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Effective English Language Teacher: A Comparison of Perceptions of Pakistani College Teachers and Students

Mahboob Ali Naper *

Lecturer, Department of English, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari, Karachi. Corresponding Author Email: mahboob.ali@bbsul.edu.pk

Muhammad Younus

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Iqra University Karachi.

Email: younis.farid@iqra.edu.pk

Jibran Khan

Lecturer, Department of English, DHA Suffa University Karachi.

Email: jibran.khan@dsu.edu.pk

Abstract

This study examined the perceptions of college teachers and students about effective English language teacher in Sindh, Pakistan. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 80 English language teachers and 300 students through a structured questionnaire comprising 50 items. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare responses between the two groups. Results revealed significant perceptual differences across most items, with teachers consistently assigning higher importance to attributes such as lesson planning, grading based on group tasks and student ability, use of English-only instruction, discipline, and teacher professionalism. In contrast, students rated these characteristics lower, suggesting a misalignment in expectations. Moreover, differences were found in perceptions of public college teachers with their students and rural college teachers and their students. Contrary to this, private college teachers and urban college teachers did not show significant differences with their students. These findings underscore the need for greater teacher-student dialogue, inclusive curriculum planning, and pedagogical transparency particularly in public colleges and in rural areas. The study concludes that bridging this perceptual gap is essential for enhancing instructional effectiveness and student engagement. Limitations include its geographic focus on Sindh and reliance on quantitative methods. Future research should incorporate qualitative approaches and broader sampling to gain deeper insights into contextual factors influencing these perceptions.

Keywords: Perceptions, Effective English Teacher, Students, Colleges

Introduction

The present study seeks to evaluate how college English language teachers and students perceive the attributes of effective English language instructors. Although teaching is a globally practiced profession, its interpretation can vary significantly between teachers and learners. These differences in perspective are often shaped by individual experiences, educational backgrounds, and beliefs about teaching and learning. Understanding how both groups view effective English language instruction can provide valuable insights for improving teaching practices and achieving better educational outcomes. As Alimorad and Tajgozari



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(2016) suggest, recognizing these perceptions can contribute meaningfully to the field of language education by promoting more effective and satisfactory teaching approaches.

Teachers' conceptions of effective instruction tend to evolve over time, influenced by formal education, hands-on teaching experience, and self-reflection (Richardson, 1996). In contrast, college students, due to their relatively limited exposure and practical experience, may hold less developed or different views on effective teaching. Such disparities in perceptions between educators and learners may lead to misaligned expectations, potentially hindering the teaching and learning process.

Examining how both teachers and students define effective English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction benefits not only educators and learners but also researchers. Teachers can use findings from such studies to assess and refine their own beliefs and teaching methods, ensuring better alignment with students' needs and current pedagogical standards. Moreover, understanding students' expectations can help educators adapt their instructional approaches, thereby fostering a more responsive and engaging learning environment. From the students' side, exposure to their instructors' views on language teaching may help correct misconceptions and encourage a more realistic understanding of language learning. As noted by Ramazani (2014), such investigations can also open new directions for research into teaching effectiveness.

A broad body of literature has addressed the topic of effective language teaching, focusing on a variety of perspectives. Some researchers have studied the issue from the standpoint of educators (e.g., Arıkan, 2010; Demiroz & Yesilyurt, 2015; Korkmaz & Korkmaz, 2013; Sandholtz, 2011), while others have explored the beliefs of students (e.g., Çelik, Arıkan, & Caner, 2013; Ekin & Damar, 2013; Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011; Kourieos & Evripidou, 2013; Lee, 2010). Additionally, several comparative studies have examined how these two groups differ or align in their views on effective teaching (e.g., Alimorad & Tajgozari, 2016; Al-Busaidi, Aldhafri, & Büyükyavuz, 2016; Babai Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009; Brosh, 1996; A. V. Brown, 2009; Park & Lee, 2006; Ramazani, 2014; Moradi & Sabeti, 2014). Vadillio (1999) emphasized that highly effective language educators possess not only strong linguistic proficiency but also essential interpersonal qualities such as empathy, warmth, and patience.

Several scholars have explored the characteristics that define effective language teachers from the perspectives of both university students and instructors (Brown, 2009; Çelik et al., 2013; Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011; Kourieos & Evripidou, 2013; Ramazani, 2014). In contrast, other researchers have concentrated on the viewpoints of high school students and their teachers. At the secondary education level, Park and Lee (2006) conducted a study in South Korea involving 169 teachers and 339 students. Using a self-report questionnaire, they classified effective teaching traits into three main domains: English language proficiency, pedagogical expertise, and socio-affective abilities. Their findings highlighted a disparity between the groups, with teachers emphasizing language proficiency, while students valued pedagogical competence more highly.

Brown (2009) assessed teacher and student perspectives on effective English language instruction by distributing a 24-item Likert-scale questionnaire covering various facets of foreign language pedagogy. The results indicated notable differences, particularly in areas such as error correction, use of the target



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language, and group work. While learners leaned towards a grammar-oriented approach, teachers generally favored communicative strategies.

In Cyprus, Kourieos and Evripidou (2013) explored the beliefs of 110 first-year EFL students from two private universities. Their findings supported a learner-centered approach, underscoring the importance of the teacher's supportive and facilitative role in the classroom. The study also revealed that students appreciated instructors who were proficient in integrating technology and capable of encouraging meaningful interaction through group work and task-based learning.

Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009) investigated the traits of effective English teachers based on input from learners and educators at universities, secondary schools, and language centers. Their results demonstrated significant variations in perception. While teachers emphasized structured classroom activities, such as assigning homework and organizing group tasks, students preferred the use of their native language as a medium of instruction. Moreover, teachers identified language mastery, sound pedagogical knowledge, classroom techniques, and a respectable demeanor as key attributes. Conversely, students prioritized the teacher's personality and attitude toward learners.

Moradi and Sabeti (2014) analyzed perceptions of effective teaching by comparing responses from university students and those attending language institutes. The findings suggested that while educators emphasized theoretical knowledge and methodological expertise, students offered more practical, experience-based evaluations of teacher effectiveness.

Alimorad and Tajgozari (2016) conducted a comparative study on EFL teachers and students in Iranian public schools, involving 75 teachers and 202 students. Using a 50-item Likert-type questionnaire, they observed marked differences in perceptions. Students were inclined toward a communicative language learning approach, whereas teachers preferred more conventional methods. Interestingly, no significant differences emerged between high and low achieving students, although both groups differed notably from their teachers. Moreover, gender-based comparisons showed contrasting views between male teachers and female students, and vice versa.

In another study, Al-Busaidi et al. (2016) examined university students' perceptions of effective instructors using a 105-item questionnaire that included demographic questions, 49 items on personal attributes, and 56 items on teaching behaviors. Results indicated that students viewed effective instructors as respectful, empathetic, attentive to student concerns, and dependable. From a teaching standpoint, effective instructors were described as fair, confidence-building, well-prepared, and clear in delivery. Female students tended to prioritize personality traits more than male students, and first-year students placed higher value on instructors who fostered a supportive learning environment. No significant differences were found based on GPA. However, Omani students rated both teaching and personality characteristics more positively than their Turkish counterparts.

It is important to note a critical methodological concern in the studies by Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009) and Moradi and Sabeti (2014): their participant pools were drawn from diverse educational contexts; universities, secondary schools, and language institutes. This diversity poses a challenge, as university students are generally considered to possess greater cognitive and metacognitive



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maturity compared to their high school or institute peers. Additionally, university learners might already have exposure to language teaching methodologies through academic coursework, which could bias their responses. In contrast, the studies by Alimorad and Tajgozari (2016) and Al-Busaidi et al. (2016) offer more focused insights by restricting their participant samples to a single educational context, either secondary or tertiary education. These studies revealed distinct differences between student and teacher perceptions, reinforcing the need to consider contextual factors when evaluating effective language teaching.

Research Objectives

This study has the following research objectives:

1. To examine differences in perceptions of college teachers and their students on effective language teacher characteristics.
2. To find out differences in perceptions of public and private college teachers and students on effective language teacher characteristics.
3. To assess differences in perceptions of rural and urban college teachers and students on effective language teacher characteristics.

Research Questions

This study aims to assess the perceptions of teachers and students regarding effective English language teacher. The following are research questions of the study:

1. Are there differences in perceptions of college teachers and their students on effective language teacher characteristics?
2. Are there differences in perceptions of public and private college teachers and students on effective language teacher characteristics?
3. Are there significant differences in perceptions of rural and urban college teachers and students on effective language teacher characteristics?

Significance of Study

This study is significant as it highlights a critical gap between how English language teachers and their students in Sindh perceive effective teaching practices. Understanding these differing viewpoints is essential for improving classroom interaction, instructional strategies, and learning outcomes. By identifying specific areas where perceptions diverge such as lesson planning, assessment methods, language use, and teacher behavior, the study provides valuable insights for teacher training programs, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers. It emphasizes the need to align teaching practices with student expectations to foster a more effective, engaging, and learner-centered language classroom.

Methodology

The study used quantitative approach for the collection and analysis of data and participants were selected through stratified purposive sampling. The population of study was consisted of English language teachers and students at colleges. Further, each group was subdivided on type of institution and area basis i.e. public and private, and rural and urban. Group of teachers consisted of 80 participants who were 40 males and 40 females. In the students' group there were 300 participants including 100 females and 200 males. The teachers participating in



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the study were practicing English language teaching at different public and private colleges in rural and urban areas of Sindh (Pakistan). The students also belonged to those colleges of Sindh and studying in science, arts and humanities groups.

Instrument

The present study aimed to explore and compare the perceptions of college English language teachers and students in Sindh regarding the qualities that define an effective English teacher. To gather the necessary data, a questionnaire adapted from Alimorad and Tajgozari (2016) was utilized. This instrument comprised 50 items in a Likert-scale format and was divided into two main sections. The first section collected demographic details, including participants' group (teacher or student), gender, location, and type of educational institution. The second section contained 50 statements related to effective teaching practices, presented in a randomized order.

Participants were asked to rate each item based on how important they believed it was as a characteristic of an effective English teacher. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "strongly disagree," 2 "disagree," 3 "neutral," 4 "agree," and 5 "strongly agree." The same questionnaire was administered to both student and teacher participants to allow for a direct comparison of their perceptions.

Data Collection

To collect data on characteristics of effective English teacher, questionnaire was sent through Google forms by approaching the teachers of 16 colleges. Eight colleges were in the public sector and eight belonged to the private sector. Furthermore, half of the colleges were in rural areas and half of these belonged to urban areas. The author explained briefly the nature of this study to the concerned teachers later they explained to their colleagues and students. All of them were asked for their cooperation by responding to the questionnaires sincerely and honestly. Both teachers and students were assured that their responses to the questionnaires would be kept confidential and not be used for other purposes.

Data Analysis

This study was mainly concerned with a detailed comparison between college teachers' and their students' perceptions on effective English teachers' characteristics. To achieve this goal, independent samples *t*-tests were used to answer the three research questions posed at the outset of the study. The following sections present the results of these analyses in detail:

Initially, the answer to the study's first question; differences in perceptions of college teachers and their students on effective language teacher characteristics were found. To compare the perceptions held by English language teachers in Sindh with those of their students on each of the items of the questionnaire, 50 independent-samples *t* tests were run.

Table 1. Effective English language teachers should:

Profession	No:	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
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Teacher	80	2.79	.589	.066
Student	300	2.26	.723	.042

Overall, teachers reported a higher mean score ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.589$) than students ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 0.723$), indicating that teachers consistently placed greater importance on the listed attributes and practices associated with effective English language teaching.

Table 2. Showing differences in perceptions of Teachers and students about effective English teacher

No. of Item	Description of Item	T: Mean N (80)	ST: Mean N (300)	T	Sig.
Item_2	Based at least some part of students' grades on completion of assigned group tasks.	4.22	1.66	40.384	.001
Item_6	Allow students to respond to test questions in listening and reading via native language (Urdu/Sindhi) rather than the foreign language (English).	4.19	1.64	38.578	.001
Item_7	Not use native language (Urdu/Sindhi) in the foreign language classroom.	4.23	1.63	39.517	.000
Item_10	Not grade language production.	4.16	1.63	38.316	.000
Item_15	Not using predominantly small groups or pairs to complete activities in class.	4.18	1.59	39.975	.000
Item_18	Not present a particular grammar point without illustrating how the structure is used in a specific real-world context.	4.19	1.63	38.330	.000
Item_23	Based at least some parts of students' grades on their ability.	4.26	1.63	39.168	.000
Item_24	Use activities where students must find out unknown information from classmates.	2.88	2.28	40.587	.000
Item_28	Help students to develop self-confidence in learning English.	3.04	2.31	38.489	.000
Item_34	Be disciplined and punctual.	3.00	2.23	39.374	.000
Item_35	Be flexible and open to criticism.	3.00	2.24	40.265	.000
Item_41	Be patient and allow students to question, comment, and participate.	3.00	2.27	40.688	.000
Item_42	Establish positive and respectful rapport with the students.	4.23	1.61	39.051	.000
Item_45	Be polite and respect the personality of the students.	4.26	1.66	40.740	.000
Item_47	Be systematic, prepare the lesson well, use lesson plans and follow a syllabus.	417	157	38.122	.000
Item_48	Focus on learning objectives.	4.17	1.63	39.463	.000

The results presented in Table 1 and Table 2 reveal statistically significant differences between college English language teachers and their students in Sindh



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regarding perceptions of effective language teacher characteristics. Independent samples t-tests conducted on individual items showed that the majority of the 50 items yielded statistically significant differences ($p < .001$) between the two groups. Teachers rated highly on items such as:

- Grading based on group tasks and student ability (e.g., Item_2, Item_23),
- Avoiding native language use in class (Item_7),
- Promoting discipline, patience, flexibility, and rapport (Items 34, 35, 41, 42, 45),
- Lesson planning and focus on objectives (Items 47, 48).

Students, on the other hand, gave consistently lower ratings, suggesting a perceptual gap regarding the importance or relevance of these characteristics. This consistent divergence highlights a significant misalignment between teacher and student expectations and values in language classrooms, suggesting a need for improved dialogue, shared understanding, and alignment of pedagogical priorities.

The study's second question was about the differences in perceptions of public and private college teachers and students on effective language teacher characteristics. To find the perceptions of teachers with those of their students on effective language teachers' characters, the Independent Samples t-test was run. Results are shown in the following tables.

Table 3. Showing descriptive statistics of public college teachers with their students

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Public Teacher	40	2.98	0.27
Public Student	150	2.86	0.22

In the above table the perceptions of public teachers ($N = 40$) and public students ($N = 150$) are shown. The results revealed that public college teachers ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.27$) reported significantly higher perception scores than public college students ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.22$).

Table 4. Showing results of t-test of public college students with their teachers

Group	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	3.080	188	0.002	0.120
Equal variances not assumed	2.900	47.3	0.006	0.120

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceptions of the groups. The difference was statistically significant, $t(188) = 3.080$, $p = 0.002$, indicating that teachers and students in public institutions differ in their evaluations or experiences regarding the topic in question. The mean difference of 0.12 suggests that teachers view the issue more positively or with greater intensity compared to students, highlighting a perceptual gap that may warrant further exploration in educational policies or communication practices.

Table 5. Showing Descriptive Statistics Of Private College Teachers With Their Students

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
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Private Teacher	40	2.72	0.26
Private Student	150	2.70	0.22

The above table shows the descriptive statistics of perceptions of private teachers (N = 40) and private students (N = 150). The mean perception score for teachers (M = 2.72, SD = 0.26) was nearly identical to that of students (M = 2.70, SD = 0.22).

Table 6. Showing Results Of t-Test For Private College Teachers With Their Students

Group	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	0.462	188	0.645	0.020
Equal variances not assumed	0.438	55.32	0.663	0.020

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare perceptions between the groups. The results indicated no statistically significant difference in perceptions between the two groups, $t(188) = 0.462$, $p = 0.645$, suggesting that both teachers and students perceive the issue in a similar manner. This similarity in scores implies alignment in understanding or evaluation, strengthening the consistency of perceptions across both educational stakeholders.

The last question of the study was to find out differences in perceptions of rural and urban college teachers and students on effective language teacher's characteristics. For this purpose, a t-test was run, and results are shown in the following tables.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics (Urban College Teachers and Students)

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Urban Teacher	40	2.70	0.25
Urban Student	150	2.68	0.08

Descriptive statistics show the comparison of perceptions between urban public college teachers (N = 40) and urban college students (N = 150). The mean perception score for teachers (M = 2.70, SD = 0.25) was closely aligned with that of students (M = 2.68, SD = 0.08).

Table 8. Independent Samples T-Test (Urban Comparison)

Group	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	0.516	188	0.607	0.020
Equal variances not assumed	0.475	43.3	0.637	0.020

An independent samples t-test was performed to compare perceptions between urban public college teachers and students. The difference was not statistically significant, $t(188) = 0.516$, $p = 0.607$, indicating similarity in perceptions between teachers and students in urban institutions. This alignment may suggest a shared understanding or consistent communication of institutional values and experiences in urban settings.

Table 09. Descriptive Statistics (Rural College Teachers and Students)

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rural Teacher	40	2.98	0.27



Rural Student	150	2.86	0.09
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Above are descriptive statistics to assess the difference in perceptions between rural public college teachers (N = 40) and rural students (N = 150). The findings show that teachers had a significantly higher mean score (M = 2.98, SD = 0.27) compared to students (M = 2.86, SD = 0.09).

Table 10. Independent Samples T-Test (Rural Comparison)

Group	T	Df	Sig. tailed)	(2- Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	3.326	188	0.001	0.120
Equal variances not assumed	2.970	43.3	0.005	0.120

An independent samples t-test was conducted to assess the difference in perceptions between rural public college teachers and rural students. The difference was statistically significant, $t(188) = 3.326$, $p = 0.001$, suggesting a perceptual gap between rural teachers and students. The mean difference of 0.12 points may reflect differences in expectations, experiences, or communication effectiveness in rural educational contexts, which may warrant further investigation or policy attention.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with previous research highlighting perceptual mismatches between language teachers and their students regarding effective teaching practices. For instance, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2009) reported that students often placed less emphasis on certain instructional strategies and teacher behaviors that educators considered essential, such as lesson planning, grading criteria, and use of the target language. Similarly, Barnes and Lock (2010) found that while teachers emphasized structure, discipline, and academic rigor, students prioritized engagement, approachability, and practical language use. The current study reflects a similar divide, with teachers in Sindh valuing structured, objective-focused instruction and professional conduct more highly than their students. This misalignment suggests that while teachers may adopt pedagogical approaches based on best practices, students may not fully perceive or value their relevance, emphasizing the need for greater pedagogical transparency and student involvement in classroom decisions to bridge these gaps.

Several studies have found notable discrepancies between teachers' self-perceptions and students' evaluations of teacher effectiveness. For example, Barnes and Lock (2013) examined Thai university students' and teachers' perceptions of effective English language teachers and found significant mismatches, particularly in areas of classroom management and rapport. Teachers tended to rate themselves more positively than students did, which mirrors the findings from the public college group in the present study.

Similarly, Park and Lee (2006), in their Korean context, observed that students placed more emphasis on affective characteristics such as friendliness and motivation, while teachers emphasized pedagogical skills and linguistic competence. The gap identified in public colleges in the study could thus be attributed to differing priorities: teachers may value instructional delivery and expertise more, while students might emphasize engagement and empathy areas where they perceive a deficiency.



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The alignment found in private colleges may be influenced by institutional culture, communication dynamics, and teacher-student interaction patterns. Richards and Farrell (2005) suggest that in private institutions, where teacher evaluations and accountability are more pronounced, there tends to be greater responsiveness to student expectations and perceptions. The minimal perceptual difference in the private college context in your study supports this notion of closer alignment, possibly due to more frequent feedback loops or a customer-service orientation often prevalent in private education.

In contrast, public institutions may operate under rigid bureaucracies and traditional hierarchies that limit such bidirectional communication, leading to misalignments in perceptions. Rahimi and Nabilou (2011) noted that in Iranian public universities, students often felt disconnected from their teachers' practices and expectations, and Naper, Younus, and Zaman. (2025) also found misalignment in perceptions of teachers' om their practices in the classroom in Pakistani public sector schools, further widening the perceptual gap.

In the urban sample, the results revealed no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and students. This finding resonates with studies such as those by Kourieos and Evripidou (2013) and Al-Busaidi, Aldhafri, and Büyükyavuz (2016), where university-level students demonstrated a preference for learner-centered teaching and interpersonal competence, values that often align with teacher self-perceptions in well-resourced or professionally supportive environments. Urban college contexts may offer greater access to training, exposure to educational technology, and ongoing professional development, which could contribute to shared understandings between instructors and learners regarding what constitutes effective language teaching.

This harmony suggests a mutual appreciation for both pedagogical and personal attributes of effective teachers, possibly due to shared experiences within a more standardized or cohesive urban educational environment. It also reflects a potential outcome of consistent institutional practices and expectations, where both groups operate within a commonly understood academic framework.

Conversely, the results from rural institutions revealed a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of teachers and students. While teachers rated themselves or their peers highly, students' ratings were more conservative. This pattern is in line with previous research by Alimorad and Tajgozari (2016) and Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009), who noted clear perceptual gaps between learners and instructors, particularly in traditional or less-developed educational contexts. In these environments, teachers often emphasize language proficiency and instructional methods, while students may place higher value on teacher-student interaction, clarity of instruction, and supportive behavior.

Such divergence may stem from limited resources, fewer professional development opportunities, or culturally ingrained instructional norms that prioritize teacher authority over communicative or student-centered methods. Rural teachers may also define effectiveness through a lens of professionalism or instructional rigor, whereas students may prioritize accessibility, encouragement, and engagement qualities they may find lacking.

Conclusion



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This study investigated the differences in perceptions between college English language teachers and their students in Sindh regarding the characteristics of effective English language teachers. Results from descriptive statistics and independent-samples t-tests revealed significant perceptual gaps between the two groups. Teachers consistently rated attributes such as lesson planning, discipline, the use of English-only instruction, and grading based on group tasks and ability more highly than students. Students, conversely, showed comparatively lower appreciation for these attributes, suggesting differing expectations and understandings of effective language teaching. These results underline a notable disconnect between what teachers prioritize in the teaching-learning process and what students find meaningful or effective, which may influence classroom dynamics and learning outcomes.

Limitations

- The study was limited to colleges in Sindh, which may not reflect perceptions in other provinces or regions of Pakistan.
- The sample included more students ($n = 300$) than teachers ($n = 80$), which might affect the generalizability and comparative balance of the findings.
- The exclusive reliance on quantitative data and Likert-scale responses limits the depth of understanding regarding participants' reasons behind their perceptions.
- The findings are contextualized within the specific educational, linguistic, and cultural norms of Sindh's public and private colleges, and may not be applicable to primary or university-level ESL settings.

Implications

- The perceptual gap highlights the need to include student perspectives in teacher training programs, enabling educators to align their teaching approaches with learner expectations.
- Educational policymakers should consider both teacher and student views when designing curriculum reforms and classroom policies, particularly those related to language use, assessment, and classroom interaction.
- Fostering regular dialogue between teachers and students about instructional goals, strategies, and expectations may reduce misunderstandings and enhance mutual respect and engagement.
- Teachers should be encouraged to adopt flexible strategies that incorporate student preferences while still maintaining pedagogical soundness.

Suggestions for Future Research

- Future studies could adopt interviews, focus groups, or open-ended survey questions to gain deeper insights into the reasons behind perceptual differences.
- Comparative studies across different provinces of Pakistan could offer a broader understanding of regional variations in ESL perceptions.
- Tracking perceptions over time could help identify whether training, experience, or institutional changes affect attitudes toward language teaching.



- Investigate how perceptions of effective teaching evolve in digital or hybrid classrooms, especially considering the growing use of online platforms in ESL education.

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