

From literacy to impact: a relationship study on EFL students' literacy to vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness

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Abstract

Literacy has increasingly been recognized as a fundamental component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning; however, limited research has examined its simultaneous relationship with multiple language competencies, particularly vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to investigate the extent to which EFL students' literacy is associated with these three essential competencies and to identify learners' needs related to literacy development. This study employed a quantitative correlational design complemented by needs analysis. Data were collected from 107 primary students through a set of instruments, including a literacy test, a vocabulary assessment, a speaking comprehension test, and an intercultural awareness questionnaire, as well as a needs analysis survey. The data were analyzed using Spearman rho correlation to determine the strength of relationships among variables. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between literacy and all three competencies. The strongest relationship was found between literacy and vocabulary mastery, followed by moderate correlations with speaking comprehension and intercultural awareness. These results indicate that students with higher literacy levels tend to demonstrate better lexical knowledge, improved ability to comprehend spoken language, and greater awareness of cultural diversity. In conclusion, literacy functions as a foundational competence that supports broader language development and intercultural communication. The study highlights the importance of integrating literacy-based and multimodal instructional practices in EFL classrooms to enhance students' communicative competence and global awareness.

Keywords: Intercultural awareness; Literacy; Speaking comprehension; Vocabulary mastery.

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INTRODUCTION

Literacy has become a central component of language learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, extending far beyond traditional notions of reading and writing. In contemporary education, literacy encompasses a broad range of competencies, including critical thinking, the ability to interpret multimodal texts, and the capacity to communicate meaning effectively across diverse contexts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2020; Ratnawati & Romansyah, 2022). This expanded view reflects the demands of the 21st century, where students are required not only to decode linguistic input but also to engage with complex information, evaluate multiple perspectives, and participate actively in global communication (Hossain, 2024; Xia et al., 2024). For example, literacy is no longer a peripheral skill but a foundational competence that underpins overall language proficiency and communicative success. Within the EFL framework, literacy development plays a significant role in shaping students' cognitive and linguistic abilities (Maspul, 2024). It involves the

integration of receptive and productive skills, enabling students to construct meaning from texts and express their ideas coherently (Fatimah & Subiyanto, 2026). Moreover, literacy is closely linked to students' exposure to authentic language input, which contributes to the development of vocabulary, comprehension, and communication skills (Bacus & Alda, 2024). From a multiliteracies perspective, students are expected to navigate various modes of communication, including visual, digital, and audio-visual texts, which further emphasizes the complexity and importance of literacy in modern language education (Novitasari et al., 2025; Rocca, 2025;). This perspective aligns with the notion that language learning is not limited to linguistic forms but also involves understanding meaning across different semiotic systems.

One of the most critical aspects influenced by literacy is vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary knowledge has long been recognized as a key predictor of language proficiency, as it directly affects learners' ability to comprehend texts and produce meaningful language (Tong et al., 2023; Zhang & Zhang, 2022). Students with a rich vocabulary repertoire are better equipped to interpret written and spoken input, as well as to express their ideas accurately and fluently (Guo & East, 2024). This relationship is supported by more recent research highlighting that vocabulary knowledge is strongly associated with reading comprehension and overall language understanding (Brooks et al., 2023; Cai & Liao, 2024). In this sense, literacy development provides learners with continuous exposure to lexical items in context, facilitating both incidental and intentional vocabulary acquisition (Reynolds & Ding, 2022). Furthermore, vocabulary learning involves both receptive and productive dimensions, which are essential for effective communication (Nation, 2022). Receptive vocabulary enables students to recognize and understand words in listening and reading activities, while productive vocabulary allows them to use these words in speaking and writing (Nuraeningsih, 2020). Literacy-rich environments support the development of both dimensions by offering students opportunities to encounter and use language in meaningful contexts. Consequently, literacy can be seen as a driving force behind vocabulary growth, which in turn contributes to broader language competence (Liu & Saad, 2025).

In addition to vocabulary mastery, literacy also plays a crucial role in speaking comprehension. Speaking comprehension refers to the ability to understand spoken language and respond appropriately in communicative situations (Sharma, 2024). This skill is influenced by multiple factors, including vocabulary knowledge, exposure to authentic input, and students' ability to process linguistic information in real time (Gui & Ismail, 2024; Yu, 2026). The concept of comprehensible input remains central in contemporary language learning research, emphasizing that students develop language proficiency when they are exposed to language slightly above their current level of competence (Bouknify & Mrani, 2025). Literacy activities, particularly reading, provide a rich source of such input, which can enhance students' listening and speaking abilities (Fenuku, 2024).

Communicative language teaching approaches are believed to offer meaningful interaction in developing speaking skills (Adem & Berkessa, 2025; Romansyah & Ratnawati, 2023). Through literacy-based activities, students are exposed to authentic language use, which prepares them for real-life communication. For example, reading texts that include dialogues, narratives, or cultural contexts helps students understand how language is used in different situations. This exposure not only improves their comprehension of spoken language but also enhances their ability to participate in conversations. Students' ability to comprehend spoken language is essential for effective communication, as it enables them to respond appropriately and maintain interaction (Robert & Menakhsi, 2022).

Another important dimension of literacy in EFL contexts is its relationship with intercultural awareness. In an increasingly globalized world, language students are expected to communicate not only across linguistic boundaries but also across cultural differences. Intercultural awareness refers to the ability to understand, interpret, and respond to cultural diversity in communication (Amalia et al., 2025; Baker, 2022; Lie et al., 2023). It is considered a key component of communicative competence, as effective communication requires not only linguistic accuracy but also cultural sensitivity (Xu et al., 2025). In fostering intercultural awareness, literacy plays a significant role by

exposing students to diverse cultural perspectives through texts (Oberste-Berghaus, 2024). Through reading and interpreting texts from different cultural contexts, students develop an understanding of cultural norms, values, and practices (Oktarina et al., 2022). This process enables them to interpret meaning beyond the literal level and to appreciate the sociocultural dimensions of language use (Fartusnic, 2025). Furthermore, engaging with culturally rich texts allows students to reflect on their own cultural assumptions and to develop a more nuanced understanding of intercultural communication (Xu et al., 2025). In this regard, literacy serves as a bridge between language and culture, facilitating the development of intercultural competence.

The integration of literacy, vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness highlights the interconnected nature of language learning. These components do not operate in isolation but rather influence and reinforce one another (Aririguzoh, 2023). For instance, the improvement of vocabulary knowledge enhances students' ability to comprehend texts, which in turn contributes to their speaking comprehension and intercultural understanding (Song et al., 2025; Yang, 2023). Similarly, exposure to culturally diverse texts enriches students' vocabulary and provides them with the linguistic and cultural resources needed for effective communication (Hidayah et al., 2024; Udeh & Onwanyi, 2024). Despite the recognized importance of these relationships, existing research has largely examined these variables separately. Numerous studies have focused on the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension or speaking skills (Lawrence et al., 2022; Rahmah et al., 2023). However, there remains a need for more integrative research that explores how these competencies interact within a comprehensive framework of language learning. Understanding these relationships is essential for designing effective instructional practices that address multiple aspects of language development simultaneously. While these studies provide valuable insights into specific aspects of language learning, they do not capture the broader role of literacy as an overarching construct that influences multiple competencies simultaneously. In particular, there is a lack of research that investigates how literacy interacts with vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness within a single framework. This gap in the literature suggests the need for a more comprehensive approach to understanding the role of literacy in EFL learning. By examining literacy as a multidimensional construct, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how it contributes to students' overall language development. Furthermore, incorporating a needs analysis perspective allows for the identification of students' specific challenges and requirements, which can inform the design of more effective instructional practices.

In light of these considerations, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between EFL students' literacy and three key competencies: vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) To what extent is literacy correlated with vocabulary mastery among EFL students? (2) How does literacy relate to students' speaking comprehension? (3) What is the relationship between literacy and intercultural awareness? and (4) What are the literacy-related needs of EFL students in developing these competencies?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationships among EFL students' literacy, vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness. A correlational design was selected because the primary objective of the study was to determine the degree and direction of relationships among variables without manipulating them. This design allows researchers to identify whether and how strongly pairs of variables are associated, which is particularly suitable for investigating naturally occurring educational phenomena. In addition to the correlational framework, a needs analysis component was incorporated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' literacy-related challenges and learning requirements. Needs analysis plays a crucial role in language education

research as it helps identify the gap between learners' current abilities and their desired competencies. By combining correlational analysis with needs analysis, this study not only examines statistical relationships but also contextualizes the findings within students' actual educational needs. The study adopted a cross-sectional design, where data were collected at a single point in time. This approach enabled the researcher to capture a snapshot of students' literacy levels and related competencies, providing insights into existing patterns and relationships. The integration of quantitative data from tests and questionnaires ensured objectivity and reliability in measuring the variables under investigation.

Participants

The participants of this study were 107 primary school students enrolled in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs at selected schools in Indonesia. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that enables researchers to choose individuals who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. In this study, the criteria included students who had been exposed to English instruction for at least one academic year, ensuring that they possessed basic familiarity with English language learning. The participants ranged in age from approximately 9 to 12 years old, representing upper primary grade levels. They came from diverse socio-economic, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, which provided a broader perspective on students' literacy development and language competencies. This diversity also reflects the varying levels of access to learning resources and exposure to English both inside and outside the classroom. Both male and female students were included to ensure balanced representation. The selection of primary school students was based on the consideration that this stage is critical for developing foundational literacy skills, vocabulary acquisition, and early communicative competence. At this level, students are actively building their ability to understand and use language, making it an appropriate context for examining the relationships among literacy, vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness. Prior to data collection, ethical procedures were strictly followed. Permission was obtained from school authorities, and informed consent was secured from both parents or guardians and the students. Participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was entirely voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, and no personal identifying information was disclosed in the reporting of the results.

Data Collection

To collect comprehensive and reliable data, this study employed five main instruments designed to measure each variable as well as to support the needs analysis component. All instruments were carefully adapted to suit the characteristics and cognitive levels of primary school students, ensuring that the tasks were age-appropriate, engaging, and understandable. First, a literacy test was administered to assess students' ability to comprehend and interpret both written and simple verbal tests. The test included some cases regarding English literacy and local culture literacy. In addition, students were asked to interpret basic visual elements such as pictures, simple charts, or illustrated scenes. Considering the young age of the participants, the texts were designed using familiar topics and simple language structures. The literacy test aimed not only to measure basic reading skills but also to capture early stages of interpretive and critical thinking abilities appropriate for primary students. Second, a vocabulary test was used to measure students' lexical knowledge. This test included both receptive and productive vocabulary tasks, adapted to suit young learners. The items consisted of multiple-choice questions with visual support, word-matching activities, and simple sentence completion tasks. For example, students were asked to match words with pictures or select the correct word to complete a sentence based on context. These activities were designed to evaluate students' understanding of word meanings, usage, and their ability to apply vocabulary in simple contexts. The use of visuals and familiar vocabulary ensured that the test was accessible and engaging for primary school students.

Third, a speaking comprehension test was administered to evaluate students' ability to understand spoken English. This test involved responding to short and simple questions such as everyday conversations or classroom instructions, followed by comprehension questions. The questions required students to identify key information, such as who is speaking, what is happening, or where the conversation takes place. The listening materials were designed with clear pronunciation, slow speech rate, and familiar contexts to match the learners' proficiency level. This instrument aimed to reflect real-life listening situations that young learners might encounter in their daily learning environment. Fourth, an intercultural awareness questionnaire was used to measure students' understanding of and sensitivity toward cultural diversity. Given the participants' age, the questionnaire was simplified and presented in a child-friendly format, using short statements and visual aids where necessary. The items were based on a Likert-scale format with simplified response options, such as "agree," "not sure," and "disagree," or represented through smiley faces to help students express their attitudes more easily. The questionnaire focused on basic aspects of intercultural awareness, such as recognizing cultural differences, showing respect for others, and expressing curiosity about different cultures. This instrument aimed to capture both cognitive and affective dimensions of intercultural competence at an early stage of development.

Finally, a needs analysis survey was conducted to identify students' perceived difficulties and learning needs related to literacy and language skills. This survey included a combination of simple closed-ended questions and guided open-ended prompts. The questions explored areas such as students' preferred learning activities, challenges in understanding vocabulary, difficulties in speaking tasks, and their exposure to cultural content in English learning. For younger learners, the survey was administered with teacher guidance to ensure comprehension and accurate responses. The inclusion of this instrument allowed the study to gain insights into students' experiences and expectations, which complemented the quantitative findings. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments, all materials were reviewed by experts in language education, particularly those with experience in teaching English to young learners. In addition, a pilot study was conducted with a small group of students who shared similar characteristics with the main participants. Feedback from the pilot testing was used to refine the instructions, adjust the level of difficulty, and improve the clarity of the items. As a result, the final instruments were considered appropriate, reliable, and effective for measuring the targeted variables in the context of primary school EFL students.

Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed in several steps using SPSS to ensure accuracy. First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. These included the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores, and overall patterns for each variable. This step helped provide a general picture of students' performance in literacy, vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness. Before conducting the correlation analysis, a normality test was carried out using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The results showed that the data were not normally distributed. Therefore, a non-parametric method of Spearman's rho correlation was chosen as a more appropriate way to analyze the relationships between variables. It measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables based on ranked data. It is suitable for data that are not normally distributed. The correlation values range from -1 to +1. A value close to +1 indicates a strong positive relationship, while a value close to -1 indicates a strong negative relationship. Values close to 0 indicate little or no relationship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the data analysis, focusing on students' literacy levels and the relationships among literacy, vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness. Since the data were not normally distributed, Spearman's rho correlation was used to examine the relationships among the variables as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of tests

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Mean Range Level
Literacy	62.35	9.12	60–69 (Moderate)
Vocabulary Mastery	68.40	8.75	60–69 (Moderate)
Speaking Comprehension	66.28	9.05	60–69 (Moderate)
Intercultural Awareness	64.10	8.90	60–69 (Moderate)

Table 1 indicated that the descriptive statistics indicate that students demonstrated a relatively low level of literacy compared to the other competencies. The mean score for literacy was 62.35 (SD = 9.12), suggesting that many students still face difficulties in understanding and interpreting written and multimodal texts. This finding implies that students may have limited exposure to reading activities or lack effective strategies for comprehending texts. In contrast, vocabulary mastery showed a mean score of 68.40 (SD = 8.75), indicating a moderate level of lexical knowledge. Similarly, speaking comprehension had a mean score of 66.28 (SD = 9.05), reflecting moderate ability in understanding spoken English. Intercultural awareness also fell within a moderate range, with a mean score of 64.10 (SD = 8.90), suggesting that students have a basic but still limited understanding of cultural diversity.

Despite the relatively low level of literacy, the correlation analysis revealed that literacy is significantly and positively related to all three competencies, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. The Relationship among variables of need analysis

Variables	Spearman's Rho (ρ)	Significance (p-value)	Strength of Correlation
Literacy – Vocabulary Mastery	0.72	$p < 0.05$	Strong
Literacy – Speaking Comprehension	0.58	$p < 0.05$	Moderate
Literacy – Intercultural Awareness	0.55	$p < 0.05$	Moderate
Vocabulary – Speaking Comprehension	0.69	$p < 0.05$	Strong
Vocabulary – Intercultural Awareness	0.52	$p < 0.05$	Moderate
Speaking – Intercultural Awareness	0.49	$p < 0.05$	Moderate

Table 2 indicates that the strongest relationship was found between literacy and vocabulary mastery, with a Spearman's rho coefficient of 0.72 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates a strong positive correlation, suggesting that students who demonstrate better literacy skills tend to have higher vocabulary knowledge. Even though overall literacy levels are low, variations within students' literacy performance still contribute significantly to differences in vocabulary mastery. The relationship between literacy and speaking comprehension was found to be moderate, with a correlation coefficient of 0.58 ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that students with higher literacy levels are generally better at understanding spoken language. Although the relationship is not as strong as that with vocabulary mastery, it still indicates that literacy plays an important role in supporting listening and comprehension skills. Similarly, literacy was moderately correlated with intercultural awareness, with a coefficient of 0.55 ($p < 0.05$). This finding suggests that students who are more literate tend to have a better understanding of cultural diversity. However, the moderate strength of this relationship indicates that intercultural awareness may also be influenced by other factors, such as direct cultural exposure or classroom instruction.

In addition to the main relationships, the analysis also revealed significant correlations among the other variables. Vocabulary mastery showed a strong positive correlation with speaking comprehension ($\rho = 0.69$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that students with better vocabulary knowledge are more capable of understanding spoken English. Meanwhile, vocabulary mastery was moderately correlated with intercultural awareness ($\rho = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that lexical knowledge may

support students' understanding of cultural content. Speaking comprehension and intercultural awareness also demonstrated a moderate relationship ($\rho = 0.49$, $p < 0.05$). Overall, the findings indicate that although students' literacy levels are relatively low, literacy remains a significant factor influencing vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness. The positive correlations across all variables suggest that improvements in literacy may contribute to the development of other language competencies. These results highlight the importance of strengthening literacy skills as a foundation for broader language learning.

The findings of this study provide strong evidence that literacy plays a crucial role in shaping EFL students' language competencies, particularly vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness. The results align with existing literature while also offering new insights into the interconnected nature of these variables. The strong correlation between literacy and vocabulary mastery supports previous research emphasizing the importance of vocabulary in language learning (Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Dormido & Ratnawati, 2025). Vocabulary knowledge is widely recognized as a key component of comprehension and communication (Hidayat et al., 2025; Hoover & Tunmer, 2022). Students who engage in literacy activities, such as reading, are more likely to encounter new words in context, which facilitates vocabulary acquisition (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Ratnawati et al., 2026). This finding also aligns with the theory that reading exposure contributes significantly to lexical development (Chang & Monaghan, 2019). Even in a context where literacy levels are relatively low, the strength of this relationship indicates that literacy remains a key driver of vocabulary development (Verhoef et al., 2021). Moreover, the relationship between literacy and vocabulary mastery can be explained through incidental learning. When students read texts, they are exposed to vocabulary in meaningful contexts, which helps them understand word meanings and usage (Vaughn et al., 2024). This process enhances both receptive and productive vocabulary, ultimately improving overall language proficiency. The moderate correlation between literacy and speaking comprehension further highlights the role of literacy in language development (Peng et al., 2022). This finding supports Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, which suggests that exposure to comprehensible input is essential for language acquisition. Literacy activities provide a rich source of such input, enabling learners to internalize language structures and improve their listening comprehension. In line with communicative language teaching, meaningful exposure to language through texts can also support learners' ability to understand spoken communication (Apridayani & Waluyo, 2025; Qin et al., 2023). Thus, literacy functions as a bridge between input and communicative competence.

The correlation between literacy and intercultural awareness indicates that literacy also contributes to students' understanding of cultural diversity (Suharni & Hussein, 2024). This finding is consistent with Nemouchi's & Byram's (2025) model of intercultural communicative competence, which emphasizes the role of cultural knowledge in communication. Through literacy activities, learners are exposed to texts that reflect different cultural perspectives, enabling them to interpret meanings beyond linguistic forms (Hossain, 2024). Liu et al. (2024) further argues that intercultural awareness is essential in global communication, as it allows learners to engage meaningfully across cultures. However, the moderate strength of this relationship suggests that intercultural awareness is influenced not only by literacy but also by external factors such as social interaction and instructional design (Huang, 2023; Nolan et al., 2024). Importantly, these findings can be contextualized within Indonesia's educational policy, particularly the growing emphasis on introducing English at the primary school level as the compulsory subject in all primary schools which supported by Indonesian government policy (Kemendikbudristek RI, 2024). In addition, recent policy directions encourage early exposure to foreign languages to prepare students for global communication. This aligns with the broader vision of the Indonesian government policy which emphasizes the importance of developing students' competencies in foreign language mastery, national identity, and cultural awareness. The policy direction highlights three important pillars: (1) mastery of foreign languages for global competitiveness, (2) strengthening the use of Bahasa Indonesia as the national language, and (3) preservation of local languages and cultures. In this

context, literacy becomes a crucial connecting element. Literacy not only supports English language acquisition but also enables students to engage with national and local cultural content (Cappellini, 2024). Therefore, improving literacy skills in English should not be seen as a threat to national identity, but rather as a complementary effort that enhances students' ability to navigate both global and local contexts. Furthermore, the relatively low literacy level found in this study suggests that the implementation of English instruction at the primary level still faces challenges. These may include limited instructional time, lack of literacy-focused materials, and insufficient integration of multimodal and culturally relevant texts. As a result, students may develop vocabulary and basic comprehension skills without a strong literacy foundation. This finding reinforces the need for policy implementation to focus not only on introducing English but also on strengthening literacy-based pedagogy (Yakin et al., 2024; Thongkhotr & Chaijaroen, 2026). From a pedagogical perspective, the findings highlight the importance of integrating literacy-based instruction in EFL classrooms, especially for young learners. Teachers should provide students with opportunities to engage with meaningful, age-appropriate, and culturally relevant texts. Multimodal materials, such as pictures, videos, and simple digital texts, can support comprehension and make learning more engaging (Salehi Gahrizangi et al., 2026; Savic, 2024). In addition, integrating local cultural content into English learning materials can simultaneously promote intercultural awareness and cultural preservation.

Moreover, the interconnected relationships among vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness suggest that language teaching should adopt a holistic approach. Rather than teaching skills in isolation, educators should design activities that integrate reading, listening, speaking, and cultural understanding. This approach aligns with current trends in language education, which emphasize communicative competence and real-world application. The findings from the needs analysis further indicate that students require more support in developing literacy skills and intercultural awareness. This highlights the importance of designing instructional strategies that address learners' specific needs, such as providing scaffolded reading activities, vocabulary support, and exposure to diverse cultural contexts. Teachers also play a key role in facilitating students' engagement with texts and guiding them in interpreting meaning. Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted with a relatively limited sample of primary school students, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should include a larger and more diverse sample to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships among variables. Second, the study used a cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time. As a result, it cannot fully explain causal relationships. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine how literacy development influences language competencies over time.

Third, the measurement of variables relied on test instruments and self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to bias. For example, young learners may have difficulty accurately expressing their perceptions in questionnaires. Future research could incorporate observational data or performance-based assessments to enhance validity. Finally, intercultural awareness is a complex construct that may not be fully captured through a questionnaire alone. Additional qualitative approaches, such as interviews or classroom observations, could provide deeper insights into students' intercultural development. In conclusion, this study confirms that literacy is a key factor influencing multiple aspects of language learning, even in contexts where literacy levels are relatively low. The findings underscore the importance of strengthening literacy as a foundation for vocabulary acquisition, speaking comprehension, and intercultural competence. In the Indonesian context, these findings are particularly relevant for supporting policy directions that promote foreign language mastery while maintaining national identity and cultural values. Future research and educational practices should continue to explore ways to integrate literacy, language learning, and cultural education in a balanced and meaningful way.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that literacy plays a central role in shaping EFL learners' language competencies, even when overall literacy levels are relatively low. The findings show consistent, positive relationships between literacy and vocabulary mastery, speaking comprehension, and intercultural awareness. Among these, the strongest association was found between literacy and vocabulary mastery, followed by moderate relationships with speaking comprehension and intercultural awareness. These results indicate that literacy functions as a foundational skill that supports broader language development and meaningful communication. In terms of contribution, this study offers an integrated perspective by examining literacy as a multidimensional construct linked to several key competencies simultaneously. It also contributes to the Indonesian educational context by providing empirical evidence that supports current policy directions emphasizing early foreign language exposure alongside the strengthening of national identity and cultural awareness. Furthermore, the inclusion of needs analysis enriches the findings by highlighting learners' actual challenges, particularly in literacy development and intercultural understanding.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. First, educators should prioritize literacy-based instruction in EFL classrooms, especially at the primary level, by integrating reading, vocabulary, listening, and cultural content in a holistic manner. Second, teaching materials should include multimodal and culturally relevant texts to enhance engagement and comprehension. Third, policymakers should ensure that the implementation of English learning in primary education is accompanied by adequate support for literacy development, including teacher training and resource provision. Finally, future research is recommended to employ longitudinal designs and larger samples to further explore the long-term impact of literacy on language learning outcomes.

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