Students' Perception of Using YouTube Application in The Context of English Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study explores university students' perceptions of YouTube as an English language learning medium. With digital platforms increasingly complementing traditional education, YouTube offers a flexible, accessible repository of content that enhances listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar skills. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five students from the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung State Islamic University. The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, revealing that students value YouTube for its interactive content and the opportunity to learn at their own pace through trusted channels such as BBC Learning English and TED Talks. Respondents reported that YouTube effectively supplements their learning especially in authentic conversational contexts and exam preparation while also noting challenges including inconsistent content quality, distracting advertisements, and difficulties in finding material suitable to their proficiency level. The findings suggest that integrating YouTube with traditional classroom instruction may enhance overall language proficiency, highlighting the need for further research on optimizing digital media use in language education.

INTRODUCTION

At present, video in the context of learning is still considered a relatively new phenomenon, and teachers have begun to pay more attention to its potential to support the learning process (Jatmiko et al., 2024; Sajinčič et al., 2024; Weinert et al., 2024). Video also has the potential to improve learning outcomes across all subjects (Brame, 2017; Khasawneh, 2023; Koto, 2020; Osmanoglu, 2016). These resources are available on various online platforms, including YouTube. YouTube, in particular, offers a substantial collection of educational videos that are freely accessible (Jamleh et al., 2022; Karadia, 2021; Prabhu et al., 2017). Therefore,

YouTube is a relevant resource for students seeking materials to support their learning objectives. Professional platforms such as YouTube EDU also provide resources for informal learning (Maziriri et al., 2020). Consequently, the use of YouTube as a pedagogical tool facilitates easy access to a wealth of educational materials, thereby fostering a more interactive and immersive learning environment.

The efficacy of YouTube as an educational medium depends not only on the availability of appropriate content but also on students' perceptions of the platform and how they utilize it to enhance their learning. Research indicates that students generally have a positive view of YouTube, citing its accessibility, flexibility in study schedules, and the wide range of available content (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021; Ly et al., 2024; Wang & Chen, 2020). However, challenges persist, such as the potential for distraction from non-academic content and concerns about the reliability of the information provided (Roodt & Peier, 2013). Therefore, it is essential to understand how students can optimally use YouTube to support their learning.

Furthermore, students' perceptions of YouTube are influenced by several factors, including learning style (Balakrishnan & Gan, 2016; Zaidi et al., 2018), prior learning experiences (Ogirima et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2020), and lecturer support for integrating YouTube into classroom activities (Alabi et al., 2020), particularly in English language learning. Many students find that educational videos on YouTube help them grasp complex concepts through visualization and hands-on demonstrations (Cakmak et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2023; Zahn et al., 2014). In addition, YouTube supports independent learning, allowing students to adjust their learning pace and time as needed. Thus, YouTube serves not only as a supplementary resource in English language acquisition but also as a tool that promotes more flexible and interactive learning methodologies.

There has been substantial prior research on YouTube, including its use in teaching practice (Szeto & Cheng, 2014), supporting lectures by serving as an information source (Almobarraz, 2018), enhancing students' speaking skills (Albahlal, 2019), and stimulating critical thinking among university students (June et al., 2014). Despite these studies, there is still a lack of research exploring the use of YouTube by university students in the context of English language learning. The motivation behind this study is to address this gap. Therefore, this research aims to explore university students' perceptions of using YouTube as a medium for English language learning.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze students' perceptions of YouTube as a medium for learning English. Specifically, it investigates how students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung perceive YouTube as a tool for language

learning. The study also explores the following aspects: (1) background; (2) patterns and habits; (3) effectiveness and impact; (4) challenges and obstacles; and (5) comparisons and preferences in using YouTube.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, enabling the researcher to obtain in-depth insights into students' perceptions of using YouTube for English language learning. This type of interview allowed for flexibility in exploring additional information based on participants' responses. The research instrument used was an interview guide comprising a list of core questions, which served as a framework while still allowing follow-up inquiries based on respondents' answers.

The research subjects consisted of five students from the English Education Department at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. The data analysis technique employed was the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three key steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.
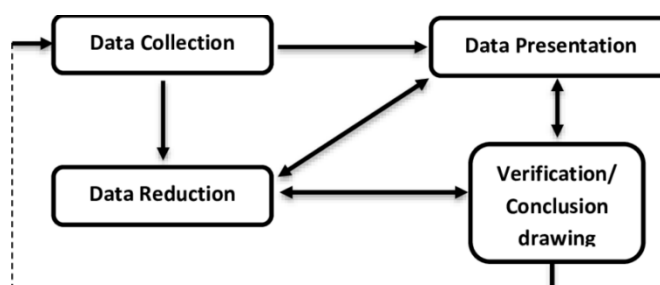

Figure 1. Huberman and Miles' qualitative data analysis model (Huberman & Miles, 1983).

In the initial phase of data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit in-depth insights into students' perceptions of YouTube's role in English language learning. Subsequently, during the data reduction stage, the collected information was carefully selected, categorized, and simplified to highlight aspects relevant to the research objectives. In the next phase, data presentation, the refined data were organized in the form of narratives, tables, or other visual representations to facilitate clearer understanding and analysis. The final stage, conclusion drawing, involved a thorough review of the presented data to identify patterns, relationships, and meanings. This process led to a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of YouTube as a medium for English language learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

The results of the study, the objective of which was to explore students' perceptions of the use of YouTube as an English language learning medium, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the Interview

Perception indicators	Results of interviews with 5 respondents
Background in the use of YouTube	A total of five respondents were interviewed, and it was found that students use YouTube as an English-learning medium for a variety of reasons. These reasons include the improvement of pronunciation (R1, R3), the expansion of vocabulary (R2, R5), the understanding of native speakers' conversations (R3, R4), and the preparation for exams or job interviews (R5). The majority of respondents commenced utilising YouTube during their school days (R1, R2, R4) or early university days (R3, R5), exhibiting varied levels of engagement, ranging from occasional use (R2, R4) to regular daily utilisation (R1, R3, R5). The rationale behind the adoption of YouTube as a medium for educational purposes is its capacity to offer a vast array of engaging and flexible educational materials that can be tailored to individual needs. The study found that students primarily engage with YouTube during their leisure time, such as before bedtime (R1, R5), during breakfast (R2), or while waiting for lectures to commence (R3, R4). This finding indicates that YouTube is a significant and effective learning resource for students seeking to enhance their English language proficiency.
Patterns and habits in using YouTube	A total of five respondents were interviewed, and it was found that students have diverse preferences in using YouTube as a medium for learning English. The types of content that are often watched include videos of daily conversations (R1), grammar learning (R2), TOEFL/IELTS practice (R2), vlogs and short films (R3), interviews with public figures (R4), and songs and stories in English (R5). The selection of content is based on individual needs, such as improving understanding in real contexts (R1, R3), exam preparation (R2), or improving pronunciation and speaking fluency (R5).The majority of respondents had favourite channels that they found effective in aiding learning, such as BBC Learning English (R1, R5), TED Talks (R4), English Addict with Mr. Steve (R2), and Learn English with Emma (R3). The respondents' viewing habits also vary, with some actively taking notes on key points (R2, R4), mimicking pronunciation (R1, R5), or repeating difficult parts for better understanding (R3).YouTube is regarded as a flexible and engaging learning resource, allowing students to customise their learning patterns according to their individual needs. However, the efficacy of this medium is contingent upon the optimisation of its utilisation, including the act of taking notes (R2, R4), repetition (R3), and the integration of language acquisition through daily living activities (R1, R5).
Effectiveness and impact of using YouTube	A total of five respondents were interviewed, and it was found that YouTube is regarded as an effective medium for students to develop their English language skills. The respondents found YouTube to be very beneficial in various aspects of English language learning, with the primary focus being on enhancing listening and speaking skills (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5). Furthermore, respondents noted that YouTube content, particularly instructional videos, has been instrumental in enhancing their vocabulary and comprehension of grammatical concepts (R1, R2, R3).The respondents further underscored the pivotal role of content type in shaping their experience. Specifically, videos covering topics such as everyday conversations, educational talks, and

	specialized materials like TOEFL/IELTS and grammar instruction were identified as being highly beneficial (R2, R3, R5). Furthermore, respondents reported positive experiences, including enhanced understanding of tenses, idioms and pronunciation following the viewing of relevant videos (R1, R3, R4).In conclusion, YouTube was perceived as a flexible and enjoyable platform that allowed students to learn according to their style and needs. Effective use of the platform, such as taking notes, imitating pronunciation or repeating difficult videos, was found to be beneficial in improving English skills (R1, R4, R5).
Challenges and obstacles in using YouTube	A total of five respondents were interviewed, and it was determined that the primary challenges encountered by students in their utilisation of YouTube for English language learning are the inconsistency in the quality of content, as evidenced by the duration of videos that are considered excessive (R3), the presence of advertisements (R4), and the inability to locate videos that align with one's level of comprehension or requirements (R1, R2, R5). Furthermore, respondents expressed difficulties in locating content that is both in-depth and pertinent to specific topics, such as grammar or everyday conversation (R2, R5). Additionally, challenges were identified regarding distraction from irrelevant content and the lack of clarity in the explanation of the material (R2). In order to overcome these obstacles, respondents tend to seek out channels or videos of a higher quality and shorter duration (R1, R3, R5), to choose videos from trusted channels (R2), and to subscribe to YouTube Premium in order to avoid advertisement interruptions (R4). They also become more selective in their choice of videos, based on their learning level, and make use of subtitles and repeat videos to improve their understanding (R3, R5). Despite the challenges encountered, students have demonstrated a commendable level of engagement in seeking solutions to enhance the efficacy of YouTube as a medium for English language learning.
Comparisons and preferences in the use of YouTube	A review of the extant literature reveals a divergence of opinion amongst students regarding the comparison between learning using YouTube and traditional methods. The majority of respondents (R1, R2, R3, R4, and R5) posit that YouTube offers greater flexibility in terms of time and access to materials, and that users can select videos that suit their interests and learning needs. They further posit that YouTube provides the freedom to repeat the material at one's own pace. Furthermore, respondents noted the presence of diverse content on YouTube, which they found to be more interactive and applicable to their learning needs. This included videos depicting everyday conversations and authentic language use in real-life contexts, which they noted were not always present in textbooks or classroom settings (R1, R2, R3, R4). Despite the acknowledged efficacy of YouTube for English language learning, some respondents (R3, R4) still consider that traditional methods, such as classroom instruction and textbooks, are important for achieving a more profound comprehension of the subject matter, particularly with regard to direct discussion and the guidance provided by teachers.Furthermore, some respondents expressed a preference for a combined approach, utilising YouTube to supplement in-class learning (R5). While the majority of respondents express a preference for YouTube due to its flexibility and abundance of content, they nevertheless

recognise the significance of traditional methods for structured learning and direct discourse with educators.

Notes: R1: 1st respondent, R2: 2nd respondent, R3: 3rd respondent, R4: 4th respondent, R5: 5th respondent.

Discussion

Based on the data presented in Table 1 regarding the background indicators of YouTube media utilisation in learning, it is evident that the use of YouTube as a medium for English language learning among university students has emerged as a notable phenomenon in recent years. Analysis of interviews with five respondents revealed that students use YouTube for various purposes, including improving pronunciation (R1, R3), expanding vocabulary (R2, R5), understanding native speaker conversations (R3, R4), and preparing for exams or job interviews (R5). These findings are consistent with prior studies which indicate that YouTube offers easy access to a wide range of educational content in an engaging and flexible manner that caters to individual learning needs (Anugerah et al., 2019; Ertem et al., 2022; Nurhotimah & Suryadi, 2023).

Most respondents began using YouTube during their school years (R1, R2, R4) or early university years (R3, R5), with usage frequencies ranging from several times a week (R2, R4) to almost daily (R1, R3, R5). This frequency reflects a shift in students' preferences from traditional learning methods to more accessible digital media. Previous research has also shown that using YouTube as a learning tool can increase student motivation and interest in learning (Fenika et al., 2024; Hia, 2021; Rinaldi, 2020; Rozal et al., 2021).

Students reported watching videos during their leisure time, such as before bed (R1, R5), during breakfast (R2), or while waiting for lectures to begin (R3, R4). This suggests that students are taking advantage of their free time to engage in self-directed learning through platforms they find efficient. Other research similarly notes that YouTube enhances motivation and enthusiasm for learning (Zulianti et al., 2024).

Despite these advantages, challenges remain, such as inconsistent content quality and distractions from irrelevant videos. Therefore, digital literacy is essential for students to use YouTube effectively. Prior studies confirm that YouTube-based learning media can significantly improve educational outcomes (Ajizah & Putra, 2022; Mawarni et al., 2024; Trianisa & Wahyuni, 2024).

Students use YouTube for various English learning goals, such as improving conversational skills (R1), studying grammar (R2), and preparing for exams (R2). This diversity indicates YouTube's comprehensive utility in supporting English learning, especially listening skills and test preparation (e.g., TOEFL/IELTS). This aligns with findings that YouTube, as a visual medium, offers adaptable content suited to learners' needs and proficiency levels (Sadaf et al., 2024; Syafiq et al., 2021).

Students also favored specific channels that offer structured and high-quality content, such as BBC Learning English (R1, R5), TED Talks (R4), and English Addict with Mr. Steve (R2). This reflects their preference for reliable and well-established sources.

This supports previous research showing that YouTube can be an effective medium for language learning when students select quality content (Meirbekov et al., 2024; Zulkflee et al., 2022).

Learning approaches also varied. Some students took notes (R2, R4), imitated pronunciation (R1, R5), or replayed difficult segments (R3). This aligns with active learning theory, which emphasizes student engagement over passive information intake (Fitrianto & Saif, 2024; Ma, 2021). YouTube's flexibility enables students to personalize their learning strategies through repetition and integration of language into daily routines (R1, R5).

Regarding effectiveness, students widely agreed that YouTube supports listening and speaking skills. Respondents (R1–R5) noted that exposure to authentic conversations improved their ability to understand different accents and contexts. This supports prior findings that video-based media enhance listening comprehension by providing visual context (Alobaid, 2022; Telaumbanua et al., 2022).

Additionally, YouTube helped students expand their vocabulary and grasp grammar through clear explanatory videos (R1–R3). Compared to textbooks, video tutorials made complex concepts easier to understand and were accessible at the learners' convenience. This corresponds with research showing that videos support cognitive and linguistic development more dynamically (Zhang et al., 2023).

The type of content watched also influenced students' experiences. Students benefited most from videos that matched their specific needs, such as test prep or pronunciation practice (R2, R3, R5). Techniques like note-taking and mimicking pronunciation (R1, R4, R5) further deepened understanding. These findings are in line with studies emphasizing the value of active learning techniques in language education (Pirker & Dengel, 2021; Sablić et al., 2021).

Challenges included inconsistent content quality. Some students (R1, R2, R5) struggled to find suitable videos. R3 noted that long videos diminished focus. Previous studies highlight this issue as a key barrier to effective YouTube-based learning (Fatimah, 2023; Shoufan & Mohamed, 2022; Timmi et al., 2024).

Advertisements were also disruptive, especially for those using the free version of YouTube (e.g., R4). This interruption negatively impacted focus and learning flow. R4 chose to subscribe to YouTube Premium to avoid this issue. Research supports that ad-free learning environments enhance concentration and engagement (Boté-Vericad, 2025).

To overcome content-related challenges, respondents selected trusted channels and used features like subtitles or video repetition (R3, R5). These strategies highlight the importance of content selection and user agency in digital learning. Supporting studies confirm that subtitles and repeated viewing promote better comprehension and retention (A Mbabi Turrión, 2022; Sablić et al., 2021).

Regarding preferences, students appreciated YouTube's flexibility in accessing material anytime and anywhere (R1–R5). This aligns with studies that show online

learning platforms promote greater autonomy and engagement (Jiménez et al., 2021; Pires et al., 2022). For instance, R1 and R5 used YouTube during their free time to engage in English practice—something not always feasible in traditional classroom settings (Nurchurifiani et al., 2025).

Nonetheless, some respondents (R3, R4) still valued face-to-face instruction for its direct interaction and real-time feedback, especially for complex topics. This mirrors findings suggesting that classroom interaction enhances comprehension in ways digital learning alone cannot (Gherheş et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2021).

Finally, while most respondents preferred YouTube for its flexibility, they also supported combining it with traditional methods. For example, R5 used YouTube to complement classroom lessons. This integration reflects research advocating for blended learning models that combine the strengths of both approaches (Fitria, 2021; Ng & Park, 2021; Suciptaningsih et al., 2023). YouTube offers variety and convenience, while classroom teaching provides structure and depth.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the use of YouTube as a medium for learning English among university students is influenced by various factors, including the desire to improve pronunciation, expand vocabulary, understand native speaker conversations, and prepare for exams or job interviews. Students exhibit diverse learning patterns, selecting content based on their individual needs—such as videos focused on everyday conversations, grammar, and exam preparation—and often relying on trusted channels like BBC Learning English and TED Talks. The effectiveness of YouTube in enhancing listening and speaking skills has been demonstrated, along with a corresponding improvement in grammar and vocabulary comprehension.

However, students face several challenges, including inconsistent content quality, intrusive advertisements, and difficulty finding videos suited to their level of understanding. Some respondents have addressed these issues by opting for shorter videos, subscribing to YouTube Premium, and using subtitles. While students appreciate the flexibility and engaging content that YouTube offers, some still value traditional classroom methods for their structure and the opportunity for direct interaction.

Therefore, a blended approach that combines digital and traditional methods is recommended to achieve optimal learning outcomes. This study suggests that further research should explore the impact of YouTube on English language proficiency in specific contexts, particularly among students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. Additionally, future studies could focus on developing strategies or guidelines to help students select relevant and effective content for language learning.

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