Utilising Youtube to Facilitate English Speaking Skills Improvement among EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore how students utilize YouTube as a virtual platform for developing English-speaking skills. A qualitative approached was used to capture the experiences of three participants in English Department discussing how YouTube improved their English-speaking skills. To analyse data, a thematic analysis was employed. The findings revealed three major themes, namely employing self-directed learning approach, engaging with videos for active learning, and receiving diverse content exposure for language enrichment. These shed light on the many ways that YouTube helps students improve their English speaking skills and advance our understanding of how students use the platform for foreign language learning.

Keywords*: English Department, English speaking skills, thematic analysis, YouTube*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, technology is widely employed for completing activities, looking for work, and even doing online information searches. The internet has developed quickly, and everyone can obtain a wealth of information that is helpful for their own growth. In fact, the internet is employed as a teaching medium and tool that has evolved to be integrated with the function of the instructor (Apriyanti, Syarif, Ramadhan, Zaim, & Agustina, 2018). Many students are interested in reading and using the wide range of information available on the internet, which can be used to access and use more recent educational materials as well as general online resources. Among the learning medium under discussion is YouTube.

YouTube is an online platform that is thought to be useful for developing English speaking abilities (Maskar & Dewi, 2020; Putri & Sari, 2020). It displays a wide range of user-generated video content, including amateur content like video blogging and short original videos, as well as movie, TV, and music video clips (Wahyuni & Utami, 2021). YouTube has hundreds of millions of videos uploaded by users from all around the world, making learning English easier than before.

Students can effectively learn to talk on YouTube, as more and more people become acclimated to utilising it as a multimedia platform. They might view videos on YouTube to study the speech patterns of native speakers. Along with learning vocabulary, intonation, expression, and mimicry, students can perform with confidence and have fun.

However, despite the widespread use of YouTube as a learning tool for improving English speaking skills among EFL learners, there is a notable gap in research exploring how university students specifically utilize this platform for such purposes. While some studies have examined the effectiveness of YouTube in language learning contexts (Ilyas & Putri, 2020; Saed, Haider, Al-Salman, & Hussein, 2021; Wahyuni & Utami, 2021), there remains a lack of comprehensive research focusing specifically on EFL university students and their utilization of YouTube for English speaking skill enhancement. Therefore, there is a need for empirical investigations to explore the ways in which EFL university students engage with YouTube as a tool for improving their English speaking abilities. Addressing this gap will contribute to a deeper understanding of how YouTube can be effectively integrated into language learning curricula to facilitate speaking skill development among EFL learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technology in the classroom has several benefits, including distance education and satellite classrooms (Arora & Chander, 2020). The inexpensive cost of infrastructure and many-fold increase in learning opportunities are expected to benefit students who cannot attend conventional classes. Technology allows huge information storage, which helps record, transmit, and educate again (repetitive learning). With such an emphasis on educational technology, one of the main duties of schools is how technology may improve the learning process, and it is crucial that schools steadily shift from low-value to high-value digital technology use.

One can say that technology aids language learners. Technology also makes it easier for kids who live far from school to attend class. Large data storage allows recording and transmission or teaching. Thus, technology can assist a classroom in many ways. Internet videos assist instruction and improve student performance (Apuke & Iyendo, 2018). Since technology has changed education, teachers can use video in the classroom to promote student participation and social pedagogy. YouTube, for example, gives easy access to instructional videos, worldwide languages, and culturally-based media. YouTube's videos from famous scientists, writers, TV newscasters, politicians, and other TV programs make it easy to create educational resources relevant and distinctive to learning English in college (Pratama, Arifin, & Widianingsih, 2020).

Studies about how YouTube is utilised for education purposes in English language classrooms have been done extensively. For example, Saed, Haider, Al-Salman, & Hussein (2021) investigates how YouTube videos were used to teach speaking to Jordanian students studying English as a foreign language (EFL). Eighty students who were enrolled in Oral Skills classes in the English Language and Literature Department at a private university in Jordan made up the study sample. The results demonstrated that both groups' performance had improved. Still, the experimental group showed a comparatively superior improvement than the traditional group. The participants who participated in the YouTube experiment shown noteworthy advancements in their speaking abilities, as indicated by the results. According to the current study, integrating YouTube videos into EFL classes can help students become more proficient speakers.

Another study is by Wahyuni and Utami (2021) who examined how to improve the speaking skills of students in the English language education class at a university in Indonesia by

using YouTube. The participants in this study were students majoring in English Education. Data were collected using speaking practice tests via YouTube, surveys, and questionnaires. The findings suggest that the majority of the participants agree that YouTube help facilitate improvement in English language speaking skills.

The other study was from Ilyas & Putri (2020) who explored whether or not there is a significant impact of utilising YouTube channel to help students develop their English speaking skills. The design of this study was experimental research that was conducted at English language study program of a university in Indonesia. 48 students of the first semester were chosen as the sample of the study. The findings showed that the use of YouTube channel was effective to motivate students to be more active in the class. They were more confident to interact with their peers and lecturers in English.

The current study, however, fills a gap in previous research by examining distinct aspects. It specifically focuses on how students majoring in English Education utilize YouTube as a virtual platform to develop their English-speaking abilities. The present study allows for a comprehensive exploration of participants' personal experiences and perspectives regarding the use of YouTube for English-speaking skill development.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach to investigate participants' experiences regarding the utilization of YouTube for enhancing English-speaking skills. Conducted within the English Language Education Department at a university in the Province of Gorontalo, the research focuses on selected participants from the class of 2022, who volunteered to participate. A careful selection process identified three high-scoring participants, ensuring a nuanced exploration of their experiences. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method, allowing for in-depth exploration and qualitative insights. Before the formal interviews, a pilot study was conducted to refine the questions and address potential biases. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach, was employed to analyze the interview data.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION
FINDINGS

This research aimed to explore how students utilize YouTube as a virtual platform for developing English-speaking skills. The overarching goal was to determine the utilization of YouTube by three English majors in developing their personal English-speaking skills. The research question was formulated as: "How do students use YouTube as a virtual platform for developing English speaking skills?" This section below provides each theme with its corresponding explanation.

THEME 1: EMPLOYING SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING APPROACH

The first theme looks at the significance of pronunciation practice and self-directed learning in fostering English-speaking proficiency among participants. Participant A's journey, for example, serves as a compelling illustration, highlighting a notable advancement in language skills. Particularly enlightening is the participant's evolution from relying on external aid, such as a cousin, for song comprehension, to achieving independent understanding. This transition underscores the effectiveness of self-directed language learning initiatives.

"I think there is an improvement although it is only about 40% because in the past, I still asked my cousin to understand the content of a song, but after I learned, I was able to independently understand the content of the song itself and in terms of speaking, I often talk to myself to improve my speaking skills." (Researcher Translation)

The proactive involvement in self-conversational practice underscores learners' dedication to honing pronunciation - a pivotal aspect of effective verbal communication in English. The meticulous attention to subtle phonetic nuances during the imitation process reflects a commitment to precision in articulating words. Moreover, the participant' acknowledgment of a 40% proficiency enhancement underscores the tangible impact of this approach on both comprehension and oral expression.

THEME 2: ENGAGING WITH VIDEOS FOR ACTIVE LEARNING

The second theme shows the participants' active use of YouTube as a dynamic platform for language learning. It underscores learners' immersion in a variety of content on YouTube, reflecting a preference for its comprehensive nature. Participant B's preference, for example, for learning through YouTube due to its perceived completeness highlights the platform's versatility in catering to diverse language learning needs.

"Usually, I often read novels and watch random educational contents. I also prefer to learn from YouTube because I think it's complete on YouTube." (Researcher Translation)

This participant provides insights into a multifaceted approach to language learning. It describes a combination of activities that contribute to a language development, including reading novels and consuming random educational contents, which might involve various types of media or entertainment. One noteworthy aspect is the participant's strong preference for learning through YouTube. The participant perceives YouTube as a comprehensive and well-rounded platform for language learning. This viewpoint suggests that the participant finds YouTube to be a valuable resource, encompassing a wide array of content that caters to theirlanguage learning needs. This could include instructional videos, authentic language content, tutorials, or even subtitled media. Therefore, this answer showcases a conscious effort to engage with diverse forms of content, enriching the participant's understanding of the language in multiple contexts.

THEME 3: RECEIVING DIVERSE CONTENT EXPOSURE FOR LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT

In the third theme, Participant C strategically navigate the rich landscape of YouTube content for language enrichment. It provides valuable insights into learners' intentional exposure to different content forms, fostering a nuanced understanding of language across contexts. Participant C's preference, for instance, for structured learning through channels like "learn English 101" and adaptive content choice, opting for lighter material when needed, exemplifies a balanced and flexible approach to language learning.

As for content, like before, I often watch short movies and podcasts. In addition, I also watch channels that are specifically for English learning such as learn English 101, but if the discussion is too heavy, I watch lighter content such as ome.tv content." (Researcher Translation)

This answer offers insights into the participant's content preferences on YouTube as part of a language learning journey. The participant mentions a choice of content, including short movies and podcasts, as central to the learning experience. These media forms likely provide authentic language usage and context that contribute to the participant's language skills development. Furthermore, the participant demonstrates a deliberate and strategic approach to learning. Watching channels dedicated to English learning, like "learn English 101," is indicative of commitment to structured language learning. However, what distinguishes this participant's approach is adaptability in content choice. When faced with content that is considered too heavy or challenging, the participant choose lighter content like ome.tv. This adaptability showcases the participant's pragmatism in selecting content that matches the participant's current language proficiency and learning goals, demonstrating a flexible and balanced approach to language acquisition.

DISCUSSION

The findings show a narrative of how technology, especially YouTube, has transformed into a central component of the participants language acquisition journey. These learners not only utilize YouTube as a source of passive learning through video consumption but also actively engage with the platform to nurture their English-speaking proficiency. The findings underscore the efficacy of engaging in self-directed learning for enhancing English-speaking skills. Participant A's progression, for example, from dependence on external assistance to independent comprehension highlights the effectiveness of personalized language learning approaches. This resonates with Zhang, Dai and Wang (2020) who emphasized the importance of learner autonomy in language acquisition. They argued that learners who take charge of their learning process are more likely to experience significant improvement in language proficiency. Similarly, Participant A's proactive engagement in self-conversational practice aligns with Yang, Liu, and Xu, (2022) who found that self-talk contributes positively to language development by providing learners with opportunities for practice and feedback.

The second theme is engaging with videos for active learning. This involves immersing oneself in authentic English content and actively participating in the learning process. Participant B expressed engaging with various content types, such as podcasts, interviews, vlogs, and more, to mimic speech patterns, expressions, and idiomatic usage. The participant immerses in a plethora of authentic English content availableon YouTube, ranging from podcasts to vlogs. The participant shared an enthusiasm for watching interviews with native English speakers on YouTube. This active participation allowed the participant to mimic speech patterns and expressions, significantly contributing to the development of English speaking skills. In fact, YouTube is a very effective medium for promoting language skills through vocabulary capacity development, presenting topics for dialogue and debate, which represent different varieties of English used in the EFL classrooms (Saed, et. al, 2021).

The third theme is receiving diverse content exposure for language enrichment, which is related to how YouTube serves as a vast reservoir of diverse content, and students consciously exploit this aspect to enrich their language skills. By exposing themselves to varied topics and linguistic styles, learners expand their vocabulary, comprehend different accents, and enhance their language proficiency (Syafiq, Rahmawati, Anwari, & Oktaviana, 2021). Participants C expressed an inclination towards exploring a wide range of topics and styles available on

YouTube. This participant mentioned engaging with content such as short movies, vlogs, and podcasts, covering diverse subject matter. This varied content exposure significantly broadened participants' vocabulary and understanding of different linguistic approaches, which aligns with Arora & Chander (2020) who explained that an increase in learning opportunities are expected to benefit students who cannot attend conventional classes, including the exposure of authentic language contents that might not be available to all individuals.

CONCLUSION

This research unveils how students effectively use YouTube to enhance their English-speaking skills. The study focused on three students from the English Language Education Department at a university in the Province of Gorontalo, employing a qualitative approach to explore their experiences. The findings highlight YouTube's dynamic role as an indispensable tool in language learning. It goes beyond being an informational resource, actively boosting students' confidence, emotional expressiveness, and engagement with authentic language content. These insights significantly contribute to our understanding of how students leverage YouTube in language learning, providing nuanced perspectives on how this virtual platform enhances their speaking skills. In conclusion, YouTube emerges as a holistic facilitator, actively engaging students with authentic language use and playing a vital role in their nuanced development of speaking abilities. Yet, future studies involving more participants from different English proficiency level may shed lights into how EFL learners use YouTube to help them find ways to improve their English speaking skills.

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