



UNPACKING STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON YOUTUBE AS A LANGUAGE LEARNING TOOL IN DEVELOPING PHONETIC SKILLS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

YouTube has emerged as a popular digital platform for language learning, especially among 21st-century students. This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the experiences of first-year Bachelor of Secondary Education English students in utilizing YouTube as a tool for developing phonetic skills. The study was conducted at a public state college in Davao de Oro, Philippines, and utilized purposive sampling to select ten participants for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's Six Phase Framework for thematic analysis. Findings revealed that students were intrinsically motivated to use YouTube to enhance their academic performance and improve their phonetic competence. They highlighted the effectiveness of its multimodal features—such as subtitles, phonetic transcriptions, and visual aids—in supporting accurate pronunciation and comprehension. However, they also encountered challenges in locating relevant and credible content aligned with their lessons. Furthermore, they emphasized the need for better content organization and navigation on the platform to maximize learning efficiency. Based on the findings, the study underscores the potential of YouTube as a supplementary phonetic learning tool when integrated with structured guidance and purposeful instructional use. It is recommended that educators curate and incorporate appropriate YouTube content into formal language instruction to support students' phonological development.

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INTRODUCTION

Proper pronunciation is crucial for students, especially in careers where effective communication is paramount. However, many students need help mastering pronunciation, mainly when the language is not their mother tongue. Students face challenges with their pronunciation skills in both local and global contexts. According to Demireszen (2005), as referenced by Ercan (2018), Turkish EFL students often do not prioritize pronunciation, which can occasionally make their speech difficult to understand. The same study also noted that a learner's mother tongue has a significant influence on the ability of students to produce correct English sounds. Dandee and Pornwiriakit (2022) emphasized that pronunciation errors among students in Thailand were attributed to differences in the Thai and English sound systems. These differences include variations in structure and patterns, articulation methods, interference from the mother tongue, and inconsistencies between English sounds and their spelling. Furthermore, EFL students often encounter pronunciation errors when communicating. This problem stems from various factors, such as their difficulty in mastering all English phonemes, the impact of their native language on their English speech, and the differences in pronunciation systems between their mother tongue and English (Riza & Kawakib, 2021).

The emergence of enhanced technology has introduced valuable resources for improving pronunciation skills. Ahmed et al. (2021) observed that, because most students are already active on social media, using social networking sites does not cause them stress, allowing for a more relaxed learning experience. Maziriri et al. (2020) found that students often spend hours on YouTube exploring videos catering to various interests, including entertainment. Meanwhile, Juma (2021) highlighted that the new generation of English students, deeply connected to Web 2.0 technologies and social media platforms such as YouTube, often develops more accurate pronunciation skills independently, sometimes surpassing those of their teachers. This highlights the growing importance of integrating technological tools into language learning, especially in the current era of online education. Al-Jarf (2022) added that YouTube videos should be utilized pedagogically effectively during self-regulated pronunciation practice. This ensures that the process is active, constructive, individualized, collaborative, conversational, contextual, guided, motivating, and

engaging.

YouTube videos enhance EFL learning by providing accessible, engaging content that boosts motivation and productivity. Students tend to prefer films and songs over science documentaries, as these formats facilitate imitation and create a positive atmosphere, at the same time, vlogs also resonate well with students (Toluzhan et al., 2023). Moreover, most students found YouTube to be an interesting and enjoyable tool for learning and practicing pronunciation, as it combines letters, sounds, and pictures, ultimately enhancing their motivation and pronunciation skills. In the study by Fachriyah et al. (2020), they concluded that YouTube plays a crucial role in helping students practice speaking and reading by facilitating the expression of ideas, enhancing their preparation before posting videos, and providing helpful information, thereby serving as a practical resource for English practice.

In the Philippines, students encounter notable language learning challenges, particularly in pronunciation skills. Additionally, many Filipino students increasingly use YouTube for entertainment and as a valuable resource for their learning. Monfero (2023) mentioned the importance of incorporating technology to support learning, particularly in today's changing educational landscape. Furthermore, Untong et al. (2023) concluded that YouTube tutorials effectively reinforce and improve students' English language proficiency.

According to Manakan et al. (2023), one of the biggest challenges for students is making grammatical errors, mispronunciations, and difficulties understanding their speech in public. Many students reported encountering issues, particularly with grammar and incorrect pronunciation, and sometimes needed help understanding the meanings of words. This highlights the need for comprehension, indicating that students should focus on their mistakes to improve their fluency and accuracy in speaking. Antaris and Omolu (2019) emphasize that overcoming pronunciation difficulties necessitates consistent and habitual practice, as motivation, confidence, and the learning environment significantly impact students' ability to develop accurate English pronunciation over time. Without regular application, students may struggle with pronunciation. However, mastering it enables them to speak English accurately and fluently.

This phenomenological study aimed to explore and unpack the perspectives of first-year public state college students on using YouTube to develop phonetic skills in language learning. By

examining the experiences and insights of these students, this research aimed to understand how YouTube contributed to their phonetic development, the effectiveness of various content types, and the challenges they encountered while using the platform. Ultimately, the study aimed to provide valuable insights to inform educators and curriculum developers about integrating digital resources in language learning.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological design. Qualitative research explores and understands the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem. It involves collecting non-numerical data in natural settings to develop in-depth insights from participants' perspectives. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), this involves an exploratory process to understand a social or human issue in depth by constructing a comprehensive and descriptive narrative based on participants' viewpoints, all situated within a natural context. Moreover, a phenomenological research design explored their lived experiences regarding the use of YouTube to develop their phonetic skills. It was well-suited for investigating how they perceived and made sense of a shared experience, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Research Locale and Participants

The study was conducted among first-year students of Bachelor in Secondary Education major in English at a public state college situated in Compostela, Davao de Oro, Philippines. This academic institution was purposefully selected as the research setting due to its relevance in representing the experiences of students in a provincial context. The locale offered a meaningful and contextualized backdrop for exploring the students' academic experiences, particularly in relation to their language learning challenges and opportunities within a resource-constrained environment.

The participants in this study were chosen through purposive sampling. This technique involved selecting individuals whose characteristics aligned with the specific objectives of the research (Creswell, 2014, as cited in Andrade, 2020). The researchers first conducted a pre-survey to identify eligible participants for the study. This survey gathered demographic and experiential information to ensure participants

met the purposive sampling criteria. This pre-survey aimed to ensure that only those who met the criteria were selected, facilitating a group of participants who could provide relevant and meaningful insights for the study.

Conversely, participants who did not regularly utilize YouTube were excluded from the study. The study included 10 selected participants from the first-year BSED English students at the main campus. Their involvement in this study spanned three sessions.

Research Instrument

To collect the data, the researchers first developed an interview guide to explore the lived experiences of participants using YouTube as a language learning tool to enhance their pronunciation skills. Language experts validated this interview guide to ensure its validity and relevance, emphasizing the incorporation of feedback from evaluators and student participants.

Data Gathering Procedure

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and the researchers ensured they fully understood the consent forms before obtaining their signatures. With informed consent, the researchers conducted structured interviews with FGD and IDI in a face-to-face format, ensuring consistency and sufficiency in data collection as each of them answered the same set of questions. The researchers strove to create a comfortable environment that encouraged open and honest responses. During this time, participants engaged in structured interviews, each lasting approximately 30-45 minutes for an In-Depth Interview (IDI) and 1-2 hours for a Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

To ensure triangulation of findings and establish credibility, the researchers conducted member checking and peer debriefing to confirm that the analysis accurately reflected the participants' actual responses. The researchers also keep an audit trail of the data.

Data Analysis

After the interviews and focus group discussions, the researchers transcribed the recorded responses to ensure accuracy and clarity in capturing participants' insights. Their responses were coded and transcribed for analysis, and Thematic Content Analysis was applied using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. This method involved organizing

the data by grouping them into themes that stemmed from the research questions or naturally emerged from the participants' responses (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This structured approach ensured a rigorous and transparent interpretation of the data. As a result, the emergent themes accurately reflected their lived experiences and perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study, ethical concerns were carefully considered to ensure the well-being and security of the participants and to validate the trustworthiness of the data that was gathered. Adhering to ethical guidelines set by the Research Ethics Committee ensured that the research was conducted responsibly, contributing positively to the advancement of knowledge while respecting their rights and well-being.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Experiences in Using YouTube for Phonetic Skill Development

Based on the results gathered, four emergent themes surfaced from the participants' shared experiences, thoughts, and reflections. These themes show how students utilized YouTube to enhance their phonetic skills in various contexts. The four emergent themes were: (1) Learning Motivation Driven by Academic Performance and Self-Improvement; (2) Preference for Familiar or Culturally Relevant Creators; (3) Concept Mastery Through Multimedia Explanation; and (4) Situational Usage Based on Academic Needs.

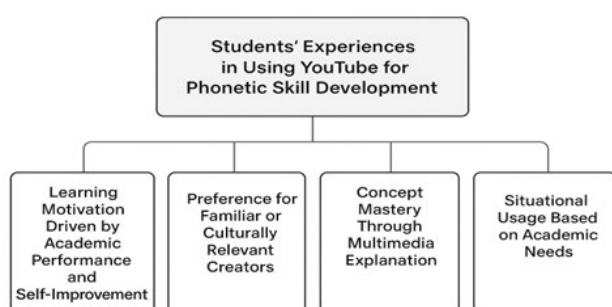


Figure 1. Students' Experiences in Using YouTube for Phonetic Skill Development

Learning Motivation Driven by Academic Performance and Self-improvement

This highlights the role of intrinsic motivation in students' use of YouTube for developing phonetic skills. Results reveal that participants were primarily driven to enhance academic performance and pursue personal growth. YouTube was a supplementary learning resource that allowed them to practice

and improve their pronunciation skills beyond the classroom. The accessibility and flexibility of the platform enabled them to take the initiative in reinforcing lessons, thereby fostering independent and self-paced learning. This was evident in their responses, who mentioned they utilized the platform to deepen their understanding and enhance their pronunciation skills beyond classroom instruction.

Participant 1 discussed how motivation to use YouTube for phonetic skill development was primarily driven by the desire to improve academic performance.

(...when there are quizzes related to language and pronunciation. Those are the times when I watch YouTube. What motivates me to use YouTube for learning is that these topics help me gain knowledge, enhance my pronunciation, improve my word usage, and ultimately, get higher scores on quizzes and exams.)
— P1

This response was corroborated by Participants 7 and 5, who similarly expressed that their use of YouTube was motivated by a strong desire to learn, improve pronunciation, and keep up with academic demands.

(...I used YouTube for learning phonetics during the first semester, when we were learning about phonetic alphabets, IPA, and then what motivates me to use it is my drive and passion for learning and to keep up with the lesson.) — P7

(...I use YouTube sometimes if the teacher has lessons or there are pronunciations that need to be learned...what motivates me to use it is my eagerness to learn the correct pronunciation of every word.)
— P5

This result is supported by previous studies that emphasize the effectiveness of YouTube as a tool for phonetic skill development. In a study, Untong et al. (2023) concluded that YouTube tutorials effectively reinforce and enhance students' English language proficiency. Additionally, Rachmawati and Cahyani (2020) emphasized that video materials can significantly improve various aspects of pronunciation, including accuracy, fluency, intonation, and stress, making them adequate resources for phonetic skill

development. The present study's findings align with these, as participants similarly reported increased interest and self-driven learning through YouTube in their phonetic practice.

Preference for Familiar or Culturally Relevant Creators

This highlights participants preference for YouTube content created by familiar or culturally relevant creators. They are more engaged and better understand phonetic lessons when the content reflects their cultural context and uses relatable language.

Participants 2 and 10 elaborated that they preferred Filipino YouTube creators, as they found the content more engaging and easier to comprehend.

(...Miss Lyqa...that is the content creator I watch. There are many creators, but I prefer her because she delves deep into pronunciation, even down to grammar rules.) — P2

(...Ma 'am Lyca, the TikTok influencer, discuss grammatical rules or sentence structure. She corrects how sentences should be properly constructed, whether a sentence, a paragraph, or even a resume—for example, which we will need in the future.) — P10

These findings are consistent with prior research of Saurabh and Gautam (2019), who identified YouTube as a powerful educational platform, offering students access to authentic language use and culturally diverse materials that aid in deepening comprehension and improving language retention. Furthermore, Maziriri et al. (2020) highlighted how videos used as real-life materials expose students to various English accents, promote cultural awareness, and support vocabulary development. These studies reinforce the present findings that culturally relevant content on YouTube can significantly support phonetic skill enhancement.

Concept Mastery through Multimedia Explanation

This theme emphasizes that complex linguistic concepts, such as phonetics and syntax, became easier to understand when presented through videos that combined visual aids, audio demonstrations, and clear, step-by-step explanations. The dynamic and engaging nature of multimedia content allowed students to visualize abstract ideas, reinforcing their

understanding beyond what was possible through text-based or lecture-based instruction alone.

Participants 5 and 10 mentioned that YouTube's multimedia explanations helped them better master complex linguistic concepts, making lessons more understandable and engaging through visuals, audio, and clear demonstrations.

(...Billy English and MMM English... they present their videos effectively because they clearly explain which letters or sounds should be pronounced. Those videos helped improve my pronunciation.)
— P5

(... British tutor on IPA. Her articulation and pronunciation are more understandable regarding IPA, or phonetic words. Even the schwa sound — so it helped me identify and understand what it is called and its corresponding symbols, which were quite challenging to grasp at first. It also made me realize that it has a specific pronunciation and articulation, so that helped us a lot.) — P10

These findings resonate with prior research highlighting Youtube's effectiveness in language learning, which found that students considered it an enjoyable and motivating platform for practicing pronunciation, as combining letters, sounds, and visuals enhanced their engagement and speaking skills. Toleuzhan et al. (2023) noted that YouTube's accessible and interactive content fosters greater motivation and productivity. They observed that students prefer engaging formats such as films, songs, and vlogs, which promote imitation and create a more encouraging learning environment.

Situational Usage Based on Academic Needs

This shows the participants' engagement with the platform was intentional and driven by particular learning challenges—such as complex topics, missed lessons, or exam preparation. YouTube served as a flexible support tool, allowing them to seek out content that directly addressed their gaps in understanding. This reflects a strategic approach to digital learning, where they adapt their resource use according to the demands of their coursework.

(...I often watch instructional materials on YouTube—quite frequently. Whenever there is a discussion, I use it to deepen

my understanding of the lesson. I watch videos every time, especially after discussions, to help me grasp the concepts better.) — P3

(... YouTube videos helped me before an exam about IPA. Because of the limited time, I did not understand it well. We were provided with a video to complete self-studies and practice articulation and pronunciation at home. Before or during the exam, we were able to distinguish between the different IPA symbols.) — P8

The findings reflect a previous study that emphasizes the value of technology in supporting learner-driven academic efforts. Roy (2019) observed that access to digital tools such as YouTube, empowers students with autonomy, motivation, and personalized support essential to their educational progress. Similarly, Ahmadi (2018) underlined the importance of encouraging students to engage in purposeful, tech-based learning activities to boost language acquisition. If technology is used appropriately, it enhances comprehension and plays a crucial role in sustaining learner motivation.

Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of YouTube Content for Phonetic Skill Development

Four themes emerged based on the analyzed data. The emergent themes were as follows: (1) Integration of Subtitles, Phonetic Transcriptions, and Visual Aids Supports Multimodal Learning; (2) Value of Repetition, Accessibility, and Self-Pacing; (3) Utility of Educational and Entertaining Content Blends; and (4) Importance of Native and Multinational Speaker Exposure.

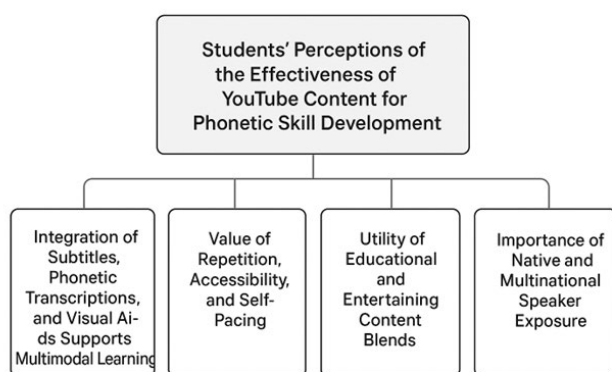


Figure 2. Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of YouTube Content for Phonetic Skill Development

Integration of Subtitles, Phonetic Transcriptions, and Visual Aids Supports Multimodal Learning

This theme reveals that participants valued the integration of subtitles, phonetic transcriptions, and visual aids in YouTube videos as practical tools for phonetic learning. These multimodal features helped them better understand varied accents, visualize sound articulation, and reinforce auditory input, resulting in more precise and accurate pronunciation.

(...they are effective. We can hear things, but hearing and seeing them simultaneously is even better. That is why subtitles are helpful—we can follow along with what is being said while reading it. Phonetic transcriptions are also helpful. Since many of us are visual learners, we learn better when information is combined visually and audibly.) — P1

(...I'm the type of person who learns better through visuals rather than just reading. So, for me, subtitles are also very effective because they serve as a background or additional support while I'm watching the video.) — P3

These support previous findings highlighting the effectiveness of multimodal tools in improving pronunciation skills. Irawan and Tampubolon (2020) demonstrated that phonetic transcription significantly enhanced the pronunciation of students. Similarly, Rachmawati and Cahyani (2020) found that video content can improve various aspects of pronunciation, including accuracy, fluency, intonation, and stress. While Zhang and Zhou (2022) emphasized the growing role of digital technologies in language learning, they noted that integrating visual and auditory elements has become a practical approach in modern language education.

Value of Repetition, Accessibility, and Self-pacing

This theme emphasizes the participants ability to repeatedly view for deeper understanding and better retention of phonetic concepts. This flexibility allowed them to revisit challenging sections, practice pronunciation multiple times, and study at their own pace. Such features reduced learning anxiety and increased confidence, highlighting YouTube's potential as a student-centered tool for developing phonetic competence. They pointed out that the ability to replay videos, pause at difficult sections,

and control the pace of learning made it an effective tool for mastering phonetic skills.

(...YouTube has many features, such as examples or content around specific subjects. It is also better because, with videos, you can replay them repeatedly, allowing you to practice until you master them. Particularly in learning, it is more effective because it includes visual aids, demonstrations, or explanations. It can also be entertaining, so you can learn while enjoying the process.) — P8

(...YouTube is beneficial. Of course, I do not disregard the role of teachers, but YouTube allows me to assess my learning. The videos go into a deep dive and provide additional examples related to phonetics and transcriptions.) — P4

These findings are consistent with Toleuzhan et al. (2023), who found that accessible and engaging YouTube content enhances motivation and productivity in language learning, particularly when students are exposed to formats that encourage imitation and enjoyment. Similarly, Jackman (2019) emphasized the role of technological advancements in making digital platforms, such as YouTube, widely accessible to educators and students alike. Saurabh and Gautam (2019) also acknowledged YouTube's educational potential, noting that authentic language exposure and engaging delivery contribute to better retention. Furthermore, Al-Jarf (2022) noted the pedagogical value of YouTube in supporting self-regulated pronunciation practice, provided that the process remains active, individualized, and engaging—principles that resonated with the student's experiences in this study.

Utility of Educational and Entertaining Content Blends

This theme showcases participants' appreciation for YouTube content that successfully combines education with entertainment. Such videos, including TED Talks and similar formats, effectively maintained their audience's attention while supporting phonetic development. The engaging nature of these videos enhanced motivation, helped them stay focused, and facilitated a better understanding of pronunciation and varied accents.

(...Many aspects of YouTube videos

have helped me improve my phonetic skills, but the most important one is the educational and informative content. These videos serve as a learning platform. Another aspect is entertainment with an educational element—these videos grab my attention and keep me engaged while also helping me learn.) — P7

The results align with existing literature on the utility of educational and entertaining content blends on YouTube. Monfero (2023) stressed the role of technology in supporting learning within the ever-evolving educational landscape, with platforms like YouTube providing dynamic and engaging learning experiences. Similarly, Untong et al. (2023) underscored the effectiveness of YouTube tutorials in enhancing English language proficiency, which resonates with the participants' experiences using informative content to improve their phonetic skills. Furthermore, Maziriri et al. (2020) noted that students often engage with YouTube for entertainment and learning, as the platforms' variety keeps them motivated and focused. The combination of entertainment and education in its content, as indicated by the participants, plays a crucial role in enhancing engagement and promoting phonetic development.

Importance of Native and Multinational Speaker Exposure

This theme displays that listening to various English speakers—native, non-native, and multinational—enhanced their awareness of pronunciation differences, accent diversity, and speech patterns. This exposure broadened their understanding of how English is spoken globally and validated their pronunciation attempts, reducing the fear of being “incorrect.” They appreciated native speakers' accurate pronunciation models while valuing multinational voices for promoting accent awareness and global intelligibility, contributing to a more inclusive and realistic approach to phonetic competence.

(...For me, since many languages originated from British English, the first phonetics guide I followed was a British one. Since they were the ones who developed much of the English language, I think I prefer learning from native English speakers. Phonetics is all about English pronunciation, so they have mastered it

better and can pronounce words more accurately.) — P4

The results of this study are supported by previous research, which similarly emphasizes the value of exposure to native and multinational speaker in language learning. Pratama et al. (2020) found that YouTube videos significantly aid students in understanding content more effectively, particularly when presented by native speakers, enhancing comprehension and presentation skills. Additionally, Abbas and Qassim (2020) revealed that students believe YouTube contributes positively to their language proficiency, mainly through exposure to native speaker content, which also fosters a deeper connection to the cultural context of the language. These studies align with the current research, confirming that native and multinational voices on YouTube promote linguistic competence and cultural awareness in phonetic learning.

Challenges Faced by Students in Using YouTube for Phonetic Skill Development

Based on the collected responses, four significant themes emerged regarding the challenges participants face when using YouTube to develop their phonetic skills. These themes reflect the barriers that limited the effectiveness of their learning experience on the platform. The four emergent themes were: (1) Lack of Real-Time Feedback and Guided Correction; (2) Content Credibility and Conflicting Information; (3) Accessibility and Technical Limitations; and (4) Difficulty in Finding Relevant and Targeted Content.

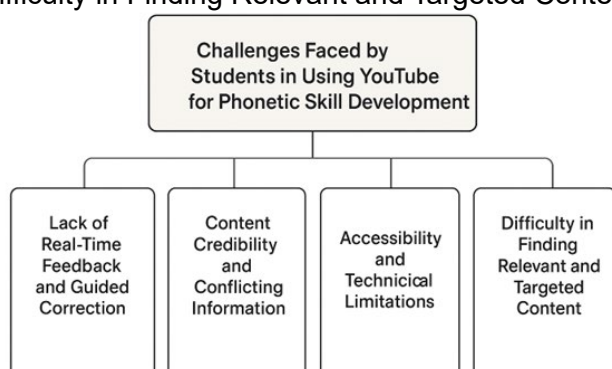


Figure 3. Challenges Faced by Students in Using YouTube for Phonetic Skill Development

Lack of Real-time Feedback and Guided Correction

This theme suggests that participants struggled with the lack of immediate feedback and guided correction when using YouTube for phonetic learning. Without an instructor to observe and correct them in real-time, they could not determine

whether their pronunciation was accurate. This lack of interactive support led to uncertainty and slowed down the improvement of their phonetic skills.

(...one challenge is the lack of assessment. It is different when you have someone to watch with you and check if you're improving. Another issue is boredom—since phonetic tutorials focus on sounds, some content becomes repetitive, which can make it less engaging.) — P2

(...the main challenge is that learning online is difficult because you do not have a face-to-face instructor. YouTube is diverse, with a vast amount of content and sources. It is hard to determine which videos are reliable. Some YouTube videos provide correct information, but others do not.) — P7

Al-Jarf (2022) supports these findings, which note that YouTube is most effective for pronunciation practice to promote active, contextual, and guided learning. Without these elements, students may miss opportunities for correction and lack the support needed for confident and correct pronunciation. This directly supports the perception of participants that YouTube lacks real-time correction and guided instruction. The emphasis on guided and interactive learning in the literature confirms that without these elements—like instructor feedback or corrective input—students may experience uncertainty or stagnation in their phonetic skill development. Similarly, Fachriyah et al. (2020) found that while YouTube can help students prepare and practice pronunciation independently, its impact is significantly enhanced when paired with reflective activities and classroom instruction, where teacher guidance and feedback are present. This further supports the notion that when used alone, YouTube may fail to address student needs for correction and improvement in real-time.

Content Credibility and Conflicting Information

This theme expresses participants' concerns about the inconsistency between YouTube content and their classroom lessons. They shared that while some videos were helpful, others presented information that conflicted with what they were taught in class, leading to confusion and mistrust in the platform's credibility.

(...nonsense content. The most unhelpful

YouTube content for me is those without credible sources. They lead to misinformation and incorrect teaching.) — P7

(...one challenge I face when using YouTube for phonetic skill development is determining whether the source is reliable. Sometimes, the content contradicts what our teachers teach, which can be confusing. It makes me question whether the information is correct or not.) — P8

These findings emphasize the challenge of identifying reliable sources on YouTube, especially for students who rely on the platform for academic support. When they encounter conflicting content, it can disrupt their understanding and reduce confidence in the platform and classroom learning. These results are supported by existing literature, such as Al-Jarf (2022), who stressed that YouTube should be used pedagogically and with guidance to ensure the learning process is constructive and trustworthy. Without curation or verification, students may be exposed to inaccurate or misleading material, which can hinder their progress and cause confusion. Similarly, Maziriri et al. (2020) found that although YouTube is popular among students, its open-access nature makes it difficult to control the quality and reliability of the content students consume.

Accessibility and Technical Limitations

This theme notes that participants' unstable internet connections and a lack of reliable access to devices hindered their ability to use YouTube consistently. They explained that weak signals or needing to download videos in advance affected their learning continuity, especially in remote or resource-limited settings.

(...my biggest challenge is the signal. Even if I have mobile data or Wi-Fi, if the signal is weak, there is nothing I can do. That is the biggest issue.) — P5

(...since YouTube requires an internet connection, my biggest challenge is accessibility. If I do not download the video in advance, I won't be able to watch it when I need it.) — P10

These experiences demonstrate that technical constraints—such as poor internet and

limited device access—can hinder phonetic learning through YouTube. Students may miss regular practice and struggle with pronunciation development if they lack consistent access. These findings align with prior research of Maziriri et al. (2020), who acknowledged that while students spend time on YouTube, consistent access to the platform is not guaranteed, especially in areas with connectivity issues. Similarly, Monfero (2023) highlighted the importance of integrating technology into education but noted that unstable access remains a challenge in many learning environments. These studies affirm that while YouTube can be a helpful tool, its effectiveness largely depends on the accessibility of technological resources.

Difficulty in Finding Relevant and Targeted Content

Participants shared that it was challenging to find YouTube videos that specifically match their phonetic learning needs. They often encountered content that was too basic, intended for younger audiences, or unrelated to their class lessons, making it harder to use the platform effectively for academic purposes.

(... my main challenge is finding the right source because many videos appear when you search for phonetics on YouTube. It can be challenging to find a video that covers explicitly the phonetic topic I need to learn and apply.) — P9

(...when I try to connect the dots between our lessons and YouTube materials, they do not always match. For example, a specific lesson taught in class might not be the same as what is available on YouTube. So, I have to look for something that is at least similar, even if it is not the same. That is one of my challenges—since YouTube has such a broad range of content, it can be difficult to find the right material.) — P3

These responses reflect how YouTube's vast and unfiltered nature can overwhelm students seeking focused, curriculum-aligned content. While the platform offers various resources, not all are relevant to the academic level of students or their specific phonetic goals, leading to wasted time and learning gaps. The literature supports this finding, as Toleuzhan et al. (2023) found that students often prefer engaging formats such as vlogs, films, and

songs, which can motivate them but may not always align with specific academic requirements. Similarly, Al-Jarf (2022) emphasized that its use must be guided and contextual for YouTube to be effective in pronunciation practice. Without proper selection and direction, students may consume content that does not support targeted phonetic learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, participants' experiences with YouTube for phonetic skill development reveal a distinctive approach to supplementary language learning. They strategically utilized the platform to prepare for their academic needs, engaging with tutorials and pronunciation guides that provided visual and audio demonstrations of complex phonetic concepts. While YouTube provided valuable independent learning opportunities, they encountered challenges navigating content reliability and managing unfamiliar accents from international creators. These experiences highlighted the importance of guided content selection and structured educational support. Ultimately, participants recommended integrating YouTube-based activities into formal instruction to enhance engagement and maximize phonetic skill development.

Integrating digital platforms, such as YouTube, into higher education language learning requires a multifaceted approach that balances technological innovation with strategic pedagogical support. Curriculum developers and institutions are encouraged to formally incorporate digital tools by providing robust infrastructure, professional development, and carefully curated learning resources that promote active, self-paced learning experiences. Educators should adopt a structured approach to platform utilization, guiding students to critically evaluate content for reliability and cultural relevance while encouraging intentional engagement with high-quality, culturally responsive channels. Creating a systematic framework that supports multimedia learning, institutions can effectively complement traditional classroom instruction and enhance students' phonetic skill development. Future research should continue exploring the long-term impacts of digital platforms on language proficiency, comparing various multimedia learning approaches to optimize educational strategies.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no financial or other conflicts of interest.

Ethical Statement

The authors declare that approval was obtained from the corresponding author institution's Research Ethics Committee (REC) with REC Approval Control Code DDOSC1122025 and REC Protocol Code 039-01-2025.

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