

Leveraging YouTube for EFL Learning: A Critical Review of Benefits, Challenges, and Pedagogical Potential

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Abstract

With the advancement of technology worldwide, especially in education, YouTube has a significant impact on language learning, particularly in English as a second language acquisition. This review enables learners to develop their English proficiency, with a focus on listening and speaking skills. The purpose of this study is to investigate the importance of YouTube in enhancing English language skills, specifically in the areas of listening, speaking, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The research employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic review approach, utilizing previous research from 54 peer-reviewed studies published between 2009 and 2025 that examined the effectiveness of YouTube in education. The thematic review indicates that YouTube provides learners motivation, engagement, vocabulary acquisition, improved pronunciation accuracy, and pedagogical awareness. The evaluation reveals gaps regarding support for technological literacy, instructor assistance in selecting materials, and long-term efficiency. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of carefully incorporating YouTube into English language instruction to enhance student learning performance. This study examines the need to integrate YouTube into language instruction to maximize its benefits thoughtfully. This can significantly impact learners, aiding in their development of English proficiency.

Keywords: Listening skill, Pronunciation, Speaking skill, Vocabulary, YouTube.

1. INTRODUCTION

Technology in language training has transformed how students develop and enhance their skills. YouTube has become a vital tool in English language instruction due to its wide accessibility and engaging nature, providing learners with authentic discussions, valuable resources, and collaborative opportunities (Chatta, 2024). Research indicates that YouTube can help students improve their speaking and listening skills by exposing them to diverse pronunciations, syntax, and contextual language use (Listiani et

al., 2021). Despite the platform's increasing prevalence in language instruction, the specific benefits of YouTube for enhancing English speaking and listening skills remain unclear. Thanks to the availability of lectures, pronunciation guides, and video tutorials, students can practice and improve their interpersonal skills at their own pace (Sadaf et al., 2024). While these positive aspects are recognized, a comprehensive analysis summarizing research on the distinct advantages of YouTube for enhancing English speaking and listening skills remains necessary (Rahila et al., 2023). This aspect illustrates how YouTube helps reduce speaking anxiety and provides multimedia facilities and opportunities. Instead of detailing how YouTube enhances speaking ability and listening comprehension, several previous studies focus on basic language learning (Wahyuni & Utami, 2021; Feng & Guo, 2024). Addressing this gap is essential for educators and researchers looking to integrate digital technologies into language courses.

Even if earlier research has shown the potential advantages of YouTube for language acquisition, a comprehensive review of actual evidence specifically addressing its effects on both speaking and listening skills is still needed. Fewer studies provide a targeted assessment of spoken language improvement facilitated by YouTube, while many focus on inspirational or basic topics related to language acquisition. Additionally, a more structured examination is necessary due to the diversity of contexts, techniques, and student groups, despite most research supporting the benefits of YouTube, such as improved word pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and listening comprehension (Feng & Guo, 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2021). Applying keywords like "benefits of YouTube," "listening skills," "speaking skills," and "use of YouTube", a systematic search of academic resources, including Google Scholar, ResearchGate, JSTOR, and websites, was used to choose the research projects that were incorporated in this study.

2. METHODOLOGY

This review employs a thematic analysis technique, drawing on 54 peer-reviewed articles that examine the role of constructive information in enhancing English language skills at the tertiary level. The publications were selected by employing terms such as "benefits of YouTube," "listening skills," "writing skills," "use of YouTube," and "speaking skills" during an organized review of scholarly databases, including Google Scholar, ResearchGate, various websites, and JSTOR. To ensure relevance to contemporary educational methods, the analysis was limited to works published between 2009 and 2025. Studies that discussed the advantages of using YouTube for language acquisition and had either conceptual or empirical support, were peer-reviewed, and were published in English, were included. Articles that concentrated on second language acquisition, lacked empirical evidence (like discussions and findings), focused on assessment or listening and speaking skills through YouTube, or were unavailable in English were discarded. Thus, a targeted and superior collection of data for evaluation was acquired.

This research was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework and employed secondary resources, including journal articles and scholarly websites. This thematic review demonstrates the effectiveness of YouTube in language acquisition, which involved carefully reading each of the 54 articles to fully comprehend their content. This study implicitly explored language acquisition through YouTube by investigating key concepts, including the "use of YouTube," its "effect on speaking and listening abilities," and the "difficulties in learning English as a second language." Furthermore, the study also

sought to understand the roller-coaster journey to the language skills of the learners. This theoretical approach aimed to identify the “effectiveness of YouTube” and “the role of YouTube in speaking and listening skills.” Themes were developed and categorized based on the material’s importance to provide a rational and methodical examination of the literature.

Quotations from the source were employed carefully to avoid plagiarism, and all sources were correctly credited following APA-7 guidelines to uphold academic integrity. Possible biases in the selection and interpretation of the research were acknowledged, despite an attempt to encompass a range of viewpoints and circumstances. However, there are significant limits to the study. For example, it primarily focuses on English-language experiments, which may overlook significant findings from studies conducted in other languages. Because research with substantial or beneficial findings has a greater probability of being published, there is also a risk of publication bias. Despite these difficulties, the thematic method provides valuable insights into how formative evaluation supports the development of writing skills in tertiary education by identifying key trends and areas that warrant further investigation.

3. THEMATIC REVIEW

The influence of YouTube on language acquisition has attracted considerable scholarly attention regarding its incorporation (Hasan et al., 2024). According to research, it can provide real, relevant, and interesting information that boosts students’ confidence, enhances speech pronunciation, supports audio learning, and fosters vocabulary development. Although there are still instructional issues related to accessibility and material choice, YouTube remains valuable when utilized in focused, student-centered, organized, and cooperative learning environments.

3.1. YouTube as a Tool for Enhancing Listening Skills

The ability of YouTube to enhance English listening skills is an established pattern across several studies. It serves as an educational tool that introduces students to a variety of dialects, speaking speeds, and real-world situations that replicate actual interactions. YouTube enables learners to engage with English in authentic contexts, which helps them become accustomed to different pronunciation and rhythmic patterns (Rahila et al., 2023; Andini & Zaitun, 2022). Students’ sensory classification and situational listening abilities, which can often be challenging for instructors using conventional classroom methods, develop through multiple sessions. According to Feng and Guo (2024), musical videos, a type of YouTube content, help students improve their listening skills by utilizing rhythm and lyrics. These perceptual cues aid in comprehension and retention. Similarly, Wahyuni and Utami (2021) demonstrate that learners’ understanding of spoken English improves when active listening activities, such as note-taking and following specific methods, are combined with YouTube material. Research conducted further supports the capacity of YouTube to reduce cognitive stress, revealing that learners experience less anxiety and greater focus when listening to familiar content, such as music or vlogs (Toluzhan et al., 2023).

However, certain disadvantages must be acknowledged. Technical challenges, such as internet connectivity issues, bandwidth limitations, and intrusive ads, can distract students (Karim et al., 2023; Listiani et al., 2021). Despite these drawbacks, many consider

YouTube a valuable resource for enhancing listening skills, particularly when teachers implement structured exercises and select relevant content. When properly supervised and designed, YouTube creates an immersive and engaging listening experience that fosters the development of auditory comprehension in English.

3.2. Role of YouTube in Developing Speaking Skills and Learner Confidence

The role of YouTube is effective, and it can help learners become more confident and improve their English-speaking abilities. Speaking is still considered the most challenging ability for ESL/EFL students to acquire due to factors such as low self-confidence, anxiety, and a limited vocabulary (Rahman & Hasan, 2025; Syafiq et al., 2021; Chien et al., 2020). By allowing students to watch practical dialogues, genuine spoken language, and indications of emotion such as movements and gestures, YouTube helps students overcome these obstacles and improve their pronunciation and fluency (Larasati et al., 2023). Establishing trust is yet another significant benefit. According to Sadaf et al. (2024), students who possess immediate knowledge have a greater influence over their studies, which in turn increases their level of independence and engagement. This adaptability promotes autonomous instruction and lessens the anxiety sometimes associated with learning a second language. However, there are also drawbacks, such as the effort required to find suitable sources and the challenge some students face in maintaining their concentration without instructor assistance (Listiani et al., 2021). However, considerable research supports the use of YouTube for language acquisition. YouTube can significantly enhance students' self-trust and communication skills when used in conjunction with planned activities, such as creating conversations, rehearsing statements, or responding to video instructions (Anis & Hasan, 2025).

3.3. Improvement of Listening and Speaking Skills

According to studies, one significant benefit of YouTube is its ability to improve speaking and listening comprehension in English. Researchers note that the platform provides frequently encountered audible input, which can be essential for enhancing word usage, execution, expression, and accent (Wahyuni et al., 2021, 2024). Students can enhance their proficiency and ability to speak effectively by engaging in various tasks, such as watching films, taking written notes, and mimicking spoken phrases (Feng & Guo, 2024; Kustiwan & Lestari, 2024). Research consistently demonstrates that acquiring knowledge through YouTube leads to tangible improvements in language ability, as evidenced by significantly better test scores. Observable indicators of information, such as appearance, behavior, and captions, help learners grasp listening skills, particularly for those with lower proficiency (Gracella & Nur, 2020). Studies conducted in various contexts, including Pakistani schools (Sadaf et al., 2024) and Indonesian universities (Silfani et al., 2025; Novawan et al., 2021), reveal that students generally regard YouTube as a valuable resource for enhancing their responsive (hearing) and creative (speaking) skills. Furthermore, activities that involve taking notes, participating in discussions, or creating video responses offer opportunities for speaking practice and active learning (Syafiq et al., 2021). Most studies agree that YouTube clips are a helpful, cost-effective, and flexible tool for improving verbal English proficiency. However, some acknowledge that students may face challenges with foreign accents or rapid speech (Wahyuni & Utami, 2021).

3.4. Challenges and Pedagogical Considerations

Although YouTube offers numerous benefits, it also has drawbacks for language acquisition, particularly in educational institutions. Access is a concern that continues to emerge in research; students in underdeveloped or rural areas sometimes struggle to connect to the internet or lack the necessary devices to access YouTube regularly (Listiani et al., 2021). Additionally, advertisements or recommendations for irrelevant content might disrupt the learning process, decreasing efficacy and attention. Another problem is the use of inappropriate structured education, particularly for weaker or inexperienced learners. Without the proper facilities, students might find it challenging to employ movies for language acquisition (Khursheed et al., 2023). Additionally, the volume of videos uploaded to YouTube might result in exposure to unsuitable material if the material gathering is not well organized (Sorohiti et al., 2024). Teachers are encouraged to select films thoughtfully, provide engaging assignments, and offer clear instructions and objectives to enhance student achievement (Elareshi et al., 2022). Comprehension and involvement can be further enhanced by extra tools such as conversations, translations, and tests (Anggrarini & Faturukhman, 2021).

3.5. Vocabulary Acquisition and Pronunciation Improvement

YouTube has been previously shown to significantly aid students of the English language in their vocabulary and grammar development (Hasanah & Wahono, 2022). Numerous studies demonstrate how the interactive components of the framework promote situational comprehension and repetition, which enhances word memory and speech consistency (Rachmawati & Cahyani, 2020; Hasan et al., 2020). For example, Listiani et al. (2021) found that YouTube helps students better comprehend the usage and meaning of languages by demonstrating how they are employed in a range of contexts, thereby improving vocabulary learning. Wahyuni and Utami (2021) discovered that when students observed and mimicked native speakers, their fluency improved, enabling them to refine their speech patterns through imitation and close listening. Videos and music-based education are also crucial for enhancing pronunciation and expanding vocabulary.

Feng and Guo (2024) demonstrated how melody and rhyme may act as memory aids, helping students recall words and reproduce appropriate intonation. Wahyuni et al. (2024) claim that recordings and practice sessions helped students improve their ability to pronounce words correctly, especially when they regularly had access to popular English songs. A better understanding of sounds and verbal assurance is fostered by this contact in conjunction with stimulating activities. Additionally, the flexibility of YouTube encourages independent learning by allowing students to review challenging parts again. Syafiq et al. (2021) emphasize that students benefit from having access to YouTube information, which gradually improves their pronunciation and vocabulary recall. When utilized purposefully in organized lessons, YouTube is a helpful instrument for improving English vocabulary and pronunciation, according to the analyzed research (Juma, 2021).

3.6. Authentic and Contextual Learning through YouTube

The importance of YouTube in fostering real-world language acquisition practices has been emphasized by several research studies (Anis & Hasan, 2025). By viewing conferences, vlogs, essays, and casual conversations on YouTube, students can engage with English as it is organically spoken in various situations (Sadaf et al., 2024). These films

provide students with a deeper understanding of speech than traditional reading, as they expose them to diverse pronunciations, interpersonal emotions, and socially varied contexts. Realistic video material enhances students' practical skills by providing them with a comprehensive understanding of how to use language in social contexts (Yassin, 2024). In addition to body language, facial expressions, and speech tones, learners can study the social language norms that govern interactions in English-speaking environments. This combination of spoken and non-spoken inputs promotes linguistic development. YouTube offers more engaging, qualitative, and motivational learning experiences, enabling an independent learning process (Dabamona & Yunus, 2022). The authentic and thematically relevant content of YouTube makes it a dynamic tool for learning and using the English language.

3.7. Collaborative Learning and Peer Interaction

Peer interaction and group instruction are essential when utilizing YouTube for language acquisition, particularly for improving speaking and listening abilities, beyond English. Learners become more comfortable speaking and listening thanks to peer interactions and group projects on YouTube, which promote involvement and individualized instruction. It highlights the peer interaction through an online learning platform that supports collaborative learning, which is crucial for developing listening and speaking skills (Tran et al., 2024). Similar findings were reported by Wahyuni and Utami (2021), who found that students enrolled in YouTube-integrated training developed enhanced speaking skills through the use of organized peer-based tasks, such as collecting comments and discussing the use of language in lectures. Peer interaction also encourages kids to become more independent and proficient communicators. Lectures that utilize YouTube videos help students overcome significant obstacles, such as ignorance and a fear of making mistakes, by promoting teamwork and shared accountability (Hasan et al., 2025a; Syafiq et al., 2021). A helpful and engaging setting for improving English language proficiency has been established by integrating YouTube with peer-reviewed and networked learning methodologies. Despite language skills, YouTube helps learners build connections and participate by allowing them to share comments and collaborate on information.

4. DISCUSSION

This comprehensive evaluation of the research literature examined the benefits of YouTube for enhancing English language skills and yielded several noteworthy findings from various studies. Increased study motivation, enhanced speaking and listening skills, encounters with real languages, a particular emphasis on learning, and cultural awareness were the main topics. YouTube video also helps EFL learners communicate through their own cultures (Yang et al., 2021). One recurring issue in the research is the capacity to inspire students on YouTube. Utilizing YouTube significantly increased student enthusiasm and involvement, which subsequently led to substantial improvements in speaking and listening skills (Wahyuni et al., 2021). These findings align with earlier studies that demonstrate how digital media can enhance student involvement. Learners who engaged in YouTube-based education showed greater motivation and engagement in their education than those who received instruction using traditional textbooks. This rise in interest is typically attributed to the accessibility and multiple mediums of YouTube

content, which cater to various learning approaches and offer options beyond the traditional instruction schedule (Alobaid, 2020).

Additionally, research has repeatedly demonstrated that YouTube exposes children to real-world language usage, which is typically absent from classroom instruction. While traditional resources usually provide rehearsed or artificial exchanges, YouTube exposes students to real-life conversations, informal phrases, and a diversity of accents (Wahyuni et al., 2021). Real resources help students acquire the practical language skills and capacities needed to use language in daily contexts. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating authentic multimedia into language instruction to reflect the social, linguistic, and cultural diversity of English (Yassin, 2024; Hasan et al., 2020). Using actual resources to create programs not only improves education but also prepares learners for global connection by bridging the gap between classroom learning and everyday interactions. It was discovered that utilizing YouTube specifically enhanced listening abilities. Students who used YouTube demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their listening ability (Wahyuni et al., 2021). This finding aligns with research by Sadaf et al. (2024), who found that students who viewed original YouTube videos demonstrated improved listening abilities and dependability. By incorporating YouTube videos into their courses, teachers can improve learners' listening abilities and promote more interactive, multimodal listening exercises.

Learners' vocabulary, pronunciation, and vocal expressiveness all increased after watching spoken English videos on YouTube (Wahyuni et al., 2021). These findings demonstrate how YouTube helps students imitate the language rhythms and voices of their native speakers. Additionally, Saed et al. (2021) propose that interactive elements of YouTube, such as summarizing or replying to movies, increase spoken output and provide students with examples of social speaking. This study has significant implications for teachers who wish to develop effective teaching methods. Examples of YouTube content that could provide relevant discussions for structured training include peer classroom instruction, video debates, and online writings. YouTube not only enhances students' skills but also fosters empathy for people from diverse backgrounds. According to Wahyuni et al. (2021), for instance, understanding of ethical and cultural standards improved when exposed to a variety of content, including documentary films, YouTube videos, and discussions. Similarly, Yassin (2024) argues that the cultural context enhances communication skills by helping students understand language use within specific social situations.

There are still several inconsistencies and inadequacies despite the largely excellent results. Several studies discuss the difficulties of using the internet, while many highlight its promise. Digital understanding and independence for learners, for instance, are frequently presumed but not guaranteed. Some students may find it challenging to locate trustworthy and educationally beneficial films or to navigate the content (Hidayah, 2022). Furthermore, little is known about how these platforms can assist students who are less proficient or have limited access to digital resources. More empirical studies and the development of accessible online classrooms that cater to various levels of accessibility and learner preparation are necessary to address these discrepancies. The actual incorporation of YouTube into teaching practices presents an additional challenge. Although Wahyuni et al. (2021) recommend strategies for before, during, and post-viewing stages, numerous instructors may lack the necessary skills or confidence to implement

these strategies effectively. Deliberate video use is crucial, according to Hidayah (2022), who notes that poorly selected or overly lengthy videos can hinder education instead of enhancing it. This underscores the urgent need for training that provides teachers with the instructional expertise in technology required for successful media integration.

There are significant consequences for academics, teachers, and legislators (Hasan et al., 2025). Teachers should be encouraged to use YouTube as a primary educational resource for fostering interpersonal skills rather than as an adjunct. Policy should promote the inclusion of digital information in language courses, along with recommendations for its responsible and efficient use. Furthermore, as digital disparities might compromise the universal access to these technologies, officials must ensure that every educational institution has comparable access to information (UNESCO, 2020). Future studies should investigate students with varying skill levels, examine the consequences over time, and consider the socioeconomic and cultural contexts in which online instruction occurs. This evaluation demonstrates that YouTube is a valuable tool for improving EFL students' communication and listening abilities (Ibhar, 2022). The learning environment is particularly adept at encouraging student participation, communication skills, and cultural understanding due to its integrity, connectivity, and multilingualism (Hasan et al., 2020). However, rigorous educational design, teacher preparation, and further investigation are necessary to realize its potential fully. YouTube and related networks offer promising opportunities to develop more engaging, customized, and effective language instruction settings as studies continue to shift toward virtual and blended approaches (Hasan et al., 2025). Lev Vygotsky has a significant influence on this research project and is closely related to the theory of constructive learning. Vygotsky's concept of "Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)" also aligns with how YouTube supports learners from initial comprehension to greater autonomy in speaking and listening skills. The emphasis on listening and speaking skills, as well as the effectiveness of YouTube, aligns well with Vygotsky's sociocultural approach to learning.

Use YouTube as a core language-learning tool to boost motivation, listening, and speaking skills through authentic, engaging content. Prioritize real-world videos with diverse accents and cultural contexts to enhance practical communication and cultural awareness. Train teachers to integrate YouTube effectively, guiding them in selecting videos and designing structured pre-, during-, and post-viewing activities. Support learners with digital literacy training to help them navigate YouTube independently and identify high-quality educational materials. Address accessibility gaps and expand research to ensure equitable tech access and explore YouTube's long-term impact across proficiency levels.

6. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to critically examine YouTube as a tool for enhancing English proficiency in instructional settings. It critically explored diverse themes throughout the chosen literature. It discussed various themes, including motivation, effective speaking and listening abilities, language acquisition, challenges, benefits, learning, pronunciation, and effectiveness. Utilizing YouTube as a language learning tool, learners demonstrated increased excitement, higher proficiency, and more involvement. These results validate the instructive utility of the platform, particularly in facilitating student-focused, multimedia education. Regarding the main research question, "What are the benefits of

using YouTube videos in developing English listening and speaking skills?” explore how YouTube improves listening and speaking skills through various materials, including video, audio, and contextual understanding. This discovery supports the use of YouTube as beneficial for both learners and users in language acquisition.

However, despite this strength, this investigation reveals a gap. Furthermore, prospective studies are needed to investigate the long-term effects of YouTube-based knowledge. This critical study will also encourage future researchers to work on systematically integrating YouTube and exploring how students of multiple abilities interact with and gain from video-based education. This evaluation demonstrates that YouTube is an effective and user-friendly tool for improving English abilities. By critically examining the text, this study will provide a new perspective and understanding of the epic.

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