



# Perception and Use of YouTube by Students in Learning English: A Study in a Public School in North Sumatera, Indonesia

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## Abstract.

Online learning videos have been described as effective in workplace learning and education. Educators and students use public video-sharing sites like YouTube to teach and learn work practices, new job roles, and skills. There is a need, however, to develop more knowledge about how such instructional videos support learning. This study investigates students' uses of and perceptions towards YouTube in high schools in North Sumatera, Indonesia. The study was conducted using a structured questionnaire. The sample included participants chosen through lottery sampling from seven classes, which totaled up to 52 participants of class II (class XI) of State High Schools. Two research questions were answered, and data was analyzed through percentages, frequency counts, and cross-tabulations. This research has shown that most students use YouTube to learn, improve the learning process, and get closer to learning lesson content based on teaching English vocabulary.

**Keywords:** high school, perception, social media, student, teaching and learning, YouTube

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rising importance of online educational tools is spreading due to their ability to give more flexibility in access to content and education anytime and anywhere. Joshi (2021), Castro and Tumibay (2019), and Hashey and Stahl (2014) declared that online learning tools are increasingly being adopted in the teaching methodology around the world. This evidently shows that digital ones are replacing traditional learning environments. YouTube, recognized as a significant online educational resource for secondary school students, is viewed as a powerful instrument for improving the learning experience (Moghavvemi et al., 2018). This platform serves as an easily

accessible channel for sharing videos, which is increasingly being used in new educational methods worldwide. Besides, YouTube effectively secures learning materials and acquires new competencies (Arndt & Woore, 2018; Zhou et al., 2020). Although the use of YouTube in the higher education classroom is widespread and therefore niche, this approach is gaining more and more attention (Alon & Herath, 2014; TorresRamírez, García-Domingo, Aguilera, & Casa, 2014; Tugrul, 2012). Teachers emphasized that using YouTube as an online learning tool can lead to technology addiction (Nacak, Bağlama, & Demir, 2020). Thus, using social media, such as YouTube, to enhance learning and participation is beginning to penetrate the educational field (Güney, 2023). Teachers usually struggle to help students access online resources to prepare lessons. In addition, students are not yet accustomed to the dynamics of online learning scenarios, which are not teacher-centered but require active student participation (Ramírez-Donoso et al., 2021).

Previous studies on the use of YouTube in educational settings, specifically on language learning, have revealed that YouTube could be effective for increasing vocabulary, improving pronunciation, and enhancing overall language ability (Al-Jarf, 2022; Henrichsen, 2018; Ja, 2019). Dizon (2022) did research using YouTube as a channel for teaching language; he also streamed sites as one of the avenues for language learning, documenting the strengths and limitations this trend involves. These findings show that using YouTube in the language class enhances students' concentration and retention ability since students usually recall what they see more effectively than what they hear. Lida (2020) further elaborated that YouTube enables students to acquire new English vocabulary through the different video genres. Additionally, the videos featured on YouTube enhance students' understanding of English sentence structure by presenting it alongside other lexical items within the content. According to Friyanto in 2019, video blogs are the most helpful kind of content on YouTube, which connects to a second language acquisition's informal environment where students learn English, since by using them, they can teach themselves English through various media outside of school.

While previous studies have provided some navigation regarding the potential of YouTube to specifically enhance vocabulary acquisition, newly significant methods have not been used. A better understanding of how YouTube videos facilitate learning, especially on a larger scale, is needed (Güney, 2023; Kabouha, 2015). Furthermore, few scholarly works reported on high school students' impressions of YouTube in higher education institutions scale, especially those conducted in the Indonesian context. To fill this gap, this study adopts an innovative methodological approach to explore Indonesian students' use and awareness of YouTube. To investigate this phenomenon, this study seeks to answer the following questions: What kind of perception do high school students in North Sumatera, Indonesia, have about YouTube for learning English? How do high school students in North Sumatera, Indonesia, use YouTube to learn English? Practically, this study aims to significantly contribute to developing theories and practices of students' vocabulary learning in the context of

contemporary and effective English language learning, meeting the developmental needs of today's digital generation of students. New insights from the interview data are discovered through the data contained in the survey.

## 2. METHOD

### Study design

A descriptive-qualitative design was employed in the present study (Bogdan & Belkin, 2007). This study used a Google Forms online questionnaire to investigate high school students' perceptions of YouTube and their English vocabulary use.

### Setting and participants

This study was conducted at one of the senior high schools in Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia. Fifty-two senior high school students (twenty-three males and twenty-nine females) were recruited through purposive sampling. Participation was voluntary, and the students and homeroom teacher obtained the informed consent form. The participants were students aged between 15 and 16 years old. The researchers recruited all students from two classes.

In addition, to investigate students' perceptions of YouTube in learning English vocabulary, students were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with 32 statements on a 5-point Likert Scale (from 1= Strongly Agree to 5= Strongly Disagree). Examples of statements included, "*To me, YouTube is nothing more than a video-sharing website*, and *I see YouTube as a community*."

### Data collection

Information was gathered by administering a well-organized questionnaire to the students. The questionnaire was created to evaluate the students' utilization patterns of YouTube for English language learning, their opinion of its efficacy as an educational tool, and its influence on their involvement with English class material, including vocabulary acquisition. The survey comprised a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Then, it was divided into parts that addressed demographic details, frequency of YouTube usage, specific content observed, and perceived educational results.

### Data analysis

The gathered data was examined using descriptive statistical techniques, such as calculating percentages, frequency counts and creating cross-tabulations. These methodologies were utilized to accurately depict the patterns and trends in the students' utilization of YouTube to learn English.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To structure the discussion presentation, this study follows the display of the percentage of the questionnaire of students' perceptions. The results are illustrated by tables and

numbers of percentages of the students' votes from the questionnaire, which are shown in order as follows.

**Table 1.** The Percentage of the Questionnaire of Students' Perception of YouTube

Statement	Agree	Disagree
1. To me, YouTube is nothing more than a video-sharing website	82.7%	17.3%
2. I see YouTube as community	57.7%	44.2%
3. YouTube is an amusement and social communication website that can be used as resource for learning.	88.5%	11.5%
4. YouTube as learning materials can create communication between learners, peers and tutors	86.5%	13.5%
5. You Tube, is all about two-way communication, collaboration and incorporating YouTube in the classroom is an ideal place to utilize these technologies	92.3%	7.7%

As shown in Table 1, students' perception of YouTube is varied. The students perceive YouTube as merely a video-sharing website. They also see the platform as an entertainment and social communication website that can be used as a learning resource and as a learning material to create communication between students, peers, and tutors. The perception that was most agreed upon by the respondents, with a percentage of 92.3%, was that YouTube is about two-way communication and collaboration, and combining YouTube in the classroom is an ideal place to utilize this technology. In line with this, a previous study conducted by Esparza Puga & Aguilar (2021) stated that the learning obtained by students from YouTube is a type of learning or learning assistance that cannot be obtained from the context of traditional schools in the classroom. Therefore, traditional classes need to utilize this technology. Notably, the respondents were divided into two sides, almost equally, based on their perception of "I see YouTube as a community." Half of the respondents (57.7%) admitted that they considered YouTube as a community, while the other half (44.2%) admitted that they did not consider YouTube as a community. These differing perspectives suggest that whether students view YouTube as a community may depend on their experiences and interactions with the platform (Tan, 2013).

**Table 2.** The Percentage of the Questionnaire of Students' Use of YouTube

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. YouTube is useful as a learning tool	26.9%	9.6%	15.4%	34.6%	13.5%
2. I use YouTube to enhance	13.5%	17.3%	46.2%	9.6%	13.5%

	learning experience and keep me engaged with the contents					
3.	YouTube offers seamless access to English vocabulary	9.6%	15.4%	55.8%	7.7%	11.5%
4.	I use YouTube as source of learning materials to buttress my English vocabulary mastery	17.3%	13.5%	40.4%	11.5%	17.3%
5.	I use YouTube to improve communication with the teachers and friends	21.2%	9.6%	42.3%	11.5%	15.4%
6.	YouTube is useful as instructional and learning aid website	17.3%	5.8%	23.1%	17.3%	36.5%
7.	I use YouTube to have increase access to resources	13.5%	7.7%	25%	40.4%	13.5%
8.	I use YouTube as source of information to conduct tasks	11.5%	11.5%	42.3%	15.4%	19.2%

Table 2 summarizes the use of YouTube by students, which, on average, was neutrally responded to by the respondents. According to the respondents, the most significant use was YouTube as a learning tool. A study by Truong and Le (2022) also recognized YouTube as a tool that helps the learning process. Meanwhile, the lowest use was using YouTube to improve communication with teachers and friends. For communication with teachers and friends, especially among high school students, students usually use text messages more often (Li, Cummins, & Deng, 2017). In addition to these two

uses, students also use YouTube as a basis for learning materials, to improve the learning experience, as a tool to expand learning resources, as an assistant in doing assignments, and as learning instructions. When asked about the usefulness of YouTube in their learning, on average, the respondents expressed neutrality. This shows that the usefulness of YouTube in learning is neutral with its uselessness. More than 50% of the respondents positioned themselves in a neutral position for the statement “YouTube offers smooth access to English vocabulary”. This means that there are YouTube videos that offer smooth access to English vocabulary, and there are also those that do not. This finding is supported by previous research by Kabouha and Elyas (2015), which stated that only well-chosen video materials could improve students' language learning process. Thus, in incorporating YouTube into the learning process, we must choose video materials that offer seamless access to English vocabulary.

**Table 3.** The percentage of the questionnaire of students' content quality perception of YouTube

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. I learn new vocabularies from YouTube video	19.2%	17.3%	21.2%	28.8%	13.5%
2. I learn correct pronunciation of English words from YouTube videos	11.5%	26.9%	36.5%	11.5%	13.5%
3. I think YouTube contents are always presented in a useful format	11.5%	21.2%	44.2%	13.5%	9.6%
4. YouTube provides up-to-date information	15.4%	7.7%	25%	32.7%	19.2%
5. YouTube provides course content/information that seems to be exactly what I need	13.5%	13.5%	21.2%	32.7%	19.2%
6. YouTube provides con-	15.4%	17.3%	17.3%	28.8%	21.2%

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As shown in Table 3, students' perceptions of the quality of YouTube content vary widely. Most of the respondents expressed that they learned new vocabulary from YouTube videos. Most also agreed that YouTube provides content or information that suits their needs. Furthermore, the study respondents also admitted that YouTube displays content or information relevant to their lessons. This is in line with the results of a study by Kabouha and Elyas (2015), which also found that both students and teachers have positive attitudes toward using YouTube videos to facilitate language learning. However, the respondents showed a high level of doubt regarding the perception that they learned the correct pronunciation of English words through YouTube videos. This indicates that learning how to pronounce English words through YouTube videos does not have a good enough impact (Lida et al., 2020). Henrichsen (2018) argued that this issue happened because pronunciation resources are limited to videos teaching English sounds to intermediate to advanced English learners. Another doubt was shown by the respondents regarding the perception that YouTube content is always presented in a helpful format. As stated by Diers et al. (2022), they studied how many YouTube videos were useful and less useful. Although more than half of the videos were considered useful, many videos were considered misleading. In terms of the perception of the quality of YouTube content, Table 3 summarizes that although students learn new vocabulary through YouTube videos, they still struggle to learn the correct pronunciation.

**Table 4.** The percentage of the questionnaire of students' perception of the usefulness of YouTube

No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Using YouTube videos in my own learning activity improves my English, especially, Vocabulary.	21.2%	11.5%	17.3%	30.8%	19.2%
2	Using YouTube videos in my own activity enhances my effectiveness	11.5%	15.4%	46.2%	15.4%	11.5%
3	Using YouTube videos in my own learning activities improves the quality of assignments I do	9.6%	13.5%	23.1%	30.8%	23.1%

4	Using YouTube videos in my learning tasks enables me to accomplish tasks more quickly	13.5%	9.6%	26.9%	5.8%	44.2%
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Students’ perceptions of the usefulness of YouTube are shown in Table 4. The only usefulness doubted was the perception that using YouTube videos in personal activities enhanced self-efficacy. Respondents expressed that YouTube videos were ineffective for personal activities. This result is supported by a study by Pakpour (2023), which examined a YouTube addiction assessment. The study found that participants with more frequent YouTube use had more significant general social media addiction and psychological distress.

In contrast to the detrimental use of YouTube in personal activities, the use of YouTube in learning activities actually improved the quality of learning tasks carried out by respondents. Respondents also agreed that using YouTube videos to do assignments made them able to complete the tasks faster. Furthermore, respondents expressed that using YouTube videos in learning activities improved their English skills, especially vocabulary. The results of Table 4 are supported by Arndt and Woore (2018), who stated that aspects of vocabulary knowledge–orthography, semantics, and grammatical functions–are best learned through this medium.

**Table 5.** *The percentage of the questionnaire of students' perception of the ease of using YouTube.*

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. Navigating through YouTube is easy	26.9%	13.5%	11.5%	38.5%	9.6%
2. Searching through YouTube is always possible	17.3%	15.4%	21.2%	28.8%	17.3%
3. I don't usually have access problem to YouTube	19.2%	15.4%	23.1%	30.8%	11.5%
4. The degree of response of YouTube is fantastic	13.5%	11.5%	21.2%	40.4%	13.5%

Respondents indicated a positive perception of the ease of using YouTube in Table 5. The students reported that it was easy to navigate YouTube, that searching YouTube was always possible, that they had no issues accessing YouTube, and that the response



degree on YouTube was fantastic. This shows that students encountered no significant difficulties which prevented them from enjoying YouTube. Hobbs (2018) argued that the ease of using YouTube encourages students to use it in many ways, including language learning. The ease of using YouTube also helps students with learning disabilities benefit from YouTube's customizable features such as subtitles and the ability to adjust playback speed, which improves learning outcomes (Mo, Wang, Dai, & Jin, 2022). Notably, Hafner and Miller (2011) found that multimedia elements in YouTube videos—such as visual cues, subtitles, and real-world contexts—supported the retention and comprehension of new vocabulary. In addition, videos often provided examples of word usage in various contexts, which helped deepen students' understanding and ability to apply new vocabulary in practical situations.

**Table 6.** The percentage of the questionnaire of problems associated with the use of Youtube

	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
1.	Access problem	40.4%	61.5%
2.	Network/server failure	46.2%	55.8%
3.	Long download time for large Adobe and PPT files	65.4%	36.5%
4.	Incessant power failure	32.7%	71.2%

In contrast to the ease of use of YouTube by respondents, this study also investigated the problems associated with the use of YouTube. A study by Seo and Jung (2022) examined the accessibility issues of YouTube and looked for ways to improve YouTube accessibility. In contrast to the study, the results of Table 6 show that most students did not have accessibility problems (61.5%). Students also admitted to not having network/server failure problems (55.8%) or incessant power outages (71.2%). The only problem experienced by respondents, referring to Table 6, was long download times for large Adobe and PPT files (65.4%). Platform accessibility is closely related to learning effectiveness. Echazarra and Radinger (2019) highlighted using YouTube in rural schools to compensate for the lack of advanced science courses and teaching expertise, making it an important resource for students in under-resourced areas. This means that the better the platform's accessibility, the better the learning effectiveness.

As illustrated by the data and results in the tables above, when looking at students' perceptions of YouTube, different perspectives show that how students view YouTube depends on their individual experiences and how they interact with the platform (Zhou et al., 2020). Then, students concluded that some YouTube videos offer smooth access to English vocabulary, and some do not. Regarding the perception of the quality of YouTube content, this study concluded that although students get new vocabulary through YouTube videos, they still have difficulty learning the correct pronunciation (Al-Jarf, 2022). Students also reported having no problems accessing or using YouTube. In general, the findings of this study indicate that students mostly use YouTube to learn, enhance their learning experience, and engage students with English learning content, especially learning English vocabulary. Studies on other social media

platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have also positively affected vocabulary learning (Ko, 2019). However, YouTube stands out for its rich multimedia content and ability to rewind, pause, and rewatch videos, which facilitates repeated exposure—an essential factor in vocabulary retention, as Nation (2013) noted.

Educators should consider integrating YouTube into their teaching strategies, particularly for vocabulary acquisition. This is supported by research from Szeto et al. (2016) and others, who advocate the inclusion of social media in the classroom to create a more engaging and interactive learning environment. Educators can leverage YouTube to provide supplemental materials, assign video-based assignments, and encourage students to explore content that reinforces their vocabulary learning (Kaya, 2023). However, as with all educational tools, YouTube's effectiveness depends on its use; thus, continued research and careful integration into the educational process are needed.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This research aims at studying on a Youtube site that studied perception and utilization as a learning tool with an emphasis on English language teaching for public school settings located in North Sumatera, Indonesia. The findings revealed that YouTube is a ubiquitous platform, and students used it to supplement their English learning through live demonstrations of language use in actual scenarios (instructional videos) and interactive tutorials. This is not only due to the learning opportunities YouTube gives by seeing and hearing. It also enables students to improve their listening experience, talking ability, and comprehension skills inside a classroom in more versatile ways than was commonplace at that point.

The students mostly believe that YouTube is useful for improving their English skills (vocabulary acquisition). According to this result, using YouTube's engagement lessons in formal English education might work appropriately with guidance and management from a teacher. In the absence of that, teachers can curate and recommend contexts they trust to use in teaching — channels or specific videos well-matched for their curriculum objectives — to guide students through video land responsibly and reinforce critical media literacy.

Finally, YouTube provides substantial promise as an ancillary for EFL learners, particularly in contexts where resources are scarce. Employed strategically, however, can enhance the language learning experience and help stimulate students into using a language both in and out of the classroom

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