

# A Critical Analysis of the Effects of YouTube Videos on Students' English Language Skills

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**Abstract**—Over the last two decades, major progress has been made in using technology and YouTube in the English language learning context to enhance students' skills. Despite the popularity of research on YouTube as a platform, there is a lack of systematic empirical evidence regarding the YouTube video effect in the English language learning context. In response to the increasing use of YouTube videos for English language learning, this study investigates the status of YouTube in the English language learning context. The study reviewed 15 studies from 2015–2023 to assess the impact of using YouTube videos to improve students' English language skills. The results indicate that using YouTube videos positively impacts students' language learning. The results also reveal that students use YouTube videos to acquire and practice general English skills rather than specific skills such as listening, writing and reading. Additionally, the results demonstrate that the majority of studies on the use of YouTube videos for English language learning have considered other education settings. Although most reviewed studies concluded that YouTube videos positively impact students' English language skills, the literature also highlights certain challenges. Future studies should examine the impact of YouTube videos on specific English skills and examine several educational levels, including the university level.

**Index Terms**—YouTube, videos, English language, education level

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, information technology (IT) has played a key role in learning and teaching foreign languages, and such technologies are currently used in the educational systems of numerous nations (Alqarni, 2021; Jdaitawi et al., 2022; Soliman et al., 2022; Jdaitawi et al., 2023; Al-Mawadiah & Al-Zoubi, 2020; Al-Mawadieh, 2020; Jdaitawi & Kan'an, 2022; Carstens et al., 2021; Casa Nova, 2014; Elham et al., 2023). Technology can make students into active participants, provide them with autonomy in their learning process, and enhance their visual and collaborative participation (Bataneh et al., 2018). Additionally, literature (Costa et al., 2012; Casa-Nova, 2014) revealed that technology-mediated learning focuses on student learning and promotes essential skills development for a given academic and professional path. Technology aids like audio, video, and PowerPoint presentation tools are commonly used in the process of teaching and learning (Qomaria & Zaim, 2020), and social and online media such as YouTube videos have recently become popular for watching and uploading videos of daily activities. Compared to traditional methods, tools like YouTube can provide unlimited information access, facilitate learning anytime and anywhere, and boost learner activeness and engagement (Alqarni, 2021). As one of the most used media platforms, YouTube has millions of visitors daily who upload, watch, and share videos; earn money; and search for answers to questions (Qomaria & Zaim, 2020; Mustafa, 2018).

Multiple studies (Ayu, 2016; Medoukali, 2015; Cahyana, 2020) have indicated that YouTube videos have been adapted for use in the classroom and are useful tools for enhancing English language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing (Al Jawad, 2020; Alameri & Rababa, 2020). However, previous studies have provided minimal information regarding the effect of YouTube media on English language literature (Widiantari et al., 2023). One review determined that YouTube videos in English language literature have focused mainly on YouTube videos in the English language, underlining the need for more studies to extensively examine the subject (Widiantari et al., 2023). Furthermore, no study has differentiated between the various impacts of YouTube videos on English language skills, and thus which YouTube videos are effective and their role in English language skills remain unclear. In response to the increasing use of YouTube videos in English language learning, studies have analyzed the importance of YouTube media for English language skills acquisition. Importantly, YouTube videos for English language skills are a relatively new field of study, as reflected by the limited number of studies conducted thus far (Istifci & Ucar, 2021; Shofatunnisa et al., 2021; Alobaid, 2020).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Language is a means of exchanging ideas, information, and knowledge with others; as a means of interacting with environmental stimuli, it is one of the most crucial communication abilities among individuals (Haddad, 2020). Language contains four sub-skills: listening, writing, speaking, and reading (Husain, 2015). These four skills are vital in our daily lives and help us communicate thoughts, ideas, attitudes, and opinions. The use of technological resources such as the internet for English language acquisition is essential to achieve significant results (Medoukali, 2015; Yasin et al., 2018; Cahyana, 2020; Medoukali, 2015). Videos benefit students both as entertainment and as learning tools (Cahyana, 2020)

because they feature body language and contextual clues, can appeal to students' "short attention spans" (Yasin et al., 2018), and train their ears to listen and process the new language.

YouTube launched in 2005 (Duffy, 2008) and is now considered the best-known video-sharing website, with videos featuring a variety of content such as reviews, tutorials, and more (Miller, 2017). Although most of its content is entertainment, YouTube also hosts video content that can be used in the classroom (Syafiq et al., 2021). Videos of speaking skills lessons on YouTube can be incorporated into English language course curricula to assist in learners' understanding of the lessons, enhance their skills, and resolve their barriers to learning (Sari & Bahara, 2022; Almurashi, 2016b; Selvarajan & Thiyagarajan, 2018). For example, Ayu (2016) and Medoukali (2015) concluded that using YouTube videos enhanced students' listening skills due to the audio and visual elements of the videos, which make words, phrases, and speech familiar to viewers and enable them to understand the content and improve their language skills (Cahyana, 2020). Furthermore, YouTube videos enhance the speaking skills of students who vlog and upload video assignments (Saiful, 2019; Rahayu & Putri, 2019), and it makes them understand English literature clearly (Almurashi, 2016). YouTube provides students with the opportunity to clearly understand and discuss the events in a novel in a more enriching manner (Cahyana, 2020).

### III. METHODOLOGY

A review of the literature was carried out to determine the impact of YouTube videos on English language skills acquisition. This critical analysis was focused on YouTube videos rather than other social media platforms and was based on the PRISMA review protocol involving search strategy, study selection, and data extraction and analysis, as suggested by Liberati et al. (2009; see Figure 1).

Only a limited number of studies have been carried out on the use of YouTube videos for English language learning. In terms of YouTube empirical studies selection, this study was carried out in a systematic way aimed at the English language context. Literature has introduced several skills of English, including speaking, listening, reading, writing, and vocabulary, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria in this study reviewed those published from 2015 to 2024 from specific databases, namely Web of Science, SCOPUS, and Elsevier. The study used the following search terms: "YouTube," "English language," "reading," "speaking," "EFL," "writing," "listening," and "vocabulary." A total of 34 studies were reviewed, of which 15 met the inclusion criteria (written in English, including English language and participants, etc.), while 19 were excluded based on the following: they were published on databases other than Web of Science, SCOPUS, or Elsevier; they were conference papers; or they did not specify education level and outcomes.

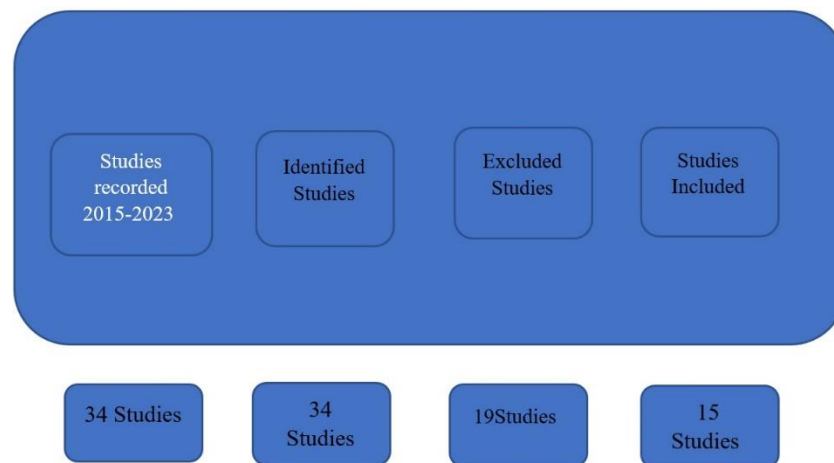


Figure 1. Flowcharts Describing the Data Collection Process

#### *Research Questions*

Given the growth in YouTube video usage for English language learning, there is a need to investigate the effectiveness of using YouTube videos for English language skills acquisition. Hence, this study critically analyzes existing literature to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of YouTube videos on students' language learning?
2. What are the common English language skills used in YouTube videos?
3. What is the education level used in the English language regarding YouTube videos?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using YouTube videos in the English language context?

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study addresses the following question: "What is the impact of YouTube videos on students' language learning?" The results of previous studies are reported in Table 1 and show that YouTube videos enhance skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and vocabulary (Boholano et al., 2022; Toleuzhan et al., 2023; Olasina, 2017). The

reviewed studies report positive outcomes concerning YouTube videos' enhancement of students' English language speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary skills (Toluzhan et al., 2023; Olasina, 2017; Al-Ameri et al., 2020). Thus, YouTube videos play a crucial role in enhancing English language skills.

The main objective of this study was to systemically review empirical studies dedicated to YouTube video use in the English language learning context and the impact of YouTube videos on students' English skills. Most studies supported positive outcomes, supporting the potential of YouTube video use for promoting practical skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing while also being fun (Boholano et al., 2022; Toluzhan et al., 2023; Olasina, 2017). Hence, the study highlights the importance of using YouTube video activities for English language learning. The results may be attributed to the fact that most English language skills activities are practice-based and, as such, YouTube videos are an effective technique for learning. According to Purwanti et al. (2022), YouTube videos promote student interaction and foster motivation and participation (Al-Jawad et al., 2021).

TABLE 1  
SUMMARY OF THE PREVIOUS STUDIES

Skill	Author	Year	Outcomes
English Language and Vocabulary	Al-Ameri et al.	2020	YouTube increased the ability to learn new English vocabulary and learning process.
	Cahyana	2020	improved English skills
	Yunus	2022	Improved English language and contributed to English learning experiences
	Sari et al.	2020	Improved English language skills
	Boholano et al.	2022	improved English comprehension skills
	Zitouni et al.	2021	improved English pronunciation skills
	Sakkir et al.	2020	improved English language skills
	Montero-Perez et al.	2017	Improved English words and vocabulary
	Wang et al.	2020	Improved English language
	Speaking	Encalada	2019
Toluzhan et al.		2023	improved communication fluency and oral skills
Muslem et al.		2022	improved speaking skills
Arndt et al.		2018	improved vocabulary learning
Al-Jawad et al.		2021	Improved listening skills and motivation and participation
Reading and Writing	Olasina	2017	improved academic writing

With regard to the common English language skills used in YouTube videos, the results in Table 2 indicate that most past studies on YouTube have focused on general English language (73.3%), followed by speaking (13.3%), listening (6.6%), and writing skills (6.6%). No study was conducted on videos dedicated to reading skills. These results may be because most YouTube videos are about general language knowledge, while videos dedicated to specific skills may be harder to find.

TABLE 2  
SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLES' INFORMATION REGARDING YOUTUBE VIDEOS AND ENGLISH SKILLS

Skills	Number of the studies	Percentages
English Language and Vocabulary	11	73.3%
Speaking	2	13.3%
Listening	1	6.6%
Reading	0	0
Writing	1	6.6%

In relation to Research Question 3, the results in Table 3 demonstrate that YouTube videos are frequently used at the university education level (60%), followed by the secondary and primary school levels (20% and 20%, respectively). The results also showcase that most previous studies have focused on university students because teaching-learning sessions are based on technology and YouTube videos are regularly used at the university level. In addition, some YouTube videos may not be suitable for school students and may be difficult for them. Moreover, availability of resources and equipment such as smartphones may also explain the results as university students are more likely to have smartphones.

TABLE 3  
SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLES' INFORMATION REGARDING YOUTUBE VIDEOS AND ENGLISH SKILLS

Educational Level	Number of the studies	Percentages
Primary School	3	20%
Secondary School	3	20%
University Level	9	60%

Regarding Research Question 4, the results support that students benefit from YouTube video activities for English learning and can enhance various skills (Boholano et al., 2022; Toleuzhan et al., 2023; Olasina, 2017). The advantages of YouTube video activities include improvement of speaking skills such as pronunciation, grammar, comprehension, and fluency (Palmer, 2018). Sun et al. (2017) concluded that YouTube videos improved students' English-speaking skills, and Toleuzhan et al. (2023) also indicated that YouTube videos facilitate skills such as communication. Moreover, YouTube videos expose students to real-life situations, providing examples of grammar, new words, spellings, and meaning (Purwanti et al., 2022). YouTube videos also promote student interaction (Purwanti et al., 2022), motivation, and participation (Al-Jawad et al., 2021). YouTube videos have a positive impact on students' English skills because they can conduct their learning tasks effectively, improve their vocabulary retention, obtain feedback, and enhance their performance. Also, YouTube videos expose students to real-life situations which provides exposure to grammar, many new words, spellings, and meaning (Purwanti et al., 2022). Also, YouTube videos were revealed to promote students' interaction (Purwanti et al., 2022) were related to their learning, and supported their motivation and participation (Al-Jawad et al., 2021). As previous studies indicated, YouTube videos have a positive impact on the learning English skills of students, because they can effectively conduct their learning tasks improve their vocabulary retention provide them with their feedback practices and enhance their performance. On the other hand, although studies have reported positive results of using YouTube for English language learning, challenges have also been identified. The most frequently reported technological issue regards internet connection (e.g., Purwanti et al., 2022). Anggrarini and Faturkhman (2021) highlighted another issue related to long videos, which may affect students' emotions and lead to boredom. Additionally, teachers may encounter difficulties in finding suitable YouTube videos for their students and the learning goals of specific topics (Anggrarini & Faturkhman, 2021). Hence, the effectiveness of YouTube video use depends on the experience of teachers and students.

Regarding the benefits of YouTube videos in the English language, studies (Boholano et al., 2022; Toleuzhan et al., 2023; Purwanti et al., 2022) have revealed that YouTube videos lead to enhanced fundamental knowledge of the English language in learning tasks and performance of daily life skills. The result may be attributed to the general premise that technology (like YouTube videos) is effective and useful for special purposes and English language students. Technology enables students to control their language learning and contributes to enhanced experience and efficient task engagement. Challenges in the use of YouTube videos include availability of the internet, resources, and equipment. Therefore, decision-makers should provide the necessary tools and technological infrastructure to meet the needs of the general learning process as well as those of language students.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study reviewed literature published from 2015 to 2023 on YouTube video use for English language learning (Purwanti et al., 2022; Sari & Margana, 2019; Yasmin et al., 2022). The study carried out a critical analysis of the literature to explain YouTube's status in English language contexts among students. The review supports the effectiveness of YouTube videos in English language learning settings, with the majority of the literature highlighting the positive impact and potential of YouTube videos to meet English language educational requirements concerning skills learning. Based on the results, YouTube videos are useful in English language learning as they contribute to student interaction and participation and enhance English skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This is true for students at various levels of education. Nevertheless, YouTube activities remain challenging to use during the learning process, necessitating further evaluation as well as refinement of design.

### *Findings*

The reviewed studies report positive outcomes concerning YouTube videos' enhancement of students' English language speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary skills. The results also revealed that that most past studies on YouTube have focused on general English language. Finally, the results also demonstrate that YouTube videos are frequently used at the university education level.

### *Implications*

There is a clear need to further examine the degree to which YouTube videos can influence skills development in the English language context. Hence, this study contributed to the literature by conducting a critical analysis and review of published research to provide information concerning the skills that can be acquired through YouTube videos.

### *Limitations and Future Research*

There are several limitations to this study, the first limitation pertains to the limited number of examined studies (obtained from ISI, Scopus, and Elsevier). Future studies should include research from other journals on English language education. Although the researcher sought to identify studies related to YouTube and specific English language skills,

only a few studies on this topic were found; thus, future studies should strive to fill this gap. Additionally, the scope of studies on YouTube activities that support English language skills should be further expanded.

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