

READING PRACTICE AND PERCEIVED SPEAKING DEVELOPMENT AMONG INDONESIAN EFL UNDERGRADUATES

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Abstract

Reading gives students steady language input and helps build the vocabulary and language skills needed for speaking. Today, university students come across English in many forms, both in print and online. This study looked at how Indonesian English education undergraduates read and how they felt these habits affected their speaking skills. The study involved 52 students from the first and final semesters of an-English education program. Data came from a short questionnaire about reading habits, classroom interviews, and records from speaking classes. The questionnaire results were summarized with basic statistics, and interview notes were used to spot patterns, but no cause-and-effect claims were made. The study found that most students had a positive attitude toward reading in English, but regular book reading was not common. Comics were the most popular reading choice (28.8%), followed by novels and course books (23.1% each). Almost half of the students said they rarely read English books (46.2%), and only a few read daily (5.8%). While just over half (51.9%) found English texts generally understandable, students who spoke English better did not always read books more often. The results suggest that students' speaking skills grew from a mix of different literacy and communication activities, not just from reading books. Books still helped students learn new words and language patterns, but their impact depended on how students noticed, practiced, and used what they learned when speaking. Social media, online articles, videos, and daily conversations also gave students more ways to build their speaking skills. In conclusion, reading and speaking are connected. Reading supports speaking, but its effect depends on how students use what they read along with other types of language input and practice.

Keywords: digital literacy, EFL undergraduates, extensive reading, reading frequency, speaking development, vocabulary

Introduction

Nowadays, speaking is often treated as the most visible indicator of English proficiency because it requires learners to retrieve linguistic knowledge, organize ideas, and respond to interlocutors in real time. In the context of university students in English education study programs, English speaking competence is professionally relevant because these students are expected to participate in academic discussions, deliver presentations, and serve as English language models for future learners. Despite years of formal instruction, most Indonesian learners still experience hesitation, restricted vocabulary, and anxiety to speak English. These difficulties suggest that speaking development cannot be reduced to grammar knowledge or pronunciation, but it depends on the quality, quantity, and accessibility of English language input as well as opportunities for meaningful output.

The activity of reading has potential source of input. Consistent engagement with texts can



expose learners to have vocabulary, content knowledge and speaking practice that can facilitate having good speech. Recent evidence shows that vocabulary size and productive lexical knowledge are connected to speaking proficiency, fluency, and lexical performance (Koizumi & In'nami, 2021; Uchihara & Saito, 2022). Extensive and self-selected reading can also produce vocabulary gains when texts are accessible and reading is sustained (Chang & Renandya, 2021; Jung & Choi, 2021). These findings provide a plausible basis for expecting a relationship between reading practices and speaking development.

However, frequent reading does not necessarily result in better speaking performance. Reading is receptive, whereas speaking needs rapid productive practice, interactional management, and repeated oral practice. Digital environments further complicate the relationship because contemporary students read short posts, captions, online articles, subtitles, and multimodal texts in addition to books. Technology-assisted learning can support vocabulary and speaking, but its contribution depends on how learners use digital input and whether it is followed by purposeful production (Fu et al., 2022; Hanafiah et al., 2022). Therefore, a narrow measure of book-reading frequency may overlook the broader literacy context in which students encounter and use English language.

Previous related studies have observed the effects of organized extensive-reading interventions, vocabulary growth, or technology-assisted speaking instruction. Fewer studies have informed how English education undergraduates distribute reading across genres and frequencies then to know how students explain the contribution of practices into English speaking performance. This gap is important in the Indonesian context, where students' exposure to English is typically distributed across formal courses, entertainment media, social networks, and independent learning. Understanding this pattern can help lecturers design reading-to-speaking activities that are aligned with students' actual habits rather than with an assumed book-centered model.

This study aimed to describe the reading preferences, reading frequency, and perceived text comprehension of first and last semester English education students then interpret how these patterns related to their perceived speaking development. The study did not test a causal effect. Instead, it used descriptive questionnaire data, interviews, and available speaking-course records to answer the following research question; (1) How do Indonesian EFL undergraduates' reading practices relate to perceived development of English-speaking ability. (2) What are the contribution of study lies in its distinction among conventional reading books, wider digital and multimodal input that students considered relevant to speaking practice.

Literature Review

Reading engagement is shaped not only by how frequently learners read but also by their purposes, material preferences, and strategies for dealing with difficult texts. Akmal et al. (2020) found that Indonesian university students frequently selected website articles and social media captions and used dictionaries, internet searches, peer consultation, prediction, and partial reading to deal with reading difficulties. Reading improves the development of second language by repeating the words and patterns in meaningful contexts. In extensive reading, learners read relatively consistently to the accessible material for general understanding and enjoyment. Grabe and Yamashita (2022) emphasize that the amount of reading contributes to fluency, vocabulary growth, and the knowledge base required for advanced comprehension. Narrow reading, in which learners read multiple texts on related topics or within the same genre, may further increase lexical repetition and facilitate vocabulary acquisition (Chang & Renandya, 2021). However, the benefits depend on text difficulty, sustained engagement, and opportunities to notice and reuse new language.

Vocabulary has an important bridge between reading and speaking skills. Lexical knowledge includes more than form-meaning recognition. Besides, it also involves collocation, derivative forms, multiple meanings, and ability to retrieve words productively (González-Fernández, 2022). Koizumi and In'nami (2021) mentioned that vocabulary and productive knowledge predicted dimensions of L2 speaking, while Uchihara and Saito (2022) showed that academic vocabulary was strongly related to students' academic speaking fluency. These studies suggest that reading

may support speaking when lexical input becomes sufficiently established for productive access.

Empirical work also explored that reading formats connect the input to be more directly with oral performance. According to Abdulrahman and Kara (2023), movie-enriched extensive reading supported vocabulary improvement and speaking scores among university learners. Shareef (2023) agreed that positive student perceptions of extensive e-book-based reading, including reported confidence in speaking. Such findings support an integrated approach in which reading is accompanied by audiovisual input, discussion, retelling, or presentation rather than treated as an isolated silent activity.

Digital media broaden the range of English input available to learners. Examples of digital media are online articles, captions, videos, and social networking platforms, which may expose students to current vocabulary and conversational expressions, while digital storytelling can create an explicit pathway from comprehension to oral production (Fu et al., 2022). In an Indonesian context, Hanafiah et al. (2022) found that computer-assisted language learning improved vocabulary and speaking outcomes and reduced speaking anxiety. Yet digital exposure is not inherently instructional. Learners may engage superficially, switch languages, or consume entertainment without noticing language form. The educational task is therefore to transform informal exposure into deliberate learning through selection, reflection, and output.

Reading frequency is treated as one indicator of exposure, but genre, medium, comprehension, and opportunities for oral reuse are also important. This issue avoids assuming that students who read books frequently will practice speaking better. Instead, it examines how multiple forms of input may interact with vocabulary knowledge, motivation, and speaking practice.

Research Method

This study used a descriptive mixed-data design. Then quantitative data were limited to frequencies and percentages from a short questionnaire, while qualitative information from classroom interviews was used to clarify how students interpreted their reading and speaking experiences. This study provide available dataset that was intended to portray an existing pattern rather than to manipulate reading exposure or estimate causal effects. The participants were 52 students enrolled in English Education Study Program at a private Indonesian university. 28 students were in the first semester and 24 were in the final semester during an odd academic term. The sample represented two stages of study so that the dataset included learners with different amounts of formal exposure to English courses. Because the original dataset did not include random assignment or a population sampling frame, the results are interpreted as context-specific.

Three sources of data were available. First, a questionnaire elicited whether students liked reading English books, the type of English material they most often read in leisure time, the frequency in reading English books, and students' perceived ability to understand English texts. Second, classroom interviews elicited explanations of how students developed speaking ability and which sources of English input they used. Third, speaking-course records and lecturers' classroom observations were consulted to identify broad patterns of comparatively stronger and weaker oral performance. The records were used descriptively and inferential comparison was conducted.

Data analysis proceeded in three stages. Questionnaire responses were tabulated as frequencies and percentages. The distributions were then compared descriptively with interview explanations and the broad pattern visible in speaking-course records. Finally, the interpretations were examined against recent literature on extensive reading, vocabulary, digital input, and speaking. As the questionnaire items were categorical and the individual-level speaking scores were not available in a form suitable for statistical modeling, the study did not compute correlations or claim that reading caused speaking improvement. This analytic restraint was necessary to preserve the validity of the conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Results

The results are presented in four parts: attitudes toward reading, preferred reading materials, book-reading frequency, and perceived comprehension of English texts. Interview and classroom evidence is integrated after the descriptive distributions.

Table 1. Students' Attitudes toward Reading English Books

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Dislike it	1	1.9%
Like it	29	55.8%
Love it	4	7.7%
Somehow like it	18	34.6%
Total	52	100.0%

Table 1 shows that explicitly negative attitudes were rare. Thirty-three students (63.5%) selected either "like it" or "love it," while another 34.6% expressed qualified interest. This pattern indicates that limited reading frequency cannot be explained simply by a general dislike of English reading. Interest existed, but it did not consistently translate into regular book-reading behavior.

Table 2. Preferred English Reading Materials in Leisure Time

Material	Frequency	Percentage
Articles	11	21.2%
English comics	15	28.8%
English magazines	1	1.9%
English newspapers	1	1.9%
English novels	12	23.1%
English course books	12	23.1%
Total	52	100.0%

As shown in Table 2, comics were the most frequently selected material (28.8%). Novels and course books each accounted for 23.1%, and articles represented 21.2%. Magazines and newspapers were selected by only one student each. The distribution suggests a preference for narrative, visually supported, curriculum-related, or readily accessible texts rather than traditional periodicals.

Table 3. Frequency of Reading English Books

Frequency category	Students	Percentage
Every day	3	5.8%
Every week	8	15.4%
Much less frequently	24	46.2%
Never	2	3.8%
Once every few days	15	28.8%
Total	52	100.0%

Table 3 reveals a gap between positive attitudes and sustained practice. Only 5.8% reported daily reading and 15.4% reported weekly reading. The largest group, 46.2%, read much less frequently, while 28.8% read once every few days. Thus, the dominant pattern was intermittent rather than extensive book reading.

Table 4. Students' Perceived Comprehension of English Texts

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes understandable but still challenging	19	36.5%
Difficult to understand	6	11.5%
Understandable most of the time	21	40.4%
Not a problem	6	11.5%
Total	52	100.0%

More than half of the participants (51.9%) reported that English texts were understandable most of the time or presented no substantial problem. Besides, 36.5% reported fluctuating comprehension. Only 11.5% described English texts is difficult to understand. These findings indicate that many students possessed enough receptive knowledge to engage with English texts, even though their engagement was not frequent.

Interview and classroom observations are also added as important qualifications. Students identified several sources of speaking development beyond books, including social media, online articles, videos, subtitles, classroom presentations, peer interaction, and repeated oral practice. Students who were viewed as comparatively confident in speaking English did not uniformly report high book-reading frequency. Conversely, some students who enjoyed reading still hesitated during spontaneous speaking. The evidence therefore points to a broader pattern: reading was perceived as useful for vocabulary and ideas, but oral performance depended on whether language from reading or digital input was repeatedly retrieved and used in speaking situations

Discussion

The main finding is the discrepancy between reading attitude and reading frequency. Most students expressed at least some interest in reading English, but regular book reading was uncommon. This distinction happens because enjoying reading does not guarantee the amount of exposure associated with extensive-reading benefits. Extensive reading requires sustained volume, accessible texts, and continuity (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022). The present participants' intermittent pattern may have provided useful encounters with English without creating the cumulative repetition needed for large and readily retrievable lexical gains.

The preference for comics, novels, course books, and online articles suggests that text choice was shaped by entertainment, accessibility, and immediate academic relevance. Comics may reduce cognitive load through visual support and short dialogue, whereas novels provide narrative continuity and course books support assessed learning. The low selection of newspapers and magazines may reflect the availability of faster digital alternatives rather than an absence of interest in current information. This interpretation is consistent with the growing importance of self-selected and digital reading, where learners move across formats instead of relying on a single conventional genre (Shareef, 2023).

The findings suggest that reading and speaking are connected indirectly, not directly. Reading can expand the words and ideas students use when speaking, and recent studies show that vocabulary knowledge affects several aspects of speaking performance (Koizumi & In'nami, 2021; Uchihara & Saito, 2022). Still, students need to turn what they understand from reading into words they can use when speaking. In addition, Pitura (2022) highlights that L2 speaking development in higher education depends partly on learning conditions and structured activities that provide opportunities to practise academic communication. Reading aloud may also help learners pay closer attention to word forms and strengthen vocabulary learning. Students must recall words quickly, use correct grammar and word combinations, and communicate with others. Students said their speaking improved through presentations, social media, videos, and conversations, which suggests that practicing speaking and using different types of input helped them turn what they understood into spoken language.

Shin (2023), for example, reported continuing vocabulary improvement during a 16-week

extensive-reading program that incorporated reading aloud, with particularly noticeable development during the earlier stages of the program. Surya and Anggriyani (2022) similarly found that think-aloud activities helped learners monitor their comprehension and demonstrate their understanding of texts through spoken and written reports. These studies support the interpretation that reading is more likely to contribute to speaking development when learners move beyond silent exposure and actively explain, rehearse, and reuse language encountered in texts.

This view helps explain why some of the stronger speakers did not often read books. They may have learned language from a wider range of digital sources. Research on Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and digital storytelling shows that technology can help with speaking by providing examples, practice, feedback, and chances to use language (Hanafiah et al., 2022; Fu et al., 2022). While this study does not prove that social media or videos directly caused improvement, it does show that students saw these sources as important. Teachers should not ignore informal digital exposure. Instead, they can use it in structured activities, such as having students read an online text, record a spoken summary, compare opinions, use target vocabulary again, and think about their word choices.

This study has some practical suggestions for English education programs. First, reading activities should be ongoing, not just occasional. Using short, level-appropriate texts can make it easier for students to get started, and offering options like comics, graded readers, articles, and narrative nonfiction can help keep them interested. Second, reading should lead to meaningful speaking activities. Tasks like retelling, information-gap discussions, panel responses, and short presentations help students use vocabulary and organize their thoughts. Third, digital materials should be carefully selected instead of just suggested. A weekly cycle that connects reading and speaking could include an online text, a vocabulary log, an oral response, peer feedback, and a revised performance. This approach keeps the benefits of reading while also meeting the needs of speaking practice.

There are some limitations to keep in mind when interpreting these results. The questionnaire only had four categories and did not track how many pages students read, how long they spent reading, how difficult the texts were, or how often they read digitally. The records from the speaking course did not have enough detail for deeper analysis, and the study did not use a standard speaking test. The interview data helped with interpretation, but the interviews were not fully recorded or transcribed and did not use formal coding. Since the sample came from just one program, the findings do not represent all Indonesian EFL undergraduates. Future studies should use proven reading-habit surveys, digital-use logs, vocabulary tests, and detailed speaking rubrics. A longer-term study could show whether a structured reading-to-speaking program leads to real improvements in fluency, vocabulary use, accuracy, and confidence.

Conclusion

The researchers described as the result of this study by describing the reading practices of Indonesian English education undergraduates and exploring how students perceived the contribution of reading to their speaking development. The descriptive findings of this study showed that most students had generally positive attitudes toward reading English, but regular book reading was still limited. Students prefer to choose comics, novels, course books, and online articles as their reading materials, while daily reading was reported by only a small number of participants. Additionally, most students also reported that they could understand at least part of the English texts they read. However, students with comparatively stronger speaking performance did not always report reading English books more frequently than other students.

This study findings suggest that the relationship between reading and speaking should be understood as indirect and conditional rather than direct and automatic. Besides, reading may support speaking development by providing vocabulary, sentence patterns, ideas, and topics for communication. Nevertheless, reading frequency alone does not fully explain how students develop speaking ability. This study also states that the contribution of reading appears to depend on how learners notice useful language, recycle it, and activate it through oral practice. In this sense, speaking development is shaped by the interaction of multiple sources of input and practice,

including books, digital media, online articles, audiovisual materials, classroom interaction, and everyday communication.

Pedagogically, the findings imply that English teachers should not only encourage students to read more, but also help students to transform reading input into speaking output. Besides, teachers also can guide students to select enjoyable and level-appropriate reading materials, identify useful vocabulary and expressions, summarize texts orally, discuss reading content in pairs or groups, and use newly learned language in speaking tasks. Furthermore, this study suggest that reading activity should be connected more explicitly to communicative practice so that students can move from understanding written texts to using language actively in spoken communication.

This study has some limitations. It used a descriptive design and was based on questionnaire responses, classroom interviews, and available speaking class records. As a result, it did not measure whether reading practice directly affects speaking development. The data showed patterns at the group level, not detailed progress for each student. Future research should use long-term studies to follow students' reading habits, digital input, vocabulary growth, and speaking skills over time. Studies that focus on individuals are also suggested to see how different learners turn reading input into speaking skills in various academic and digital settings.

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