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USING YOUTUBE TO IMPROVE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract: YouTube has become one of the most accessible and cost-effective digital platforms for supporting English language learning, particularly in the development of speaking skills. This study explores the potential of YouTube to improve students' pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and overall speaking proficiency. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews with university students who regularly use YouTube as a learning resource. The study is grounded in Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Language Exposure Theory, and the Shadowing Technique, which explain how authentic audiovisual input contributes to language acquisition. Findings indicate that YouTube offers several advantages, including exposure to authentic English spoken by native speakers, flexible learning opportunities, increased learner motivation, and opportunities for independent practice. However, challenges such as content selection, passive viewing habits, and overreliance on memorization were also identified. Overall, the results suggest that YouTube can effectively enhance speaking skills when used actively and systematically as part of English language learning strategies.

Keywords: YouTube, English speaking skills, digital learning, language exposure, shadowing, language education.

INTRODUCTION

English speaking skills are more and more important than ever in the modern world. Every aspect of life today is dominated by the use of English. Thus, students are not only tasked with fluency in English, but also to speak it well and confidently. But speaking is still for a majority of EFL learners very difficult. They have fewer opportunities to practice, become shy or weak in confidence, and often do not get real English exposure. In traditional classrooms, there is often not enough time for speaking practice. Students usually only use textbooks and teacher explanations, which do not really show how English is used naturally in daily conversations.

Especially in Indonesia and other non-English speaking countries, students almost never talk with native speakers, so practicing speaking feels even harder.

Luckily, the development of educational technology has opened new ways to learn English outside the classroom. One of the most popular platforms right now is YouTube. YouTube is a free video-sharing site that has millions of videos about many topics, including lots of English learning content. Students can watch tutorials, podcasts, interviews, TED Talks, documentaries, movies, and real conversations anytime and anywhere they want.

YouTube gives several benefits for English learners. First, it provides real English from native speakers with different accents and speaking styles. Second, students can replay the videos, change the speed, download them to watch offline, and use subtitles to help with understanding and pronunciation. Third, YouTube supports self-learning because students can choose materials that match their interests and level.

Even so, just watching YouTube videos does not automatically make speaking skills better. Students need to be active by imitating speakers, using shadowing, repeating, practicing speaking, and sometimes working together. Therefore, this article aims to discuss how YouTube can help improve English speaking skills, its benefits, the challenges students face, and some suggestions for undergraduate students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking is one of the four fundamental language skills and is classified as a productive skill because it involves the active use of language to communicate ideas, thoughts, opinions, and emotions through spoken interaction. In the context of language learning, speaking is considered an essential indicator of communicative competence because it enables learners to express themselves and participate effectively in social and academic communication. According to Thornbury (2005), speaking is a complex process that requires learners to produce

language in real time while simultaneously organizing ideas, selecting appropriate vocabulary, applying grammatical rules, and maintaining fluency. Similarly, Hakim (2019) emphasizes that successful English speaking involves the integration of several linguistic and psychological components, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, listening ability, and self-confidence.

Several components contribute to the development of effective speaking skills. Pronunciation refers to the ability to produce speech sounds accurately so that spoken messages can be clearly understood by listeners. Vocabulary is the collection of words and expressions that speakers use to convey meaning and communicate ideas effectively. Fluency refers to the ability to speak smoothly, spontaneously, and coherently with minimal hesitation or unnatural pauses. Grammar involves knowledge of language structures and rules that enable speakers to construct meaningful and accurate sentences. Confidence is another important element, as it allows learners to express themselves comfortably and effectively without excessive anxiety or fear of making mistakes. In addition, listening plays a crucial role in speaking development because learners must be able to receive, interpret, and respond appropriately to spoken messages during communication. The integration of these components enables speakers to communicate effectively and achieve successful interaction in various contexts.

For many learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking is often regarded as the most challenging language skill. Unlike reading and writing, speaking requires immediate language processing and real-time interaction. Learners must simultaneously think about what to say, select appropriate vocabulary, apply grammatical knowledge, and produce comprehensible pronunciation while maintaining confidence. As a result, many students experience difficulties such as limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, lack of fluency, and speaking anxiety, which can hinder their oral communication performance.

YOUTUBE AS A LEARNING MEDIUM

YouTube is one of the largest and most widely used video-sharing platforms in the world. Since its establishment in 2005, the platform has evolved beyond entertainment and become a valuable educational resource that provides access to a vast collection of learning materials across various disciplines, including language learning. Through YouTube, learners can access authentic multimedia content anytime and anywhere, making it an effective tool for independent and classroom-based learning.

As a language learning medium, YouTube offers several features that support speaking development. First, it provides audio-visual learning experiences by combining images, text, animations, and sound, which can enhance learners' understanding and retention of information. Second, subtitles and closed captions help learners connect spoken and written language while improving pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition. Third, playback speed adjustment allows learners to slow down or speed up videos according to their learning needs, making it easier to understand spoken language. Fourth, the repetition feature enables students to replay difficult sections multiple times for better comprehension and practice. Additionally, YouTube provides access to diverse authentic content created by both native and non-native English speakers, exposing learners to various accents, communication styles, and cultural contexts. The platform is also highly accessible because it can be used on smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers. These features make YouTube a practical and effective medium for improving speaking skills, particularly in EFL learning environments.

Theoretical Framework

The effectiveness of YouTube as a tool for improving speaking skills can be explained through several theories of language acquisition and learning. These theories provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how learners acquire language through exposure to authentic audiovisual content.

Input Hypothesis

One of the most influential theories related to language acquisition is Krashen's Input Hypothesis. According to Krashen (2005), language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input, which refers to language that is slightly above their current level of proficiency but still understandable through context and prior knowledge. Comprehensible input is considered a necessary condition for language development because it enables learners to acquire new linguistic forms naturally. YouTube supports this theory by providing a wide range of videos with varying levels of difficulty, allowing learners to select content that matches their proficiency level and learning needs. Through continuous exposure to understandable spoken English, learners gradually acquire new vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation patterns, and communicative expressions.

Language Exposure Theory

Language exposure is another important factor in language acquisition. Rost (2011) defines language exposure as the amount of time learners spend engaging with a target language for meaningful learning purposes. The greater the exposure to authentic language input, the more opportunities learners have to develop their language competence. YouTube provides extensive exposure to authentic English through interviews, podcasts, educational videos, documentaries, films, and vlogs. Such exposure allows learners to hear natural pronunciation, different accents, colloquial expressions, and real-world communication patterns that are often unavailable in traditional textbooks. Consequently, regular engagement with YouTube content can enhance learners' listening comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and speaking performance.

Shadowing Technique

The effectiveness of YouTube can also be explained through the shadowing technique, a language learning strategy that involves listening to spoken language and immediately repeating it as accurately as possible. According to Murphey (2001), shadowing helps learners improve pronunciation, fluency, listening comprehension, and speaking confidence by encouraging active imitation of native-speaker speech patterns. YouTube provides an ideal environment for shadowing practice because learners can replay videos repeatedly, adjust playback speed, and focus on specific sections of speech. By regularly practicing shadowing with YouTube videos, learners can internalize pronunciation patterns, intonation, rhythm, and natural expressions, leading to improved speaking proficiency and communicative competence.

DISCUSSION

The Role of YouTube in Improving Speaking Skills

YouTube plays an important role in improving English speaking skills because it provides authentic and engaging language input. Through various types of content such as interviews, podcasts, educational videos, news broadcasts, and vlogs, learners can observe how native speakers pronounce words, use expressions, and communicate naturally in real-life situations. Unlike traditional textbooks, YouTube exposes learners to authentic conversational English, enabling them to become familiar with pronunciation patterns, sentence structures, vocabulary usage, and natural speaking rhythms. Continuous exposure to such content helps learners develop better speaking abilities and greater confidence in using English for communication. Research supports the effectiveness of YouTube as a learning tool for speaking development. Pratiwi and Hidayat (2020) found that students who actively used YouTube for speaking practice demonstrated significant improvements in fluency and self-confidence. Similarly, Syafiq and Santoso (2021) reported that YouTube-based learning enhanced students' speaking achievement

after several weeks of regular practice. These findings indicate that YouTube can serve as an effective supplementary medium for improving speaking proficiency.

Benefits of Using YouTube for Speaking Practice

YouTube offers numerous benefits for students who want to improve their speaking skills. One of its major advantages is its ability to enhance multiple aspects of language learning simultaneously, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and listening comprehension. Through exposure to authentic English content produced by native speakers and proficient users, learners gain insight into how language is naturally used in everyday communication. This authentic exposure helps students develop a better understanding of both formal and informal language expressions. Another significant benefit of YouTube is its contribution to pronunciation development. By repeatedly listening to native speakers, students can imitate correct pronunciation and gradually reduce pronunciation errors. Since learners can practice independently and privately, they often feel more comfortable experimenting with new sounds and expressions without fear of making mistakes in front of others. Moreover, YouTube helps learners understand important features of spoken English, such as intonation, stress patterns, and rhythm. Students can replay videos, adjust playback speed, and imitate speech patterns to improve the naturalness and accuracy of their spoken language.

YouTube also contributes substantially to vocabulary development. The platform offers a wide range of topics that expose learners to diverse vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Through subtitles and visual support, students can easily identify the meanings, spellings, and pronunciations of unfamiliar words. Learning vocabulary through authentic contexts enables students to understand not only the definitions of words but also their appropriate usage in real communication. In addition, YouTube supports grammar acquisition by presenting grammatical structures within natural language use. Rather than memorizing isolated grammar

rules, learners observe how grammar functions in conversations, interviews, films, and educational videos. This contextualized approach makes grammar learning more engaging and easier to understand.

Furthermore, YouTube enhances students' motivation and interest in learning English. The entertaining and interactive nature of video content makes learning more enjoyable than traditional instructional methods. Students are often more willing to spend time learning when they are engaged with interesting content. Continuous exposure to spoken English and regular speaking practice also contribute to improved fluency. Learners can practice speaking by repeating phrases, participating in shadowing activities, or even creating their own videos. Creating video content not only develops speaking proficiency but also fosters creativity, digital literacy, and self-confidence. In classroom settings, YouTube serves as an effective teaching aid that supports discussions, presentations, and interactive learning activities. Teachers can use videos to introduce topics, provide authentic language examples, and encourage student participation.

4. Strategies for Using YouTube Effectively

To maximize the benefits of YouTube for speaking improvement, learners should adopt active learning strategies rather than passively watching videos. One effective strategy is shadowing practice, which involves listening to a speaker and immediately repeating what is heard while imitating pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm. This technique helps learners develop more accurate pronunciation and greater speaking fluency. Another useful strategy is the use of English subtitles. Subtitles help learners connect spoken and written forms of language, making it easier to understand unfamiliar words and expressions. As learners become more proficient, they can gradually reduce their dependence on subtitles to strengthen their listening and speaking abilities.

Repetition and self-recording are also valuable strategies for improving speaking skills. Students can watch the same video several times to reinforce comprehension and pronunciation. Recording their own speech allows them to evaluate their performance, identify weaknesses, and monitor their progress over time. In addition, learners can practice speaking production by summarizing the content of videos orally after watching them. This activity encourages active language use and improves both speaking fluency and comprehension. Taking notes on new vocabulary, phrases, and expressions encountered in videos is another effective strategy because it helps learners retain and apply newly acquired language in future conversations.

Challenges and Limitations of Using YouTube

Despite its many advantages, YouTube also presents several challenges and limitations in language learning. One of the most common challenges is related to technical issues, particularly internet connectivity. Many students experience unstable internet connections that hinder their ability to stream or download videos. Furthermore, video streaming consumes a considerable amount of internet data, which may create financial burdens for some learners. Poor internet access can disrupt the learning process and reduce students' motivation to engage with learning materials. Another challenge is the length of some educational videos. Students often lose interest when videos are excessively long, especially younger learners who typically have shorter attention spans. For this reason, teachers need to carefully select videos that are concise, engaging, and appropriate for students' language proficiency levels. In addition, some students may struggle with independent learning. Learners who are accustomed to direct teacher guidance may feel confused or overwhelmed when learning through YouTube without sufficient support. Some students also experience anxiety when required to record and upload

videos of themselves speaking English because they fear criticism or negative feedback from others.

Teachers also face difficulties in selecting appropriate YouTube content. Finding videos that align with learning objectives, student needs, and proficiency levels can be time-consuming. Teachers often need to review entire videos to ensure their quality, relevance, and suitability before using them in instruction. Moreover, YouTube-based learning may reduce opportunities for immediate social interaction. Unlike traditional classroom environments, students may not receive instant feedback from teachers or engage in spontaneous discussions with peers. This limitation can affect language development, as interaction and feedback are essential components of language learning.

Finally, some students encounter difficulties in understanding the content presented in YouTube videos. Certain videos contain advanced vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, rapid speech, or unfamiliar accents that exceed learners' language proficiency levels. As a result, students may struggle to comprehend the material without additional explanations or support from teachers. Therefore, while YouTube offers considerable potential as a language learning tool, its successful implementation requires careful planning, appropriate guidance, and the use of effective learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

As a digital tool that can help students improve their spoken English skills even further as well as increase their confidence in speaking, YouTube truly has huge potential. It gives real English exposure, it has countless cool features such as audio and video and is always available to the students, when they want. This allows speakers to practice pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency and confidently speaking fluently, like as if speaking and pronunciation like native speakers. But the effect depends on how the students engage. They shadow, repeat the words and practice

speaking daily. All these things are key to a good improvement. However, despite the issues like the content isn't always from native speakers and teacher feedback not received at all, YouTube is a great tool for learning English. Utilizing YouTube as a pedagogical tool can better assist students developing speaking in an Internet-savvy nation through enhancing their speaking and self-sufficiency skills.

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