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USING YOUTUBE AS A LEARNING MEDIA TO IMPROVE THE VOCABULARY OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of YouTube as a learning media to improve the vocabulary of eighth-grade students at SMP Advent Palu. The research utilized a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design, specifically a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The instruments applied consisted of vocabulary tests and questionnaires. A pre-test was conducted to assess students' initial vocabulary knowledge, followed by a treatment comprising six sessions that utilized YouTube videos focused on nouns, verbs, and adjectives. After the treatment, a post-test was administered to measure vocabulary improvement. The findings demonstrated that the students' average pre-test score was 40, which significantly improved to 81.3 in the post-test. The statistical analysis showed that the t-counted was higher than the t-table (11.759 > 1.860), indicating a significant improvement in students' vocabulary after using YouTube as a learning media. Furthermore, the questionnaire results revealed that 82% of the participants had a positive perception of using YouTube in vocabulary learning. Therefore, it can be concluded that YouTube is an effective and engaging learning media to improve students' vocabulary.

Keywords: YouTube, Learning Media, Vocabulary Improvement, EFL Learners.

BACKGROUND

The integration of digital technology into language education has significantly transformed how students acquire English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in building vocabulary. Vocabulary refers to the understanding of words and their meanings, which is fundamental for interpreting written and spoken texts. Students with strong vocabulary skills are generally more confident and capable of mastering other language skills, such as listening, speaking, and reading. In the Indonesian context, the Ministry of Education and Culture's (Kemendikbud) plan to implement the Kurikulum Merdeka, requiring English to be taught from primary school starting in 2027/2028, further emphasizes the urgency of developing robust vocabulary skills early on. However, traditional teaching tools like lectures and textbooks often fail to capture students' interest, resulting in boring, less engaging learning environments and limited word retention.

This challenge was highly evident at SMP Advent Palu. Pre-observations revealed that eighth-grade students lacked engaging media for learning English vocabulary and relied predominantly on conventional textbooks. Consequently, their vocabulary remained basic, and many struggled to comprehend word meanings, leading to severe boredom and passivity in the classroom. To address this issue, interactive, technology-based learning media are required to boost interest and comprehension. Fransiska et al. (2024) assert that digital media can significantly support cognitive growth by making lessons more stimulating. In this digital age,

utilizing interactive platforms like videos is crucial, as it allows students to observe vocabulary in real-life contexts, thereby enhancing their overall language skills (Wardaya, 2015).

Among various digital platforms, YouTube has emerged as a highly effective tool for teaching vocabulary, offering a vast array of contextualized content suitable for all English proficiency levels. Dowse (2009, as cited in Abidin et al., 2011) suggests that teachers can utilize YouTube creatively in the classroom to foster interactive learning. Furthermore, Hariyono (2020) notes that integrating YouTube makes learning more engaging, leading to increased student interest and enthusiasm.

Recent studies consistently highlight the positive impact of YouTube on language learning. For instance, Maulana (2023) and Rini et al. (2024) demonstrated that YouTube channels act as a game-changer in significantly boosting students' vocabulary mastery. Furthermore, Masykuri et al. (2025) emphasized its effectiveness in facilitating asynchronous vocabulary acquisition in Indonesian secondary classrooms. However, there remains a need to investigate its specific effectiveness as a targeted intervention for vocabulary building among junior high school students in a localized context, particularly those who have shown a severe lack of motivation due to traditional textbook reliance. To fill this gap, this research was conducted to prove whether the use of YouTube as a learning media can significantly improve the vocabulary of eighth-grade students at SMP Advent Palu. The research question formulated is: *"Can the use of YouTube as a learning media improve the vocabulary of the eighth-grade students at SMP Advent Palu?"*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a key aspect of language learning. Richards and Renandya (2002) emphasize that a strong command of vocabulary is essential for accurately understanding and producing language. In line with this, Nation (2001) states that a rich vocabulary enhances communicative competence, while a limited vocabulary can hinder effective communication. Coady and Huckin (1997) also highlight that vocabulary is crucial for mastering the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without an adequate vocabulary, learners will struggle to develop these four skills.

Integrating technology into vocabulary learning is an effective way to boost student motivation and engagement through more interactive and meaningful experiences. Furthermore, an adequate vocabulary supports social interaction, enabling individuals to express their thoughts and emotions clearly, thereby making communication in daily life far more effective.

YouTube and Its Features

YouTube, founded in 2005 and now owned by Google, has evolved from a simple amateur video platform into a global hub for entertainment, communication, and education. According to Wiryany et al. (2019), YouTube functions as a mass media platform hosting millions of videos, and Juitania and Indrawan (2020) note that the platform is used by more than one billion people worldwide. YouTube offers various supportive features such as a personalized homepage, *playlists*, a comments section, and Premium services, as well as tools like *Shorts*, *live streaming*, and *YouTube Studio* for content creators. The platform also provides safe viewing options such as *YouTube Kids* and *Restricted Mode*, making it a versatile and safe platform for audiences of all ages.

YouTube as a Learning Medium

Learning media play a crucial role in helping students better understand the material. Sudjana and Rivai (2011) emphasize that effective media can enhance students' focus, motivation, and active participation. In the digital age, platforms like YouTube offer a far more engaging alternative to traditional teaching methods. Mujianto (2019) highlights that YouTube can boost student interest through visual content, while Widahyu (2021) adds that video-based learning can enhance focus, enjoyment, and lively interaction in the classroom.

In the context of language learning, particularly vocabulary, YouTube offers a dynamic and interactive environment. Wigati et al. (2018) state that this platform creates a more engaging experience for both teachers and students, whether used online or in person. Its multimedia elements help make language learning more visual, accessible, and adaptive. Other benefits of YouTube as a learning tool include its widespread availability, ease of access, and abundance of varied educational content. Its interactive features encourage communication and feedback, while its free nature provides a highly cost-effective option for supporting modern education.

YouTube's Benefits for Vocabulary Learning and Teaching Steps

YouTube offers significant advantages for developing students' vocabulary mastery. By integrating visual and auditory input, the platform reinforces word retention through contextual cues such as conversations, images, gestures, and sound effects. Evidence from studies involving secondary-school students indicates that YouTube-based instruction can improve vocabulary achievement and produce significantly higher posttest results, while also generating positive learner responses (Maulana, 2023; Rini et al., 2024). In addition, YouTube provides diverse materials, ranging from formal educational videos to informal everyday communication, allowing students to encounter vocabulary in authentic and meaningful contexts (Masykuri et al., 2025). This exposure helps learners understand not only the meanings of new words but also their pronunciation, collocations, and appropriate use. Furthermore, videos such as vlogs and interviews promote active and self-directed learning by presenting real-world communication. Consequently, YouTube can extend vocabulary learning beyond memorization, prepare students to use new words in classroom activities, and make the learning process more engaging and relevant.

The process of teaching vocabulary through YouTube follows several structured steps designed to maximize student engagement and understanding. First, the teacher selects a relevant topic and chooses appropriate YouTube videos. Students then watch the videos carefully and record any unfamiliar vocabulary they encounter. Afterward, they share their findings with the class, while the teacher provides clarification and expands on the material. To reinforce learning, students work collaboratively to create example sentences and present them to the class. The lesson also includes pronunciation practice before concluding with a reflection and a brief introduction to the topic of the next class.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental design of the one-group pre-test and post-test type (Sugiyono, 2017). This design was applied to assess students' vocabulary skills before the intervention (pre-test), provide the treatment using YouTube as a medium, and measure their improvement at the end (post-test).

The population in this study comprised all eighth-grade students at SMP Advent Palu, totaling nine (9) students.

Given the small population size, the researcher employed a total sampling technique, in which all students were included as the study sample. Due to the very limited sample size (N=9), the inferential statistical analysis (t-test) used in this study serves as a preliminary evaluation, the results of which are highly contextual and specific to the population at that school.

Data collection was conducted through instrument triangulation, namely, tests, questionnaires, and documentation, to ensure the accuracy of the results (Arikunto, 2010). The pre-test and post-test instruments each consisted of 30 items designed to specifically measure vocabulary proficiency. The treatment phase was conducted in 80-minute sessions consisting of structured activities. During these sessions, students watched educational videos, took notes on new vocabulary, worked collaboratively in groups, and completed worksheets to reinforce vocabulary retention.

After the treatment phase concluded, a post-test equivalent to the pre-test was administered to evaluate the impact of using YouTube. A questionnaire was then distributed to gather feedback regarding students' perceptions of the method. Documentation throughout the learning process was used to support the validity of the study. This combination of instruments yielded comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data to thoroughly evaluate the effectiveness of the YouTube platform.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Vocabulary Tests Result (Pretest and Posttest)

This study began with a *pre-test* to measure the basic vocabulary skills of the nine students prior to the intervention. The results of the pre-test can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. The Students' Scores in Pre-Test

No	Students Initial	Multiple Choice	Complete Sentences	Obtained Scores	Maximum Scores
1	MC	55	40	95	47.5
2	AL	25	50	75	37.5
3	SN	30	50	80	40.0
4	KN	35	70	105	52.5
5	JR	30	30	60	30.0
6	AS	30	70	100	50.0
7	JN	10	70	80	40.0
8	FI	20	10	30	150.
9	LA	25	70	95	47.5
	Total	260	460	720	360

The researcher calculated the students' average pre-test score by totaling all individual scores and dividing by the number of students, following the given procedure. The result is presented below:

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

$$M = \frac{360}{9}$$

$$M = 40$$

The results showed that the students' *mean pre-test* score was 40. This figure indicates that the students' vocabulary proficiency was still at a basic level and considered low before the integration of YouTube as a teaching medium.

After six treatment sessions using YouTube (focusing on nouns, verbs, and adjectives), the researcher administered a *post-test*. The results of the post-test were used to determine whether YouTube can be used effectively as a learning media to improve students' vocabulary. The score is shown in the following table.

Table 2. The Students' Scores in Post-Test

No	Students Initial	Multiple Choice	Complete Sentences	Obtained Scores	Maximum Scores
1	MC	95	90	185	92.5
2	AL	85	70	155	77.5
3	SN	75	70	145	72.5
4	KN	95	100	195	97.5
5	JR	80	70	150	75.0
6	AS	90	60	150	75.0
7	JN	90	100	190	95.0
8	FI	80	60	140	70.0
9	LA	85	70	155	77.5
	Total	775	690	1.465	732.5

The researcher also calculated the students' average post-test score using the same formula as for the pre-test. The results are presented as follow.

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$
$$M = \frac{732{,}5}{9}$$
$$M = 81.3$$

The data showed a dramatic improvement, with the students' total accumulated score reaching 1,465 and the average *post-test* score jumping to 81.3. This comparison reveals an increase of more than 100% compared to the initial score.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

To determine whether the increase in scores from 40 to 81.3 is statistically significant, the researcher calculated the deviation (difference) between the *post-test* and *pre-test* scores. The following table shows the deviation and squared deviation calculation.

Table 3. Deviation Score of Pre-test and Post-test

No	Students Initial	Post-test	Pre-test	(d)	(d2)
1	MC	92.5	47.5	45.0	2,025
2	AL	77.5	37.5	40.0	1,600
3	SN	72.5	40.0	32.5	1,056
4	KN	97.5	52.5	45.0	2,025
5	JR	75.0	30.0	45.0	2,025
6	AS	75.0	50.0	25.0	625
7	JN	95.0	40.0	55.0	3,025
8	FI	70.0	15.0	55.0	3,025
9	LA	77.5	47.5	30.0	900
	Total	732.5	360	372.5	16,306

The researcher subsequently calculated the mean deviation of the pre-test and post-test scores. The calculation is shown below.

$$MD = \frac{\sum d}{N}$$
$$MD = \frac{372.5}{9}$$
$$MD = 41.3$$

The researcher slaso calculated the squared deviation, as shown below.

$$\Sigma x^2 d = \Sigma d^2 - \frac{(\Sigma d)^2}{n}$$
$$= 16{,}306 - \frac{(372.5)^2}{9}$$
$$= 16{,}306 - \frac{138{,}756}{9}$$
$$= 16{,}306 - 15{,}417$$
$$= 889$$

The results of the calculation showed a *Mean Deviation* (MD) of 41.3, with a *Sum of Squares of Deviations* of 889. Based on these deviation data, hypothesis testing was conducted using a *t-test*. The statistical calculation yielded to find a t-counted value.

$$t = \frac{MD}{\sqrt{\frac{\Sigma x^2 d}{n\,(n-1)}}}$$
$$t = \frac{41.3}{\sqrt{\frac{889}{9\,(9-1)}}}$$
$$t = \frac{41.3}{\sqrt{\frac{889}{72}}}$$
$$t = \frac{41.3}{\sqrt{12.34}}$$
$$t = \frac{41.3}{3.512}$$
$$t = 11.759$$

As a result, it is found 11.759 of t-counted value. This value was then compared to the t-table value at a significance level of 0.05 using a one-tailed test with a *degree of freedom* (df) of 8 (n-1 = 9-1). The t-table value obtained was 1.860.

Since the calculated t-value (11.759) far exceeds the table t-value (1.860), the research hypothesis is accepted. This provides strong statistical evidence that the use of YouTube as a learning medium significantly improves the vocabulary mastery of eighth-grade students at SMP Advent Palu.

Student Perceptions (*Questionnaire Findings*)

In addition to objective test data, a 14-item questionnaire was distributed to gauge students' subjective perceptions of this method. The results were presented in the table below:

Table 4. Students' Perceptions on Using YouTube for Vocabulary Learning

No	Questionnaire Items	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	YouTube is an effective and interactive media for learning English.	Agree	9	100%
		Disagree	0	0%
2	I am more interested in learning English vocabulary through YouTube compared to using textbooks.	Agree	9	100%
		Disagree	0	0%
3	Learning videos on YouTube help me understand English vocabulary better.	Agree	9	100%
		Disagree	0	0%
4	I prefer learning in video format rather than just listening or reading.	Agree	8	90%
		Disagree	1	10%
5	It is easier for me to remember new vocabulary after watching it on YouTube.	Agree	7	80%
		Disagree	2	20%
6	I have difficulty understanding the accents or pronunciation of words in YouTube videos.	Agree	3	30%
		Disagree	6	70%
7	I often find new words when watching learning videos on YouTube.	Agree	8	90%
		Disagree	1	10%
8	The provided YouTube videos help me understand the meaning of new vocabulary in various contexts.	Agree	8	90%
		Disagree	1	10%
9	I feel there is an improvement in my vocabulary after learning using YouTube.	Agree	8	90%
		Disagree	1	10%
10	YouTube helps me know the correct pronunciation of words.	Agree	7	80%
		Disagree	2	20%
11	I often take notes on new vocabulary from YouTube videos to study later.	Agree	6	70%
		Disagree	3	30%
12	I have trouble focusing on learning if there is no guidance from the teacher while watching YouTube.	Agree	3	30%
		Disagree	6	70%
13	The discussion session after watching YouTube videos helps me understand vocabulary better.	Agree	9	100%
		Disagree	0	0%
14	I feel learning through YouTube is more flexible because I can replay the videos anytime.	Agree	9	100%
		Disagree	0	0%

The results were very positive: 100% of students agreed that YouTube is an interactive and effective medium that makes learning more flexible compared to printed textbooks. Furthermore, 90% of students felt that the videos helped them understand the meanings of vocabulary words in various real-life contexts, and 80% of students reported that they found it easier to remember new vocabulary after seeing its visual and audio representations on YouTube.

Overall, despite some minor challenges, with 30% of students admitting they had difficulty understanding native speakers' accents and another 30% finding it hard to focus without teacher guidance, an average of 82% of students held a very positive perception of YouTube's usefulness in language learning.

Discussion

The findings of this study convincingly answer the research questions and confirm the effectiveness of integrating digital video platforms into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The

very sharp increase in the average score (from 40 to 81.3) demonstrates that the use of YouTube successfully alleviated student boredom, which had previously resulted from reliance on conventional textbooks. This achievement aligns with the theories of Nation (2001) and Richards and Renandya (2002), who assert that vocabulary acquisition cannot occur optimally without a motivating and interactive learning environment.

The success of this score improvement is directly proportional to the questionnaire results, in which 100% of students agreed that YouTube is an interactive and enjoyable medium. These results empirically validate the theory proposed by Sudjana and Rivai (2011), which states that selecting the appropriate learning media will significantly enhance students' focus, motivation, and active participation. Furthermore, the fact that 80% of students found it easier to remember new vocabulary after seeing its visual and audio representations on YouTube is highly consistent with the findings of Fransiska et al. (2024). They state that digital media greatly supports cognitive development because it stimulates the brain through multisensory (audio-visual) input.

More specifically regarding the use of video platforms, the findings of this study confirm the results of previous studies by Hariyono (2020) and Mujianto (2019), which concluded that YouTube is significantly capable of increasing students' enthusiasm for learning through its wealth of visual content. The high percentage of students (90%) who felt helped in understanding the meaning of words in various real-life contexts also reinforces Wardaya's (2015) argument. Wardaya (2015) emphasizes that videos provide *contextual cues*, such as facial expressions, intonation, and situational settings, that printed textbooks cannot offer, thereby making it easier for vocabulary to be stored in long-term memory.

Nevertheless, the questionnaire findings in this study also highlight a critical challenge: 30% of students reported difficulty understanding the accent of a *native speaker*, and another 30% found it hard to stay focused without guidance from a teacher. This fact raises an important pedagogical implication: even a digital platform as powerful as YouTube cannot stand alone as a "replacement" for a teacher. This medium achieves its peak effectiveness (as evidenced by a t-score of 11.759) precisely because it is used as a tool accompanied by structured guidance, observation instructions, collaborative discussions, and clarifications of meaning provided by the teacher. This is fully in line with the view of Dowse (2009, in Abidin et al., 2011), who emphasizes that the effectiveness of YouTube depends on the teacher's creativity and guidance in managing its use in the classroom.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the statistical analysis and the discussion, this study concludes that using YouTube as a learning media significantly improves the vocabulary of eighth-grade students at SMP Advent Palu. The effectiveness of this platform is evidenced by the substantial increase in the students' average scores, which rose from 40 in the pre-test to 81.3 in the post-test. Furthermore, the statistical analysis confirms this significant impact, with the t-counted value (11.759) far exceeding the t-table value (1.860). Beyond the quantitative data, the questionnaire results revealed that 82% of the students positively perceived YouTube as an engaging and interactive tool that helps them understand and retain new vocabulary in various contexts. However, this study also highlights a critical pedagogical note: YouTube cannot function as a standalone replacement for teachers. The presence of a teacher remains essential

to guide the learning process, maintain students' focus, and bridge comprehension gaps, particularly concerning native English accents.

Suggestion

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are proposed:

(1) For English Teachers: It is highly recommended to integrate YouTube videos as supplementary media in vocabulary learning to create an interactive classroom environment. However, teachers must provide structured guidance, such as pre-teaching difficult words and leading post-viewing collaborative discussions, to help students overcome challenges with native accents and maintain focus.

(2) For Students: Students should utilize YouTube not only as an entertainment platform but also as an independent learning tool. They are encouraged to re-watch educational videos, utilize English subtitles, and take notes on new vocabulary to familiarize themselves with native pronunciation and contextual usage.

(3) For Future Researchers: Considering that this study was conducted with a very limited sample size (9 students), future researchers are strongly encouraged to replicate this study using a larger population and a control group to strengthen the statistical validity. Furthermore, future studies could expand the scope by investigating the impact of YouTube on other language skills, such as speaking or listening comprehension.

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