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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## The Effectiveness of YouTube in Developing and Improving English Foreign Language Learners' Speaking Skills

**Ayman Mosully**

*Department of English Language Teaching, Istanbul Aydin University, Turkey*

**Corresponding Author:** Ayman Mosully, **E-mail:** [aymanmosully@gmail.com](mailto:aymanmosully@gmail.com)

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the competence of employing YouTube videos in teaching speaking skills among EFL Turkish students in Turkey. The study comprised 40 students attending general English-speaking classes in a language school in Istanbul, Turkey. The participants were divided equally into an experimental group and a control group of 20 students each. The traditional method was employed in teaching speaking for the control group, while YouTube videos were used for the experimental group. Both groups were given an oral pre-test and post-test to track their development. Four experienced English teachers rated the participants' speaking performance using TOEFL independent speaking descriptors, which consist of four primary classifications: general description, delivery, language use, and topic development. The study's outcome showed that both groups' speaking performance was developed. However, the experimental group demonstrated a better speaking improvement than the traditional one. Delivery and language use were noticeably advanced in the experimental group's performance using YouTube videos during speaking classes.

**KEYWORDS**

YouTube, speaking skills, Oral Fluency, Lexis choice, EFL.

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**1. Introduction**

Speaking is one of the key linguistic skills in learning English. Speaking can demonstrate a student's proficiency in English as a second language. The English language has four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, we will focus on speaking in this study. Speaking, as a skill, is used to communicate and convey messages verbally. Rishwandi (2016) highlighted the problems that students face in improving their speaking skills. Students, in general, feel nervous or shy when they speak in the classroom because of their lack of self-confidence to answer the teacher's questions. In addition, they become nervous when they need to present some information in front of their friends. Furthermore, he also claimed that the strategies and techniques used in teaching speaking lessons in the classrooms by many teachers are essentially monotonous and teacher-centered and rarely allow students to participate actively in the class. Therefore, the students will not be able to use the appropriate lexis and exact grammar structure when speaking. To communicate appropriately and achieve the goal of speaking correctly, students need to pay more attention to their speaking skills than other skills and practice the language in any available method. Nevertheless, students' speaking difficulties and problems can be improved by providing different methods and strategies for teaching speaking. These strategies can be utilized by taking the benefits of technological developments.

**1.1 The significance of the study**

Technology has penetrated all aspects of our lives, such as improving communication, health, information access, education, economy, and others (Chitamba, 2014). Most modern EFL classrooms are technologically advanced, with projectors or smart boards. The regular traditional classroom is no longer the preferred option for learners because of the typical curriculum delivered

face-to-face by a teacher and traditional paper-and-pencil tests. The use of media as a tool in learning provides huge advantages and positive effects for both students and teachers. The learning process becomes easier and more fun because a lot of resources and related materials can be accessed by students in one click.

This study examines the influence of YouTube on developing and improving students' speaking skills. YouTube is one of the most remarkable media that is used in learning and teaching English (Almurashi, 2016). YouTube allows users to upload their videos, comment on others' videos, and share videos with others. This website attracts and interacts with millions of users every day. It is also available worldwide in more than eighty languages. The most noticeable feature of YouTube is that it includes plenty of videos on different topics and in many languages. These videos are important in education and learning languages. They allow the teachers to design their lessons for their learners and give meaningful activities in language lessons. For instance, discussion and conversation activities such as "voice-over" and "movie trailers" can be employed to practice listening and speaking skills (Watkins and Wilkins, 2011).

Many researchers have determined the important role of YouTube in learning languages. According to Barrs (2012), YouTube contributes to cross-cultural knowledge because users from various cultures can upload different videos on different topics. Furthermore, Snelson and Perkins (2009) report that videos improve motivation in language learning; hence, learners can exchange videos in a stress-free environment. YouTube videos allow students to share, comment, think, express, and speak positively without the constraints of traditional classes in which the teacher is the only speaker in the classroom (Alhamami, 2013). Furthermore, YouTube videos play an important role in permitting learners to speak interactively with their classmates and teachers in the class while watching the videos and understanding their surroundings (Alastuey, 2011). Wagner (2007) advocated for the use of videos in teaching speaking classes because they allow students to remember the topics and speak easily about them.

Another advantage of using YouTube in the classroom is its free service and low cost for some additional features. Yagci (2014) emphasized these advantages, noting that YouTube is a global portal that can be used anywhere and anytime. The use of YouTube content in the classroom has fostered the students' speaking skills in three different areas: accuracy, fluency, and overall performance (Jati et al., 2019).

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. Is there an important improvement in the students' speaking performance exposed to YouTube compared to students taught speaking traditionally?
2. Which of the following subskills, grammatical structure, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation, were the most noticeably improved in the YouTube experimental group's speaking performance?

### **2. Literature Review**

YouTube is one of the most important online media that can be used as a method of learning speaking skills. YouTube is a platform that allows users to upload, view, and share other users' videos. The website uses Python, JavaScript, HTML5, Go, Java, C++, and C programming languages, and Adobe Flash Video technology to display video content uploaded by users. YouTube is an online sharing tool that can present different types of information that can be employed for language learning (Nugroho et al., 2021; Setiawan et al., 2018). Hence, teachers need to fully comprehend what YouTube represents to provide a safe and stress-free learning process environment for learners (Wright, 2009).

Several studies have been conducted on using YouTube videos to improve English language skills. These studies provided vast advantages to EFL teaching in particular. Numerous scholars expected to apply all forms of electronic technology to enhance the learning process. YouTube offers a variety of valuable content to help educators while teaching English. By cooperating with fun experiences, learners are encouraged, and their lack of self-confidence decreases when learning a second language. This approach gives teachers a great opportunity to help their students improve their learning process. Compared to the traditional teaching approach, YouTube videos are more practical, sensible, and comprehensive (Almurashi, 2016). Surprisingly, a large part of YouTube content is educational, with a wide variety of videos presenting valuable information in various fields such as science, medicine, history, politics, geography, and more. Additionally, YouTube is a valuable source of related social material that can inspire students to participate in popular culture worldwide. YouTube videos have significantly improved not only students' speaking skills but also other English language proficiency elements such as vocabulary, grammatical structures, fluency, and content (Syafiq et al., 2021).

There are lots of advantages to using short videos while teaching a foreign language. According to Nasution (2019), YouTube is a helpful instructional tool for EFL teachers. It is an extremely effective method for improving language speaking skills through lexis development and providing different topics for discussions and debates representing all combinations of English learning activities used in the EFL classes. English teachers understand that YouTube video content is motivating and exciting simultaneously because it creates an actual, contextualized, authentic learning and teaching environment. Furthermore, YouTube videos provide

comprehensible, compelling, abundant, and rich input that encourages students to construct their language acquisition and learning (Cakir, 2006).

A study was conducted by Castaneda (2011), who stated that university students' speaking skills were improved by the combined learning procedures used on YouTube. Forty-four participants contributed to his research. He found that more than eighty-five percent of the participants have improved in comprehending the meaning of various ideas and speaking skills. Additionally, it was indicated that YouTube motivates learners to learn and speak with other peers without any restrictions. Miller et al. (2012) examined the impact of YouTube in enhancing sixth- and eighth-grade students' speaking skills in a school in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore. YouTube was used as a medium in speaking classes for three months. Students were given a proficiency test after using YouTube in the classroom. The study showed that YouTube is a valuable and useful tool that allows students to interact with their peers in pair or group work and develop their speaking process. The study's key finding was that the students self-reflected on their assignments in class and shared their ideas and work with classmates.

In his study, Zorko (2009) reported that videos and online games used by students caused several problems in their speaking because of the language difficulty level and the lack of understanding of some lexis and grammar structures. However, using YouTube as a course for improving speaking skills, students were motivated, developed their speaking process, and benefited from their teachers' and peers' comments. Therefore, YouTube provided the students with more engagement with their classmates, and in return, students developed their speaking, lexis, and grammar.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Participants**

The participants of this study consisted of 40 students enrolled in two English-speaking classes in a language school in Turkey, with 20 students in each class. The classes were divided into a control group and an experimental group. Each class contained five males and five females aged between 20 and 26. All the participants were university students in different majors with B1 English proficiency levels. Two teachers were assigned to teach the control group, and two were assigned to the experimental one. The teachers had more than ten years of teaching experience with an MA in English Language Teaching and a CELTA degree.

#### **3.2 Procedures**

An oral pre-test was administered to both groups to evaluate their speaking skills and performance. For evaluation objectives, four experienced teachers were assigned to rate the participants' speaking level using TOEFL independent speaking descriptors involving four main categories: general description, delivery, language use, and topic development. Each category contained 4 points, where zero indicates students did not attend the test, while 4 indicates students with great improvement in the speaking sub-skills in all four categories (see Appendix 1). By the end of the experimental program, an oral post-test was provided to both groups to find out whether there was an improvement in their speaking skills.

#### **3.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

To examine the evaluation of four experienced teachers, the researcher conducted an interrater analysis of the reliability of each category the teacher examined (see Table 1). The inter-rater analyses for the four categories of general description, delivery, language use, and topic development were kappa scores of 0.950, 0.962, 0.894, and 0.945, correspondingly, with  $p < 0.001$  for each category. According to Landis and Koch (1977), these values constitute excellent points of agreement.

Concerning the teaching program, the control group was traditionally taught speaking skills using the textbook and the exercises with pair and group work activities. In contrast, the experimental group was taught speaking using YouTube videos. Students had two sessions per week, with six hours in total. The overall period was 14 weeks. Both groups were given an oral post-test supervised by experienced teachers to assess the students' speaking performance.

Regarding the experimental group, several procedures were considered before providing YouTube videos to the students. First, the focus videos were watched by the researcher to check their appropriateness with respect to content and form. Then, the suitable ones were selected, and students had to watch the videos at their homes before discussing them in class. After long discussions about the goal of using the videos and their impact on speaking development, guiding questions were prepared by the teachers to use later for evaluation. After that, students were required to do several tasks over a period of one semester (14 weeks), starting from simple tasks to more complex ones. Students also were taught how to get the main ideas and summarize the videos. Finally, students were asked to present an oral report with a set of questions given in advance to peers in the classroom.

Nevertheless, the traditional teaching method was employed in teaching speaking skills to the control group for 14 weeks. Students had regular speaking lessons using a textbook focusing on the language form, for example, vocabulary and grammatical structures, pair work, group work, teacher-students, and students-student speaking open-ended question activities. Most of these questions had one single pre-determined answer because the concentration was on form rather than communication tasks. Hence, there was a lack of delivering the meaning or conveying their point of view.

**Table 1.** Interrater reliability analysis for all four teachers and for each category

Category	The Measure of Agreement: Kappa	p-value
General Description	0.950	0.000
Delivery	0.962	0.000
Language Use	0.894	0.000
Topic Development	0.945	0.000

#### 4. Results & Discussions

At first, the researcher checked the progress of learning and speaking performance of both groups to find if there was an improvement or not. The researcher compared the students' speaking performance before and after the 14 weeks speaking course. Table 2 shows a crucial improvement in the students' final scores between the two groups, where the t-values were less than -2, and the p-value was less than 0.001.

The significant differences were confirmed statically among both groups before and after the test. The researcher found that the experimental group exposed to YouTube video learning showed better speaking performance regarding the use of the language and the delivery. The researcher used the One-Way ANOVA test to determine which of the four categories under investigation were most noticeably improved among the experimental group. Table 3 shows that there is an essential difference in the experimental group's speaking performance regarding the four categories since the major level is 0.05 and the F value is greater than 2.

The subskills that improved the most in the experimental group's speaking skills were 'language use' and 'topic development', which ranked first and second, respectively, with a difference of (1.05) and (0.70). 'Delivery' and 'general description' were third and fourth ranked, respectively, with a difference of (0.67) and (0.65).

**Table 2:** Groups statistics and a sample of T-Test

Nu	Group		M (SE)	SD	Mean Difference	
					M (SE)	T value
1	Control Group	Pre-test	4.75	0.9690	0.04	-4.390
		Post-Test	5.00	0.9890		
2	Experimental Group	Pre-test	4.90	0.9800	0.05	-10.350
		Post-Test	5.59	0.9980		

(SE) Standard error of mean, (SD) Standard Deviation, \*\*\*p < 0.001, \*\*p < 0.01, \*p < 0.05

**Table 3:** The outcome of experimental group'

Category	Test	M (SE)	Category rank by improvement	F value
General Description	Pre-Test	4.70	4	3.750
	Post-Test	5.35		
Delivery	Pre-Test	5.18	3	
	Post-Test	5.85		
Language Use	Pre-Test	4.90	1	
	Post-Test	5.95		
Topic Development	Pre-Test	4.80	2	
	Post-Test	5.50		

(SE) Standard error of mean, (SD) Standard Deviation, \*\*\*p < 0.001, \*\*p < 0.01, \*p < 0.05

The outcomes of this study are coherent with the study conducted by Omer (2017). He reported that YouTube developed EFL students' listening and speaking skills simultaneously and paved the way for them to communicate in English with their peers. Additionally, students were exposed to YouTube native speakers' pronunciation and culture, which sequentially improved the students' language production.

Similar outcomes stated by Jati et al. (2019) proved that using YouTube in English classes improved learners' speaking skills in four different categories: fluency, accuracy, performance, and communication.

## **5. Conclusion**

Based on the outcomes and the discussions above, YouTube has been one of the most remarkable educational platforms for developing learners' skills since it was launched in 2005. YouTube helped learners upload videos and tutorials in English, which gave them the opportunity to use the language, learn other people's cultures, and communicate with different English natives worldwide. YouTube has become an excellent resource for learning after the COVID-19 pandemic, where education shifted to an online learning style in all schools and universities around the globe. The existing study supports this theory by examining the effectiveness of YouTube videos in English-speaking lessons. Our study outcomes revealed that using YouTube videos in EFL classes helps students boost their speaking skills and develop their fluency and coherence by improving their pronunciation, vocabulary choices, and grammatical structures, which leads to meaningful and comprehensible discourse. In addition, YouTube materials improve students' reflection on better pronunciation and more awareness of lexis use during their speaking activities. According to our statistical analysis, there is a significant improvement in the experimental group outcomes following YouTube speaking-based activities. The findings have proven a direct interdependence between students' YouTube video experience and the rapid improvement in their speaking, oral fluency, and lexis selection. In contrast, the control group outcomes in terms of oral fluency and lexis selection were remarkably lower compared to the experimental group's progress during the term.

The latest research outcomes align with the increasing trend of incorporating educational technology into classrooms, responding to the call for a shift to blended and fully online learning. The COVID-19 crisis serves as a prime example, emphasizing the urgent need for a swift transition, impacting various aspects of life (Al-Salman and Haider, 2021a). Globally, COVID-19 has significantly transformed and redefined the educational paradigm (Al-Salman and Haider, 2021b; Haider and Al-Salman, 2020a). In tandem with this reality, cutting-edge multimedia educational technology tools, notably audiovisuals, should stay abreast of innovations in the teaching-learning process. Accordingly, we propose the integration of YouTube videos, digital technology, and multimedia packages into educational syllabi. Consequently, further research is warranted to develop new EFL curricula and syllabi based on innovations in educational technology and their application for academic purposes.

Acknowledging the limitations of the present study, which focuses solely on speaking skills, and recognizing the positive impact on students' spoken English performance, we strongly advocate for additional empirical research efforts to explore the effects of YouTube videos on enhancing Jordanian EFL students' achievement levels in the remaining language skills which are listening, reading, and writing. Future research endeavors in an e-learning environment can benefit from the literature review's reported findings. This call for further rigorous research is prompted by the current study's recommendations, urging the integration of YouTube videos into the EFL classroom to enhance students' speaking skills.

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Appendix 1: TOEFL iBT independent speaking rubric descriptors (<https://www.ets.org/content/dam/ets-org/pdfs/toefl/toefl-ibt-speaking-rubrics.pdf>)

 <b>TOEFL iBT®</b> Independent Speaking Rubrics				
SCORE	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	DELIVERY	LANGUAGE USE	TOPIC DEVELOPMENT
4	The response fulfills the demands of the task, with at most minor lapses in completeness. It is highly intelligible and exhibits sustained, coherent discourse. A response at this level is characterized by all of the following:	Generally well-paced flow (fluid expression). Speech is clear. It may include minor lapses, or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, which do not affect overall intelligibility.	The response demonstrates effective use of grammar and vocabulary. It exhibits a fairly high degree of automaticity with good control of basic and complex structures (as appropriate). Some minor (or systematic) errors are noticeable but do not obscure meaning.	Response is sustained and sufficient to the task. It is generally well developed and coherent; relationships between ideas are clear (or there is a clear progression of ideas).
3	The response addresses the task appropriately but may fall short of being fully developed. It is generally intelligible and coherent, with some fluidity of expression, though it exhibits some noticeable lapses in the expression of ideas. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:	Speech is generally clear, with some fluidity of expression, though minor difficulties with pronunciation, intonation, or pacing are noticeable and may require listener effort at times (though overall intelligibility is not significantly affected).	The response demonstrates fairly automatic and effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and fairly coherent expression of relevant ideas. Response may exhibit some imprecise or inaccurate use of vocabulary or grammatical structures or be somewhat limited in the range of structures used. This may affect overall fluency, but it does not seriously interfere with the communication of the message.	Response is mostly coherent and sustained and conveys relevant ideas/information. Overall development is somewhat limited, usually lacks elaboration or specificity. Relationships between ideas may at times not be immediately clear.
2	The response addresses the task, but development of the topic is limited. It contains intelligible speech, although problems with delivery and/or overall coherence occur; meaning may be obscured in places. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:	Speech is basically intelligible, though listener effort is needed because of unclear articulation, awkward intonation, or choppy rhythm/pace; meaning may be obscured in places.	The response demonstrates limited range and control of grammar and vocabulary. These limitations often prevent full expression of ideas. For the most part, only basic sentence structures are used successfully and spoken with fluidity. Structures and vocabulary may express mainly simple (short) and/or general propositions, with simple or unclear connections made among them (serial listing, conjunction, juxtaposition).	The response is connected to the task, though the number of ideas presented or the development of ideas is limited. Mostly basic ideas are expressed with limited elaboration (details and support). At times relevant substance may be vaguely expressed or repetitious. Connections of ideas may be unclear.
1	The response is very limited in content and/or coherence or is only minimally connected to the task, or speech is largely unintelligible. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:	Consistent pronunciation, stress and intonation difficulties cause considerable listener effort; delivery is choppy, fragmented, or telegraphic; frequent pauses and hesitations.	Range and control of grammar and vocabulary severely limit or prevent expression of ideas and connections among ideas. Some low-level responses may rely heavily on practiced or formulaic expressions.	Limited relevant content is expressed. The response generally lacks substance beyond expression of very basic ideas. Speaker may be unable to sustain speech to complete the task and may rely heavily on repetition of the prompt.
0	Speaker makes no attempt to respond OR response is unrelated to the topic.			

