

Vlog as a Self-Learning Medium to Improve Speaking Skills: A Study on Non-English Major Students' Perception in a General English Class

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Abstract

Speaking is often considered the most challenging English skill for university students outside English departments because of limited practice opportunities and speaking anxiety. Video blogs (vlogs) provide an alternative self-learning medium that enables students to practise speaking, record their performance, and review their progress. This study aimed to explore non-English major students' perceptions of using vlogs to improve speaking skills in a General English class. A descriptive study employing qualitative and quantitative approaches was conducted with 25 students from the Faculties of Economics and Business, Computer Science, and Philosophy. Data were collected through an online questionnaire containing closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended responses were analysed using percentages, while open-ended responses were examined thematically. The findings indicated that most students perceived their speaking, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary abilities as moderate. Almost all respondents (96%) considered vlogs at least moderately effective for speaking practice, 56% reported increased creativity, and 68% expressed willingness to use vlogs again. Although most students reported greater confidence, some experienced nervousness and faced vocabulary and device-related limitations. These findings suggest that vlogs are a promising self-learning medium when supported by clear guidance, vocabulary assistance, and a supportive sharing environment.

Keywords

General English; Non-English Major Students; Self-Learning; Speaking Skills; Vlog



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INTRODUCTION

English speaking ability has become an important skill for university graduates in Indonesia. Students from many fields, such as business, computer science, and philosophy, are expected to use English for presentations, job interviews, and international communication. However, for students outside the English department, English is usually taught only through a General English course that meets twice a week. In this limited time, the teacher must cover several skills at once, so each student gets very few chances to speak. As a result, many non-English major students finish the course with weak oral skills and low confidence.

Speaking is a complex skill because the speaker must think about ideas, choose words, build sentences, and pronounce them correctly at the same time (Burns, 2019; Richards, 2008). Earlier studies have shown that learners' speaking performance is affected not only by their linguistic knowledge but also by psychological factors such as anxiety, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and lack of motivation (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Tuan & Mai, 2015). Horwitz et al. (1986) explained that foreign language anxiety often appears when learners must speak in front of others and feel that they are being judged. According to Krashen (1982), a high affective filter can block language input and make learning less effective. For this reason, learners need a practice space that feels safe, flexible, and less stressful. One way to create such a space is to move part of the speaking practice outside the classroom. Reinders and Benson (2017) and Lai et al. (2018) noted that technology allows learners to continue learning beyond the classroom, at their own pace and in their own setting. This idea is closely related to learner autonomy, which Benson (2011) described as the capacity of learners to take control of their own learning. In a similar way, Zimmerman (2002) explained that self-regulated learners set goals, monitor their progress, and reflect on their performance. A tool that lets students record, watch, and improve their own speech can therefore support both autonomy and self-regulation.

A video blog, or vlog, is a type of blog in which the main content is a video, usually recorded by the author while talking directly to the camera. Since smartphones now have good cameras and editing applications, students can produce vlogs easily and at a low cost. Early research on voice blogs and audio blogs found that recording oneself gave learners more chances to speak and helped them reflect on their language (Hsu et al., 2008; Sun, 2009). Studies on video-based tasks reported similar benefits. Hung (2011) found that ESP learners viewed vlogs as useful for practising speaking and for evaluating their own performance. Shih (2010) showed that video blogs combined with face-to-face teaching helped students improve their public speaking, while Gromik (2012) found that short video recordings on mobile phones encouraged learners to speak more. Watkins (2012) also reported that vlogging increased student talk time in an EFL context.

In Indonesia, research on vlogs for speaking has grown in recent years. Maulidah (2017), Afrilliani et al. (2018), and Lestari (2019) found that vlogs could improve students' fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. Weganofa and Khoiro (2021) reported that vlogs were effective for speaking, and Wau et al. (2023) showed that a vlogging strategy improved junior high school students' speaking. Studies on students' perceptions also gave positive results. Liando et al. (2022) found that students saw vlogs as an enjoyable and useful learning medium, while Sanjaya et al. (2024) reported that watching vlogs helped students learn natural expressions. Beyond vlogs, YouTube videos have also been used to support speaking practice during online learning (Syafiq et al., 2021). Aldukhayel (2021) further showed that vlogs can provide authentic spoken input for EFL learners.

Even so, most of these studies focused on students of English education programmes or on school students. Only a few studies, such as Kurniawan and Andanty (2025), have explored

vlog creation among non-English major students, and that study involved a small group from a single programme. Little is known about how students from different faculties, who join a General English class with mixed abilities, view vlogs as a tool for learning on their own. Their views are important because they usually have less exposure to English and fewer chances to practise speaking than English majors. Understanding their perceptions can help lecturers design speaking tasks that match students' needs and abilities. Based on this gap, the present study aimed to explore non-English major students' perceptions of using vlogs as a self-learning medium to improve their speaking skills in a General English class. In particular, the study looked at (1) how the students assessed their own speaking-related abilities, (2) how they perceived the benefits and effectiveness of vlogs for speaking practice, and (3) how vlogging affected their confidence. The findings are expected to give practical input for lecturers who teach General English to students from various disciplines.

METHODS

This study used a descriptive research design with a mixed approach, combining simple quantitative description and qualitative analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative part described the distribution of students' answers to closed-ended questions, while the qualitative part explored the reasons and feelings behind those answers through students' written responses. This design was chosen because the study did not test a treatment, but tried to describe students' views and experiences after they had used vlogs for speaking practice. The participants were 25 non-English major students who took a General English course at a university in Indonesia. They were selected using purposive sampling, with the main criteria being that they were enrolled in the General English class and had completed at least one English vlog as part of their speaking practice. The students came from several faculties, most of them from the Faculty of Economics and Business and the Faculty of Computer Science, and a smaller number from the Faculty of Philosophy. In the course, the students were asked to record short English vlogs outside class time as a self-learning activity. They could choose their own topics, record and re-record their videos, and watch their own performance before submitting the final version to the lecturer.

The data were collected through an online questionnaire created with Google Forms. The questionnaire was developed by referring to guidelines for questionnaire design in language research (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010) and contained ten items. Four items asked students to rate their own speaking level, pronunciation, grammar in speaking, and vocabulary mastery on a three-point scale (excellent, moderate, poor). One item asked them to rate how effective vlogs were in helping their speaking practice using the same scale. Four items asked whether vlogs had advantages for speaking practice, increased their speaking motivation, increased their creativity, and made them want to use vlogs again, with the options yes, maybe, and no. The last item was an open-ended question that asked students to describe how they felt about their confidence when practising speaking through vlogs. Participation was voluntary, and students' identities were kept anonymous.

The closed-ended data were analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages, and the results are presented in tables and a figure. The open-ended answers were analysed using thematic analysis, following the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): reading the data several times, giving initial codes, grouping the codes into themes, reviewing the themes, and naming them. Each response was given a code from R1 to R25. One response written in Indonesian was translated into English by the researcher. To increase trustworthiness, the themes were checked again against the original answers, and the qualitative findings were compared with the quantitative results. The research procedure is summarised in Figure 1.

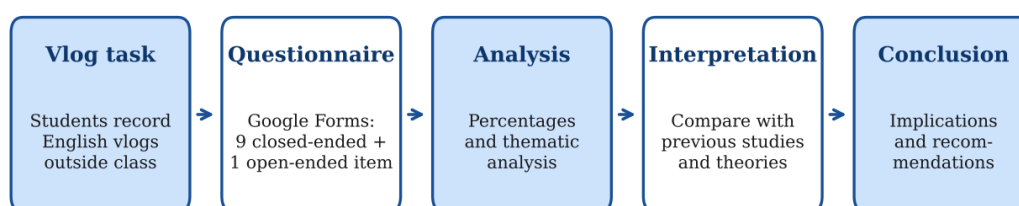


Figure 1. Research Procedure

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Students' self-assessment of their speaking-related abilities

The first part of the questionnaire asked students to assess their own speaking-related abilities. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Self-Assessment of Speaking-Related Abilities (n = 25)

No	Aspect	Excellent	Moderate	Poor
1	Overall speaking ability	1 (4%)	16 (64%)	8 (32%)
2	Pronunciation	4 (16%)	14 (56%)	7 (28%)
3	Grammar in speaking	1 (4%)	12 (48%)	12 (48%)
4	Vocabulary mastery	0 (0%)	17 (68%)	8 (32%)

Source: Research data

Table 1 shows that most students placed themselves at the moderate level. For overall speaking ability, 64% of the students chose moderate, 32% chose poor, and only one student (4%) chose excellent. Pronunciation received the most positive rating, with 16% of the students rating it as excellent and 56% as moderate. Grammar and vocabulary, on the other hand, were the weakest areas. Almost half of the students (48%) said that their grammar in speaking was poor, and no student rated their vocabulary as excellent. These results show that the participants were mostly intermediate or lower-level speakers who felt less sure about the accuracy of their language than about their pronunciation.

Students' perceptions of the effectiveness and benefits of vlogs

The second part of the questionnaire focused on students' views of vlogs as a medium for speaking practice. The results are presented in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Vlogs for Speaking Practice (n = 25)

No	Statement	Positive	Neutral	Negative
1	Effectiveness of vlogs in helping speaking practice (excellent / moderate / poor)	9 (36%)	15 (60%)	1 (4%)
2	There are advantages of using vlogs to practise speaking (yes / maybe / no)	11 (44%)	12 (48%)	2 (8%)
3	Speaking motivation increased after making a vlog (yes / maybe / no)	12 (48%)	11 (44%)	2 (8%)
4	Practising speaking with vlogs increases creativity in learning (yes / maybe / no)	14 (56%)	9 (36%)	2 (8%)
5	Willingness to practise speaking with vlogs again (yes / maybe / no)	17 (68%)	6 (24%)	2 (8%)

Source: Research data

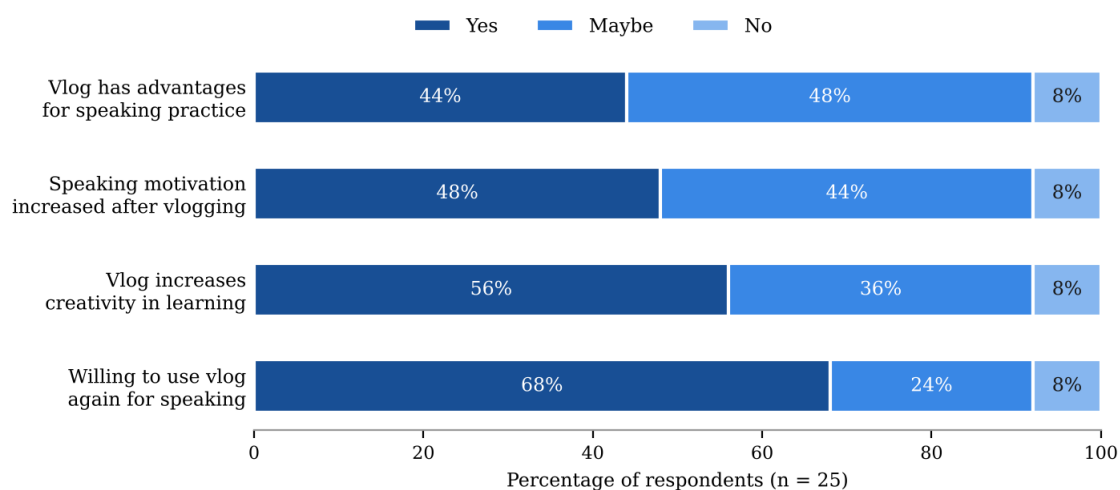


Figure 2. Students' Perceptions of Vlogs for Speaking Practice

As shown in Table 2, almost all students (96%) felt that vlogs were moderately or highly effective in helping their speaking practice. Nine students (36%) rated vlogs as excellent, fifteen (60%) as moderate, and only one (4%) as poor. When asked whether vlogs had advantages for speaking practice, 44% answered yes and 48% answered maybe, while 8% answered no. A similar pattern was found for motivation: 48% of the students felt that their speaking motivation increased after making a vlog, and 44% were not fully sure. The most positive answers were related to creativity and future use. More than half of the students (56%) agreed that practising speaking through vlogs made them more creative in learning. Furthermore, 68% of the students said they wanted to practise speaking with vlogs again, and only 8% did not. Figure 2 shows that the share of yes answers rose from the first item to the last one, while the share of no answers stayed at the same low level (8%) for all four items. This suggests that even students who were unsure about the direct benefits of vlogs were still willing to try them again.

Students' confidence when practising speaking through vlogs

The open-ended question asked students to describe their confidence when they practised speaking through vlogs. The thematic analysis produced five themes, as summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Themes of Students' Confidence When Practising Speaking through Vlogs (n = 25)

No	Theme	Frequency	Respondents
1	Increased confidence and comfort	12 (48%)	R1, R2, R4, R5, R6, R8, R10, R11, R12, R15, R19, R20
2	Nervous at first, then more confident	3 (12%)	R13, R16, R25
3	Mixed or conditional confidence	3 (12%)	R7, R14, R18
4	Still nervous, shy, or insecure	5 (20%)	R3, R17, R21, R22, R24
5	Neutral or unclear response	2 (8%)	R9, R23

Source: Research data (open-ended responses)

The largest group of students (12 out of 25) reported that vlogs made them feel more confident. Many of them linked this confidence to the freedom to practise without pressure and the chance to watch and evaluate their own performance. For example, one student wrote:

"I feel more confident when practicing speaking through vlogs because I can practice speaking freely and become more comfortable expressing my thoughts." (R2)

Another student explained that vlogs made her more confident because she could see her own way of speaking, feel less nervous in front of the camera, and learn comfortably without fear of being judged by others (R1, translated). Some students also connected confidence with improvement in other areas, as one stated that vlogs "helped me improve my pronunciation and fluency" (R11). One student described the experience as "a huge confidence booster" because "seeing my progress made me feel way more relaxed and natural when speaking" (R10). The second theme showed that confidence grew step by step. Three students said they felt nervous at the beginning, but became more comfortable after recording several times. One of them wrote:

"I felt a little nervous at first because I was worried about making mistakes. However, after practicing several times, I became more confident and comfortable speaking in English." (R13)

The third theme reflected mixed or conditional feelings. One student felt nervous but still preferred making a vlog to speaking live in front of the class (R7). Another said vlogs were comfortable "as long as it's not for others to see" (R14), and another felt confident until realising that "I didn't have enough vocabulary to speak" (R18). The fourth theme showed that five students still felt nervous, shy, or anxious, for example "I feel a little scared and anxious thinking whether what I said is right or wrong" (R21). One of these students mentioned a technical problem, saying that poor camera quality made them feel insecure when submitting video assignments (R3). Finally, two answers were brief or neutral and did not show a clear change in confidence (R9, R23).

Discussion

The first finding of this study is that the non-English major students saw themselves as moderate speakers, with grammar and vocabulary as their weakest areas. This profile is typical of students who learn English only through a General English course. It is in line with Leong and Ahmadi (2017) and Tuan and Mai (2015), who found that limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge are among the main factors that lower learners' speaking performance. The self-assessment also helps explain the other findings. Students who are not sure about their language accuracy are more likely to feel anxious when they speak in front of others, so they may benefit more from a private and repeatable form of practice such as a vlog. The second finding is that almost all students considered vlogs at least moderately effective for their speaking practice, and more than two-thirds wanted to use vlogs again. This supports earlier studies that reported positive perceptions of vlogs among EFL learners (Hung, 2011; Lestari, 2019; Liando et al., 2022). The result can be explained by the nature of vlogging as a self-learning activity. When students record a vlog, they can plan what to say, try several times, watch the result, and fix their mistakes before sharing it. These steps match the cycle of planning, monitoring, and reflecting that Zimmerman (2002) described as self-regulated learning. Vlogs also give students more time to speak than a regular class, which supports Watkins (2012) and Gromik (2012), who found that video recording increased learners' talk time.

However, the high number of maybe answers about advantages (48%) and motivation (44%) should not be ignored. These answers suggest that many students felt some benefits but were not fully convinced. One possible reason is that the students were still at an early stage of using vlogs, so the effect on their speaking was not yet clear to them. Another reason may be their limited vocabulary and grammar, which made speaking difficult no matter what medium was used. This result is different from studies with English education students, who often show stronger agreement (Liando et al., 2022; Sanjaya et al., 2024). It shows that non-English majors may need more support, such as vocabulary lists, model vlogs, or simple speaking guides, before they can feel the full benefits of vlogging.

The third finding concerns creativity and motivation. More than half of the students felt that vlogs made them more creative, and nearly half felt more motivated to speak. In making a vlog, students have to choose a topic, plan the content, and present themselves on camera, which turns speaking practice into a small creative project. This finding agrees with Kurniawan and Andanty (2025), who found that non-English students saw vlog creation as creative and more engaging than conventional speaking practice. From the point of view of self-determination theory, giving students choice and control over their tasks can support their sense of autonomy and, in turn, their intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The strong wish to use vlogs again (68%) can be seen as a sign of this motivation. The fourth and most important finding is related to confidence. Most students reported that their confidence increased, either directly or gradually. They explained that vlogs allowed them to practise "freely" and "without feeling too pressured", and to evaluate their own speaking. This finding supports the idea that a low-anxiety setting helps learners use the language more freely

(Krashen, 1982). Since students do not have to face a live audience, the fear of negative evaluation described by Horwitz et al. (1986) is reduced. Similar results were reported by Shih (2010) and Afrilliani et al. (2018), who found that video recording helped learners become more confident speakers. The theme of gradual confidence is also meaningful. It shows that confidence does not appear after one vlog, but grows through repeated practice, which means that vlog tasks should be given regularly rather than only once.

At the same time, the findings show that vlogs do not remove anxiety for all students. Some students still felt nervous, shy, or afraid of making mistakes, and one student felt comfortable only if the video was not seen by others. This shows that the audience of a vlog matters. If vlogs are shared publicly, some students may feel the same pressure as in a live performance. Two other barriers also appeared: limited vocabulary and limited technology. The comment about poor camera quality reminds lecturers that not all students have the same devices, and that video quality should not be part of the assessment. These challenges are similar to those reported by Kurniawan and Andanty (2025), who found that nervousness, limited vocabulary, and technical problems were common among students who created vlogs. Overall, the results suggest that vlogs can work well as a self-learning medium for speaking in a General English class, especially for building confidence and creativity. Their effect, however, depends on how the task is designed. Lecturers can increase the benefits of vlogs by giving clear instructions and examples, providing vocabulary support related to the topics, letting students choose whether to share their vlogs with the class or only with the lecturer, and giving feedback that focuses on communication rather than on video quality. In this way, vlogs can become a bridge between private practice and confident public speaking.

CONCLUSION

This study explored non-English major students' perceptions of vlogs as a self-learning medium to improve their speaking skills in a General English class. The students generally rated their speaking abilities as moderate, with grammar and vocabulary as their main weaknesses. Despite these limits, almost all of them viewed vlogs as at least moderately effective for speaking practice. Many students felt that vlogs increased their creativity and motivation, and most of them wanted to use vlogs again. The clearest benefit was in confidence, since most students said that recording and reviewing their own speech helped them feel more relaxed and comfortable when speaking English. Nevertheless, some students still felt anxious and faced problems with vocabulary and device quality.

These findings suggest that lecturers of General English can use vlogs as a regular self-learning task, supported by vocabulary input, clear guidance, and a safe way of sharing. This study has several limitations. It involved a small number of participants from one institution, used self-reported data, and did not measure students' actual speaking performance. Future studies are recommended to involve more participants from different institutions, to combine perception data with speaking tests or analysis of the vlogs themselves, and to conduct

interviews to gain a deeper understanding of how students use vlogs for learning on their own over a longer period.

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