

OPTIMIZING YOUTUBE AS A DIGITAL PLATFORM TO ENHANCE LISTENING SKILLS AMONG ELEVENTH-GRADE STUDENTS AT MAN 1 SIMEULUE, INDONESIA

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Abstract

This research explores the capabilities of YouTube as a digital medium to boost listening comprehension among eleventh-grade learners at MAN 1 Simeulue, a rural Islamic senior high institution in Aceh, Indonesia. Listening is commonly regarded as one of the most difficult competencies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, especially in rural settings where authentic exposure and digital resources are scarce. To fill this void, the study utilized a quasi-experimental approach involving 60 students, split evenly into an experimental cohort and a control cohort. The experimental cohort was subjected to YouTube-integrated teaching, while the control cohort engaged in traditional textbook-based listening activities. Data were gathered through pre-tests, post-tests, in-class observations, and instructor notes, then analyzed using paired and independent sample t-tests. The outcomes indicated that both cohorts improved in listening comprehension; nonetheless, the experimental cohort demonstrated significantly greater progress in performance, motivation, and classroom interaction. These findings underscore YouTube's versatility as an accessible, budget-friendly resource for language teaching. The study contributes empirical insights from a rural Islamic educational context and provides practical recommendations for teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers aiming to bridge educational gaps through digital learning.

Keywords: Youtube; Listening Comprehension; Digital Learning; Efl Education; Rural Schools

A. Introduction

Listening comprehension is fundamental in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, as it serves as the primary avenue for language input and bolsters the enhancement of speaking, reading, and writing capabilities. Without sufficient listening skills, students find it challenging to decode spoken communications, engage properly in dialogues, and attain effective communication skills. In Indonesia, listening is acknowledged as a vital element of English teaching; however, it consistently ranks as one of the most challenging skills to master. This difficulty is particularly pronounced in rural Islamic educational institutions, where the availability of authentic English resources, exposure to spoken exchanges, and access to digital tools are significantly constrained.

The intricacy of listening arises from its twofold cognitive operations: bottom-up processing of sounds and words, alongside top-down understanding that draws upon existing knowledge, contextual indicators, and discourse markers (Vandergrift, 2007). This positions listening as an active, engaging endeavor rather than a passive one. Urban learners frequently navigate these obstacles



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through their exposure to English media, supplementary courses, or technological resources. In contrast, students in rural settings often remain reliant on textbook-driven and instructor-centric approaches, which exacerbate the achievement divide between rural and urban students.

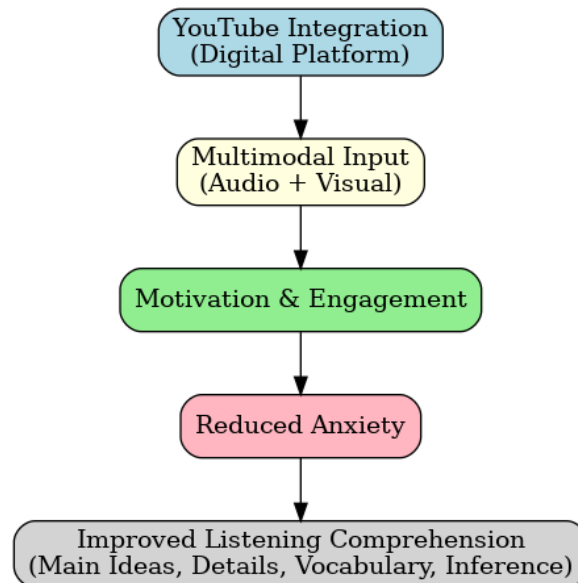
The swift progress of digital technologies presents avenues to bridge these gaps. Multimedia platforms like YouTube furnish learners with authentic auditory resources, varied accents, and real-life situations that are seldom accessible in traditional classrooms. Unlike scripted recordings found in textbooks, YouTube merges audio with visual elements, enhancing understanding and promoting engagement (Mayer, 2009). Its interactive features such as captions, playback options, and mobile accessibility empower learners to manage their learning pace, alleviate stress, and boost self-confidence. Existing research (Kelsen, 2009; Watkins & Wilkins, 2011; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) substantiates that YouTube heightens motivation and augments listening skills within EFL frameworks.

Nevertheless, most research has been conducted in urban or technologically advanced environments, where internet availability and digital competencies are relatively strong. There has been insufficient focus on rural Islamic schools, where issues such as unreliable internet, insufficient equipment, and limited teacher training persist. As a result, listening often receives less focus compared to reading and grammar, leaving learners unprepared for practical communication. This discrepancy highlights the need for investigating the utility of YouTube in underserved educational settings.

The current study aims to address this research need by assessing the effectiveness of YouTube as a digital tool for improving listening comprehension among eleventh-grade students at MAN 1 Simeulue, Aceh. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) determine whether YouTube-based teaching is more effective than traditional textbook instruction in enhancing listening skills; (2) evaluate student advancements in specific listening sub-skills, such as identifying main concepts, detecting details, and making conclusions; and (3) examine the pedagogical implications of incorporating YouTube into rural Islamic educational environments. In doing so, this study provides empirical insights to the body of knowledge on digital education while offering practical guidance for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers aiming for cost-efficient strategies to mitigate educational inequalities.

The theoretical basis of this investigation is grounded in Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory (2009), and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985). According to Krashen, language acquisition is contingent on exposure to comprehensible input, whereas Mayer posits that learning is more impactful when audio and visual modalities are unified. These tenets are further backed by the affective filter hypothesis, which asserts that motivation, self-assurance, and lowered anxiety contribute to more successful learning outcomes.

In this study's context, YouTube acts as a multimodal platform that provides authentic English input (Input Hypothesis), melds visual and auditory signals (Multimedia Theory), and engages learners in enjoyable tasks that diminish anxiety (Affective Filter Hypothesis). Consequently, the integration of YouTube in listening instruction is anticipated to enhance motivation, support comprehension, and ultimately advance listening efficiency. This framework can be illustrated as follows:



B. Method

This investigation utilized a quasi-experimental framework featuring pre-test and post-test control cohorts to assess the efficiency of YouTube as an online platform for enhancing listening comprehension. This framework was chosen as it allows researchers to juxtapose two teaching methods in authentic classroom environments while ensuring a balance between experimental rigor and practical relevance. Full randomization was impractical due to school scheduling conflicts and class arrangements; thus, intact classes were designated as either experimental or control groups. The independent variable centered around the instructional medium—YouTube-driven instruction versus textbook-driven instruction—while the dependent variable focused on students' listening comprehension results.

1. Participants and Setting

The study was executed at MAN 1 Simeulue, a rural Islamic senior high school located in Aceh, Indonesia. The school exemplifies a conventional madrasah atmosphere marked by limited infrastructure, sporadic internet connectivity, and teacher-centered pedagogical strategies. A total of 60 students from the eleventh grade participated in the research. Their average age ranged from 16 to 17 years, with most having engaged with English for at least five years as mandated by the national curriculum. However, informal exposure to English outside the school was scarce due to the rural context.

Purposive sampling techniques were implemented to ensure comparable levels of English proficiency among the groups. Two existing classes were selected: one assigned as the experimental group ($n = 30$) and the other as the control group ($n = 30$). Both groups were instructed by the same English teacher, possessing over five years of professional experience, to reduce variability linked to teaching. The educator was well-versed in both digital and textbook-based pedagogies, minimizing bias in the instructional approach. The rural setting played a crucial role as students had limited or no access to private language classes or additional digital learning tools, making the school the primary source of English exposure.

2. Instruments

The primary tool used was a standardized listening comprehension assessment adapted from English proficiency practice resources. This assessment comprised 30 multiple-choice questions

addressing four sub-skills: (1) identifying core ideas, (2) recognizing details, (3) interpreting vocabulary in context, and (4) drawing inferences. Each question was aligned with educational objectives and designed to emulate authentic listening scenarios. To ascertain content validity, the assessment was reviewed by two senior lecturers in English education, affirming its relevance and appropriateness for secondary school students. Reliability metrics produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency.

Supplementing the test, qualitative methods were utilized. Classroom observations were conducted jointly by the teacher and the researcher to record student behaviors during lessons, including engagement, note-taking habits, willingness to inquire, and enthusiasm for tasks. Teacher field notes provided reflective insights on classroom dynamics, the learning atmosphere, and student reactions to different instructional methods. These qualitative tools enriched the findings and offered perspectives beyond mere numerical scores.

3. Procedures

The intervention spanned four weeks during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. In the first week, both groups undertook a pre-test to establish baseline listening abilities. During weeks two and three, the instructional intervention was executed. For the experimental group, YouTube videos were meticulously curated based on three criteria: (1) curricular relevance, (2) age-appropriateness and linguistic accessibility, and (3) superior audio-visual quality. Each lesson adhered to a structured format:

- 1) Pre-listening activities: students predicted content according to video titles or visuals, drew on prior knowledge, and recognized key vocabulary.
- 2) While-listening activities: learners viewed the video, answered comprehension queries, and utilized subtitles to aid understanding. Features such as pausing, replaying, and slow playback were employed to allow students to manipulate the input pace.
- 3) Post-listening activities: class discussions, vocabulary reinforcement, and inferential questions fostered deeper cognitive processing.

For the control group, lessons were grounded in textbook content. Students listened to scripted audio recordings provided within the curriculum and completed corresponding comprehension tasks. Teacher-led explanations were prioritized, with limited opportunities for students to direct their input. Both groups received equivalent instructional time (two sessions per week, each lasting 90 minutes).

The rural context posed practical challenges. Internet connectivity was occasionally unreliable, prompting the teacher to pre-download YouTube videos ahead of class to prevent disruptions. This ensured that students consistently accessed learning materials. Conversely, the control group depended solely on audio CDs and printed exercises, reflecting the conventional resources typically available in rural educational institutions.

In the concluding week, a post-test was administered to both groups utilizing the same listening assessment as the pre-test, with questions rearranged to mitigate familiarity effects. The teacher and researcher also conducted brief informal interviews with students to clarify their learning experiences, which were recorded in the field notes.

4. Data Gathering and Examination

Quantitative data from the preliminary test and final assessment were evaluated using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics—including averages, standard deviations, and gain scores—were computed to encapsulate performance outcomes. Paired sample t-tests assessed improvements within the groups, while independent sample t-tests contrasted final assessment results between the two cohorts. The criterion for statistical significance was established at $p < 0.05$.

Qualitative data derived from classroom observations and educator field notes were analyzed descriptively. Observational data were classified into indicators of motivation (e.g., attentiveness,

involvement), engagement (e.g., readiness to respond or ask questions), and emotional response (e.g., manifestations of anxiety or assurance). The convergence of quantitative and qualitative results enabled a richer interpretation of the findings. For instance, advancements in test scores were analyzed in the context of classroom behaviors to assess the wider effects of YouTube-based instruction.

5. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical principles in educational research. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent acquired from both students and their guardians. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing student responses rather than using identifying names. Approval from the school administration was also secured for the study, acknowledging its potential advantages for teaching practices. Importantly, no participant faced disadvantages: although the control group did not utilize YouTube during the research, they received instruction aligned with the national curriculum. Following the study's conclusion, the teacher provided YouTube resources to the control group to guarantee equal access to the benefits of digital learning.

C. Results and Discussion

In the following section, the results and discussion of this study are presented.

1. Results

This section delineates the findings of the quasi-experimental study, centering on descriptive statistics, results from paired sample t-tests, outcomes from independent sample t-tests, and qualitative classroom observations. The results are methodically arranged to offer a lucid depiction of students' performance in both the experimental and control groups.

1) Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of listening comprehension scores for the experimental and control groups are encapsulated in Table 1. Both groups commenced with comparable baseline proficiency levels, as indicated by the pre-test means. Following the intervention, advancements were observed in both groups, albeit the extent of change varied significantly.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Listening Comprehension Scores

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD	Gain Score
Experimental	30	62.40	7.12	78.90	6.85	16.50
Control	30	61.87	6.95	68.23	7.01	6.36

The experimental cohort exhibited a marked enhancement, with the average score rising from 62.40 to 78.90, reflecting an increase of 16.50 points. Conversely, the control cohort showed a more modest improvement, with an average gain of just 6.36 points. The standard deviations for both cohorts remained comparably stable, suggesting that the advancements were uniform across participants.

2) Paired Sample t-Test Outcomes

To ascertain whether the advancements within each cohort were statistically meaningful, paired sample t-tests were performed. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Paired Sample t-Test Outcomes

Group	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	12.84	29	0.000
Control	5.73	29	0.000

Both cohorts exhibited marked advancements from the initial assessment to the final evaluation ($p < 0.05$). Nonetheless, the extent of enhancement was considerably greater in the experimental cohort ($t = 12.84$) in contrast to the control cohort ($t = 5.73$), corroborating that YouTube-based education yielded more substantial improvements in listening comprehension.

3) Independent Sample t-Test Findings

An independent sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the post-test averages between the experimental and control cohorts. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Independent Sample t-Test Findings

Group Comparison	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental vs. Control	5.12	58	0.000

The post-test score disparities between the experimental and control groups were statistically meaningful ($p < 0.05$). This offers solid proof that instruction via YouTube surpassed textbook methods in boosting students' listening skills.

4) Score Distribution

To further depict the findings, Figure 1 illustrates the spread of gain scores across both groups. The experimental group's results concentrated more consistently around elevated values, whereas the control group's scores exhibited smaller and less robust advancements. (Here Figure 1 would be inserted: a bar chart contrasting pre-test and post-test averages of both groups.)

5) Qualitative Insights

Beyond the statistical data, classroom observations highlighted distinct contrasts in student engagement levels between the two groups. Learners in the experimental group exhibited greater enthusiasm, frequently communicated with the instructor, and actively took part in class dialogues. They were seen taking notes meticulously, posing clarification queries, and showing confidence while tackling comprehension tasks. Elements such as subtitles and playback controls seemed to enable them to manage their learning pace, which in turn alleviated anxiety and heightened motivation.

In contrast, students in the control group were generally more passive. Many depended on teacher explanations instead of striving to independently process the audio. While a degree of improvement in listening was noticeable, the classroom environment lacked the dynamism and interactivity seen in the experimental group. These observations bolstered the quantitative outcomes, underscoring the benefits of utilizing YouTube as a pedagogical tool.

6) Summary

In summary, the findings indicate that although both groups enhanced their listening abilities during the intervention, the experimental group that engaged with YouTube-based instruction demonstrated markedly greater advancements compared to the control group. The mean increment of 16.50 points in the experimental group, contrasted with merely 6.36 points in the control group, underscores the significant influence of digital video resources on educational results. Statistical evaluations verified the importance of these distinctions, and classroom observations further indicated that students who interacted with YouTube were more motivated, engaged, and assured in their listening tasks. These conclusions offer a clear empirical foundation for the efficacy of YouTube as a tool for enhancing listening comprehension in rural Islamic educational settings.

2. Discussion

The current investigation sought to assess the efficacy of YouTube as a digital learning tool for improving listening comprehension among students at MAN 1 Simeulue, a rural Islamic senior high school located in Aceh, Indonesia. The results indicated that instruction based on YouTube yielded

significantly greater advancements in comparison to traditional textbook approaches, as evidenced by both statistical evaluations and classroom observations. This segment elaborates on these results in relation to pertinent theories, contrasts them with earlier studies, and examines their teaching implications.

1) Interpretation of Quantitative Findings

The notable enhancement of the experimental group can be ascribed to various pedagogical benefits inherent in YouTube as a medium. Unlike conventional textbook recordings, YouTube delivers multimodal input that merges audio and visual elements, aiding learners in processing information more efficiently. According to Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (2009), learners remember information more effectively when presented through auditory and visual channels simultaneously. In this study, the integration of YouTube videos featuring subtitles, visuals, and contextual hints likely alleviated cognitive load and aided the understanding of spoken English.

Additionally, YouTube furnishes features such as replay, pausing, and playback speed adjustment, permitting learners to tailor the pace of input. This self-direction is particularly beneficial during listening exercises, whereby learners frequently encounter difficulties in keeping up with native speaker speed. By empowering students to control their learning pace, YouTube significantly diminished anxiety, a phenomenon that aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which asserts that lowered anxiety enhances language acquisition. The remarkable gains observed in the experimental group imply that these features directly contributed to improved results.

The control group, albeit showing modest progress, did not benefit from such features. Their advancement was confined to what could be achieved through teacher explanations and repetitive exposure to scripted textbook audio. This disparity emphasizes the significance of authenticity and learner autonomy in digitally mediated instruction.

2) Alignment with Previous Studies

The results of this research support earlier findings that underline the advantages of incorporating YouTube into language learning. Alwehaibi (2015) discovered that Saudi EFL learners utilizing YouTube exhibited enhanced listening and speaking abilities compared to those relying solely on conventional methods. Likewise, Kelsen (2009) reported that YouTube heightened learner motivation and engagement in Taiwanese EFL classrooms. More recent investigations, such as those by Kaboocha and Elyas (2018), further validated that YouTube improves vocabulary acquisition and comprehension thanks to its authentic and engaging materials.

This study expands these findings by placing them within the unique context of a rural Islamic school in Indonesia. Unlike students in urban environments with greater technological access, learners at MAN 1 Simeulue contend with infrastructural limitations and scant exposure to authentic English outside the classroom. The efficacy of YouTube in such a setting implies that even when resources are limited, digital platforms can fill gaps in exposure and deliver significant input.

3) The Role of Motivation and Engagement

Beyond quantifiable test outcomes, qualitative observations revealed that students in the experimental group exhibited heightened motivation and engagement. They demonstrated a greater willingness to partake in discussions, pose questions, and convey their understanding of video content. Motivation plays a pivotal role in language acquisition, as underscored by Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (1985), which emphasizes the interplay among motivation, attitudes, and achievement. The surge in motivation noted within the experimental group implies that YouTube acted not merely as an instructional resource but also as a motivational driver.

Engagement was also prominently displayed in the ways students interacted with the videos. The utilization of culturally relevant and age-appropriate content likely rendered learning more

relatable. For instance, students could connect themes from YouTube videos to their everyday lives, thus enriching comprehension and retention. This finding resonates with Dörnyei's (2001) concept of "situated motivation," which highlights that context-specific elements, such as engaging media, can greatly amplify learner commitment.

4) Implications for Rural and Islamic Educational Contexts

One of the unique contributions of this research is its examination of YouTube's effectiveness in a rural Islamic educational framework. Rural institutions frequently encounter hurdles such as poor internet accessibility, a lack of multimedia resources, and a reliance on teacher-centered pedagogies. In these circumstances, integrating YouTube as an educational instrument represents a noteworthy pedagogical innovation. Pre-downloading videos to bypass connectivity challenges illustrated that infrastructural obstacles can be navigated with strategic planning.

From the standpoint of Islamic education, the integration of digital resources like YouTube prompts discussions about appropriateness and alignment with institutional values. The selection of videos for this study prioritized age-appropriateness, curriculum relevance, and positive moral messaging. This deliberate curation ensured that incorporating YouTube resonated with the values of an Islamic institution, demonstrating that technological integration need not clash with cultural or religious principles. Instead, it can be harmonized to foster both linguistic skills and character development.

5) Theoretical Contributions

This study strengthens applied linguistics by underscoring the significance of multimodal input in language acquisition. It offers empirical validation for Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis within the context of digital teaching methods. Additionally, it highlights the relevance of motivational frameworks, including Gardner's model and Dörnyei's situated motivation theory, by demonstrating their applicability in a rural Islamic school setting. By integrating these theories into this unique context, the research expands their scope and emphasizes the critical role of situational factors in language learning.

6) Pedagogical Implications

The findings from this study carry meaningful implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. For teachers, the results indicate that incorporating YouTube into routine lessons can substantially boost listening skills without demanding costly resources. Educators should be encouraged to carefully select relevant content, design pre- and post-listening exercises, and equip students with strategies to maximize features like subtitles and playback settings.

For curriculum designers, the research underlines the value of blending digital platforms with traditional curricula. Textbooks maintain their importance, but their impact can be amplified when paired with authentic digital materials. Such a hybrid approach accommodates diverse learner needs while balancing standardization with adaptability.

Policymakers can glean insights into the necessity of enhancing digital literacy and infrastructure, particularly in under-resourced areas. Prioritizing stable internet access, multimedia tools, and teacher training focused on digital pedagogy could magnify the educational benefits observed in this study. Moreover, ensuring that digital initiatives align with cultural and religious considerations—as exemplified by the thoughtful selection of video content—is crucial for effective implementation.

7) Limitations of the Study

Although this study makes significant contributions, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The sample size was relatively small ($n = 60$), restricted to one rural Islamic school,

which may limit the broader applicability of the findings. Additionally, the intervention spanned only four weeks; extended exposure could potentially yield different effects regarding long-term improvement and retention. While qualitative observations enriched the dataset, these were confined to teacher and researcher perspectives. Including direct insights from students through interviews or surveys could have provided a more nuanced understanding of their experiences.

8) Recommendations for Future Research

To build on these insights, future studies should aim for larger and more diverse samples spanning various regions to enhance generalizability. Employing longitudinal designs could help determine whether the benefits of YouTube-based instruction persist over time. Investigations into distinct types of YouTube content—such as educational videos, documentaries, or real-world dialogues—can provide a deeper understanding of how specific materials influence various language skills beyond listening, including pronunciation and speaking proficiency. Gathering data on student perspectives through interviews or questionnaires would also enrich understanding of the emotional and motivational aspects tied to digital learning.

In summary, this research demonstrates that YouTube-integrated instruction significantly enhances listening comprehension among students in rural Islamic high schools. The findings align with established linguistic theories and previous studies on digital platforms while contributing novel insights specific to the intersection of rural Islamic contexts and language education. The results highlight YouTube's dual role as a provider of authentic input and an engagement driver, fostering both motivation and learning outcomes. Despite some constraints, the evidence supports the strategic incorporation of YouTube into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms as a transformative tool, particularly within resource-constrained settings.

D. Conclusion

This study examined the role of YouTube as a digital learning platform in enhancing listening comprehension among eleventh-grade students at MAN 1 Simeulue, a rural Islamic senior high school based in Aceh, Indonesia. Utilizing a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test control groups, the research compared the effects of YouTube-based instruction to traditional textbook-based methods. The findings consistently revealed that the experimental group, which engaged with YouTube learning materials, demonstrated significantly higher improvements in listening comprehension than their counterparts in the control group. These insights were substantiated by statistical analyses and qualitative classroom observations, both of which illustrated heightened motivation, engagement, and confidence among the experimental group students.

The study's primary contribution lies in providing empirical evidence for the educational value of YouTube within rural and Islamic academic environments. While existing literature has highlighted the benefits of digital platforms on a broader scale, this research focused on their impact within resource-constrained and culturally specific settings. It illustrates how YouTube can be seamlessly integrated into the curriculum of a rural Islamic school without conflicting with cultural or religious values. Moreover, the study expands the applicability of digital learning theories by reinforcing concepts such as learner autonomy, multimodal input, and authentic exposure in low-resource scenarios. By demonstrating adaptability within this context, it underscores the cognitive and affective advantages that such platforms offer.

The implications for pedagogy are significant. For educators, these findings encourage the adoption of digital tools to enrich teaching practices, offering flexibility and authentic learning experiences that go beyond the capabilities of traditional textbooks. For curriculum developers, the research emphasizes the need for integrating multimedia resources into formal lesson plans to provide students with varied and compelling input. Policymakers are equally urged to prioritize investments in digital infrastructure, teacher training, and curated content development, even in rural areas where technology access remains limited. Such measures have the potential to bridge

educational gaps between urban and rural schools while unlocking enhanced learning opportunities.

Despite its valuable contributions, the study is not free from limitations. The relatively small sample size and its focus on a single rural school restrict the generalizability of the results. The short duration of the intervention raises questions about long-term retention of listening skills. Furthermore, as qualitative data was primarily gathered through teacher observations, it may not fully encompass student viewpoints. Future research can address these gaps by involving larger and more diverse populations, extending the research timeline to capture lasting impacts, and incorporating students' perspectives through interviews or surveys.

In summary, this study provides compelling evidence supporting the integration of YouTube into English language instruction as a means of improving listening comprehension. It demonstrates that digital platforms can help overcome barriers faced by rural and Islamic schools, offering learners access to authentic input, higher engagement levels, and tangible improvements in learning outcomes. Although additional research is necessary to further validate these findings, the results indicate that YouTube transcends its role as an entertainment platform to become a transformative educational resource. Thoughtful integration into teaching methodologies holds immense potential to redefine language learning and enhance English education across diverse academic contexts.

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