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## **THE EFFECT OF YOUTUBE-BASED INSTRUCTIONS ON EFL LEARNERS' VOCABULARY ACQUISITION**

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**KadijaFathi\*<sup>1</sup>, Nafiseh Zarei<sup>2</sup>**

Faculty of Education and Humanities, Unitar International University, Malaysia

\*Corresponding author: kadija.f1984@yahoo.com

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### **Abstract**

Currently, YouTube is one of the most popular and broadly used online video services. Therefore, teachers can utilize the YouTube website to teach English and promote students' learning. Teachers and students can make use of the YouTube as a supportive tool for language learning and teaching skills. This study investigated the effects of YouTube- based instruction on the students' vocabulary acquisition. The data were analysed using interpretive and phenomenologist approaches. The findings of the study revealed constructive improvement for the students' vocabulary acquisition as a result of the YouTube intervention in the instruction. Thus, it is recommended to consider YouTube as an effective instructional implement for improving English language learning.

**Keywords:** YouTube, vocabulary acquisition, English language learning, foreign language students

### **Introduction**

Information technology has created valuable and advanced methodologies to resolve instructive matters and the rising demand for learning support. YouTube website enables users to view desired videos free of charge, and access authentic opportunities for innovative teaching and

learning forms. This research is supported by the constructivist theory in the use of scaffolding for student learning. YouTube, as a social media and technological tool, plays the role of scaffolding, which is the amount of assistance provided by the teachers to the students. Since the Internet has enabled various paths of learning. Language use, organisation and structure, are the primary means of mediation (Lantolf, Thorne, &Poehner, 2015). Basically, progressive processes occur through cultural, linguistic and historical participation in terms of family life or peer group interaction, and in formal contexts, like schooling. Previous researchers have emphasised that the important implications of English language teaching are vocabulary acquisition through the learning process (Annisa, 2013), and its essential role is demonstrated within the language learning skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing (MofarehAlqahtani, 2015). One crucial factor is the amount of lexical information a person possesses and can remember that can assist him/her to communicate his or her message or view both in written or spoken forms successfully.

According to Alimemaj (2010), vocabulary acquisition is considered by many to be the primary problem in second

language learning. She indicated that the majority of EFL students and their teachers alluded to vocabulary as their first priority. Hence, the recognition of the important role of vocabulary in language learning by many researchers has encouraged the search for effective pedagogical methods and techniques of teaching and learning new words. Various research studies have highlighted the beneficial features of the social media, in particular, the YouTube, in the teaching and learning process (Hughes & Tolly, 2010; Cox, 2011, Watkins & Wilinkins, 2011), language learning (Terantino, 2011; Tarantino, McDonough, & Hua, 2013) and in writing skills and performance (Styati, 2016; Olasina, 2017). While the effect of YouTube based instruction on students learning has not been explored in the context of Libyan education. The present study intended to investigate how the Libyan secondary school students benefited from YouTube usage in developing their language acquisition.

### **Literature Review**

YouTube can be used as a teaching tool. English instructors can benefit from YouTube in terms of reading comprehension and use of YouTube texts to start discussion or writing tasks (Ismaili, 2013; Fleck, Beckman, Sterns, & Hussey, 2014). They can benefit from YouTube in their teaching process to create more meaningful and inspiring learning experience. Therefore, YouTube should be implemented appropriately and purposefully for enhance students' understanding and learning. In addition, it can improve various issues pertaining to

English language learning and acquisition, for instance, lack of exposure and non-availability of suitable teaching/learning materials (Alhmali, 2007; Chang, 2010; Musa, Lie, & Azman, 2012; Abukhattala, 2016). Jahin and Idrees (2012) and Abukhattala (2016) reported that the exposure of EFL learners, including Libyan learners, to English instruction at schools, is limited. Also, EFL learners' poor levels in English skills are attributed to inadequate opportunities, either to listen to or to speak in English. Due to insufficient practice and exposure to English inside and outside the classroom, learners tend to depend only on classroom learning rather than attempting to improve their English outside the classroom as well (Abukhattala, 2016).

YouTube lessons can offer worthy knowledge for learners, both in and outside the classroom (Kelson, 2009; Alimemaj, 2010; Khalid & Muhammed, 2012; Olasina, 2017). Students can exchange thoughts and enquiries pertaining the YouTube lesson. Subsequently, this will enable the students to have more discussions and exchange information or answers to improve their understanding (Rennie, 2012). It can assist teachers to apply their responsibilities more professionally and successfully. Nejati (2010) referred to the role of the YouTube as an unrestricted aids for language acquisition and learning compared to other websites. Likewise, learners can listen to diverse spoken languages (formal, neutral, informal) and genres (songs, parodies, debates, political speeches, talk shows, lectures) and learn a

lot of vocabulary, which, without a doubt, can help in memorisation. Alimemaj (2010) and Ghasemi, Hashemi and Bardine (2011) reaffirmed this by stating that the YouTube provides learners the opportunity to get more exposure to native language and different styles of spoken English by highlighting not only academic English but also its application in real-life contexts, incorporating accents, slang and much else, besides.

Unfortunately, many teachers and students are not utilizing advanced technological materials which are essential for effective teaching (Alhmali, 2007; Musaet al., 2012). The YouTube is a massive online audio-visual supply commonly well known to learners which functions effectively in diverse techniques. The growth of media-assisted learning has aroused the necessity to investigate its effects on vocabulary acquisition in recent years. Many studies have shown that computerised media and a multimedia environment can be very helpful for learning a foreign language (Shoemaker, 2013; Njegomir, 2016). These mostly positive findings of previous literatures have encouraged this study. Accordingly, a need analysis was carried out prior to the actual data collection. The learners were interviewed to find out their needs in terms of English language learning as well as to gain information on the teaching methods. The responses of the students were mostly related to their difficulty in understanding the lessons, learning the language and recognising the words and their meaning.

In Libya context, textbooks are the main pedagogical tools for teaching and as guides to the language that is presented and the activities that are practiced. YouTube as a media has not been adopted substantially for educational purposes. Although the schools are equipped with computer laboratories, however, these laboratories have not been fully utilised. Therefore, the present study investigated the effect of YouTube in English Language instruction to improve students' vocabulary acquisition. This is because the relevant studies and literature reviewed on students' English learning difficulties have discovered that most significant cause behind this inadequacy attributed to learners' low vocabulary knowledge. This were motives to select English vocabulary to be taught through a YouTube lesson. In this study, YouTube lessons provided learners with various representations, since the teaching practices had not stimulated lexis knowledge sufficiently (Alhmali, 2007; Chang, 2010; Musaet al., 2012). Further practices needed to be adopted in different paths which can improve students' vocabulary during English classes. With this in mind, the present study utilised the YouTube to support foreign language learning, particularly English vocabulary acquisition.

In discussing the contributions of YouTube usage in the educational settings, different studies have been conducted. It is worth stating that the study that is most similar to the present study is by Widiastuti (2011), but it used exploratory sequential mixed method design with elementary school students. The results of

the study indicated improvement in students' vocabulary mastery and classroom situation. Khalid and Muhammed (2012) also highlighted the effectiveness of using the YouTube as a supplementary resource, to teach English Literature. However, the researchers studied the effect of the YouTube college level EFL learners' English performance in general, without concentrating on a particular area in the teaching of English language.

In another study, Fleck et al. (2014) used a quantitative approach to examine the combination of YouTube and discussions, to find out if they contributed to increasing students' understanding of the course content. The sample included 85 university students enrolled in the Developmental Education Psychology course. Pre- and post-semester surveys were used and analysed with Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. The results shown that some videos were effective based on learners' perceptions. These findings indicated the critical role of teachers to select and produce videos that reflect the content of the lesson purposively and interestingly to involve learners' engagement. Similarly, Alwehaibi's study (2015) used quantitative methods for data collection and analysis, focusing on EFL college students in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. However, the study did not investigate the influence of the YouTube on the students' improvement of English language, with regards to aspects, such as vocabulary acquisition; it also did not record their learning experience. However, it encouraged the use of the YouTube in

educational institutions. In addition, Buzzetto-More (2015) examined the impact of the YouTube on business students' engagement as well as their perceptions based on gender and course modality at a Mid-Atlantic Historically Black College or University (HBCU) context. However, Buzzetto-More's study did not explore students' performance, course grades or course retention.

Although the above mentioned studies were carried out within various contexts and using different instruments for data collection, they shared almost similar findings in terms of students' learning by using the YouTube as an effective educational tool. In addition, the YouTube was considered as an advantageous and appreciated platform for them to develop their knowledge in diverse fields because they showed positive gains. Even though there are a large body of research on the YouTube effectiveness as an educational tool, additional investigation still necessity to be looked for, particularly concerning the YouTube integration in the ESL/EFL learning and teaching processes of secondary school students to gain in depth knowledge. Thus, the goal of the current study is to improve EFL students' performance and experiences of English class by focusing on the effect of YouTube videos on students' acquisition.

#### METHOD

This study investigated the effects of YouTube-based instruction on the students' vocabulary acquisition. The participants were Libyan students who were studying in Malaysia, with the aim of

finding new insights into the usage of YouTube in education. As illustrated in Figure 1, YouTube, as a social media and technological tool, played the role of scaffolding provided by the researchers as teachers, to improve students' acquisition of language vocabulary.

The Libyan EFL students (females and males) were ranging from the ages of 16 to 17 years and were enrolled in the second year of the secondary level (grade 2). The learners were divided in groups according to their class and timetable. Although these students are familiar with the platform's videos typically on their social and personal life. They had not been previously exposed to YouTube integration as a teaching tool in the classes. The participants, school administrators and the English language teacher welcomed the researchers and cooperated for the successful conduct of the study. Contemplate that the study is derived from a big project to explore the effect of YouTube based instruction on students learning. Meanwhile, the 2-week period guided the class procedures and activities for integration and non-integration YouTube class. The English subject scheduled into four classes a week. Accordingly, the researchers permitted to only twice in a week.

For data collection, pre-post-tests were used. The study was conducted over two-week period during regular class time lasting 45 minutes for each class. Structurally, each class was different in terms of YouTube usage. Whatever, the participants had the same instructional

goals of improved their language acquisition. These topics-based course book had general and specific learning objectives, one of them was to develop students learning skills through enrich their vocabulary including two ways, namely: describing objectives and identifying objects. Therefore, the lessons-based syllabus played an important role in selecting the teaching and learning material and activities delivered for integration and non-integration YouTube class. Both pre-test and post-test was derived from the tasks existing on students' course book and workbook. The selection criteria were to avoid misinformation and to establish the requirements of curriculum progress template restricted by the school outlining the instructions for the participants. Hence, the offered themes on the syllabus was guided the selection of YouTube video. After that, the selected video is presented to two experts assessing the rationality and quality of the YouTube video. Being these learners familiar with YouTube, facilitated the researchers to teach them confidently. The students were given a pre-test on the course book lesson, i.e., before the intervention of the YouTube lesson in order to investigate their understanding and vocabulary acquisition of the lesson. Next, after the intervention of the YouTube, a post-test, was conducted. Therefore the investigation was processed upon different stages:

First class: students were taught traditionally to use the textbook and the white board.

Second class: the students were given the pre-test during the class.

Next stage: it was based on presenting YouTube lesson. Further class, the researchers asked the students to answer the post-test in order to confirm that students' responses are not associated with only transmission and reproduction of the delivered concepts but rather from seeking meaning and conceptual understanding.

To determine the extent of the students' acquisition improvement, both, pre-post-tests were at the same difficulty level. They consisted of two questions to complete sentences and describe objects with words in different forms. In order to achieve the content validity, tests items were analysed by expert panel consisted of two lectures from the graduate school of education. The lectures were experts in measurement and evaluation in education.



Figure 2. YouTube Lesson on ‘Describing and Identifying Objects’

### Results and Discussion

The general impression of the researchers was that YouTube had a useful impact on

the learners' vocabulary acquisition process. Table 1 presents the results of the pre-test and post-test of students' learning outcomes in English language proficiency.

Table 1 .Pre-Post-Tests Results

STUDENT	YouTube Usage		Difference
	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST	
1	13/20	20/20	+7
2	18/20	20/20	+2
3	10/20	20/20	+10
4	9/20	15/20	+6
5	8/20	20/20	+12
6	6/20	16/20	+10
7	19/20	20/20	+1
8	11/20	20/20	+9
9	13/20	18/20	+5
10	10/20	14/20	+4

Table 1 indicates that there are some differences due to the intervention of YouTube lesson among the respondents. The results also showed that students, after using YouTube, understood the lesson better and answered all questions in the post-test. They pointed out that using YouTube in teaching the language has enriched their vocabulary. The researchers found that the YouTube facilitated students' learning effectively and increased their vocabulary acquisition level. Furthermore, the results of the post-test reflected students' ability to understand the lesson and their awareness of the meaning and forms of words. Based on the findings of the study, YouTube class was more effective than the traditional class in facilitating English language vocabulary acquisition. The

study obtained significant results with regards to low-performance students' confidence in learning and practicing the English language. The low-performing students seemed to have a more positive reaction to YouTube class. Worthwhile that the results of post-test in contrast of the pre-test for the students (3), (4) and (5), with much focus on the sixth student, indicated extraordinary achievement. Such results could be attributed to the lack of interest and focus to follow the instruction without YouTube integration.

The results provided positive affirmation of what has already been described by the various studies reviewed regarding the use of multimedia in the classroom for teaching and learning. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of YouTube usage in the teaching and learning of English language to enhance the Libyan students' acquisition of the language in the classroom. The findings indicated that the YouTube supported the students in the English class, especially to understand the lesson better and to increase their vocabulary acquisition. According to Vygotsky (1989), an optimal learning situation is one in which the student is able to understand the materials with assistance from a computer programme, a peer or a teacher.

The interest of incorporating the YouTube in the instructional situation was to determine how successful it could be as a teaching tool in the classroom. Based on the pre-post-test responses, the students' outcomes were better after the intervention

of the YouTube in terms of their ability to focus on and follow the lesson. These findings were in harmony with Olasina (2017) study where students could opt the correct vocabulary to construct grammatically right sentences and paragraph. Thus, the YouTube has proven to be an innovative and creative aid to improve students' acquisition of vocabulary. This is akin to the result of a study by Alimemaj (2011). Her study concluded that YouTube is regarded as a very beneficial resource for language learning. In addition, Alwehaibi (2015) asserted that utilizing media in the teaching setting has been presented to develop better learner independence and introduce permanent language learning skills.

Ultimately, it is worth stating that the results of this study indicated that the application of YouTube has provided the foreign language students with opportunities to reflect on their learning styles, which are necessary for improving independent and meaningful learning. Hence, undoubtedly, audio and visual effects presented by the YouTube offer the students the ability to grasp the meaning of new words. YouTube, as a medium of instruction, was flexible enough to meet different learning needs. Consequently, the students' needs were reduced in terms of translation and first language intervention. In addition to YouTube being appealing and attractive to the students' vocabulary improvement, this aspect is considered a strength in the YouTube integrated class. More authentic aspects would provide clearer descriptions on the goals of the

lesson and compensated for deficiencies in terms of pictures and native speaking models (Olasina, 2017). This is consistent with Gutiérrez, Puella, & Galvis (2015) study where authentic materials such as YouTube could improve the students' vocabulary.

In line with the findings of the studies by Bravo (2010) and Khalid and Muhammad (2012), this study found a difference in the students' performance regarding the pre-post-tests. With regards the suitability of non-intervention class, the results presented a great deal of inability to develop learners performance at the same level of intervention class. Based on the results, traditional teaching classroom insufficient to fully develop students' vocabulary acquisition. This finding was doubtlessly considered as a weak point in the overall non-intervention class. Such aspect was reflected on the test scores as indicator of vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, EFL learners must be involved in the learning and teaching process according to their favourite learning style as YouTube class could offer.

Considering Vygotsky's term 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD) that refers to the zone where teachers and students as novices work to move towards independence, the findings of this study demonstrated that students have moved past their present level towards new areas of knowledge. Through the implementation of the YouTube as a teaching and learning scaffolding media inside the classroom, the learners got the

chance to obtain meaningful input (vocabulary) which supplemented their language acquisition within the ZPD. The learners assumed greater responsibility to progress appropriately in the foreign language class and enhance their understanding. The results illustrated the positive use of YouTube-based instruction. What was noteworthy was that students became more independent and capable of tackling related issues which had hindered their progress in language learning. In accordance with Vygotsky's belief of constructivism, once the learners have obtained extra input via the YouTube as a supporting tool, their potential zone is enlarged.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the study proved the importance of integrating YouTube as an educational tool in teaching in order to enhance the EFL students' vocabulary acquisition process. The results of this study indicated positive gains in this area. Based on the students' perspectives, the use of YouTube in the class was more helpful than using textbook-based English instruction for acquiring English vocabularies. The results of this study showed that YouTube is a valuable resource, firstly, for teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century learners; and secondly, for drawing on their multiple levels and different learning styles to help them acquire English vocabularies. Furthermore, it is worth noting that YouTube played an active role in terms of providing necessary information and vocabulary retention.



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SebelasMaret University.