

Unveiling Indonesian EFL students' learning pathways: Experiences, challenges, and growth through student-created digital content for public speaking beyond the podium

¹Endang Susilowati*, ¹Etika Dewi Kusumaningtyas, ¹Eka Fanti Sulistiyaningsih

*¹English Education Department, Faculty of Business, Education, and Applied
Universitas An Nuur, Indonesia*

***Corresponding Author**

Email: endangsusilowati@unan.ac.id

Received:
13 December 2025

Revised:
11 July 2026

Accepted:
18 July 2026

Published:
27 July 2026

Abstract

The integration of digital media into language learning has expanded opportunities for EFL learners to practice speaking in more authentic, creative and self-directed ways, particularly through student-created digital content (SCDC) that enables learners to produce and share their own speaking performances. Public speaking remains a persistent challenge for Indonesian EFL college students, who often experience anxiety, limited exposure, and traditional instruction that restricts authentic speaking practice. This study explores the learning pathways of Indonesian EFL college students by examining their experiences, challenges, and growth while creating digital speaking content for public speaking practice. This study employed a qualitative case study design, involving nine English education students enrolled in a semester-long public speaking course. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and reflective journals, analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2017) thematic analysis framework, grounded in Constructivist Learning Theory, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, and Self-Determination Theory. The findings reveal that students experienced SCDC as meaningful, empowering, and transformative, as it allowed personal expression and greater control over learning. While students confronted linguistic, technical, and psychological challenges, these difficulties became opportunities for constructive practice, reflection, and development. This study also shows multidimensional growth, categorized into linguistic, digital, motivational, and identity development. Overall, this study concludes that SCDC functions not only as a speaking task but also as a holistic learning pathway that connects experiences, challenges and growth into a transformative learning process. Finally, this study provides significant implications for language teaching and learning.

Keywords: *Indonesian EFL students; learning pathways; public speaking skills; speaking development; student-created digital content*

How to Cite (APA Style):

Susilowati, E., Kusumaningtyas, E.T., & Sulistiyarningsih, E.F. (2026). Unveiling Indonesian EFL students' learning pathways: Experiences, challenges, and growth through student-created digital content for public speaking beyond the podium. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 11 (2), 541-558. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/e.11.2.541-558>

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is a fundamental yet demanding skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, playing a crucial role in both academic achievement and future professional communication (Nirmawati et al., 2025; Poedjiastutie et al., 2020; Rusen, 2021). Despite its importance, many EFL learners struggle to speak confidently in public due to linguistic limitations, fear of negative judgment, insufficient speaking practice, and difficulty generating ideas in English (Apriyanti et al., 2021; Elbalqis & Pradana, 2022; Nangimah, 2022; Norahmi et al., 2025).

In the Society 5.0 era, digital technology has reshaped how public speaking is practiced and taught, allowing students to move beyond conventional classroom presentations and create content on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and podcasts (Fauzi, 2025; Gabriel et al., 2022; Ocktarani, 2022; Rahman, 2023; Sadhasivam et al., 2023; Utami et al., 2025). This shift provides learners with new spaces to express their ideas, identities, and language development to a wider audience, making public speaking practice more personalized, dynamic, and learner-centered (Mufidah & Roifah, 2020; Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020; Rahmawati et al., 2019). Consequently, digital media has emerged as a valuable tool for learning languages beyond the classroom walls, encouraging teachers to adopt more student-centered and technology-enhanced learning practices.

In this light, Self-Created Digital Content (SCDC) stands out as a powerful tool for language learners to practice public speaking. SCDC refers to individual student-created digital material (e.g. speeches, vlogs, or presentations) that is prepared, performed, and produced by the students themselves. By choosing topics, scripting, recording, and editing, students shift from passive learners to active creators. This hands-on process promotes ownership, self-directed learning, and digital literacy. By creating their own content, students transform speaking into a personal form of self-expression, sharing meaningful messages in their own voice with audiences beyond the classroom (Baron, 2021; Lubis et al., 2020; Pramesti et al., 2025). It also encourages autonomy, creativity, and authentic language use, while offering a safe space to express ideas, confront challenges, and receive feedback, which helps them grow as confident speakers (Hasanah & Pradana, 2019; Lestari, 2019; Phuong & Vo, 2019).

Other previous studies have focused on the creative and expressive dimensions of digital content creation. Risdayani et al. (2024), Roza and Rustam (2023), and (Zuhro & Budi, 2025) demonstrated that digital storytelling enabled students to convey ideas more naturally and creatively, while Gabriel et al. (2022) claimed that social media platforms assist EFL learners in constructing their digital identities as English speakers. Similarly, Yahaya and Miskam (2025) affirmed that digital platforms such as TikTok have been shown to provide students space to express themselves, boost their confidence, and motivate them to practice speaking independently. Meanwhile, studies on digital public speaking showed that online platforms reshape students' perceptions of their audience, encouraging them to communicate with greater clarity, intention, and responsibility (Imamyartha et al., 2023; Rahman, 2023; Zheng & Barrot, 2022).

Despite the benefits, prior studies have also highlighted several challenges. Students frequently struggle with linguistic barriers, such as vocabulary limitations, pronunciation difficulties, and fluency breakdowns (Elbalqis & Pradana, 2022; Hadijah & Shalawati, 2021; Nurarifah et al., 2025). Technical hurdles, like editing skills, sound quality, and device constraints, also influence students' performance (Nugroho & Atmojo, 2020). Furthermore, emotional challenges such as anxiety, self-consciousness, and fear of negative judgment often heighten learners' stress, especially when content is shared on social media (Mardiyah, 2025; Saputro et al., 2020). These challenges align with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which suggests that emotional barriers such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence can block language input and hinder output. When students feel anxious or unsupported, their ability to perform and learn decreases.

At the same time, SCDC promotes various dimensions of growth. Repeated interactions with digital tasks assist learners in developing their fluency, digital literacy, and self-confidence. These growth trajectories reflect the principles of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), arguing that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are essential for maintaining intrinsic motivation. When students create content that reflects their interests and identities, they experience stronger ownership in their learning and greater engagement with the speaking process. This also resonates with Constructivist Learning Theory by Piaget (1976), emphasizing that learners actively construct meaning through hands-on experience, reflection, and engagement with real-world resources.

Despite growing interest in digital video tasks for EFL speaking, the literature reveals three specific limitations. Methodologically, most prior studies (e.g., Roza & Rustam, 2023; Yahaya & Miskam, 2025) rely on outcome-based measures such as fluency and confidence gains, without employing qualitative designs capable of capturing the holistic process students undergo, from initial excitement and struggle to eventual transformation. Contextually, existing research on digital speaking practice has rarely examined emotional and technical challenges alongside growth within the same study, and the role of platform-sharing in reshaping speaker identity remains underexplored, particularly among Indonesian EFL university students. Theoretically, no prior study has grounded SCDC in an integrated framework that combines Constructivist Learning Theory, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, and Self-Determination Theory to explain how experience, challenge, and growth interact. By adopting a qualitative case study design and integrating these three theories, the present study addresses these methodological, contextual, and theoretical gaps.

A preliminary exploration before this study revealed that students found SCDC both exciting and challenging. They experienced pride in their progress alongside anxiety about speaking on camera and sharing content publicly, suggesting it functions as a transformative learning pathway worth investigating further.

How to Cite (APA Style):

Susilowati, E., Kusumaningtyas, E.T., & Sulistiyarningsih, E.F. (2026). Unveiling Indonesian EFL students' learning pathways: Experiences, challenges, and growth through student-created digital content for public speaking beyond the podium. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 11 (2), 541-558. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/e.11.2.541-558>

Responding to these gaps, the present study aims to explore Indonesian EFL college students' learning pathways as they engage in self-created digital content for public speaking practice. Specifically, it examines students' experiences, challenges, and growth as interconnected dimensions of the learning process. Unlike earlier studies that investigate these dimensions separately or focus solely on outcomes, this study integrates them into a single pathway-oriented framework, offering a more complete picture of how students learn through digital content creation. This study also incorporates Constructivist Learning Theory, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, and Self-Determination Theory to provide a holistic understanding of how SCDC shapes learners' development.

The novelty of this study lies in its pathway-oriented approach, which views SCDC not simply as a speaking assignment but as a developmental learning process. Methodologically, it employs a qualitative case study design integrated with three theoretical lenses to trace this process in depth, rather than relying on outcome measures alone. This approach allows the study to capture how SCDC functions as a meaningful, challenging, and transformative learning journey within the Indonesian EFL context. Moreover, university students—as digital natives navigating academic and professional communication demands—are well-suited participants for this study, and insights from their SCDC experiences offer practical value for EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers.

METHOD**Research Design**

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore students' learning pathways, focusing on the lived experiences, challenges, and growth of EFL university students in producing self-created digital content for English public speaking practice. A qualitative approach was chosen as it allows researchers to capture rich, detailed insights into students' reflections and emotional responses. This aligns with Creswell's (2022) view that qualitative inquiry is suitable for understanding the complexity and depth of personal experiences. In addition, the case study design was appropriate because it enables an in-depth examination of a specific group within a real-life context, allowing researchers to trace how students' learning processes developed throughout the digital speaking project.

In this study, the case study design was operationalized by treating the group of nine EFL students enrolled in the same public speaking course as a single bounded case, situated within the real-life context of a semester-long SCDC project. Data collection was designed to capture this case in depth and over time: weekly reflective journals were used to trace students' ongoing experiences throughout the semester, while semi-structured interviews were conducted after the project to explore their retrospective reflections. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2017) thematic analysis to identify patterns within and across participants, followed by interpretation through three theoretical lenses (Constructivist Learning Theory, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, and Self-Determination Theory) to preserve the contextual richness and depth characteristic of case study inquiry.

Participants

The participants of this study were nine undergraduate EFL students of the English Education Department enrolling in a public speaking course at an Indonesian private university. Their age is around 19 to 21 years old. The participants were chosen as they had firsthand experience creating SCDC videos for public speaking practice, which was well-suited to the focus of the study. They were purposely selected because they had all completed individual public speaking tasks through self-created video projects. As part of the course, they were assigned a weekly task to create a 2–3-minute public speaking video, with topics freely chosen but focused on public speaking or English-related materials. Students were asked to upload their videos to public social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube), giving them real-world speaking exposure beyond the classroom.

Instruments

The data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews and students' reflective journals. The interview guide comprised three thematic sections addressing students' experiences (engagement, autonomy, and emotional responses during video creation), challenges (linguistic, technical, and psychological barriers), and growth (perceived gains in fluency, confidence, digital competence, and speaker identity). This structured yet flexible framework enabled in-depth, contextually rich data.

To supplement the interviews, students' weekly reflective journals submitted during the course captured students' ongoing thoughts and reactions to the weekly video tasks. Students wrote these journals weekly in their journal book while completing each video assignment, documenting their emotions, difficulties, strategies, and reflections after every speaking task. These journal entries included emotional responses, language-related difficulties, technical learning, and personal transformations. The journals captured spontaneous reflections across multiple weeks, allowing the researcher to trace students' learning pathways chronologically. These two instruments complemented each other in timing and depth: weekly reflective journals captured students' ongoing experiences during the SCDC project, while post-project semi-structured interviews enabled deeper retrospective reflection on their experiences, challenges, and growth. Recurring patterns identified in the journals were further explored during the interviews, and consistencies and discrepancies across the two data sources were used to strengthen data triangulation, enhancing the credibility, depth, and trustworthiness of the findings.

Procedures

The data collection process was carried out in several steps over one academic semester. At the beginning of the study, all participants were informed about the research objectives and ethical procedures, and each participant signed an informed consent form confirming their voluntary participation. The first data gathered were students' reflective journals. These journals were written in English and submitted every week as the students worked on their self-created speaking videos. Each week, they received simple guiding questions to help

How to Cite (APA Style):

Susilowati, E., Kusumaningtyas, E.T., & Sulistiyarningsih, E.F. (2026). Unveiling Indonesian EFL students' learning pathways: Experiences, challenges, and growth through student-created digital content for public speaking beyond the podium. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 11 (2), 541-558. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/e.11.2.541-558>

them reflect on their feelings, challenges, progress, and overall experiences. All the journal books were then collected to track each student's learning journey.

Once all video tasks were completed, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. The interviews were conducted in either English or Bahasa Indonesia, depending on each student's preference, and lasted approximately 15-20 minutes. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim, and each participant was assigned a numerical pseudonym and initialized name for analysis.

Data Analysis

After gathering the data, transcripts and written responses were carefully read and coded to identify recurring patterns and themes related to experiences, challenges, and growth. The data were analyzed employing Braun and Clarke's (2017) framework of six-step thematic analysis, which included: (1) familiarizing with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) finalizing the report. Through this process, key patterns of students' learning pathways related to students' experiences, challenges, and growth were identified and organized into thematic categories.

To interpret the findings meaningfully, three theoretical lenses were applied. First, in terms of students' experiences, the Constructivist Learning Theory proposed by Piaget (1976) guided the analysis of students' learning experiences, focusing on how they constructed knowledge through interaction and tools. Second, in terms of challenges, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) helped explain how emotional and psychological challenges can affect learning. Lastly, in terms of growth, Self-Determination Theory by Ryan and Deci (2017) was used to interpret students' perceived growth in their learning process. These theories helped explain the students' reflections on their public speaking practice beyond the classroom. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, data from interviews and reflective journals were triangulated to enhance the credibility and depth of the findings. All data were finally interpreted qualitatively to preserve the authenticity of students' voices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis of interviews and reflective journals from nine participants revealed three interconnected dimensions of students' learning pathways: experiences, challenges, and growth, directly addressing how Indonesian EFL college students experienced, navigated, and grew through the process of creating self-created digital content for public speaking practice. Overall, students' experiences were found to be meaningful, empowering, and transformative; the challenges they encountered were predominantly linguistic, technical, and psychological in nature; and their growth manifested across linguistic, digital, motivational, and identity dimensions. When compared across the three dimensions, growth emerged as the most consistently reported theme across participants, indicating that despite the challenges, students' learning pathway ultimately led to positive development. The following sections present these findings in detail, beginning with students' experiences.

Students' Experiences in Creating Self-Created Digital Content

The findings reveal that students' experiences in creating digital content for public speaking were meaningful, empowering, and transformative.

Meaningful Experience

First, students described the project as a meaningful learning experience because it allowed them to practice English in an authentic context beyond the classroom. Unlike traditional presentations delivered to only classmates and lecturers, publishing videos on digital platforms created a sense of a real audience and purpose. Student 3 explained,

"... This is different from usual classroom presentations because other people outside the class can watch my videos, not only my classmates."
(Student 3 - NLF, Interview Excerpt).

Similarly, Student 7 reflected,

"I feel more serious when I know my video will be uploaded on social media." (Student 7 - ZTN, Interview Excerpt)

These responses suggest that students viewed SCDC as more than a classroom assignment. By selecting their own topics, formats, and presentation styles, they became more personally invested in the task and assumed greater responsibility for the quality of their performance and message. Publishing their videos on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube further enhanced this experience by giving them a real audience, making them more aware of audience engagement, presentation style, and clarity of communication. These findings align with Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory (1976), which emphasizes that learning becomes more meaningful when students actively construct knowledge through authentic experiences. They also support earlier studies (Lestari, 2019; Lubis et al., 2020), which found that providing students with autonomy in digital tasks increases motivation and engagement. However, the present study extends this literature by showing that autonomy not only enhanced motivation but also fostered a stronger sense of purpose and ownership, making the learning experience more meaningful.

Empowering Experience

Second, students described the project as an empowering learning experience because they had control over the entire recording process. They were free to choose their own topics, presentation formats, and video styles, and to decide how many times they wanted to record before publishing the final version. Although many students initially reported feeling nervous and lacking confidence, repeated practice, self-recording, and revision gradually helped them gain greater control over their learning and performance. This process allowed them to improve their presentations at their own pace and increased their confidence in speaking English. As Student 3 shared,

"... I repeated the recording many times until I felt satisfied with my speaking."
(Student 3 - NLF, Interview Excerpt)

How to Cite (APA Style):

Susilowati, E., Kusumaningtyas, E.T., & Sulistiyaningsih, E.F. (2026). Unveiling Indonesian EFL students' learning pathways: Experiences, challenges, and growth through student-created digital content for public speaking beyond the podium. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 11 (2), 541-558. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/e.11.2.541-558>

Student 6 also mentioned,

"When I make mistakes, I stop and repeat again, so I feel more confident."
(Student 6 – IF, Journal Excerpt)

These responses showed that giving students autonomy over the content creation process fostered a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning. The freedom to make creative decisions and revise their performances encouraged greater engagement and motivation to produce high-quality work. This finding is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), which argues that autonomy promotes intrinsic motivation and active learning. Students demonstrated autonomy through their creative choices, competence through repeated practice and self-evaluation, and relatedness by sharing their videos with authentic audiences. While previous studies have shown that SCDC enhances students' motivation, the present study extends this evidence by revealing that empowerment also strengthened students' confidence and supported the development of their identity as English public speakers.

Transformative Experience

Third, students described SCDC as a transformative learning experience as it changed how students perceived themselves as English speakers and digital content creators. At the beginning of this project, they reported mixed emotional responses, ranging from excitement to fear and anxiety. Several students admitted feeling nervous and embarrassed when speaking in front of the camera compared to traditional classroom presentations. Some students felt less pressure because they did not face a live audience directly, while others felt more pressured because their performance could be viewed repeatedly by others online. As Student 8 explained,

"When I speak in front of my classmates, the fear is only for a moment, but when it is recorded, I feel more nervous because everyone can watch it." (Student 8 – RE, Interview Excerpt)

Similarly, Student 4 also shared the same thing.

"At first, I was very nervous because I was not used to talking to a camera. I was afraid people would judge my pronunciation." (Student 4 – WPL, Interview Excerpt).

However, through continuous exposure to digital public speaking, the students gradually reconstructed their self-image as more confident and capable communicators. Student 1 reflected,

"... Before this, I never imagined that I could speak English in a video and upload it..." (Student 1 - ASA, Journal Excerpt)

Likewise, Student 5 wrote,

"The first time when I was assigned to create public speaking video content, I felt nervous and not confident. Now I feel the results of it. I have

become accustomed to creating content using English.” (Student 5 – SA, Journal Excerpt)

These responses indicate that students' transformation developed gradually through repeated practice, reflection, and authentic communication. Rather than occurring instantly, confidence and self-belief evolved as students became more familiar with creating and sharing English-speaking content. This finding is consistent with Zheng and Barrot (2022), who reported that online public speaking activities improve speaking performance and audience awareness. However, the present study extends previous research by showing that transformation followed a gradual learning pathway rather than a single learning outcome. Beyond improving speaking performance, students also developed a stronger identity as English speakers and digital content creators, a dimension that has received limited attention in earlier SCDC research.

Challenges Encountered by Students during SCDC Process

The findings reveal that students' learning pathways were significantly influenced by three main types of challenges: linguistic, technical, and psychological.

Linguistic Challenges

Linguistically, most students struggled with pronunciation, vocabulary limitations, grammar accuracy, and fluency. Students reported that expressing ideas clearly in English required careful scripting and repeated rehearsal. Difficulties in pronunciation and limited vocabulary sometimes caused pauses during recording, which led the students to repeat recordings multiple times. Student 1 explained,

“... I often stopped my recording because I forgot the vocabulary and pronunciation. I repeated several times. I am afraid of making mistakes because people can see my videos.” (Student 1 – ASA, Interview Excerpt)

Similarly, Student 9 shared,

“I was afraid of making mistakes because my pronunciation and grammar could be heard clearly in the videos.” (Student 9 – MAM, Interview Excerpt)

These responses suggest that the digital format intensified students' awareness of their linguistic limitations. These struggles highlight the gap between students' current speaking ability and their desired performance. This relates to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which explains that anxiety and pressure can hinder language performance. It also supports earlier research (e.g. Norahmi et al., 2025; Su et al., 2019), which identified similar linguistic difficulties in digital speaking activities. However, the present study further shows that these challenges gradually became opportunities for improvement. Through repeated practice, self-reflection, and multiple recording

How to Cite (APA Style):

Susilowati, E., Kusumaningtyas, E.T., & Sulistiyarningsih, E.F. (2026). Unveiling Indonesian EFL students' learning pathways: Experiences, challenges, and growth through student-created digital content for public speaking beyond the podium. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 11 (2), 541-558. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/e.11.2.541-558>

attempts, students were able to reduce their anxiety and progressively improve their speaking performance.

Technical Challenges

From the technical aspect, students encountered difficulties related to video production, such as poor lighting, unclear audio, limited editing skills, and unstable internet connection. For many students, this was their first experience producing academic digital content, which created additional pressure beyond language performance. Several students also admitted that they had never edited videos before and were unfamiliar with video-editing applications. As Student 4 explained,

"I find it most difficult to edit videos, because I have never edited before. So, when editing videos, I will look for tutorial videos on TikTok."
(Student 4 – WPL, Interview Excerpt)

Similarly, Student 2 wrote,

"I was confused about how to edit the video and add sound and subtitles. Sometimes the voice is not clear, and I must repeat again." (Student 2 – SS, Journal Excerpt.)

These responses suggest that technical challenges extended the learning pathway beyond language learning into digital skill development. These findings support Nugroho and Atmoj (2020), who highlighted that digital learning requires technical readiness. However, the present study further reveals that technical difficulties were closely linked to students' emotional experiences. Limited editing skills and production challenges often increased anxiety and frustration, reflecting that technical and psychological barriers influence one another throughout the learning process. Despite this, students eventually learned to handle these technical tasks more effectively as part of their learning.

Psychological Challenges

Psychologically, many students experienced nervousness, low self-confidence, and fear of negative judgement when speaking on camera or uploading videos publicly. As a result, they often overthought their performances and recorded their videos multiple times before feeling satisfied. As Student 5 mentioned,

"... I repeated the video many times because I am not confident and afraid of bad comments. ..." (Student 5 – SA, Interview Excerpt)

Student 7 also reflected,

"At first, I was shy about recording myself. Listening to my own voice felt embarrassing, and I worried about what people think." (Student 7 – ZTN, Journal Excerpt)

These responses are consistent with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which suggests that anxiety and low self-confidence can hinder language performance. They also corroborate prior studies reporting similar emotional barriers in digital speaking activities (Mardiyah, 2025; Saputro et al., 2020).

However, the present study extends earlier research by highlighting that these psychological challenges changed over time. Students gradually felt less anxious and began to trust their capabilities more. This suggests that psychological barriers were not merely obstacles to learning, but an important part of students' learning pathways, contributing to their confidence and personal growth.

Students' Growth through the SCDC Process

The findings clearly reveal that through sustained engagement with SCDC, students perceived multidimensional growth as a result of learning pathways. The students' growth was categorized into linguistic, digital, motivational and identity development.

Linguistic Growth

In terms of linguistic growth, the findings indicate that students demonstrated noticeable linguistic development, particularly in pronunciation, fluency, clarity of speech, and organization of ideas. Through the repeated cycle of scripting, recording, reviewing, and revising their digital speaking performances, students became more aware of their linguistic weaknesses and gradually improved the quality of their English public speaking. Many students also reported feeling more fluent and confident because they had multiple opportunities to practice independently before publishing their final videos. As student 4 explained,

"I feel that my public speaking skills have improved. After many recordings, my pronunciation, intonation, and fluency are better than before." (Student 4 – WPL, Interview Excerpt)

Likewise, Student 9 reflected,

"I repeated many times when recording. Now I am more fluent and not too nervous when speaking English in front of the camera." (Student 9 – MAM, Journal Excerpt)

These findings align with Constructivist Learning Theory by Piaget (1976), which emphasizes active engagement and reflection, and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), as repeated practice before publication reduced anxiety and increased speaking confidence. They also support the previous findings (Bobkina & Romero, 2020; Risdayani et al., 2024), which found that self-produced videos developed students' speaking performance. However, the present study extends the literature by explaining how linguistic improvement occurs through iterative practice, self-reflection, and confidence building rather than viewing linguistic gains solely as learning outcomes. Furthermore, this finding partially challenges previous studies that view linguistic growth as an individual cognitive process. The present study suggests that students' linguistic growth was influenced not only by individual cognitive processes but also by social and emotional factors, particularly their awareness of speaking to a real audience and their repeated engagement in creating digital content.

How to Cite (APA Style):

Susilowati, E., Kusumaningtyas, E.T., & Sulistiyaningsih, E.F. (2026). Unveiling Indonesian EFL students' learning pathways: Experiences, challenges, and growth through student-created digital content for public speaking beyond the podium. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 11 (2), 541-558. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/e.11.2.541-558>

Digital Growth

In terms of digital development, students demonstrated growth in digital literacy and creativity. They reported that through the project, they learned how to record videos properly, edit content, adjust lighting, and improve audio quality. These skills were initially perceived as difficult but gradually became part of their competence. As Student 8 reflected,

“... Besides my speaking skills, I find my editing skills are also better than before. Now I know how to edit video and add background sound. ...” (Student 8 – RIW, Journal Excerpt)

Similarly, Student 6 shared,

“Before this project, I never edited videos, but now I can do basic editing.”
(Student 6 – IF, Interview Excerpt)

These responses show that students' learning pathways expanded beyond linguistic growth into digital competence. Students also developed essential digital literacy skills, including video recording, editing, adjusting lighting, and managing audio. Students reported that at first, these tasks felt difficult, but over time, these skills became easier and became part of their competence. This supports prior studies revealing that digital content creation enhances creativity and expressive abilities (Pramesti et al., 2025; Risdayani et al., 2024; Saputro et al., 2020). For instance, Risdayani et al. (2024) found that digital storytelling helped students express ideas more naturally and creatively. Pramesti et al. (2025) also reported that students developed greater creativity and clarity in crafting their messages. Building on these findings, the present study shows that creating digital speaking content fostered not only technical skills but also students' ability to communicate through multimodal forms by integrating spoken language with visual, audio, and editing elements.

Motivational Growth

In terms of motivational growth, students became more confident, courageous and motivated. Most of the students described feeling proud and satisfied after successfully completing and publishing their videos. Moreover, positive feedback from the lecturer, peers and audiences strengthened their self-esteem and encouraged them to continue improving. As Student 3 shared,

“I feel proud when viewers or people give positive comments on my videos.” (Student 3 – NLF, Interview Excerpt)

Student 8 also reflected,

“I got a lot of praise. Some of my friends said they liked my videos or asked me questions. That made me feel like my English was useful and appreciated.” (Student 8 – RIW, Journal Excerpt)

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that vlog-based and social media speaking activities enhance students' motivation, autonomy, and self-esteem (Lestari, 2019; Lubis et al., 2020; Su et al., 2019). They also align with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), which

suggests that learners become more intrinsically motivated when they experience autonomy, competence, and supportive social interaction. In the present study, students' motivation was strengthened not only by the freedom to make creative decisions but also by positive responses from authentic audiences. This finding extends previous research by highlighting the important role of audience feedback in sustaining students' motivation and encouraging continued engagement in English public speaking.

Identity Growth

Lastly, students experienced identity growth through the SCDC process. Repeated opportunities to plan, record, revise, and publish their videos helped them become more confident, independent, and comfortable using English in authentic contexts. Over time, they no longer viewed themselves as passive EFL learners, but as capable English speakers and content creators. As Student 4 explained,

“... After practicing many times, I feel that this assignment can be my best practice for public speaking. Now I feel more confident and enjoy speaking in front of the camera. ...” (Student 4 – WPL, Interview Excerpt)

Similarly, Student 2 reflected,

“I was nervous at first, but recording at home helped me feel more relaxed. I could practice many times until I got it right.” (Student 2 – SS, Journal Excerpt)

These responses indicate that students experienced more than improvement in speaking skills. Through repeated practice and authentic communication, they developed greater confidence, learner autonomy, and a stronger sense of themselves as English speakers. They became more willing to express their ideas, less afraid of making mistakes, and more capable of managing and evaluating their own learning. These findings support Gabriel et al. (2022), who found that social media helps learners construct their digital identities, and are consistent with Zheng and Barrot (2022) and Rahman (2023), who reported that digital public speaking tasks reshape students' perceptions of themselves and their audience. However, this current study extends previous research by showing that identity development emerged gradually throughout the SCDC process. Students' confidence and autonomy were strengthened not only through repeated practice but also through the responsibility of communicating with authentic audiences beyond the classroom.

Overall, the findings show that students' learning pathways developed through a dynamic and interconnected process in which experiences, challenges, and growth continuously influenced one another. Rather than representing simply a change in instructional method, SCDC functioned as a transformative learning pathway that engaged students in authentic communication, repeated practice, and continuous reflection. Through this process, students developed not only their English public speaking skills but

How to Cite (APA Style):

Susilowati, E., Kusumaningtyas, E.T., & Sulistiyaningsih, E.F. (2026). Unveiling Indonesian EFL students' learning pathways: Experiences, challenges, and growth through student-created digital content for public speaking beyond the podium. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 11 (2), 541-558. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/e.11.2.541-558>

also digital literacy, learner autonomy, confidence, and a stronger sense of themselves as English speakers and content creators. These findings highlight the pedagogical value of SCDC as a pathway-oriented approach to EFL public speaking, demonstrating that challenges can become valuable learning opportunities when learners are supported with authentic digital tasks and appropriate technical and emotional scaffolding.

The findings also carry important implications for EFL pedagogy. As digital platforms increasingly become part of students' everyday communication, speaking instruction should move beyond classroom-based performance toward authentic, audience-oriented digital practices. Integrating SCDC into speaking curricula with adequate technical and emotional support may help create learning environments that promote sustained engagement, self-reflection, and long-term communicative development.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the learning pathways of Indonesian EFL college students as they created self-created digital content (SCDC) for English public speaking practice, focusing specifically on their experiences, the challenges they encountered, and the growth they perceived. In relation to students' experiences, the findings show that SCDC provided a meaningful, empowering, and transformative learning experience, as students moved from initial nervousness to a stronger sense of ownership, purpose, and confidence in speaking to a real audience beyond the classroom. In relation to the challenges students faced, the findings reveal that linguistic, technical, and psychological barriers shaped much of the learning process. Rather than obstructing learning, these challenges served as catalysts for repeated practice, reflection, and gradual skill development. Regarding students' growth, the findings demonstrate that SCDC fostered multidimensional development encompassing linguistic competence, digital literacy, motivation, and speaker identity, indicating that its benefits extend well beyond language skills alone.

Taken together, these findings establish the newness of this study: unlike prior research that examined SCDC primarily through isolated outcome measures, this study offers a pathway-oriented account that captures how experience, challenge, and growth interact and evolve together over time. One notable discrepancy from earlier findings is that while previous studies generally reported that learner autonomy in digital tasks directly boosts motivation, the present findings suggest that motivation in this study was not solely driven by autonomy but was also closely tied to external validation, such as audience feedback and peer engagement on social media, an aspect that has received comparatively less attention in previous SCDC research.

This study is not without limitations. The relatively small number of participants (nine students) from a single Indonesian private university limits the generalizability of the findings to broader EFL contexts. Future research is encouraged to involve larger and more diverse participant groups, including different institutional settings and proficiency levels, and to employ longitudinal designs that can trace learning pathways over a longer period. Further studies may also investigate the specific role of audience feedback and social media

engagement in shaping students' motivation and identity development. Pedagogically, this study reinforces the importance of integrating SCDC into speaking curricula not merely as an assignment, but as a structured learning pathway supported by early technical and emotional scaffolding, so that EFL learners can experience its full developmental benefits.

AUTHOR STATEMENTS

This study was collaboratively conducted by all authors. **Endang Susilowati** conceptualized the study, conducted the data collection and analysis, and drafted the manuscript. **Etika Dewi Kusumaningtyas** and **Eka Fanti Sulistiyaningsih** contributed to the data analysis process, collaborated in developing the findings section, and verified the accuracy of the data and conclusions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all research participants involved in this study. Appreciation is also extended to Universitas An Nuur and LLDIKTI Wilayah VI for their support and funding assistance for the publication of this article.

REFERENCES

- Apriyanti, D., Syarif, H., & Ramadhan, S. (2021). Video feature making in ESP- based public speaking class: A student- centred learning in vocational higher education context. *International Journal of Language Education*, 5(1), 469–476. <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v5i1.15419>
- Baron, R. (2021). Video project model for increasing speaking skills in Covid-19 pandemic. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 13(1), 590–596. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v13i1.479>
- Bobkina, J., & Romero, E. D. (2020). Exploring the perceived benefits of self-produced videos for developing oracy skills in digital media environments. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2020.1802294>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2017). *Qualitative research in psychology using thematic analysis in psychology*. SAGE Publisher.
- Creswell, J. W. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (6th)*. Sage Publications.
- Elbalqis, P., & Pradana, S. A. (2022). Portraying students' speaking foreign language anxiety level during online and offline learning. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 15(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.24042/ee-jtbi.v15i1.11412>
- Fauzi, A. (2025). From scrolling to speaking: Students' experiences in using TikTok duet for English practice. *Celtic: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching*,

How to Cite (APA Style):

Susilowati, E., Kusumaningtyas, E.T., & Sulistiyarningsih, E.F. (2026). Unveiling Indonesian EFL students' learning pathways: Experiences, challenges, and growth through student-created digital content for public speaking beyond the podium. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 11 (2), 541-558. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/e.11.2.541-558>

Literature and Linguistics, 12(1), 480–498.
<https://doi.org/10.22219/celtic.v12i1.40680>

Gabriel, F., Kandau, M. R., Arifin, D. A., & Ningsih, A. M. (2022). Social media as a flatform in public speaking courses. *Journal of English Language and Literature*, 2(1), 10–14. <https://doi.org/10.32696/piell.v2i1.1120>

Hadijah, S., & Shalawati. (2021). A video-mediated EFL learning: Highlighting Indonesian students' Voices. *J-SHMIC: Journal of English for Academic*, 8(2), 179–193. [https://doi.org/10.25299/jshmic.2021.vol8\(2\).7329](https://doi.org/10.25299/jshmic.2021.vol8(2).7329)

Hasanah, Y. A., & Pradana, S. A. (2019). Enhancing the speaking performance of students through video projects. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 12(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.24042/ee-jtbi.v12i1.4425>

Imamyartha, D., Bilqis, M., Febri, R., & Hudori, A. (2023). Developing video-conferenced English speaking test (VEST) for classroom-based assessment in tertiary education. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 8(1), 242–264. <https://doi.org/10.30659/e.8.1.242-264>

Krashen, S. D. (1982). Principles and practice in second language acquisition. In *Vocabulary and Language Teaching*. Pergamon.

Lestari, N. (2019). Improving the speaking skill by vlog (video blog) as learning media: The EFL students Perspective. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(1), 915–925. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v9-i1/5490>

Lubis, N., Lubis, A., & Purba, N. Br. (2020). Project-based learning collaborated with digital media for Indonesian EFL learners' self-confidence and communication skill. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Terpadu (JPPT)*, 2(1), 10–18. <https://doi.org/10.32696/pgsd.v2i1.440>

Mardiyah, M. (2025). The analysis of the use of social media in enhancing students' speaking skills. *Candradimuka: Journal of Education*, 3(1), 76–84. <https://doi.org/10.60012/cje.v3i1.125>

Mufidah, Z., & Roifah, M. (2020). Vlog as learning media to train English fluency and public speaking skill. *Prosodi: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa dan Sastra*, 14(1), 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.21107/prosodi.v14i1.7193>

Nangimah, M. (2022). Engineering students' English public speaking: Why is it a nerve-wracking experience? *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 7(1), 82–99. <https://doi.org/10.30659/e.7.1.82-99>

Nirmawati, D. A., Asnawi, Risnawati, & II, H. (2025). Development of digital multimodal based public speaking learning media at the Faculty of English Literature University Muslim Al Wahsliyah Medan. *International Journal of Educational Research Excellence (IJERE)*, 4(2), 836–841. <https://doi.org/10.55299/ijere.v4i2.991>

Norahmi, M., Aristia, C. F., & Mairing, J. P. (2025). Student speaking anxiety, casual factors, and recommendations: A mixed methods research. *Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies*, 12(2), 843–875. <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v12i2.5754>

Nugroho, A., & Atmojo, A. E. P. (2020). Digital learning of English beyond classroom: EFL learners' perception and teaching activities. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 7(2), 219–243. <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v7i2.1993>

- Nugroho, A., & Mutiaraningrum, I. (2020). EFL teachers' beliefs and practices about digital learning of English. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 5(2), 304–321. <https://doi.org/10.30659/e.5.2.304-321>
- Nurarifah, L., Na'imah, Putri, R. A., & Hardiyanti, M. (2025). Improving English speaking through media in the digital age. *Acuity: Journal of English Language Pedagogy, Literature, and Culture*, 10(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.35974/acuity.v10i1.3107>
- Ocktarani, Y. M. (2022). Integrated digital platforms in enhancing students' speaking skills. *ITELL (Indonesia Technology Enhanced Language Learning)*, 114–122.
- Phuong, H. Y., & Vo, P. Q. (2019). EduLite Students' learning autonomy, involvement and motivation towards their English proficiency. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 4(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.30659/e.4.1.1-12>
- Piaget, J. (1976). *Piaget's theory*. In P. Neubauer, (Ed.); The process of child development. Meridian.
- Poedjiastutie, D., Akhyar, F., & Masduki. (2020). English communication needs in Indonesian. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 5(2), 287–303. <https://doi.org/10.30659/e.5.2.287-303>
- Pramesti, R. W., Arjulayana, A., & Firdaus, M. I. (2025). Dynamic student's public speaking through digital application. *IDEAS: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 13(2), 3428–3443. <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v13i2.7315>
- Rahman, R. (2023). The Influence of social media (Tiktok) on public speaking mastery of students of the Communication Science Department Hang Tuah University Pekanbaru. *Semantik: Journal of Social, Media, Communication, and Journalism*, 1(2), 101–111. <https://doi.org/10.31958/semantik.v1i2.10855>
- Rahmawati, R., Drajati, N. A., & Asib, A. (2019). A portrait of higher education students' experiences of doing informal digital learning of English (IDLE) speaking practices in Indonesia. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 12(2), 115–126. <https://doi.org/10.24042/ee-jtbi.v12i2.5428>
- Risdayani, N., Limbong, E., & Sunggingwati, D. (2024). EFL pre-service teachers' experiences in speaking through a digital storytelling project. *Jambura Journal of English Teaching and Literature*, 5(1), 25–38. <https://doi.org/10.37905/jetl.v5i1.24667>
- Roza, Z., & Rustam, S. (2023). Digital storytelling to facilitate academic public speaking skills: case study in culturally diverse multilingual classroom. *Journal of Computers in Education*, 10(3), 499–526. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40692-023-00259-x>
- Rusen, B. (2021). *Creatively speaking: An approach to teaching public speaking*. The State University of New Jersey.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Publishing.
- Sadhasivam, S., Ilias, N. I. A., Azim, N. S. M., Yunus, M. M., Hashim, H., & Rafiq, K. R. M. R. (2023). An investigation on the use of Tiktok to enhance speaking skills. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(12), 3827–3841. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i12/20266>

How to Cite (APA Style):

Susilowati, E., Kusumaningtyas, E.T., & Sulistiyaningsih, E.F. (2026). Unveiling Indonesian EFL students' learning pathways: Experiences, challenges, and growth through student-created digital content for public speaking beyond the podium. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 11 (2), 541-558. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/e.11.2.541-558>

- Saputro, T. H., Tafsirudin, I. C., & Farah, R. R. (2020). The use of vlog in improving students' oral language production: A Case Study. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 13(1), 135-158. <https://doi.org/10.24042/ee-jtbi.v13i1.5298>
- Su, Y. R., Fatmawati, & Selamat, E. H. (2019). Fostering students' self-esteem in speaking by extending speaking activities in social media. *Pedagogy Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(1), 65-74. <https://doi.org/10.32332/pedagogy.v7i1.1544>
- Utami, N. L. K. M., Aini, S. N., & Senowarsito. (2025). Teachers' perspectives on the use of microlearning TikTok in assessing students' speaking skill within Merdeka curriculum: An exploratory study. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature, and Culture*, 10(1), 86-102. <https://doi.org/10.30659/e.10.1.86-102>
- Yahaya, N., & Miskam, N. N. (2025). Media literacy in the digital age: Examining the use of Tiktok to enhance speaking skills. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 15(2), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v15-i2/24385>
- Zheng, Y., & Barrot, J. S. (2022). Social media as an e-portfolio platform: Effects on L2 learners' speaking performance. *Language Learning & Technology*, 26(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.64152/10125/73487>
- Zuhro, C., & Budi, A. S. (2025). The students' perceptions on making digital video project to develop their speaking skills. *Sintaksis: Publikasi Para Ahli Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris*, 3(5). 327-34. <https://doi.org/10.61132/sintaksis.v3i5.2187>

Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright©2026. **Susilowati, Kusumaningtyas, and Sulistiyaningsih.** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution, or reproduction is permitted that does not comply with these terms.