

The Use of Youtube Media In Enhancing Vocabulary Mastery of Eleventh Grade Students at SMKN 1 Gowa

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Abstract

This study investigates students' perceptions of YouTube as a medium for learning English vocabulary among eleventh-grade vocational school students. With the growing use of digital platforms in language education, understanding how learners evaluate the effectiveness of such tools is increasingly important, particularly in supporting vocabulary development. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with six purposively selected students. The findings indicate that students hold highly positive perceptions of YouTube, viewing it as an enjoyable, flexible, and supportive platform that provides contextualized audiovisual input for vocabulary learning. Features such as subtitles, replay options, and diverse content were perceived to facilitate comprehension, repeated exposure, and retention of new words, while also enhancing motivation and confidence. Challenges such as fast speech and pronunciation differences were noted but were generally manageable through repeated viewing and teacher guidance. Overall, the study concludes that YouTube serves as an effective complementary tool for vocabulary learning and has potential to strengthen more innovative, student-centered instructional practices.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary remains a persistent challenge in English language learning, including for students at SMKN 1 Gowa. Conventional teaching methods often struggle to sustain students' interest or provide meaningful support for vocabulary development. As digital media increasingly shapes students' daily lives, YouTube an accessible and highly engaging audiovisual platform has emerged as a promising tool for language instruction. Its features, such as authentic content, subtitles, visual cues, and replay functions, offer distinct advantages for vocabulary learning and may shape how students perceive and interact with instructional materials. Understanding learners' perceptions is therefore essential for determining whether YouTube genuinely contributes to vocabulary improvement.

Although YouTube has been widely examined within English education, most existing studies emphasize broader language skills such as listening and speaking, and are predominantly conducted at the tertiary level. Research focusing specifically on students' perceptions of YouTube as a medium for vocabulary learning in vocational high schools remains limited, particularly within the Indonesian context. Furthermore, previous studies rarely provide detailed insights into how students evaluate the benefits, challenges, and motivational aspects of using YouTube for vocabulary acquisition. This gap highlights the need

to explore how vocational students interpret the platform's usefulness and how their perceptions relate to its instructional effectiveness.

To address this gap, the present study formulates the following research question: What are the students' perceptions of the implementation of YouTube as a medium for vocabulary mastery? This question seeks to uncover students' learning experiences, their views on the platform's utility, and the extent to which YouTube's features support or hinder their vocabulary development.

In line with this research question, the study aims to describe and analyze students' perceptions of YouTube as a digital tool for vocabulary instruction. The analysis emphasizes aspects such as accessibility, motivation, comprehension support, and user experience, as reflected in students' responses during interviews and classroom activities. These perspectives offer a deeper understanding of the perceived benefits and the factors that shape learners' engagement with YouTube-based materials.

This study contributes to the field by providing empirical evidence from a vocational school setting an educational context that is seldom represented in digital media research. The findings offer meaningful insights into how platforms like YouTube can facilitate vocabulary learning from the learners' viewpoint and provide practical implications for English teachers seeking to design more innovative, learner-centered, and technology-integrated instructional practices. Additionally, the results may support schools and educators in strengthening digital literacy and optimizing the pedagogical use of widely accessed media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' perceptions are a determining factor in evaluating how effectively digital media supports language learning. Perception is understood as a cognitive process through which individuals interpret and organize sensory information based on prior experiences, expectations, and mental frameworks, as described by Goldstein and Brockmole (2021). This implies that learners may respond differently to the same instructional medium, including YouTube, depending on how they process and attribute meaning to the material presented.

A growing body of research indicates that YouTube tends to be perceived positively by learners due to its multimodal characteristics. Madani, Hidayat, and Hasim (2023) reported that students feel more motivated and at ease when learning vocabulary through YouTube, largely because the platform offers engaging visuals and clearer explanations of content. This aligns with audiovisual learning principles, which suggest that combining sound and imagery enhances comprehension and memory, making learners more receptive to vocabulary input.

Additional studies further support learners' favorable attitudes toward YouTube as a tool for vocabulary development. Mokodompit, Samola, and Tuerah (2023) found that many students view YouTube as an effective medium, consistent with Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory, which posits that learning is strengthened when information is presented through integrated auditory and visual channels. YouTube's accessibility and wide range of materials also allow students to learn at their own pace, contributing to positive perceptions of autonomy and flexibility in language learning.

Despite these advantages, several challenges shape students' evaluations of YouTube as a learning resource. Problems such as unstable internet connectivity, disruptive

advertisements, and difficulty understanding certain accents can hinder comprehension and may negatively influence students' perceptions of its usefulness, as noted by Sakkir, Dollah, and Ahmad (2021). These constraints illustrate that students' perceptions are influenced not only by the quality of instructional content but also by external factors related to technological access and the learning environment.

Overall, existing literature shows that students generally perceive YouTube as a motivating, enjoyable, and interactive tool for vocabulary learning. Learners often appreciate features such as subtitles, replay options, authentic language exposure, and visually appealing formats, all of which help reinforce vocabulary acquisition while reducing anxiety and boredom. These findings demonstrate that students' positive perceptions stem from both YouTube's pedagogical strengths and its ability to integrate formal and informal learning experiences, making it a valuable medium for supporting vocabulary mastery.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative approach using a case study design to investigate students' perceptions of YouTube as a medium for enhancing vocabulary mastery at SMKN 1 Gowa. The case study method was selected because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of students' subjective experiences within an authentic classroom setting. The research was carried out in an English class where YouTube had been incorporated into vocabulary learning activities.

The participants included one English teacher and a group of Grade XI students who had direct exposure to learning through YouTube. Students were chosen based on their active involvement in YouTube-assisted lessons, enabling them to provide firsthand insights regarding the platform's benefits, challenges, and motivational impact. The teacher was also involved to clarify instructional practices and to support data triangulation through comparison with students' accounts.

Data were gathered through two main techniques: classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Observations were conducted to document how students interacted with the instructional videos, how they responded to learning tasks, and how classroom dynamics evolved during the use of YouTube. Semi-structured interviews were employed to obtain more detailed explanations from students about their perceptions of accessibility, comprehension support, motivation, and their overall experience with the platform as a vocabulary learning tool.

The analysis followed the Miles and Huberman framework, which comprises data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation were reviewed and coded to identify thematic patterns related to students' perceptions. These themes were then analyzed to determine recurring viewpoints and to draw conclusions about the perceived effectiveness of YouTube in supporting vocabulary learning.

FINDINGS

Interview analysis indicates that students hold varied perceptions regarding the use of YouTube to support vocabulary development. These perceptions reflect their learning

experiences, media-use habits, and how they assess the platform's features in helping them understand and retain new vocabulary.

a. Frequency and Habits of Using YouTube for Vocabulary Learning

Findings show that most students have incorporated YouTube into their regular study routines. Although individual usage patterns differ, many reported accessing the platform almost daily for both learning and leisure purposes.

Extracts:

S1: "I use YouTube almost every day to learn English."

S2: "Around three to four times a day for learning or entertainment."

These habits suggest that students view YouTube as a flexible and readily accessible learning tool. Its frequent use reflects the extent to which the platform has been integrated into their independent learning practices, functioning not merely as an additional resource but as a natural part of their daily learning environment.

b. Types of Videos and Vocabulary Exposure

Students consume a wide range of content tutorials, vlogs, short films, podcasts, and mini dramas that expose them to vocabulary in authentic communicative contexts.

Extracts:

S3: "English tutorial videos help improve my vocabulary."

S5: "Short dramas with English subtitles help me learn meaning and usage."

This diversity of content provides multiple linguistic contexts, from formal instructional vocabulary to everyday conversational expressions. The multimodal nature of YouTube combining visual, auditory, and textual cues enables students to grasp word meaning, pronunciation, and sentence patterns more effectively than text-based materials alone. Consequently, YouTube serves as a rich source of authentic input that broadens students' vocabulary exposure.

c. Perceptions of YouTube's Effectiveness in Vocabulary Mastery

Overall, students consider YouTube an effective medium for acquiring new vocabulary. Features such as subtitles, visual support, and replay options are viewed as particularly helpful.

Extracts:

S2: "I can easily catch new vocabulary because of the audiovisual format."

S5: "Interesting videos make me focus and memorize words more easily."

These perceptions indicate that audiovisual input strengthens memory by providing contextual cues that aid comprehension. Engaging content also enhances concentration, contributing to more meaningful vocabulary retention. Students attribute YouTube's effectiveness to the combination of multimodal presentation and appealing content design.

d. Motivation and Confidence in Using Vocabulary

YouTube not only improves understanding but also enhances motivation and confidence. Students feel more encouraged to learn vocabulary through YouTube than through traditional resources like textbooks.

Extracts:

S3: "I'm more motivated because I can listen, unlike textbooks that only provide reading."

S5: "YouTube makes me more confident because I can practice at home first."

The interactive and relatable nature of YouTube fosters greater involvement, helping students feel more prepared before using English in real situations. This demonstrates that the

platform offers affective benefits that complement its cognitive advantages in vocabulary learning.

e. Challenges in Learning Vocabulary through YouTube

Despite its benefits, students also report several difficulties, particularly related to pronunciation, mismatched spelling, rapid speech, and unreliable subtitles.

Extracts:

S1: "Pronunciation is challenging because spelling and sound differ."

S4: "Sometimes the speaker talks too fast, so I need to replay the video."

These challenges show that authentic input may require additional learning strategies such as repeated viewing, using dictionaries, or choosing more level-appropriate videos. While these issues do not diminish students' overall positive perceptions, they highlight the need for learner adaptation when engaging with real-life language use.

f. Overall Perceptions of YouTube as a Learning Tool

Students generally view YouTube as a comprehensive and enjoyable resource for vocabulary learning. They appreciate how the platform provides pronunciation models, word meanings, and example sentences.

Extracts:

S3: "I learn many new words and can build sentences gradually."

S5: "YouTube is like an online teacher pronunciation, meaning, and examples are all there."

These views show that students regard YouTube as an "additional teacher" that delivers integrated language input. By offering examples of how vocabulary is used in meaningful communication, YouTube supports not only word acquisition but also practical application, reinforcing its role as an effective and engaging vocabulary-learning medium.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that students hold distinctly positive perceptions of using YouTube for vocabulary development. They described the platform as enjoyable, adaptable, and effective, noting that it enables them to learn at their own pace while offering extensive content choices, replay functions, and subtitles that help them connect spoken and written forms of vocabulary. Students also reported that learning through YouTube reduces feelings of anxiety and boredom, thereby increasing their motivation to engage with English both within and beyond the classroom. These affective advantages indicate that YouTube not only supports vocabulary acquisition but also contributes to a more comfortable and motivating learning environment.

These results align with earlier studies highlighting the motivational benefits of video-based learning. Amanda et al. (2024) found that YouTube operates simultaneously as an instructional and entertaining medium, effectively linking formal instruction with informal learning experiences. This pattern was equally evident among students at SMKN 1 Gowa, who perceived YouTube not only as a study aid but also as a source of enjoyable content that stimulates interest and engagement. Comparable insights were reported by Ngabalin, Noni, and Sakkir (2024), whose research demonstrated that visual and interactive media reinforce memory and enhance learners' enthusiasm. Students in this study expressed similar views, emphasizing that YouTube's multimodal input combining visual, auditory, and textual cues helps them better understand and retain vocabulary. This type of engaging presentation fosters

a positive emotional connection to English learning, something traditional textbook-centered instruction often fails to achieve.

The findings also corroborate the conclusions of Arqam, Samtidar, and Abduh (2023), who argue that YouTube encourages learner autonomy by giving students the freedom to explore materials that match their interests. This perspective explains why the students in this study valued the platform's flexibility and accessibility, which allowed them to select relevant content and revisit videos whenever necessary. Overall, these results show that students view YouTube as an essential part of their learning experience rather than a supplementary tool. The platform supports both cognitive and affective aspects of language learning by expanding vocabulary knowledge while fostering confidence and motivation. Its ability to promote intrinsic motivation, independent learning, and emotional engagement underscores YouTube's potential as an empowering and meaningful resource for vocabulary mastery in contemporary digital learning environments.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated students' perceptions of YouTube as a medium for vocabulary learning, and the findings indicate consistently positive attitudes toward its use. Students perceived YouTube as an enjoyable, accessible, and effective platform that offers authentic language exposure through a wide range of content, as well as supportive features such as subtitles, audiovisual cues, and replay options. These insights provide a direct answer to Research Question 2, showing that students regard YouTube not merely as supplementary material but as a meaningful and motivating component of their vocabulary-learning process.

The results hold both practical and theoretical implications for English language education. Practically, integrating YouTube into instructional activities can enhance cognitive and affective aspects of vocabulary acquisition by providing more contextualized and engaging input than traditional materials. Theoretically, the findings reinforce principles of multimedia learning and align with previous research emphasizing the role of interactive digital media in fostering learner engagement, autonomy, and motivation.

Despite the positive outcomes, the study is limited by its focus on a single school setting with a relatively small number of participants, which restricts the generalizability of the results. Future research could involve larger and more diverse samples, incorporate quantitative measures of vocabulary gains, or compare YouTube with other digital platforms. Further investigations may also explore which types of YouTube content most effectively support vocabulary development or include teachers' perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of its pedagogical value.

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