

## **Malaysian University Students' Perceptions of the Influence of YouTube Videos on English Language Proficiency**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Through various online resources, the internet has enabled students to take advantage of technological developments to enhance their English language proficiency by using social media platforms such as YouTube (Web 2.0 new media). This study investigated the perceptions of Malaysian university students on the influence of YouTube videos on English language proficiency. The theoretical framework for this study is adopted from the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) by Mishra and Koehler (2006) as it can be utilised as a foundation for analysis of Web 2.0 learning design. Next, a semi-structured interview (SSI) comprising 10 open-ended questions adapted from a previous study by Gracella and Nur (2020) was administered to five (5) students from different faculties of Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Shah Alam. After that, the data were analysed using the analytical framework adapted from Husain et al. (2012). The findings revealed that based on the applicability of YouTube videos in teaching and learning, four (4) themes were identified: technological qualities, contents, learners' attitude and readiness, and learners' engagement. Moreover, the results also indicated that the respondents have a strong inclination towards the influence of YouTube in their language learning as it enhances their English language proficiency. Hopefully, this study will contribute more insights into technology-assisted learning, specifically on the influence of using YouTube videos in enhancing English language proficiency among university students, language instructors, and similar studies in the future.

**Keywords:** YouTube, web 2.0, TPACK, technology-assisted learning, English proficiency

## **INTRODUCTION**

Today, students are not only limited to classroom experience as they are becoming more independent and aware of the newest materials and resources that are available for them to explore in the comfort of their surroundings such as their house, significantly during Online Distance Learning (ODL) which has replaced the conventional face-to-face classroom learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak (Syafiq et al., 2021). With the existence of technology-assisted learning, students can use the wide range of resources on the Internet to their full potential. On top of that, students are more familiar with using the Internet because of how easy it is to navigate and access free learning materials from there. This is especially convenient when instructors or educators, and even students make use of the available resources such as online videos during ODL (Syafiq et al., 2021). With that in mind, one of the most popular video sharing and social media platforms that are commonly used by students as a medium to enhance their English language is known as YouTube (Anggraini, 2021).

Kristiani and Pradnyadewi (2021) asserted that technology offers many benefits, especially in the field of education. Thus, university students can take advantage of these technological developments to enhance their English language proficiency by using social media platforms such as YouTube. This is because YouTube provides videos with all sorts of content that makes it easier for students to enhance their proficiency in the English language which includes reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. It makes the learning process more interesting and impactful for university students. Furthermore, researchers have found that students who use YouTube can improve their English language proficiency in terms of their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and fluency (Anggraini, 2021; Bouk, & Kamlasi, 2021; Qomaria and Zaim, 2021; Syafiq et al., 2021).

Although English was accorded as the second language (L2) in Malaysia, it is not always effortless for non-native speakers to acquire full proficiency in the language, which in this case are university students. It is reported that the transition among students in higher education to the English-medium instructions, posed various problems in learning English language such as comprehending technical vocabulary, understanding lectures, achieving a suitable learning style, as well as meeting institutional and disciplinary requirements (Misiran et al., 2018). In short, these factors can disrupt university students from learning and using the English language fluently and accurately. This is usually the result of not being provided with interesting instructional media for them to practise the English language (Gunada, 2017). Therefore, this study explored the perception of university students of the influence of YouTube videos on their English language proficiency based on these research questions:

1. What are the students' perceptions of the applicability of YouTube videos on English language proficiency?
2. In what way does YouTube help students improve their English language proficiency?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Theoretical Background*

Nowadays, technological advancements are becoming more prominent in our daily lives. Not only that, but technology has also changed the education landscape over the past years to help students cope better and gain robust proficiency in the English language. The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) by Mishra and Koehler (2006) was adopted in this study to examine students' perception of the applicability of YouTube videos in English language proficiency and the ways YouTube helps students improve their English language proficiency. According to Jimoyiannis (2015), the TPACK framework was built upon Shulman's construct of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) to include an integrated relationship between the three basic components of knowledge namely; technology knowledge (TK), content knowledge (CK) as well as pedagogy knowledge (PK). Firstly, technology knowledge (TK) is described as the knowledge about various digital technologies and tools such as how to use the Internet for resources. Secondly, content knowledge (CK) refers to the knowledge that is going to be taught or has been taught regarding certain topics including theories, concepts and more. As an example, an educator needs to be prepared and familiar with the content that they are going to teach the students. Lastly, pedagogy knowledge (PK) refers to the knowledge of methods and practices in teaching and learning such as having an organised lesson plan or classroom management skills.

### *The Integration of YouTube Videos in Language Learning*

The emergence of modern technology such as YouTube since it was first introduced in 2005 has tremendously contributed to language learning for university students as a medium to enhance their English language proficiency. YouTube is described as a Web 2.0 site that allows immediate access for people to publicly share, comment and views the content of the videos (Hasan et al., 2018). Through this, students can get free access to various learning materials on the site, unlike other online platforms which require them to pay for the materials. This makes YouTube the main source of language learning as students nowadays are already accustomed to using technology in almost everything (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). Bastos and Ramos (2009, as cited in Sari and Margana, 2019) stated that YouTube videos have a lot of advantages, especially when it is used to enhance students' English language proficiency. This is because YouTube offers many other interesting video contents for students to choose from, which in turn increases the interest of students to enhance their English language proficiency even more without feeling like they are forced to use the online platform.

Besides, students will also get to enjoy the benefits of being proficient in the English language in terms of their pronunciation, sound discrimination and comprehending what others are talking about on YouTube (Wagner, 2007 as cited in Binmahboob, 2020). Logically, students would have to observe how English native speakers communicate in real-life situations to possess such proficiency. However, students can now learn just from watching the videos on YouTube as it also offers authentic examples of the language used by English native speakers (Meinawati et al., 2020). Another previous study conducted by Kristiani and Pradnyadewi (2021) showed that the students' vocabulary knowledge can also be improved when they use YouTube to search for videos such as short videos, films and even tutorials in English. This is because the transfer of knowledge will flow naturally for them once they get to explore more contents that suit their preferences and help them enhance their proficiency in English. Thus, the utilisation of YouTube videos is considered

to be necessary for language learning as students will have better chances of enhancing their English language proficiency.

*Previous studies on the Influence of YouTube Videos on Students' English Language Proficiency*

The closest case study was made by Gracella and Nur (2020) where they analysed whether the students' perception of English learning through YouTube videos is beneficial and can help them improve their English skills involving five (5) students from SMK Negeri 17 Samarinda in Indonesia. The findings revealed a strong correlation between the students' perceptions of language learning and YouTube which concluded that students were able to enjoy the benefits of using YouTube videos to enhance their English language proficiency because the site itself offers a wide range of functionality including unlimited access to use. Next, Azurawati et al. (2018) covered more on the ESL classroom and the students' interests in their effort to study the students' perceptions of using YouTube involving 159 students from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Perak. The study confirmed that the majority of the students were interested in using YouTube videos to enhance their English language proficiency because of the presence of multimedia elements that were able to grab the students' attention and improve the quality of the students' assignments.

Furthermore, a study by Husain et al. (2012) was conducted to find out whether or not YouTube supports active learning in a negotiation classroom involving 20 participants who signed up for a negotiation skill course in Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) through a semi-structured interview (SSI). The findings were categorised into four themes which are technical qualities, contents, learners' attitude and readiness and learners' engagement. It was evident that the majority of the students agreed that the integration of YouTube in their lessons helped support active learning experiences. Therefore, all of the findings from these previous studies showed that today's learning is significantly moving towards a digital realm which restates the importance of integrating technology such as YouTube into language learning which can be beneficial for students who are interested in enhancing their English language proficiency.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilised a qualitative research design to investigate Malaysian university students' perceptions of the influence of YouTube videos on their English language proficiency. The research sample for this study was replicated from a previous study by Gracella and Nur (2020) where a total of five (5) students were selected. Thus, this study also used the same sample size in which five (5) students were selected from different faculties in UiTM Shah Alam. On top of that, a purposive sampling technique was utilised in this qualitative study. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling where it involved the participation of five (5) students from different faculties who commonly use YouTube videos to enhance their English language proficiency. Next, the instrument that was used to gather the data is through semi-structured interviews (SSI) via the Google Meet platform to avoid any risk of physical contact. 10 open-ended questions in the interviews were adapted from Gracella and Nur (2020) to suit the objectives of this study.

The analytical framework by Husain et al. (2012) was utilised to analyse the data. To do so, four specific themes focusing on the technical qualities, contents, learners' attitude and readiness, and learners' engagement were identified. Moreover, to determine if the findings are reliable, the transcripts of the interviews were thoroughly checked a few times to make sure that it does not contain any major mistakes. In addition, a cross-check of the codes was also done by frequently comparing the definitions of the code with the data. This was to ensure that the definition of codes was consistent throughout the data analysis stage. Meanwhile, qualitative validity requires the utilisation of certain procedures to verify the accuracy of the findings (Gibbs, 2007, as cited in Creswell, 2014). This study used four validity strategies which included using rich, thick descriptions to convey the findings, clarifying the researcher's bias, presenting negative or discrepant information and spending prolonged time in the study.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### *Students' Perception of the Applicability of YouTube Videos on English Language Proficiency (RQ1)*

The findings that were identified in Research Question 1 (RQ1) on the students' perceptions of the applicability of YouTube videos on English language proficiency included four (4) themes adapted from a past study by Husain et al. (2012). The themes were technological qualities, contents, learners' attitudes and readiness, and learners' engagement. The three (3) themes (contents, learners' attitude and readiness, and learners' engagement) received a positive point of view from the respondents' sides. The respondents believed that the type of videos that they watched and the fact that YouTube is easy to use have positively impacted the way they can enhance their English language proficiency in terms of their pronunciation, better understanding of certain topics and more. Hence, the findings in RQ1 suggested that the students' perceptions leaned towards the positive side despite obtaining a mixed perception from the aspect of technological qualities.

### *Technological Qualities*

The theme of technological qualities received mixed feedback from the respondents. Since YouTube is a video streaming site that uses the Internet which can affect one's learning process, to watch videos that are of high quality in terms of the technical aspects, students need to have a stable internet connection or else it would disrupt their whole learning experience. Based on the respondents' answers below, the technical aspects such as the audio and visual depend highly on the quality of the internet connection. This is because, the respondents believed that without a good internet connection, it is difficult to enjoy watching YouTube videos regardless of whether the content is interesting. The findings from this study agreed with Husain et al. (2012) who found that the quality of the YouTube videos in terms of audio and visual components affected the students' learning process. Similar results also were found in Yaacob and Md Saad (2020) where it was revealed that the challenge faced by YouTube users when using the videos on YouTube for learning is the inconsistent quality of the available videos, leading to a low-quality learning experience. Thus, this finding showed that technological qualities may encourage or discourage learning experiences on YouTube where students perceived the ease of use based on the strength and stability of the internet connection.

Table 1 Respondents' answers highlighting Technological Qualities (RQ1)

Respondent 2	<i>Yes, definitely! I love how easy it is to use because I feel like technology is a part of our life so I have no problem using YouTube.</i>
Respondent 3	<i>Yes, I do love how YouTube is easy to use to learn English but sometimes it bothers me when the quality of the video is not clear due to the internet connection. So, that is one of the downsides of using YouTube.</i>
Respondent 4	<i>For me, it's easier to use YouTube compared to reading textbooks. But, it can be annoying when I'm having trouble with my internet connection and then the videos will load for so long.</i>

### Contents

According to Saed et al. (2021), the audiovisual components of YouTube videos drive the students' concentration to watch the videos until the end. In this study, the respondents collectively agreed that the type of videos that they watched played a huge role in assisting their English language learning. This is because YouTube provides a wide range of videos with audiovisual components that are appealing for university students to watch as opposed to reading textbooks. According to Mardiningrum (2021), watching YouTube videos allows students to have a better comprehension of the information learned compared to reading an article. The findings of this study also supported Husain et al. (2012) whereby it was reported that the students believe the contents of the YouTube videos contributed to their understanding of a particular topic. Thus, without an extensive selection of videos and interesting audiovisual components, university students will show an absence of interest, which can lead to low understanding and proficiency. In response to students' demands for a new learning environment, there has to be the presence of verbal and visual components in YouTube videos or they will show a lack of interest. Below are the transcriptions that were obtained from the respondents.

Table 2 Respondents' answers highlighting Contents (RQ1)

Respondent 1	<i>I think that learning using YouTube is easier for me to navigate on topics that I don't understand because it's in the form of visuals instead of lengthy paragraphs like in the textbooks.</i>
Respondent 2	<i>I think that YouTube helps me improve my English, like learning new information every day. It doesn't matter what type of videos I watch; I'm constantly learning new things from one video to another and so on. I don't mind if it's an educational video, but I'll only watch them if it has interesting content or else, I'll feel bored.</i>
Respondent 5	<i>Yes! I do feel more motivated when I use YouTube... YouTube has really helped me to understand topics that I couldn't catch up with. I discovered that educational videos on YouTube can be entertaining as long as the duration of the videos is not long and the topics are delivered concisely.</i>

### Learners' Attitude and Readiness

This theme specifically relates to the students' attitude and readiness whether they are leaning toward positive or negative outcomes. According to Cahyana (2020), in order to test one's readiness in language learning, one must be able to familiarise the foundation of the lessons learned and grasp it with full understanding. To do so, motivation plays an important role that can influence

students' attitudes and readiness. Based on the findings, the respondents believed that the convenience of accessing YouTube at any time and place was the factor that contributed to the increase in their motivation and attitudes towards language learning. Gracella and Nur (2020) presented similar findings whereby the students were found to be motivated to learn English using YouTube as they believe learning on this platform is more enjoyable compared to listening to lectures and reading books. The findings of this study are also in line with Husain et al. (2012) who also supported that the students were more motivated and ready to learn with YouTube when it is integrated into their lessons as YouTube is considered to be an influential medium in terms of motivation and education. Thus, it is clear that respondents portrayed positive attitudes and readiness from watching YouTube videos from the transcriptions of the positive remarks shared by the respondents below.

Table 3 Respondents' answers highlighting Learners' Attitude and Readiness (RQ1)

Respondent 2	<i>Yes! I feel motivated because I don't need to carry any books around if I just want to do some light studying or recap the lessons that I had learned because I can use my phone to access YouTube.</i>
Respondent 3	<i>Yes, I'm more motivated when I use YouTube because I always have my phone with me so I can just watch videos on YouTube whenever I want.</i>
Respondent 5	<i>Yes! I do feel more motivated when I use YouTube. If I'm being honest, before this I only watched entertainment videos on YouTube but ever since the pandemic occurred and most of my classes were online, YouTube has really helped me to understand topics that I couldn't catch up with. I discovered that educational videos on YouTube can be entertaining as long as the duration of the videos is not long and the topics are delivered concisely.</i>

### *Learners' Engagement*

Fathi and Zarei (2019) highlighted that the traditional learning method alone is insufficient to stimulate active learning in students. This is due to the emergence of technology such as YouTube which has shifted the education landscape, therefore, matches the idiosyncrasies of the digital natives that are different from the previous generation because they are more familiar with the traditional learning method. Besides, second language learners will get to engage and potentially augment their English language proficiency in real-life contexts when they know how to take advantage of the authentic learning materials of the videos on YouTube. Abukhattala (2016) as cited in Fathi and Zarei (2019) also mentioned that the process of engagement in students is a continuous effort between motivation and active learning. The findings revealed that learners' engagement is more encouraged when the contents are more entertaining and easier to follow.

Table 4 Respondents' answers highlighting Learners' Engagement (RQ1)

Respondent 1	<i>Yes, because the videos are more entertaining and engaging than the usual traditional learning methods. I get to learn a lot of things more quickly rather than reading books because watching videos is usually more interesting to me as I'm a visual learner.</i>
Respondent 3	<i>I feel like I understand daily conversations faster and better compared to before. I used to have a hard time catching up with what people are saying because sometimes they can talk very fast, but I think that my English is improving lately all thanks to the vlogs from the content creators that I watched.</i>
Respondent 4	<i>YouTube helped improve my pronunciation a lot. I like to observe the way native English speakers talk because they mostly use words that are easy to understand for daily conversations, so I find them easy to follow.</i>
Respondent 5	<i>Well, I think that YouTube videos are way more interesting than formal learning because it's not restricted to educational videos and because of that, I find that my attention span is longer compared to when I'm in the classroom.</i>

*The Ways YouTube can help Students in improving Students' English Language Proficiency (RQ2)*

The findings for Research Question 2 (RQ2) focused on the ways YouTube can help students in improving their English language proficiency by watching YouTube videos. The findings showed that out of the four (4) themes adapted from Husain et al. (2012), only two (2) of the themes were identified from the respondents' answers and were relevant to RQ2 which were content and learners' engagement as explained below.

*Content*

YouTube content can offer indefinite enrichment to students to enhance their skills in speaking, listening, writing or reading. Purwanti et al. (2022) highlighted that YouTube can significantly improve one's English language proficiency and vocabulary because of the variety of videos provided on the platform. It can range from entertainment to educational content as students will get to explore what videos they would like to watch depending on their preferences. From the findings, the respondents agreed that classroom materials can be insufficient and boring, which were the causes for the discouragement to learn and enhance their English language proficiency. On the other hand, the respondents also believed that the contents they watched can greatly improve comprehension, vocabulary, listening, and speaking skills. As supported by Qomaria and Zaim (2021), some of the skills acquired can be in terms of gaining new vocabulary and improving pronunciation.



Table 5 Respondents' answers highlighting Contents (RQ2)

Respondent 1	<i>I think that YouTube taught me a lot of English vocabulary, accents and slang that I'm not familiar with.</i>
Respondent 3	<i>Yes! I have been using YouTube to learn about things that I don't understand in certain subjects and because most of the videos are in English, I think that's how I can improve my English. Besides, I usually jot down notes while listening to the videos which are easier than having to read an entire topic from a book.</i>
Respondent 4	<i>I would say that YouTube helped me in terms of my pronunciation because I like to hear other people's pronunciation, especially British accents, and from there, I got to improve mine as well.</i>

### *Learners' Engagement*

The findings of this study revealed the respondents agreed that through watching YouTube videos, they were able to attain new skills such as improving their English pronunciation, retaining a longer attention span and achieving comprehension in daily conversations. Similar findings can be found from Purnamasari (2018), in which the author stated that students are more eager to enhance their English language proficiency by watching YouTube videos as the experience is more engaging. Moreover, another finding from Gracella and Nur (2020) also supported this study that the students managed to improve their listening and speaking skills as they become more engaged in learning on YouTube. In essence, this proved that students are more likely to engage with the platform when it is not restricted to classroom learning since they can access the contents freely and the technical aspects of the platform also contributed to learners' engagement for instance with the help of subtitles. Hence, this concluded that YouTube videos are useful in supporting the attainment of knowledge and improvements in English language proficiency for the students. The table below highlights the answers obtained from the respondents:

Table 6 Respondents' answers highlighting Learners' Engagement (RQ2)

Respondent 5	<i>Yes! YouTube helps to improve my English because it has a lot of videos from different categories for me to choose from depending on what I feel like watching on that day. It's amazing how you can literally search for anything there.</i>
Respondent 1	<i>Yes! I honestly think that learning English in the classroom is not enough so that's the reason why sometimes I prefer to use YouTube to learn as much as I can even though it's not always related to educational videos.</i>
Respondent 2	<i>I guess YouTube helped me sharpen my listening skills because I get to challenge myself to listen to the videos without opening the subtitles for the videos.</i>

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study was done to fill in the gap about the influence of YouTube videos on English language proficiency based in the English as a Second Language (ESL) context among university students, which is seldom explored in Malaysia due to the scarcity of past research that

focused more on foreign language (FL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). In this study, the findings related to the students' perceptions and their improvements in English language proficiency from watching YouTube videos were deemed favourable. The findings in this study can be of use for UiTM students, language instructors and other researchers in Malaysia. This study can be served as a reference for language instructors who want to gain clear assimilation between the influence of watching YouTube videos and how YouTube can help in enhancing students' English language proficiency. Thus, it is expected for language instructors to integrate technology such as YouTube into their pedagogy as it provides ample benefits as demonstrated in this study. This study can also be used as a supplementary reference for other researchers who are interested in conducting more comprehensive research on how university students perceive the applicability of YouTube videos and the ways that YouTube can enhance students' English language proficiency.



Several recommendations can be pinpointed based on this study to help highlight the implications that the researcher might not have noticed in the initial analysis. Firstly, one of the limitations that can be seen was from the methodological standpoint. It is recommended for future studies to employ different approaches in terms of the research design to elevate the overall quality of the study. Since this study used a qualitative method, future research can utilise a quantitative method or a mixed method so that the data obtained can be diversified. Besides, future research regarding this field may also opt for other research instruments besides online interviews. Moreover, future research can also widen their research subjects. This study was restricted to only five (5) participants from different faculties in Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Shah Alam Campus, which meant that the data obtained might not be definitive. Thus, it is recommended that future research will include more participants from other universities or other groups of people as well such as the general public, children and more. By doing so, researchers will not only be able to augment the variety in the data, but also improve the accuracy and the significance of findings in their research.

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