

The Perspectives of EFL Students at Yarmouk University towards Using YouTube in Learning and Understanding English during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The Covid-19 epidemic has forced several nations to adjust to new conditions in a variety of fields, including education. Jordan has made the decision to go from in-person instruction to online classes utilizing a variety of programs, including WhatsApp, Teams, and Zoom. During the pandemic, students used YouTube to learn and comprehend English. This study examines how watching YouTube videos affects students' English language proficiency and contrasts it with lectures delivered by professors through Zoom and WhatsApp. Additionally, it illustrates the challenges of using YouTube videos for online learning as well as possible solutions. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers use qualitative and quantitative method to be applied on 100 fourth-year college students from the department of English language and literature, College of Education, Yarmouk University. The researchers conclude that students consider YouTube as a learning tool as they have motivation for using YouTube videos to understand academic materials to the extent that they believe that YouTube videos help them to improve their performance and language skills more than the lectures given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp. The researchers find three Barriers of using YouTube videos in learning and understanding English identified from the students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at Yarmouk University during Covid-19 pandemic. The three barriers are lack of interpersonal contact, technological barriers and physical barriers. The researchers also suggest approaches to overcome those obstacles. A number of recommendations were also given in this publication in light of the study's findings.

Keywords: online learning, EFL, language proficiency, pandemic, alternative platforms

1. Introduction

Using technology becomes part of our daily activities as it covers many aspects and serves many purposes. Many People use technology for various reasons like searching for a job, doing business, shopping and gathering information. Since the spread of Corona virus, the use of social media has become popular. People can upload, download, share, view and comment on many contents. As videos on YouTube could be shared and commented on, YouTube is considered as social media since interaction and communication take place on the site (De Witt et al., 2013).

Turning as an online learning tool, YouTube website plays a vital role in the teaching field. It is regarded as a main source of online learning material, particularly during Covid-19 pandemic, as it provides students with authentic and real-life videos that enhance students' understanding of their English lessons. Maness (2014) states that learners can gain positive indicators when they watch authentic and real-life clips. Students improve their ability to comprehend and recall more than 75% when they see hear and do (Lindstorm, 1994). Many researchers observe that using YouTube in learning develops students' mentality and creativity (Abbas, 2020). Others conclude that higher thinking levels, including problem-solving and decision making, have improved and developed among learners as they connect what they have learned from YouTube videos to real-life situations. Almurashi (2016) states that using YouTube videos to teach English helps to provide good understanding, make the learning process more fun and meaningful, and give students a chance to easily memorize their lessons. As a source of information, 98% of students use YouTube while 86% of them assure that it enhances their performance (Jafar, 2012).

The current study sheds light on the perspectives of the students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at Yarmouk University towards using YouTube in learning and understanding English during Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher tries to answer the following questions: What are the effects of using YouTube videos on students during Covid-19 pandemic? To what extent can YouTube videos improve student's performance in English language during Covid-19 pandemic? What are the barriers of using YouTube videos in learning English during Covid-19 pandemic? And how can students overcome such barriers? The paper also sheds light on the effectiveness of YouTube videos in learning English and compares it to lectures given on WhatsApp and Zoom applications. The study sample constitutes 100 fourth-year college students from the department of English language and literature, College of Education, Yarmouk University.

2. Methodology

The participants of the current study were college students from the department of English language and literature, College of Education, Yarmouk University. The study sample was limited to fourth-year college students because of many reasons. First, they have four-year experience in studying English. Second, they are more aware of the effectiveness of using YouTube videos in learning English as they have

experienced face to face learning in their first years in the college and distant learning during the wide spread of Corona virus. Thirdly, it is highly expected that the experience of using YouTube in learning English affects their future career as teachers.

The population of the study sample was 100 students from different English courses including: syntax, morphology, listening and speaking, pronunciation and speech. The study was based on qualitative and quantitative methods. The researchers use these methods to study the phenomenon in its real condition, rather than attempting to change or interfere with the normal course of events. By this, it means that researchers conducting qualitative and quantitative investigation study objects in their natural settings, aiming to make meaning out of it, or interpret events based on the meanings students attach to them.

Regarding the qualitative portion, students were interviewed about their experience and opinion about using YouTube videos in learning English during Covid-19 global pandemic (see Appendix A). Due to the wide spread of corona virus, the researcher conducted online interviews with the students. All their answers were written to be analyzed. Descriptive analysis will be using the interview as the analysis of the problem.

For the quantitative portion, the researcher developed an online survey constructed to examine the effectiveness of videos in YouTube in learning English during the pandemic (see Appendix B). The online survey was given after the interviews. All participants responded to each item as 'agree', 'neutral' or 'disagree'. All answers were collected to be analyzed. The survey will be used on the statistical analysis. Both results of the analyses are used to answer both research questions.

3. Results

3.1 The Interview

The researcher collected students' answers during the interviews which concentrated on sharing their experience in using YouTube videos during the pandemic to learn English. The table below shows the summarized results.

Table 1. The students' feedback from the interview

feeling more interested when using YouTube videos	88%
feeling more excited and motivated when using YouTube videos	90%
YouTube videos create independent learners	78%
planning to use YouTube videos ever after	78%
planning to use YouTube videos in teaching	91%
preferring YouTube videos	81%

3.2 The Survey

Following the interview, the participants were asked to do an online survey to examine the effectiveness of their learning using YouTube videos. Students' feedback is shown in the table below.

Table 2. Percentage of the responses to the survey

Improving understanding	80%	13%	7%
Improving performance	51%	27%	22%
simplifying learning English	68%	19%	13%
Improving English pronunciation	76%	21%	3%
building vocabulary and developing grammatical patterns.	59%	30%	11%
recalling and memorizing	54%	23%	23%
enhancing academic marks	71%	20%	9%
providing long-term learning	88%	10%	2%
creating independent learners	78%	17%	5%
providing more learning techniques	81%	15%	4%

4. Discussion

This study aims at investigating the effectiveness of using YouTube videos in learning English among EFL students at Yarmouk University during Covid-19 pandemic. Below is the analysis of the interviews and the survey feedback based on students' answers.

The first question of the interview is "Which Application makes you feel more enjoyable and interested in learning English: YouTube videos or lectures given on Zoom and WhatsApp?" This question aims at examining students' feelings when using YouTube in learning English during the pandemic. 88% percent of the participants answered that they felt interested when using YouTube videos in learning English more than they did during lectures given on Zoom and WhatsApp. They asserted that many lecturers used traditional ways of teaching on Zoom and WhatsApp. A learner answered "Some lecturers made me feel bored and want to leave the lesson". Other students supported the same idea. They responded that "Sometimes, I felt a sleepy", "I quickly got bored" and "I thought that learning English is interesting, but it seemed that I was wrong".

Similarly, the second question provides an overview about students' feeling toward YouTube videos in learning English. 90% percent of the students expressed positive feelings toward using YouTube videos. They asserted that the materials presented through YouTube videos were more motivating than those provided through Zoom or WhatsApp classes. They responded that "It was difficult to follow the lecturer", "Sometimes, I hardly understood all the words in the lesson on Zoom or WhatsApp because of the absence of visual content", "I could not concentrate on what was saying during the lecture. I preferred visual aids" and "I misunderstood some topics because of the little interaction with the tutor".

The third question "Do you think that using YouTube videos in learning English has turned you an independent learner? How?" explores students' ability to use YouTube in developing their understanding inside and outside classrooms. A student supported the idea by commenting that "It was hard to me to understand what the lecturer was saying during the lecture, but by using YouTube videos I could follow up". Another said "I am a visual learner and online lectures on Zoom and WhatsApp did not work with me, thus I totally depended on YouTube videos which gave the content lively and realistically". This question examines students' confidence in learning English by themselves, which is the aim of the modern teaching methods. 78% percent preferred using YouTube in learning English to listening to the lecturer in online classes on Zoom and WhatsApp during the pandemic. This has turned students to independent learners who are responsible of their learning.

The fourth question explores students' intentions in pursuing using YouTube videos in learning English after the pandemic, i.e. when education turns back to face-to-face mode. 78% percent answered the question "Are you planning to continue using YouTube videos in learning English after the pandemic? Why?" with agreement. They expressed that they like to use YouTube videos because it has positive effects on their performance. For example, one of the students said "YouTube videos enhanced my fluency through conversations between native speakers. Also, many students asserted that many aspects of the lesson were hard to be understood, but with using YouTube videos they became able to understand everything. A student added that "YouTube was my friend during my journey in learning English". Such answers clarify students' intentions in using YouTube videos ever after because of its positive impact on their learning.

"Are you going to use YouTube videos in teaching English when you become a teacher? Why?" is the fifth question that aims at questioning students' intention in applying YouTube videos in their future careers as teachers. This question got the highest agreement with 91% percent. The majority stated that using YouTube videos that have visual-audio effects has the ability to improve students' learning. A commenter said "Surely, I will use YouTube videos because they help students to get more engaged in the lesson and easily remember the content". Another student supported the point that "Technology is part of our life and the future generations are eager to use different applications in their classes. Traditional ways of teaching will no more work with them". The result of this question is similar to a previous study conducted by Sherman (2003) who has found that using authentic videos leads to interesting and fruitful learning.

"Which way do you prefer in learning English: YouTube videos or lessons given by lecturers on Zoom and WhatsApp? Why?" is the sixth question which investigates students' preferences to the best mode of learning. 81% percent asserted that YouTube videos simplified many aspects of the lesson through using visual-audio effects which made the lesson comprehensive and understandable. A remarkable number of students agreed on the positive effects of YouTube videos on learning English which could compensate for the negative impacts of or lessons given by lecturers on Zoom and WhatsApp. A student said "YouTube videos teach English through real life situations which made the learning process interesting". Also, many students asserted that they preferred using YouTube videos in learning English because of the visual and audio features which captured their attention and eased retention. Thus, it is clear that many students preferred YouTube videos over lessons given by lecturers on Zoom and WhatsApp.

No doubt that using YouTube videos in Learning English had useful effects on students. Nevertheless, some students outlined many barriers they have faced in using YouTube videos. A participant said "I really enjoyed using YouTube videos in learning English except the technical problems and bad internet connections during bad weather". In addition, a student added that "the high cost of internet bundle and the weak internet connection in some places were the challenges of using YouTube videos in learning English". Another student replied that "Honestly, I really got motivated in the topic until online advertisements started to appear without prior notice. So, I decided to download videos to avoid such advertisements, but the low download speed was another annoying problem. Beside, YouTube does not have real-time interaction". Also, they all mentioned that "Some English topics were presented by non-native speakers who mispronounced some words or over-expanded a topic in a way that made it difficult and confusing". All the participants mentioned that they have experienced physical health barriers such as eye strain and headache.

There were three main types of barriers of using YouTube in Learning English. The first barrier was related to the absence of "personal

contact". Although personal contact is acquired fully in face-to-face classrooms, using YouTube videos is more affordable and convenient (Clover,2017). The second barrier was related to technical barriers; for instance, low internet bandwidth, outdated cell phones and bad internet connection. Relatively, internet connection is expensive and not all students are able to afford the monthly high cost of fixed broadband. As a result, most students use mobile data when they want to watch or download a video from YouTube which needs a decent Internet connection. The third barrier was the physical barrier. Kozeis(2009) mentions that "Expanded light levels can add to over the top glare and issues related to the adjustment of the eye to various degrees of light". He also adds that staring at a cell phone for a long period of time causes headache, eye fatigue and dryness.

To overcome these barriers, the researcher proposes ways for each barrier. Regarding "personal contact" barrier, students can use other platforms, for instance, Telegram, Zoom, Line and WhatsApp in a way that helps students interact face-to-face. For the technical barrier and Internet connection, the researcher suggests that students should use audios such as radio and broadcasts to learn English. Using sounds can be devoured while doing other activities such as: working, eating, etc. In contrast to using YouTube videos, using audios does not need a decent Internet connection, costly hardware or updated phones. Using texts to learn English can be also an alternative way. Sharing static pictures, tests and exercise are also beneficial in conveying data and learn English. The third barrier, the physical barrier, may cause students to have eye strain and other Digital Visual Syndrome (DVS). In order to overcome this barrier, students can adjust the level of the background light of their phones to decline eye strain (Garza et.al., 2014;Narinasamy,2018). Students should have breaks every hour to reduce the possibility of eye strain headache.

The responders to the first item in the survey, " Using YouTube videos to learn English has improved my understanding and comprehension more than lectures given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp do. ", show that 80% agreed that their understanding of English has enhanced after using YouTube videos. 13% of the responders gave a neutral response to the use of YouTube as a useful tool in comprehending and understanding English and 7% disagreed on the benefit of YouTube in building better comprehension. The high percentage of agreed responders indicates that students are willing to use YouTube as a supplementary tool in learning English. The findings conform to the conclusion of Almurashi (2016) that 90% of the participants use YouTube videos to improve their understanding. He concluded that:

YouTube videos have the ability to improve learners' comprehension and elicit information. Additionally, it gives learners the opportunity to understand the lesson in effective and lively way. Also, YouTube videos can present the lesson more realistically and comprehensively than traditional teaching methods.

Additionally, Frdlinger and Owens (2009) found that 95% of students better understood the content learned from YouTube. Likewise, Abbas (2020) found that 43% of students fully comprehend the materials presented on YouTube.

51% of the participants agreed on item number two: Using YouTube videos to learn English improved my performance, especially in speaking and listening, more than lectures given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp did. While 27% gave a neutral response, 22% disagreed on the item. The approximation of the percentages of the two latter indicates that some students were unusual and unfamiliar of using YouTube in learning English and preferred having lectures by their teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp. This conforms to the conclusion of Almurashi (2016) that more than half of the participants agree that YouTube is a vital tool that helps to enhance students' English fluency through real-life videos. Also, the findings show concordance to Abbas (2020) that YouTube videos help students to communicate and hence improve their speaking and writing skills in particular.

Item number three, " YouTube videos simplify learning English language more than lectures given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp do. " shows that 68% of the participants agreed on the role of YouTube videos in clarifying and simplifying the materials presented in online classes on Zoom and WhatsApp. The visual-audio effects of the videos helped students grasp the idea easily. While 19% gave neutral response, 13% disagreed on the item. Almurashi (2016) finds that more than 70% of the students believe that the digital features of YouTube videos help students grasp the meaning of some idioms, references and abstract meanings.

Concerning item number four, " YouTube videos presented by native speakers have improved my English pronunciation more than the online lessons given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp ", shows that 76% agreed that watching videos presented by native speakers leveled up their English pronunciation. Others 3% disagreed on this, and 21% were neutral. Similar results were concluded by Abbas (2020) and Almurashi(2016). The official YouTube videos can help students understand and comprehend the lesson more effectively, lively and realistically than online lessons presented by teachers.

As for item number five, " YouTube videos helped me built my vocabulary and developed my grammatical patterns more than online classes on Zoom did ", 59% of the students agreed on the effective role of YouTube videos in improving students' level in these two aspects of English language. 30% of the research sample disagreed and 11%gave a neutral response. Abbas (2020) and Almurashi(2016) find a reasonable number of students agree on their English lexical and grammatical development when using YouTube videos. YouTube videos display real-life situations and everyday conversations, which increase students' mental lexicon and enhance their grammatical patterns.

"Leaning English materials using YouTube videos helps to recall and memorize easily and quickly" is the sixth item which shows that 54% agreed on their quick ability in retaining information when learning it using YouTube. 32% equally disagreed and neutral. Frdlinger and Owens (2009) find that 75% of the students feel that they easily retain information when the materials are presented through YouTube. The visual and auditory features help to capture students' attention, to grasp the idea easily, and smoothly recall information. This cannot be achieved through online classes which depend on lecturing only.

Regarding the seventh question, "My marks have become better since I started using YouTube videos in learning English during the pandemic", 71% of the participants agreed on their academic development since they have started using YouTube in learning English. While 20% disagreed on this item, 9% gave neutral response. The English materials presented by native speakers on YouTube simplify and facilitate understanding English. Again, the visual-audio features of YouTube videos make learning English realistic, comprehensive, interesting and understandable.

As the eighth question "The materials learned through YouTube videos last for a long term compared to materials learned in online lessons on Zoom and WhatsApp." shows that 88% of the sample study believed that the materials learned on YouTube last for a life-time, 10% disagreed on this item and 2% gave a neutral response. Frdlinger and Owens (2009) found that 95% of students better understand the content learned from YouTube. Ebied, Kahouf & Rahman (2016) claim that using YouTube videos help to keep the learning materials in the long-term memory. Thus, Students' adequate understanding helps them acquire a lifelong learning.

The ninth item, "I have become an independent learner since I started using YouTube videos in learning English", is one of the essential 21st century skills for learners. While 78% agreed that using YouTube has turned them into independent learners, 17% disagreed and 5% gave a neutral response. Wilson (2015) indicates that 84% of students like to watch videos for educational purposes. Based on the results of the interview, 78% of the students believe that using YouTube videos in learning English during Covid-19 pandemic made them responsible for their learning inside and outside the classroom.

The final item, "YouTube videos provide more various techniques and methods of learning English than lectures given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp do", indicates that 81% of the sample study thought that the visual-auditory features, the different teaching styles and methods of learning English were more than the techniques used in traditional classes. Nevertheless, 15% disagreed and 4% gave a neutral response. Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) tackle the positive implications of using modern technology in education technology. They state that it enhances learning through the use of computers, digital cameras, and PowerPoint presentations.

In the light of the analytical study of the interviews comments and survey answers that the students at Yarmouk provided, YouTube videos have played a vital role in learning English language during the pandemic. The multimodal text and authentic videos in YouTube have approved its efficiency in helping students to understand their English lessons more than the lectures given on Zoom and WhatsApp. First, YouTube helps to build students' knowledge and enhance their English fluency and performance. Second, YouTube videos help students experience real-life situations, improve their comprehension and elicit information. Moreover, YouTube presents English lessons more effectively, realistically, comprehensively and lively way than lessons given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp. Additionally, the visual-audio features of YouTube videos assist students' ability to remember the content, enjoy English lessons and have a long-term learning. In sum, YouTube has served as a beneficial and effective application in learning English language during Covid-19 pandemic.

5. Conclusion

The spread of virus Corona has led the Jordanian government to adjust the education mode from face-to-face learning to online learning. As a new mode, many students utilized YouTube in learning and understanding English during the pandemic. This paper sheds light on the effects of using YouTube videos on students' performance in English language and compares it to lectures given by lecturers on Zoom and WhatsApp. Also, it depicts the online learning barriers of using YouTube videos and their alternatives to cope them. As approved above, YouTube offered beneficial and interesting learning experience during online learning mode more than the other applications: Zoom and WhatsApp. The use of YouTube videos during Covid-19 pandemic was considered enjoyable and attractive as it was a supplementary part of the learning process. At the beginning of online learning mode, students considered YouTube as a learning tool as they had motivation for using YouTube videos to understand academic materials to the extent that they believed that YouTube videos have improved their performance and language skills more than the lectures given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp. YouTube videos created by native speakers were more preferred by the students as they helped students to approach the culture of the foreign language. The study has showed that YouTube videos were more effective in dealing with students' difficulties in learning and understanding English during the pandemic. The dramatic change in the Jordanian educational mode to online learning has proved YouTube's effectiveness in promoting better understanding of English more than the lessons given on Zoom and WhatsApp. Thus, this study suggests that YouTube videos should be integrated into online learning as a supplementary tool.

The study found three Barriers of using YouTube videos in learning and understanding English identified from EFL students at Yarmouk University during Covid-19 pandemic. The three barriers are lack of personal contact, technical barriers, and physical barriers. The study also proposes ways to overcome those barriers. For the lack of personal contact, students should use other platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, etc. Regarding the technical barrier, students should use texts and audio materials. Finally, students should adjust the level of the background light of their phones and should have breaks every hour to overcome the physical barrier.

Several suggestions are provided below in light of the study's findings. To start, it is important to encourage students to utilize YouTube in practicing their English. The use of YouTube in the classroom should also be mandated since it captures students' interest and caters to it. Additionally, Jordan's educational system has to find solutions for the difficulties posed by the technical issues. Future research might examine how students feel about using Teams and Zoom as well as any concerns they might have about using YouTube to learn a new language. This research covers only students' side regarding the barriers they interface during online learning process when using YouTube website. It is highly recommended for future studies to investigate teachers' perspectives towards the barriers of using YouTube in teaching English.

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Appendix A

(Interview questions)

1-Which Application makes you feel more enjoyable and interested in learning English: YouTube videos or lectures given on Zoom and WhatsApp?

2- Which Application makes you feel more excited and motivated in learning English: YouTube videos or lectures given on Zoom and WhatsApp?

3- Do you think that using YouTube videos in learning English has turned you an independent learner? How?

4-Are you planning to continue using YouTube videos in learning English after the pandemic? Why?

5- Are you going to use YouTube videos in teaching English when you become a teacher? Why?

6-Which way do you prefer in learning English: YouTube videos or lessons given by lecturers on Zoom and WhatsApp? Why?

7- What do you think are the main barriers of using YouTube in learning English?

Appendix B

(Survey Questions)

1-Using YouTube videos to learn English has improved my understanding and comprehension more than lectures given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp do.

- Agree
- neutral
- Disagree

2- Using YouTube videos to learn English has improved my performance, especially in speaking and listening, more than lectures given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp do.

- Agree
- neutral
- Disagree

3-YouTube videos simplify learning English language more than lectures given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp do.

- Agree
- neutral
- Disagree

4-YouTube videos presented by native speakers have improved my English pronunciation more than the online lessons given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp.

- Agree
- neutral
- Disagree

5- YouTube videos helped me built my vocabulary and developed my grammatical patterns more than online classes on Zoom did .

- Agree
- neutral
- Disagree

6- Leaning English materials using YouTube videos helps to recall and memorize easily and quickly.

- Agree
- neutral
- Disagree

7- My marks have become better since I started using YouTube videos in learning English during the pandemic.

- Agree
- neutral
- Disagree

8- The materials learned through YouTube videos last for a long term compared to materials learned in online lessons on Zoom and WhatsApp.

- Agree
- neutral
- Disagree

9- I have become an independent learner since I started using YouTube videos in learning English.

- Agree
- neutral
- Disagree

10- YouTube videos provide more various techniques and methods of learning English than lectures given by teachers on Zoom and WhatsApp do.

- Agree
- neutral
- Disagree

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