20 items measured on a five-point Likert scale and covered the following indicators: *Goals in Learning English, Attitudes Toward Native vs. Varieties of English, Perception of Grammar Rules, Language Change, Teaching Methodologies, Standardization and Freedom in Language Use, Confidence and Anxiety*. The instrument is valid if the calculation is $r\text{-Value} > r\text{-Table}$ with significant 0.05. Otherwise, if the calculation is $r\text{-Value} < r\text{-Table}$, then the instrument is not valid. In statistical analysis, the degrees of freedom (df) are often calculated as the sample size (n) minus 2. In this research, the validity of the questionnaire was assessed using SPSS Statistics version 30.0, a widely used software tool for statistical findings. The questionnaire was tested with a 38-student cohort not included in the sample population before Distribution. By means of Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis, the preliminary evaluation of the validity of the items revealed that all of them displayed r values exceeding the critical r -table threshold ($r > 0.3202$), so confirming their validity.

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which is a common measure of internal consistency. The reliability score obtained was 0.777, which is significantly higher than the threshold of 0.6, a commonly accepted benchmark for determining good reliability in research. The speaking test asked each student to choose one topic from five provided and deliver a 2-3 minutes monologue in recording video. The recordings were assessed by three trained raters using Brown's speaking rubric, which evaluated five key components: Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension (Brown, 2004).

To ensure consistency in scoring, inter-rater reliability was tested using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) through a two-way mixed-effects model. The results showed a single Measures ICC of 0.960 and an Average Measures ICC of 0.986, with a significance level of $p = 0.000$. These values indicate an excellent level of agreement among the raters (Landis & Koch, 1977). There was descriptive as well as inferential statistical analysis in the data processing. While their speaking performances were examined using a disciplined scoring rubric, students' answers to the questionnaire were scored using the Likert scoring system. (Hatch & Farhady, 1982) formula then helped to calculate and standardize the overall scores. The correlation between students' perception scores and their speaking ability scores was computed using Pearson

correlation analysis via SPSS Statistics 30.0. The hypothesis of this study is there is no significant correlation between students' perception of prescriptive English grammar and their speaking ability, is stated as Null Hypothesis (H_0), and if there is a significant correlation between students' perception of prescriptive English grammar and their speaking ability, is stated as correlation between students' perception of prescriptive English grammar and their speaking ability.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The Result of Students' Perception toward Prescriptive Grammar

The questionnaire was administered to 38 fourth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at FKIP Universitas Riau. The items in the questionnaire were designed to reflect students' perspectives on prescriptive grammar, measured through seven key indicators: *goals in learning English, attitudes toward native vs. varieties of English, perception of grammar rules, language change, teaching methodologies, standardization and freedom in language use, and confidence and anxiety*. Each item was rated using five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Very Disagree) to 5 (Very Agree) the responses were then Data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics version 30.0, and interpretations are provide below for each indicator to highlight not only the surface results but also the underlying trends, possible causes, and implications for students' speaking ability. The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Students' Perception toward Prescriptive English Grammar

No	Indicators	Very Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Very Disagree
1	Goals in Learning English	18 (47.4%)	16 (42.1%)	1 (2.6%)	2 (5.3%)	1 (2.6%)
2	Attitudes toward Native vs. Varieties of English	3 (7.9%)	12 (31.6%)	12 (31.6%)	10 (26.3%)	1 (2.6%)
3	Perception of Grammar Rules	7 (18.4%)	19 (50.0%)	10 (26.3%)	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.6%)
4	Language Change	9 (23.7%)	19 (50.0%)	7 (18.4%)	2 (5.3%)	1 (2.6%)
5	Teaching Methodologies	3 (7.9%)	20 (52.6%)	15 (39.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
6	Standardization and Freedom in Language Use	1 (2.6%)	16 (42.1%)	16 (42.1%)	5 (13.2%)	0 (0%)
7	Confidence and Anxiety	9 (23.7%)	18 (47.4%)	4 (10.5%)	7 (18.4%)	0 (0%)

The data reveal that the majority of students hold positive perceptions toward prescriptive grammar. In the first indicator, "Goals in Learning English", nearly all students expressed strong motivation, with 47.4% (18 students) selecting "Very Agree" and 42.1% (16 students) choosing "Agree." This suggests that most students have a clear purpose in learning English, which likely contributes to their overall language development, including speaking skills.

In the second indicator, "Attitudes toward native vs. Varieties of English", students' opinions were divided. Only 7.9% (3 students) selected "Very Agree" and 31.6% (12 students) chose "Agree," while another 31.6% (12 students) responded

neutrally. Notably, 26.3% (10 students) disagreed, and 2.6% (1 students) strongly disagreed. The results indicate that although students are open to different English varieties, many still prefer standard forms and may be hesitant to accept variation in spoken English.

The third indicator, “Perception of Grammar Rules”, showed generally positive views, with 18.4% (7 students) strongly agreeing and 50.0% (19 students) were neutral, while only 2.6% (1 students) strongly disagreed. This confirms that most students believe grammar rules play an important role in their English learning process.

In the fourth indicator, “Language Change”, more than two-thirds of students showed acceptance of the idea that language evolves over time. 23.7% (9 students) selected “Very Agree” and 50% (19 students) chose “Agree.” Meanwhile, 18.4% (7 students) were neutral, and only a small number (5.3% or 2 students and 2.6% or 1 students) disagreed. This shows that students are generally open to the idea that English is not static and continues to change.

The fifth indicator, “Teaching Methodologies”, received highly favorable responses. While only 7.3% (3 students) selected “Very Agree”, a majority 52.6% (20 students) chose “Agree,” and 39.5% (15 students) were neutral. No students disagreed. This indicates that students still prefer or are comfortable with grammar-based instruction in the classroom, even if they are also open to other teaching styles.

The sixth indicator, “Standardization and Freedom in Language Use”, student responses were quite balanced. Only 2.6% (1 students) strongly agreed, and 42.1% (16 students) agreed, while another 42.1% (16 students) were neutral. 13.2% (5 students) disagreed, and none strongly disagreed. These results suggest that while many students support standardization, a large portion are either undecided or questioning how strict grammar rules should be, especially in real communication.

The seventh indicator, “Confidence and Anxiety”, revealed that most students felt grammar knowledge improved their speaking confidence. 23.7% (9 students) selected “Very Agree” and 47.4% (18 students) chose “Agree.” However, 10.5% (4 students) were neutral and 18.4% (7 students) disagreed. This shows that while grammar can be a source of support, for some students it also causes stress or hesitation, especially during speaking.

In summary, the data show that English Department students at FKIP *Universitas Riau* generally view prescriptive grammar positively. Most believe it helps achieve their goals, improves speaking accuracy, and supports their classroom experience. However, responses also reveal areas of uncertainty, especially regarding non-standard English varieties, language flexibility, and anxiety. These findings suggest that while grammar remains important to students, a more balanced instruction approach, one combining structure with communication, may better support both confidence and fluency in speaking.

Students’ Speaking Ability Results

Students’ speaking performance was assessed using a speaking test where each participant gave a monologue on one of the provided topics in recording 2-3 minutes. The recordings were evaluated by three raters using a standardized rubric based on five components: grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The final scores were categorized into five performance levels: Very Poor, Poor, Mediocre, Good, and Very Good. The distribution of the students’ results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Performance Categories

Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Very Good	11	28.9%
Good	14	36.8%
Mediocre	13	34.2%
Poor	0	0%
Very Poor	0	0%

The results of the speaking test show that most students demonstrated strong speaking performance. Out of 38 participants, 11 students (28.9%) rated as "Very Good" and 14 students (36.8%) in the "Good" category. This means that over half of the students performed at an above-average level in terms of fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and overall coherence. Meanwhile 13 students (34.2%) were categorized as "Mediocre," indicating that while their speaking skills were acceptable, they still showed noticeable limitations, such as hesitation, grammar slips, or limited vocabulary. Notably, none of the students were rated as Poor or Very Poor, suggesting that all participants had at least a basic level of competence in spoken English. Overall, this distribution reflects a generally strong foundation in speaking ability among the students, with room for improvement in fluency and confidence, especially for those in the middle range. Notably, none of the students were rated as Poor or Very Poor, which shows a generally competent level of speaking ability among the sample group.

Normality Test

To assess whether the data for both students' perceptions of prescriptive English grammar and their speaking ability were normally distributed, a normality test was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk method.

Table 3. The Result of Normality Test
Shapiro-Wilk

	Statistic	df	Sig.
Questionnaire	0.972	38	0.438
Speaking Score	0.979	38	0.689

This test was chosen due to the relatively small sample size of 38 participants, as Shapiro-Wilk is considered more appropriate and reliable for samples under 50. According to the decision rule, if the significance value (p-value) is greater than 0.05, the data distribution is considered normal. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test in table 3 showed that the questionnaire variable had a significance value of 0.438, while the speaking score variable had a value of 0.689. Since both values are greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the data are normally distributed. This finding satisfies the assumption of normality, allowing the use of parametric statistical procedures in the following stages, including linearity testing and Pearson correlation analysis.

Linearity Test

Table 4. Linearity Test Result
ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Linearity	6874.531	1	6874.531	393,869	<,001 ^b
Residual	628.338	36	17.454		
Total	7502.869	37			

To examine whether a linear relationship existed between students' perceptions of prescriptive English grammar and their speaking ability, a linearity test was conducted using regression analysis. The results of the test are presented in Table 2. As shown, the significance value (Sig.) for the linear regression model is less than 0.001, which is well below the 0.05 threshold. This confirms that both datasets followed a normal distribution and were suitable for parametric analysis.

The linearity assumption was then tested using Linearity analysis. Results in Table 4 revealed a highly significant relationship ($p < 0.001$), F-value ($F = 393.869$), supporting the use of Pearson's correlation. The model explained a large portion of the variance (Sum of Squares = 6874.869), confirming a consistent upward trend: as perception scores increased, so did speaking scores.

Hypothesis Testing and Correlation Analysis

This section discusses the results of the hypothesis testing, which was conducted to determine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between students' perception of prescriptive English grammar and their speaking ability. To test this, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used. This statistical method helps identify how strongly two continuous variables are related, and in what direction. In this case, students' perception of prescriptive grammar was treated as the independent variable (X), while speaking ability scores were the dependent variable (Y).

Table 5. Correlation Testing Result

Variables	Prescriptive Grammar (X)	Speaking Ability (Y)
Prescriptive Grammar (X)	1	.957
Speaking Ability (Y)	.957	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
N (Sample Size)	38	38

The results, shown in table 5, revealed a very strong and positive correlation ($r = 0.957$, $p = 0.000$) between students' perception of prescriptive grammar and their speaking ability. This means that there is a very strong positive linear relationship between the two variables: students who demonstrate a higher level of appreciation or understanding of prescriptive grammar tend to perform better in speaking tasks.

Moreover, the p-value of 0.000 (which is lower than the standard alpha level of 0.05) confirms that this relationship is statistically significant, and not due to random chance. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0), which stated that there is no significant correlation between students' perception of prescriptive grammar and their speaking ability, is rejected. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis (H_a), that there is a significant correlation, is accepted. This validates the core assumption of the research that prescriptive grammar perception is meaningfully linked to oral performance.

However, while the correlation is strong and statistically significant, it is important to note that this does not imply a cause-effect relationship. Other variables, such as speaking experience, confidence level, and exposure to English outside the classroom, may also contribute. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as an association, not proof that grammar perception alone improves speaking performance.

In conclusion, the correlation analysis confirms the central premise of the study: prescriptive grammar is not only relevant to writing or formal language contexts but plays a critical role in shaping students' spoken English proficiency. The strong statistical

relationship found in this study contributes to the growing body of research emphasizing grammar's function in overall language performance, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts such as Indonesia.

Discussion

This study explored the relationship between prescriptive grammar and speaking ability. The findings from the questionnaire showed that most students had a positive attitude toward grammar rules, especially when it came to using grammar as a tool to support language learning. This was most visible in the indicator *Goals in Learning English*, where nearly 90% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed that grammar plays a key role in their English learning process. This result reflects a common belief among EFL students in Indonesia that Mastering grammar is essential for academic and professional success.

However, the responses were not uniformly positive across all indicators. For example, in the indicator related to attitudes toward native versus varieties of English, the results were more mixed. While some students supported the idea of accepting different forms of English, many were either unsure or preferred sticking to standard grammar norms. This hesitation may discourage variation. Similarly, in the Standardization and Freedom in Language Use indicator, a large number of students selected neutral, suggesting some uncertainty or inner conflict about how flexible English usage should be. Interestingly, students also showed support for traditional teaching methodologies. More than half agreed that grammar-focused instruction helped them, and no students disagreed. This supports the idea that learners are still comfortable with rule-based teaching, although many also seem open to different instructional styles, as shown by the high number of neutral responses. In the final indicator, Confidence and Anxiety, most students reported that grammar improved their confidence when speaking. Still, nearly one-fifth admitted that they felt anxious, even when they understood the rules. This highlights that grammar can be both a source of support and pressure at the same time.

The second major finding came from the analysis of students' speaking ability scores, assessed by three independent raters. The results indicated that most students were placed in the "Good" and "Very Good" categories, with no participants falling into "Poor" or "Very Poor." A small number fell into the "Mediacore" range, but the central tendency measures pointed toward a generally high level of speaking performance. This implies that English Department students possess a solid foundation in speaking, likely reflecting the instructional emphasis on communicative within their academic program. Before conducting correlation analysis, the performed normality and linearity tests to verify the data met the assumption required for Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis. The Shapiro-Wilk test showed that both variables, students' perception of prescriptive grammar and their speaking scores, were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). The linearity test also confirmed a linear relationship between the two variables, allowing the analysis to proceed with confidence.

The most crucial finding emerged from the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis, which revealed a very strong and statistically significant positive correlation between students' perception of prescriptive grammar and their speaking ability ($r = 0.957$, $p = 0.000$). This result led to the rejection of the null Hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis, confirming that students with higher awareness and appreciation of prescriptive grammar tend to perform better in speaking tasks. The strength of the correlation highlights the role of grammar in supporting both fluency and

accuracy in oral communication. It suggests that grammatical awareness enhances students' confidence, clarity and control when expressing ideas verbally. The results are consistent with previous study. For example, Hilma et al., (2023) also found a strong correlation ($r = 0.853$) between grammar proficiency and speaking fluency among EFL students, although their focus was on grammar knowledge, not perception. This study focused on examining students' attitudes and beliefs, a more affective and cognitive dimension; which shows that even how students feel about grammar can be linked to how well they speak. This adds a new layer to what we understand about grammar's role in EFL speaking development.

Other researchers have also explored the value of grammar in language education. Eickhoff (2016) found that students and teachers often aim for fluency but still rely on grammar for accuracy, especially in academic contexts. Al-Rushaidi (2020) and Nwoko (2023) defended the use of prescriptive grammar as a foundation for structured language learning, especially for non-native speakers who need clear guidance. Our findings align with these views, showing that students in Indonesia still see grammar as a necessary part of becoming a fluent and competent English speaker.

At the same time, our study also reflects the concerns raised by Sasomsub (2021), who emphasized the importance of moving toward more communicative and flexible teaching methods. Some students in our study, although they understood grammar rules, still felt anxious when speaking. This shows that while grammar can support fluency, too much emphasis on being correct may increase pressure and reduce students' willingness to take risks in speaking. What distinguishes this study from previous research is its specific focus on students' perception of prescriptive grammar as a variable affecting speaking ability, rather than merely testing grammatical knowledge or oral fluency in isolation. While many studies have discussed the pedagogical implications of grammar instruction or compared prescriptive and descriptive methods, few have empirically investigated how students' attitudes and beliefs about grammar impact their speaking performance—particularly within the Indonesian EFL tertiary context. By focusing on students from FKIP Universitas Riau, this research provides localized insights that contribute to a broader understanding of language acquisition in Southeast Asia.

Thus, this study fills a research gap by linking cognitive and attitudinal factors (perception of grammar) with productive language skills (speaking). In terms of teaching implications, the study suggests that grammar should not be taught as an isolated skill but rather integrated into speaking activities. Tasks such as role plays, storytelling, debates, and presentations allow students to apply grammar rules while practicing real communication. These activities provide a boost to and support for grammatical accuracy while giving students practice to speak in English. Teachers must also develop low-anxiety settings in which errors are regarded as part of learning, not failure. This can ease the pressure that frequently accompanies grammar intensive learning and promote use in practice.

The results of this study have some significant implications for teaching and learning language. First, they underscore the necessity of combining grammar instruction with speaking activities, but not teaching each skill in isolation. But instead of teaching grammar through drills or writing exercises only, teachers can develop interactive tasks, e.g., debates, role plays, storytelling and presentations, which aims to focus on correct grammatical use, while promoting fluency.

Second, these findings imply that students' attitudes toward grammar are important. Students are more likely to learn and use rules if they understand the role of

grammar on communication. Hence, teachers need to cultivate learners' good attitudes to grammar by showing in depth grammar activities used in real-life speaking situations, instead of giving them as abstract or inflexible limitations. Third, although the study reinforces the value of prescriptive grammar, it advises not to wield it in a manner that could incite fear and restrict the students' freedom of expression. By establishing a nurturing classroom atmosphere that allows them to experiment, to give, and most of all, to receive, constructive criticism, to feel that it is something used simply to improve their manner of communication, not necessarily limit it.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the correlation between EFL students' prescriptive grammar and their speaking ability. The findings showed a very strong and positive correlation ($r = 0.957$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that students who hold more positive views toward grammar Knowledge tend to perform better in speaking tasks. However, as this is a correlational study, the results do not imply that EFL students' grammar causes higher speaking proficiency. Other factors such as prior learning experience, speaking opportunities, and self-confidence may also play a role. Moreover, during the research activities, the study adds new insight into cognitive and emotional factors that may influence language performance, especially within the Indonesian EFL setting, where rule-based teaching remains dominant. While many students viewed grammar as a tool for improving accuracy and confidence, the data also showed that some experienced anxiety, and many were unsure about non-standard English or more flexible language use. These patterns highlight the need for a more balanced teaching approach, one that values structure but also encourages real communication.

The findings suggest that grammar instruction should not be separated from speaking activities. Instead, it can be integrated into interactive tasks like discussion, storytelling, and debates that help students apply rules in a meaningful context. Teachers are also encouraged to create a supportive classroom environment that allows students to take risks, make mistakes, and build confidence. In this way, grammar can serve not as a barrier but as a scaffolding for fluent and accurate communication. Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role grammar perception plays in speaking development and offers practical ideas for improving EFL teaching practice in a similar context. Future researchers could expand this topic by exploring other factors, like motivation, anxiety levels, or teacher feedback; that might also shape students' speaking performance.

REFERENCES

Al-Rushaidi, S. M. S. (2020). Is the linguists' View of Prescriptive Grammar Reductionist? (A Re-examination of the Accusations Made against the Prescriptive Tradition). *Arab World English Journal*, 11(3), 305–317. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.19>

Alharbi, A. T. (2022). Grammatical Awareness and Language Performance: Examining Gendered Differences among Saudi EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Learners. *F1000Research*, 11, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.109455.1>

Amirian, S. M. R., & Sadeghi, F. (2012). The Effect of Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks on EFL Learners Performance. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 4(3), 708–720. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v4i3.2392>

Andas, N. H. (2020). Students' Speaking Problem at the Fourth Semester of English Study Program in Sembilanbelas November Kolaka. *ELT Worldwide: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.26858/eltww.v7i1.12359>

Arif, N., Haryanto, E., Norawati, R., Wachyuni, S., & Volya, D. (2024). The Role of Grammar in Learning-Teaching English: EFL Learners' Belief. *Modality Journal: International Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 4(1), 13–31. <https://doi.org/10.30983/mj.v4i1.8004>

Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practice*. New York: Pearson Education

Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Crisianita, S. & Mandasari, B. (2022). The Use of Small-Group Discussion to Improve Students' Speaking Skill. *Journal of Research on Language Education*, 3(1), 61–66.

Eickhoff, L. (2016). Attitudes about Prescriptive Grammar in ESL and EFL Teachers and Students. In *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.

Hatch, E., & Farhady, H. (1982). *Research Design and Statistics for Applied Linguistics*. Rowley: Newbury House Publisher

Hia, R. H. S., Herdi, H., & Abbas, M. F. F. (2016). An Analysis of Students' Speaking Ability in English Conversation Club (ECC) Program at the 3rd Semester. *Lectura: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 7(1), 130–138. <https://doi.org/10.31849/lectura.v7i1.244>

Hilma, M., Yudha, I., Lekatompessy, F. M., & Patty, J. (2023). The Correlation between Students' Grammar Proficiency and Speaking Fluency: A Study in English Education Study Program. *Pattimura Excellence Journal of Language and Culture (PEJLaC)*, 3(1), 32–44. <https://doi.org/10.30598/PEJLaC.v3i1.pp32-44>

Knüsel, C. J., & Schotsmans, E. M. J. (2022). *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Prescriptivism*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351030625>

Landis, J. R., & Koch, G. G. (1977). The Measurement of Observer Agreement for Categorical Data. *Biometrics*, 33(1), 159–174. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2529310>

Milad, S., Hidayatulloh, M., & Margana, M. (2022). Integrated or Separated: Voicing Indonesian EFL Teachers' and Student-Teachers' Preferences in Teaching Grammar. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 168–181. <https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v10i1.1113>

Nazari, A., & Allahyar, N. (2012). Grammar Teaching Revisited: EFL Teachers between Grammar Abstinence and Formal Grammar Teaching. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(2), 72–87. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n2.6>

Nwoko, C. N. (2020). *Prescriptive Grammar and Others: Which Is the Most Appropriate Paradigm for the Contemporary Learner and User of the English Language?* 3(10), 54–60. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/375187803>

Pawlak, M. (2021). Teaching foreign language grammar: New solutions, old problems. *Foreign Language Annals*, 54(4), 881–896. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12563>

Putri, E. D. (2023). The Correlation between Students' Question Words Mastery and Their Speaking Ability in Asking Information. *Proceedings of International Conference on Research in Education and Science*, 9(1), 414–423.

Raikhapor, R. (2020). Teachers' Beliefs and Practices on Teaching Grammar Raikhapor. *1st International Conference on Education, Society, Economy, Humanity and Environment (ICESHE 2019)*, 65–68.

Saadi, Z. K., & Saadat, M. (2015). EFL Learners' Writing Accuracy: Effects of Direct and Metalinguistic Electronic Feedback. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5(10), 2053–2063. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0510.11>

Şahinkaya, H. A. (2024). Explicit vs. Implicit Grammar Teaching in EFL Classroom: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Education*, 9(1), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.17985/ijare.1369773>

Saputri, T. (2023). *The Correlation between Students' Grammar Mastery and Their Speaking Achievement at English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang*. Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang.

Sasomsub, I. (2021). *A study of EFL Teachers' and Students' Attitude toward Prescriptive and Descriptive English Grammar Teaching and learning*. (Master's independent study, Thammasat University). Language Institute, Thammasat University.

Sugiyono, S. (2017). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D* (23rd ed.). Bandung: Alfabeta.

Walkden, G. (2022). *A History of English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Xu, J., & Li, C. (2022). Timing of Form-Focused Instruction: Effects on EFL Learners' Grammar Learning. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 12(3), 405–433. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2022.12.3.4>