

EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF POCKET BOOK USE IN VOCABULARY AND SPEAKING DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary mastery is a major problem for EFL learners, especially in the active use of vocabulary in speaking skills. This problem is often caused by teaching materials that are not practical, less contextual, and do not support independent learning. Therefore, this research aimed to explore EFL students' perceptions of the use of pocket books in vocabulary and speaking skills. This study used a qualitative case study design involving 24 students who are members of the Language Student Activity Unit at universities. Data was collected through interviews and supported by questionnaire data, then analyzed using an interactive model. The results of the study show that students view pocket books as a medium that helps enrich vocabulary and speaking practice. Clear layouts, concise explanations, and ready-to-use phrases help reduce cognitive burden and support vocabulary memory, fluency, and student confidence. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on EFL students at the university level regarding the use of pocket books for vocabulary enrichment and speaking practice in the context of language learning outside the classroom. The results of this study show that pocket books have the potential to be an effective supporting learning medium to improve vocabulary mastery and speaking skills.

Keywords: Pocket Book, Speaking, Students' Perception, Vocabulary

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary mastery is one of the main challenges in learning English as a foreign language (EFL), especially in supporting speaking skills (Tiansoodeenon et al., 2023). Despite speaking being the primary means of expressing ideas and interacting verbally, many EFL learners have difficulty speaking due to their limited vocabulary (Gultom, 2026). Vocabulary serves as the main foundation in communication (Sri Yuliani, 2024). Without adequate vocabulary mastery, learners have difficulty conveying messages effectively and tend to repeat the same words, and eventually lose the confidence to speak (Nation, 2018). This problem is even more frequently found in the context of EFL, where exposure to authentic English is still limited so that the use of vocabulary in oral communication is less than optimal.

This condition is also found in the context of education in Indonesia. Although English has been formally taught from elementary to secondary school levels, students' speaking

skills are still relatively low (Putri & Febriani, 2023). This is not only due to the limited opportunities for speaking practice, but also to vocabulary learning strategies that are less varied and do not fully support the use of vocabulary contextually (Sudarman et al., 2022). As a result, students often feel unprepared and lack confidence in participating in academic and social discussions using English (Akhmad & Aba, 2023). This situation shows the need for learning media that is practical, easily accessible, and supports continuous vocabulary practice inside and outside the classroom.

One of the learning media that has the potential to answer this problem is pocket books. Pocket books are seen as learning media that are designed in a concise and practical way, making them easy to carry and allowing for flexible use without time and space limitations (Ika Agustina et al., 2019). In the context of language learning, pocket books allow students to access vocabulary quickly and repeatedly, thus, it supports students' independent learning. In addition, the use of pocket books is in line with cognitive load theory, which emphasizes that learning is more effective when material is presented in a simple and structured manner to reduce irrelevant cognitive load (Clark & Kimmons, 2025). Thus, pocket books have the potential to help students process and remember vocabulary more efficiently, while encouraging their use in speaking practice.

Various previous studies have examined the development and effectiveness of pocket books in English language learning. Study by (Sanusi et al., 2024) shows that vocabulary pocket books developed through the research and development approach have proven to be valid, feasible, and effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery at the secondary school level. Similar findings were also reported by (Dari et al., 2025), which revealed that pocket books help to meet students' vocabulary learning needs as well as reduce learning anxiety. In addition, (Zidni et al., 2023) discovered that Digital Vocabulary Pocket Book effective and get a positive response because it is in accordance with the specific vocabulary needs of vocational school students, while (Kholid & Saifudin, 2023) shows that pocketbooks that focus on pronunciation contribute to improve students' speaking skills. In general, these studies confirm that pocket books are effective, portable, and highly pedagogical learning medium.

However, previous studies have mostly focused on product development, expert validation, and testing the effectiveness of pocketbooks as a learning medium. There is still a lack of research examining students' perceptions of the use of pocket books themselves, especially those related to learning experiences, ease of use, and their role in supporting vocabulary enrichment and speaking practice. In addition, existing research is generally conducted in the context of formal learning in schools, while non-formal learning contexts, such as language student activity unit at universities, are still rarely studied. In contrast to formal classroom learning, non-formal learning contexts such as UKM Bahasa emphasize voluntary involvement and independent learning, thus requiring practical and flexible learning media, such as pocket books, to support vocabulary enrichment and speaking practice.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to explore students' perceptions of the use of pocket books in the enrichment of vocabulary and speaking skills in the context of non-formal English learning in UKM Bahasa. This research specifically seeks to describe students'

views on the benefits, ease of use, and their experience in using pocket books as a supporting learning medium. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the perception of EFL students in the university-level non-formal learning environment, emphasizing the real experience of learners, rather than on product development or measurement of effectiveness alone.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore students' experiences in using pocket books as a medium for vocabulary enrichment and speaking skills (Heale & Twycross, 2018). This study uses an instrumental case study type, where the use of pocket books is used as a means to understand a broader phenomenon related to student learning experience in the context of English learning (Yin, 2018).

This research was conducted at UKM Bahasa in the context of non-formal English language learning at university level. The research participants are students of the class of 2025 who actively participate in UKM activities and have used pocket books in the English learning process. A total of 24 students participated in this study. Of these, 4 students were selected for in-depth interviews, while 20 students participated in a questionnaire to gain an overview of student perceptions. The selection of 4 interview participants was carried out using purposive sampling techniques with the following criteria: 1) active members of UKM Bahasa, 2) have experience using pocket books in English learning, 3) willing to provide information in depth (Palinkas et al., 2016). The selection of the class of 2025 is based on the uniformity of their learning experience and their active involvement in the activities of UKM Bahasa in the research period. All participants participated in the study voluntarily and had provided consent before data collection was conducted. Participation is anonymous, and all data is used for research purposes only.

The instrument used in the study was a semi-structured interview and supported by quantitative data, namely a questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews are used to explore the experiences, benefits, that students face in using pocket books (Asep Mulyana et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the questionnaire consists of 8 questions. The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) (Pranatawijaya & Priskila, 2019). To ensure the validity of the content, the question items are reviewed by experts in the field of English education. Minor revisions were made to improve clarity and relevance before the questionnaire was distributed to the participants. The combination of these two instruments is carried out to triangulate data so that the research results are more valid and reliable (Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, 2018).

The data obtained was then analyzed using an interactive model, which included four stages, namely data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). Questionnaire data analysis was carried out descriptively to illustrate the tendency of respondents' responses (Siti Romdona et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the interview data were transcribed verbatim, then analyzed through open coding responses to identify the unit of meaning, followed by the grouping of codes into categories, and finally formulated into main themes relevant to the research questions (Santoso, 2022).

RESULTS

This section presents research findings that aim to answer the research question "how do students perceive the use of pocket books for vocabulary enrichment and speaking practice?". The results of the interviews were compiled based on the themes of ease of use, vocabulary comprehension, vocabulary mastery, speech support, and fluency in speaking.

Ease of Use of Pocket Books

The results of the interviews showed that all participants viewed pocket books as an easy-to-use learning medium. This convenience is due to the small, practical, and portable design of the pocketbook, so it can be carried and used at any time without the need for special preparation. Students stated that they can use vocabulary pocket books flexibly.

"Pocket books are very easy to learn vocabulary, because the model is practical and easy to carry, can be opened and read anywhere" (R1)

"The use of pocket books is relatively easy, the size of the kevil is so that it is easy to carry everywhere and the contents are directly at the core of the vocabulary" (R2)

"It's small in size, so it's easy to carry around without carrying a large dictionary: (R3)

"In my opinion, pocket books are very easy to use because they are small and practical. I can take it anywhere and read it anytime" (R4)

Based on the results of the interview, all respondents emphasized that pocket books are easy to use because of their simple and portable design. This convenience allows students to learn independently and access vocabulary materials more often in a variety of situations.

Vocabulary Understanding and mastery

The findings show that pocket books help students understand new vocabulary through the presentation of concise and structured material. Students stated that vocabulary explanations are delivered in simple language and complemented by vocabulary explanations delivered in simple language and equipped with sentences and meanings, thus facilitating the process of understanding and recalling.

"The content is easy to understand and there are meanings and examples of sentences that I can use, so it's quick to nat" (R1)

"The content has been arranged in language that is easy to understand and quick to remember because the vocabulary is familiar" (R2)

"The explanation is short and there are examples so it is easier to understand" (R3)

"The vocabulary explanation is short and accompanied by example sentences, so I know how to use it right away" (R4)

The results show that the presentation of the material in the pocket book supports vocabulary comprehension effectively. The simple and contextual structure of the material helps students relate new vocabulary to their use in sentences.

Speaking support and Fluency

The results of the interviews also showed that the pocket book supports speaking practice and helps with fluency in speaking. Students said that the examples of everyday sentences and expressions available in the pocket book help them practice speaking confidently and not too hesitating when composing sentences.

"My English speaking skills are getting better because I have mastered a lot of vocabulary and example sentences that I have memorized" (R1)

"Pocket books give you a clue as to how words or phrases are used in proper expressions" (R2)

"I read a lot and memorize it makes me more confident and doesn't think too long when I want to speak" (R3)

"Pocket books help me increase my vocabulary and expression, so it makes me more confident when I want to speak because I have mastered a lot of vocabulary" (R4)

Overall, these findings suggest that pocket books not only help with vocabulary mastery, but also support fluency in speaking. The availability of sample expressions and repetitive exercises helps students improve their confidence and natural speaking skills.

To support the findings, quantitative data from questionnaire is also used to measure the students' response of the Pocket Book use for Vocabulary and English speaking skills.

Table 1. Students' responses on pocket book use for vocabulary

Statements	Scale				
	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
I enjoy using pocket books to learn new languages.	40%	45%	15%	0%	0%
The pocket book helped me to be more confident in using new vocabulary.	35%	45%	20%	0%	0%
I plan to continue using the pocket book to learn vocabulary.	35%	25%	40%	0%	0%
I would suggest my friend to use pocket books to learn vocabulary.	30%	50%	15%	5%	0%

Vocabulary Aspect. In general, respondents showed a positive attitude towards the role of pocket books in vocabulary enrichment. The average percentage of positive responses (score 5+4) on vocabulary aspect items was 76%, with a neutral proportion of 22.5% and very few negative responses (1.25%). The most strongly positive items were: item 1 (85%), item 2 (80%), and item 4 (80%). The item committed to using regularly, item 3, showed a high neutral proportion (40%).

Table 2. Students' Responses on Pocket Book Use for English Speaking Skills

Statements	Scale				
	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
I enjoy using pocket books to help with my speaking practice.	30%	60%	10%	0%	0%
Pocket books give me ideas to speak in English.	35%	60%	5%	0%	0%
I want to continue using the pocket book to practice speaking.	20%	35%	40%	0%	5%
I would recommend the pocket book to my friends to help them speak English.	25%	55%	15%	5%	0%

Speaking Aspect. Respondents generally rated the use of pocket books for speaking practice more positively, with an average percentage of 80% positive, 17.5% neutral, and 2.5% negative. Items with very high positive scores were item 2 (95%), item 1 (90%), and item 4 (80%). The item "committed to using regularly" in item 3 showed a high neutral proportion (40%).

DISCUSSION

Students' perception of using a pocket book for vocabulary

The results of the study show that pocket books are perceived as an effective learning medium in supporting the enrichment of students' vocabulary. This positive perception not only reflects the results of media use but can also be explained through the compact, structured, and easy-to-understand design characteristics of the pocketbook. Simple material presentation that allows students to focus on key lexical information without being burdened by excessive information. These findings are in line with cognitive load theory, which states that learning effectiveness increases when external loads are minimized through clear and organized material presentation (Clark & Kimmons, 2025).

The ease with which students remember, understand, and repeat vocabulary shows that pocket books support efficient information processing. This is in line with the view of the Nation which emphasizes that vocabulary mastery is influenced by the repetition and presentation of vocabulary in a clear and meaningful context, thereby helping learners understand and remember vocabulary more effectively (Puspitasari et al., 2024). In line with the findings of this study, previous studies support that vocabulary pocket books can contribute positively to students' lexical mastery because they allow for flexible and repetitive accessibility, thus supporting student engagement in language learning (Aulia et al., 2023). It is also supported by the research of Aitaissa et al., who report that the use of a pocket electronic dictionary provides support in vocabulary learning because of its portable nature and easy to access at any time by EFL students (Aitaissa et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Melinda and Eka showed that the use of digital dictionary contributes positively to student retention, so that the media can play a role as a means of cognitive support in learning vocabulary (Melinda & Eka, 2020). The similarity of these results indicates that pocket books play a role as a means of cognitive support in vocabulary learning.

In addition, the quantitative findings reinforce this interpretation by showing a high level of student motivation and confidence in learning vocabulary through pocket books. This condition can be explained by the reduced mental effort required to access information, so that students can allocate their cognitive resources to understanding meaning. Thus, pocket books not only serve as an additional medium but also as a learning tool that encourages active engagement and independent student learning.

Students' perception of using pocket book for Speaking Practice

In the context of speaking skills, the results of the research show that pocket books make a positive contribution to the smooth running and confidence of students. Ready-made expressions, short sentence examples, and simple dialogue patterns help students speak more spontaneously and reduce doubts. This finding can be explained by the concept of speaking fluency put forward by Brown, who states that fluency in speech is achieved when learners are able to access language forms automatically from memory (Brown, 2001).

The use of pocket books is also closely related to the principle of Cognitive Load Theory in the provision of a clear language model that allows students to reduce the cognitive burden in composing sentences, so that attention can be focused on aspects of fluency, pronunciation, and message delivery. These results are in line with Andriani's research, which shows that pocketbook-based materials can increase students' confidence in speaking (Andriani et al., 2025). In addition, these findings are supported by a systematic study that concludes that compact and portable learning media contribute positively to students' willingness to communicate because it is considered practical and easy to use (Dağdeler, 2023).

From the perspective of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), students' positive perception of pocket books can be explained through the aspects of ease of use and perceived benefits. Although TAM is generally applied to digital technologies, its basic principles remain relevant in the context of print media. Davis and Granic emphasized that learners tend to accept and use learning media that are considered easy to use and support brand performance. This explains the high acceptance rate of students for pocket books as a medium for speaking practice (Davis & Granić, 2024).

The findings of this study provide practical implications for EFL learning, especially in the context of non-formal learning. Language teachers and facilitators can use pocket books as a supporting medium for vocabulary enrichment and speaking exercises to encourage student learning independence. The compact and structured pocket book format also has the potential to help learners who experience anxiety or difficulty managing cognitive load when learning English.

However, this study has limitations. The limited number of participants and the focus on one non-formal learning context limit the generalization of findings because this research is qualitative. In addition, the research focused on student perceptions without measuring the improvement of vocabulary and speaking skills directly. Therefore, further research is recommended to involve a wider sample, diverse learning contexts, and combine perceptual data with performance measurement to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of pocketbooks for EFL learning.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research shows that students use pocket books as a medium that can help to support vocabulary enrichment and speaking practice. Clear layouts, brief explanations, and simple examples help reduce cognitive burden, making it easier for students to understand, remember, and use new vocabulary with more confidence. Ready-made expressions and sentence models also help students in producing ideas and support the fluency of speaking.

The main contribution of this study is to show that simple and low-cost learning media, if designed based on cognitive principles, can significantly support language learning. Although this study has limitations in the number of participants, the context of the study, and the use of perceptual data, the results of this study provide practical implications. Teachers are advised to use my books as a supporting material for vocabulary and speaking activities, while further research can use experimental designs, compare pocket books with digital media, or apply them at different skill levels.

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