



A Linguistic Study of the Impact of Watching YouTube Educational Videos on the Iraqi EFL Learners' Performance in Learning English Language

Shaymaa Abid Abdulameer Kareem^{a,b*} , Narjis Faris Abdullah^c 

^a *Alameed University, College of Basic Education for Women, English Department, Iraq.*
Email: shama-abd-alameer@alameed.edu.iq

^b *Kerbala University, College of Education for the Humanities, English Department, Iraq.*
Email: shayma.a@uokerbala.edu.iq

^c *Southern Technical University, Basrah Technical Institute, Iraq.* Email: narjis.faris@stu.edu.iq

Received: 29 June 2025 | Received: in Revised Form 16 August 2025 | Accepted 19 August 2025

APA Citation:

Kareem, S. A. A., & Abdullah, N. F. (2025). A Linguistic Study of the Impact of Watching YouTube Educational Videos on the Iraqi EFL Learners' Performance in Learning English Language. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(3), 213-224.
Doi: <https://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.11319>

Abstract

Iraqi learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) continue to encounter persistent difficulties in attaining language proficiency, despite prolonged exposure to formal instruction. Conventional pedagogical approaches frequently fall short in fostering essential linguistic competencies, thereby contributing to unsatisfactory academic outcomes. In response to this issue, the present study investigated the effect of viewing educational content on YouTube on the English language performance of Iraqi EFL learners. Specifically, the study explored how the frequency of video consumption, the nature of the content, and the level of learner engagement with the material influenced EFL performance. To gather empirical data, a structured questionnaire was administered to students from two schools located in Basrah, Iraq: Alkhansaa Secondary School for Girls and Almarkazia Secondary School for Boys. The data were analysed through structural equation modelling to identify relationships among the variables. The results demonstrated that the frequency of watching, content type, and learner engagement significantly and positively affected EFL learners' performance. Moreover, the findings emphasised the necessity of digital literacy, as effective learning through YouTube educational videos relies on adequate digital competency. Consequently, the study provides evidence that YouTube educational videos serve as a valuable tool for enhancing the English language performance of Iraqi EFL learners. These insights offer practical implications for educational policymakers seeking to improve language learning outcomes by integrating digital media into instructional strategies.

© 2025 EJAL & the Authors. Published by Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics (EJAL). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (CC BY-NC-ND) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Keywords: EFL Learners' Performance, YouTube Educational Videos, Frequency of Watching, Type of Content, Learner Engagement, Digital Literacy.

Introduction

English is recognised globally as a vital means of communication, serving as a cornerstone for academic success, professional development, and intercultural interaction (Dashtestani, Hejazi, & Albadri, 2025; Zheng et al., 2025). Within Iraq, EFL is integrated across all levels of formal education (Dashtestani et al., 2025). Despite extended exposure to English instruction, Iraqi EFL learners consistently exhibit limited competence in essential areas, including speaking, listening, vocabulary development, and grammatical usage. This

* Corresponding Author

Email: shayma.a@uokerbala.edu.iq

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.11319>

persistent struggle adversely affects their academic progress and employability within the increasingly interconnected global landscape.

Although various initiatives have been undertaken by educational institutions and government authorities to improve teaching quality and institutional effectiveness, the learning outcomes remain unsatisfactory. Instructional practices in Iraq predominantly reflect teacher-centred paradigms, placing emphasis on rote memorisation and rigid curricular adherence (Ajaj, 2024). Although efforts have been made to shift towards more communicative and student-driven methodologies, particularly in the teaching of English, classroom practices still primarily rely on textbook-based lectures, with minimal emphasis on learner participation or interactive exercises. Moreover, opportunities to engage with English beyond the classroom are scarce, and immersive or contextual language use is largely absent (Almurashi, 2016). These limitations point to the pressing need for innovative, learner-oriented approaches that can more effectively support language development.

The continued reliance on traditional pedagogical strategies across Iraqi educational institutions has been identified as a major contributor to low learner performance (Kanber et al., 2025). In this context, YouTube has emerged as a promising educational tool capable of addressing some of these instructional shortcomings. The platform offers an extensive range of English learning resources, including grammar tutorials, vocabulary instruction, pronunciation guides, and authentic conversational examples. Its audiovisual format facilitates exposure to contextualised and real-world language use, which can significantly enhance the acquisition process for EFL learners (Rahmawati, Pasandalan, & Novitasari, 2024). Additionally, YouTube accommodates multiple learning styles—visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic—enabling learners to engage with content in ways that align with their individual preferences, thereby improving comprehension and retention (Beautemps & Bresges, 2021).

However, within the Iraqi educational context, the academic utilisation of YouTube remains both limited and underexplored. While learners frequently interact with digital content for recreational purposes, little is known about their use of YouTube as a medium for language learning, the types of content accessed, or the frequency of engagement with such resources. Although earlier studies have investigated the role of YouTube in various educational settings (Burke & Snyder, 2008; Chintalapati & Daruri, 2017; Curran et al., 2020), very few have specifically addressed its application in supporting EFL learners, particularly in Iraq. Another under-researched area pertains to the extent of learner engagement with YouTube content and its influence on language proficiency. The current study also incorporated digital literacy as a moderating factor, recognising that effective utilisation of YouTube as a learning tool presupposes a certain level of digital competence. Without sufficient digital skills, learners may be unable to benefit fully from modern instructional resources such as YouTube.

Existing research has primarily explored digital media in EFL learning from a general or Western-centric perspective, often overlooking region-specific challenges, including limited digital fluency, restricted access to high-quality educational content, and sociocultural resistance to non-traditional instructional methods. A significant research gap exists concerning the effect of educational YouTube video consumption on the language performance of Iraqi EFL learners, particularly regarding viewing frequency, content type, and the nature of learner engagement. Furthermore, the potential moderating role of learners' English proficiency levels in this context remains unexamined. Therefore, the primary objective of this study was to investigate the influence of educational YouTube videos on the language performance of Iraqi EFL learners. By examining the impact of usage frequency, content characteristics, and learner interaction with digital material, the research aimed to address both a practical educational challenge and a critical gap in the literature. The findings are expected to yield insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to enhance language learning outcomes through the strategic integration of digital media into EFL instruction.

Literature Review

Educational technology has become instrumental in transforming conventional teaching environments into dynamic, interactive, and learner-centred settings (Shi et al., 2020). It broadens access to varied instructional resources, facilitates personalised learning pathways, and enhances engagement through the integration of multimedia elements. Consequently, technological advancement is often viewed as a hallmark of modern civilisation and a defining feature of progress in the twenty-first century. Its influence permeates numerous aspects of human life, significantly improving the quality of experience for many individuals. In the educational sphere, technology encompasses a broad array of tools and platforms designed to support learners in acquiring new knowledge, developing competencies, and achieving academic growth.

The integration of advanced technologies enables the completion of complex educational tasks, and its significance is evident across schools, colleges, and universities (Huang & Hong, 2016). With the proliferation of digital platforms, computers, and educational software, the process of knowledge transmission has become more efficient and accessible. Educators can convey information more clearly, while learners benefit from enhanced comprehension and retention. One notable innovation within this technological landscape is

YouTube, which has increasingly been utilised as a pedagogical aid. Through the incorporation of videos, simulations, and language learning applications, students are now able to receive immediate feedback and acquire practical skills beyond the limitations of textbooks. YouTube, in particular, has evolved into a global hub for both formal and informal learning (Jones & Cuthrell, 2011). As the leading online video-sharing platform, YouTube hosts an extensive range of content spanning educational, cultural, social, scientific, and entertainment domains. The platform plays a vital role in cultivating users' abilities, particularly in educational contexts where the objective is to stimulate critical thinking and cognitive engagement.

The use of digital video resources has become widespread in instructional settings, with YouTube videos emerging as one of the most frequently employed tools for facilitating concept understanding and knowledge retention (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Ranked as the third most influential online network globally, YouTube has seen a surge in its utilisation for educational purposes. Teachers increasingly adopt YouTube as an instructional supplement to introduce new material and enhance learners' comprehension and proficiency. In recent years, the platform has also been integrated into students' homework routines, reinforcing its role in supporting independent learning (Kusmaryono & Basir, 2024). Jones & Cuthrell (2011) highlighted the value of YouTube's interactive features, such as video commenting, which can significantly contribute to language skill development by encouraging learner engagement and communicative practice.

Given the proven educational benefits of YouTube, the present study sought to investigate its role in addressing the persistent issue of low EFL performance among Iraqi learners. The research specifically focused on three core dimensions of YouTube usage: viewing frequency, content type, and learner engagement with video material. These dimensions were treated as the independent variables in the study framework. Furthermore, the study acknowledged the critical importance of digital competence in enabling effective technology-based learning. It was observed that without foundational digital skills, students are unlikely to derive meaningful benefit from educational technologies such as YouTube. To account for this factor, digital literacy was introduced as a moderating variable within the conceptual model. The study therefore explored the relationships among viewing frequency, type of content, learner engagement, digital literacy, and EFL learners' performance, as illustrated in Figure 1.

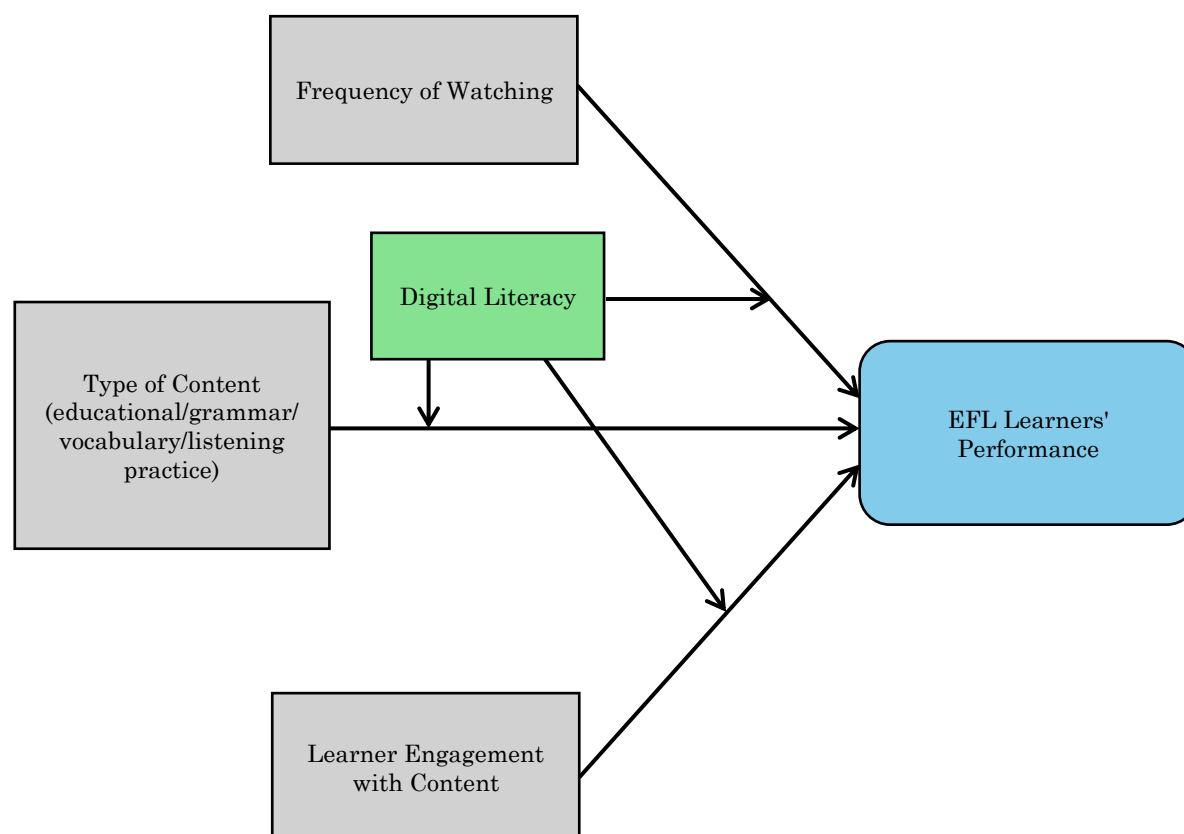


Figure 1: Framework of the Study Highlighting the Relationship between YouTube Educational Videos, Digital Literacy and EFL Learners' Performance.

Hypotheses Development

Frequency of Watching YouTube Videos and EFL Learners' Performance

The concept of viewing frequency pertains to the regularity with which individuals engage with specific media formats, including television, streaming platforms, and digital content (Daniel et al.,

2022). Within the scope of the present study, which focuses on YouTube as an educational tool for EFL learners, this term specifically denotes how often learners access and watch educational videos on YouTube. A growing body of research has highlighted the beneficial role of digital media in supporting language acquisition (Mehta et al., 2025; Yu & Wang, 2025), particularly when engagement is consistent and sustained. In the context of YouTube-based instruction, frequent exposure to educational video content has been positively linked to improved language development. Such repeated interaction allows learners to internalise authentic language elements, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical structures. Viewing frequency can be measured using various indicators, such as the number of times educational material is accessed within a defined period (e.g. weekly or monthly) or the duration of each session, which may range from brief interactions to extended viewing. Regular viewing strengthens language learning through repetition and continuous engagement with the target language, which is especially beneficial for EFL learners who have limited opportunities for real-life English communication. Consequently, learners' language performance is often closely associated with the frequency of their engagement with YouTube educational videos. As learners consistently consume English-language content through this platform, their comprehension and overall language abilities are expected to improve (Novarita, satya Gumelar, & Ainun, 2025). Based on these considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: *Frequency of watching YouTube videos has a positive relationship with EFL learners' performance.*

Type of Content (Educational/Grammar/Vocabulary/Listening Practice) in YouTube Videos and EFL Learners' Performance

In the context of this study, the type of content refers specifically to educational materials aimed at enhancing grammar, vocabulary, listening, and pronunciation skills. The nature of video content accessed on YouTube plays a pivotal role in influencing EFL learners' language development (Lee, 2025). Videos that are explicitly designed to address linguistic components such as grammatical structures, vocabulary enrichment, listening comprehension, and accurate pronunciation provide learners with focused and purposeful exposure to the target language (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Engagement with such educational content in English contributes meaningfully to the development of listening and pronunciation abilities. By offering systematic explanations and contextually embedded examples, these resources support deeper understanding and long-term retention of linguistic knowledge. Exposure to varied content types also facilitates vocabulary acquisition, enabling learners to expand their lexical repertoire more effectively. Unlike general or entertainment-based media, instructional content targeting specific language domains promotes concentrated learning and allows learners to strengthen individual skill areas. The YouTube platform, when utilised for diverse educational purposes, represents a valuable medium for supporting EFL learners in their English language acquisition journey (Lee, 2025). Based on this premise, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: *Type of content in YouTube videos has a positive relationship with EFL learners' performance.*

Learner Engagement with Content in YouTube Videos and EFL Learners' Performance

Learner engagement refers to the extent of a learner's active involvement, interest, and sustained motivation during the learning process (Xu & Qiu, 2024). In the context of digital platforms, engagement with YouTube content plays a significant role in enhancing the performance of EFL learners by fostering meaningful interaction with language input. It serves as a critical determinant of effective learning, influencing retention of knowledge, development of language skills, and overall academic achievement (Teng & Wang, 2024). Learners who are actively engaged are more likely to internalise new vocabulary, improve listening comprehension, refine pronunciation, and develop greater fluency. Such individuals also tend to exhibit increased participation in learning activities, pose questions, explore content more deeply, and apply acquired knowledge in real-life contexts (Mohammadi et al., 2024). This active participation transforms passive content consumption into an interactive experience, thereby enhancing the salience and memorability of language input. Higher levels of engagement with educational video material are therefore associated with improved understanding and stronger performance in English language acquisition. On the basis of these considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: *Learner engagement with content in YouTube videos has a positive relationship with EFL learners' performance.*

Moderating Role of Digital Literacy

Digital literacy refers to the ability to effectively and ethically locate, evaluate, create, and communicate information through the use of digital technologies (Abiddin, Ibrahim, & Aziz, 2022; Detlor et al., 2022). It serves as a crucial moderating factor in enhancing the relationship between YouTube-based learning dimensions and the performance of EFL learners. This construct encompasses a broad

spectrum of competencies, including the use of digital tools, interpretation of online information, and the capacity for digital communication and collaboration (Ndibalema, 2025). Learners possessing a higher level of digital literacy are more adept at navigating educational platforms, identifying relevant and high-quality content, and engaging constructively with video materials. As a result, digital literacy becomes a foundational skill enabling learners to make informed choices about the type of content they consume and to interact with it more meaningfully. In this regard, digital literacy significantly contributes to improving the outcomes of YouTube-based learning for EFL learners. Moreover, digitally literate learners are better positioned to manage their viewing frequency by incorporating educational videos into their study routines in a structured and purposeful manner. In essence, digital literacy empowers learners to confidently interact with digital environments and maximise the educational potential of online platforms. Conversely, those with limited digital skills may encounter difficulties in identifying or effectively utilising beneficial content, thereby constraining the positive impact of YouTube videos on their language development. Therefore, digital literacy enhances the effectiveness of viewing frequency, content quality, and learner engagement in facilitating improved EFL performance (Palacios-Hidalgo & Huertas-Abril, 2025). Based on this analysis, the following hypotheses related to the moderating effect of digital literacy are proposed:

Hypothesis 4: *Digital literacy moderates the relationship between frequency of watching YouTube videos and EFL learners' performance.*

Hypothesis 5: *Digital literacy moderates the relationship between type of content in YouTube videos and EFL learners' performance.*

Hypothesis 6: *Digital literacy moderates the relationship between learner engagement with content in YouTube videos and EFL learners' performance.*

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to investigate the effect of watching YouTube educational videos on the performance of Iraqi EFL learners. The target population comprised learners enrolled in the English subject at the fifth secondary grade level in two prominent schools located in Basrah, Iraq: Alkhansaa Secondary School for Girls and Almarkazia Secondary School for Boys, both situated within the same geographical area. The investigation focused on three core dimensions of YouTube-based learning—frequency of watching, type of content, and learner engagement with content—while also incorporating digital literacy as a moderating variable. These dimensions were examined to assess their collective influence on EFL learners' language performance.

A cross-sectional survey design was employed for data collection. Although the role of YouTube in education has been examined in prior research, no existing instrument was found to measure the specific dimensions addressed in this study. Consequently, a new measurement scale was developed to capture the five constructs under investigation. An initial pool of 40 items was identified through a comprehensive review of the literature. These items were subsequently refined through a focus group discussion involving academic experts, including linguistics professors, resulting in a finalised set of 30 items. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on a preliminary sample of 70 respondents to evaluate the reliability and validity of the proposed items. Following this validation process, 27 scale items were retained based on their face validity and content validity. These finalised items are detailed in Table 1. The construct of frequency of watching was operationalised by assessing how regularly learners accessed YouTube for English language learning. Type of content was measured by evaluating the variety and relevance of English learning materials viewed. Learner engagement with content focused on the extent to which students actively and attentively interacted with video material. Digital literacy was assessed by examining learners' proficiency in using digital tools to facilitate learning via YouTube. Lastly, EFL learners' performance was measured based on perceived improvement in vocabulary, speaking, listening, and linguistic accuracy.

A total of 500 questionnaires were administered to students enrolled at Alkhansaa Secondary School for Girls and Almarkazia Secondary School for Boys. The sampling process followed a simple random sampling technique, a probability-based method whereby each individual in the population has an equal likelihood of being selected (Meng, 2013). Respondents were chosen from official class attendance records, which were obtained from both schools. Participants were then randomly selected from these lists to ensure unbiased representation. Data collection was conducted in the presence of both course instructors and members of the research team, who provided clarification and support to the students throughout the questionnaire completion process. Of the 500 distributed questionnaires, 410 were returned. However, 30 responses were excluded during the data screening phase due to incompleteness or inconsistencies. Consequently, a final sample of 380 valid questionnaires was retained for analysis. The data were examined using partial least squares (PLS) methodology, and structural equation modelling (SEM) was applied to assess the relationships among the study variables.

Table 1: *Questionnaire Items.*

Variable	Questionnaire Items	Reliability
Frequency of Watching	1. I watch English learning videos on YouTube daily. 2. I spend several hours per week watching English-related content on YouTube. 3. YouTube is one of my main sources for practicing English. 4. I use YouTube regularly to improve my English language skills. 5. Watching YouTube for English learning has become a habit. 6. I often re-watch English videos on YouTube to understand them better.	$\alpha = 0.788$
Type of Content (Educational/Grammar/ Vocabulary/Listening Practice)	1. I watch grammar-focused videos on YouTube. 2. I watch vocabulary-building videos on YouTube. 3. I watch listening practice videos such as conversations or English talks. 4. I prefer educational channels designed for English learners. 5. I avoid entertainment content and focus mainly on instructional videos. 6. I select videos based on the skill I want to improve (e.g., grammar, listening, etc.). 7. I frequently explore different types of English learning content on YouTube.	$\alpha = 0.828$
Learner Engagement with Content	1. I take notes while watching English learning videos on YouTube. 2. I pause and replay parts of YouTube videos to better understand the content. 3. I actively participate in exercises or activities shown in the videos. 4. I often try to speak or repeat after the speaker in English videos.	$\alpha = 0.833$
Digital Literacy	1. I can effectively search for and evaluate educational content on the internet. 2. I am confident in using digital tools such as YouTube, online dictionaries, and learning apps to improve my English. 3. I can navigate and use different online platforms without assistance. 4. I know how to identify reliable and credible sources of information online. 5. I can troubleshoot basic technical issues when using digital devices or applications.	$\alpha = 0.711$
EFL Learners' Performance	1. My vocabulary has improved significantly in recent months. 2. I am more confident in speaking English than before. 3. My listening comprehension in English has improved. 4. I can write more clearly and accurately in English. 5. I can follow English reading passages more easily.	$\alpha = 0.715$

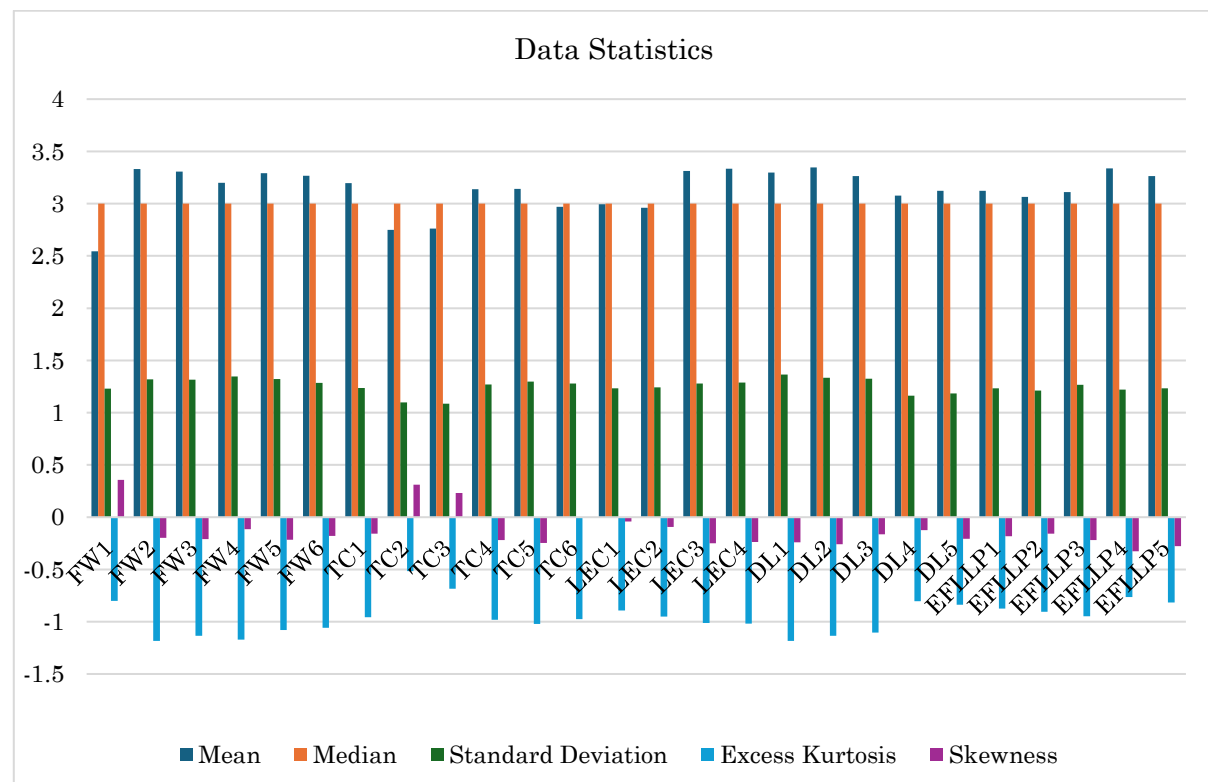
Results

This study utilised PLS-SEM as the primary analytical technique. PLS-SEM is widely recognised and frequently employed in linguistic and educational research for its suitability in analysing complex models involving multiple constructs (Hair, Howard, & Nitzl, 2020; Razzaq & Hamzah, 2024; Shehzad et al., 2019). Prior to conducting the main analysis, a series of data screening procedures were undertaken to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the dataset. A small number of missing values were identified and subsequently addressed using the mean replacement method, thereby maintaining the completeness of the data. No significant outliers were detected, and the data met the assumptions of normality. Upon completion of the screening process, descriptive statistics and measurement information were prepared for analysis. These preliminary results are presented in Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 2.

Table 2: Data Statistics.

Items	Mean	Median	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
FW1	2.545	3	1.23	-0.802	0.356
FW2	3.331	3	1.319	-1.182	-0.197
FW3	3.308	3	1.316	-1.133	-0.21
FW4	3.201	3	1.346	-1.17	-0.114
FW5	3.291	3	1.321	-1.078	-0.215
FW6	3.268	3	1.286	-1.058	-0.178
TC1	3.197	3	1.237	-0.956	-0.156
TC2	2.749	3	1.098	-0.516	0.312
TC3	2.763	3	1.085	-0.685	0.231
TC4	3.137	3	1.269	-0.981	-0.22
TC5	3.14	3	1.296	-1.022	-0.245
TC6	2.97	3	1.278	-0.976	-0.001
LEC1	2.993	3	1.232	-0.892	-0.041
LEC2	2.96	3	1.242	-0.95	-0.092
LEC3	3.314	3	1.278	-1.013	-0.248
LEC4	3.334	3	1.289	-1.018	-0.238
DL1	3.298	3	1.364	-1.183	-0.241
DL2	3.348	3	1.334	-1.136	-0.257
DL3	3.264	3	1.324	-1.104	-0.165
DL4	3.077	3	1.164	-0.804	-0.125
DL5	3.124	3	1.183	-0.838	-0.205
EFLLP1	3.124	3	1.233	-0.875	-0.183
EFLLP2	3.064	3	1.213	-0.906	-0.156
EFLLP3	3.11	3	1.266	-0.947	-0.219
EFLLP4	3.338	3	1.22	-0.764	-0.325
EFLLP5	3.264	3	1.232	-0.815	-0.277

Note: FW = Frequency of Watching, TC = Type of Content, LEC = Learner Engagement with Content, DL = Digital Literacy, EFLLP = EFL Learners' Performance

**Figure 2:** Data Statistics.

Note: FW = Frequency of Watching, TC = Type of Content, LEC = Learner Engagement with Content, DL = Digital Literacy, EFLLP = EFL Learners' Performance

PLS-SEM is a statistical technique designed to assess relationships among variables, particularly when dealing with complex theoretical models, prediction-focused analysis, non-normally distributed data, or limited sample sizes. As an alternative to covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM), PLS-

SEM is extensively applied across disciplines such as social sciences, education, and marketing research. In the initial phase of the PLS-SEM analysis, the reliability and validity of the measurement model were assessed. Convergent validity was evaluated through several indicators. Factor loadings were expected to exceed the threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010), composite reliability (CR) values were required to be greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2020), and the average variance extracted (AVE) should exceed 0.50. As presented in Table 3, all indicators met the recommended thresholds, confirming the presence of convergent validity. To assess discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was employed. According to established guidelines, HTMT values should remain below 0.90 to ensure discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). As reported in Table 4, all values fell within the acceptable range, thereby supporting the distinctiveness of the constructs under study.

Table 3: Convergent Validity.

Variable	Item	Loading	Alpha	CR	AVE
Digital Literacy	DL1	0.904	0.919	0.94	0.757
	DL2	0.881			
	DL3	0.885			
	DL4	0.843			
	DL5	0.835			
EFL Learners' Performance	EFLLP1	0.868	0.912	0.934	0.739
	EFLLP2	0.886			
	EFLLP3	0.874			
	EFLLP4	0.837			
	EFLLP5	0.832			
EFL Learners' Performance	FW1	0.543	0.917	0.938	0.721
	FW2	0.889			
	FW3	0.905			
	FW4	0.911			
	FW5	0.906			
	FW6	0.878			
Learner Engagement with Content	LEC1	0.868	0.892	0.925	0.755
	LEC2	0.878			
	LEC3	0.885			
	LEC4	0.843			
	TC1	0.821	0.876	0.907	0.622
	TC2	0.661			
	TC3	0.684			
	TC4	0.884			
	TC5	0.86			
	TC6	0.795			

Table 4: Discriminant Validity.

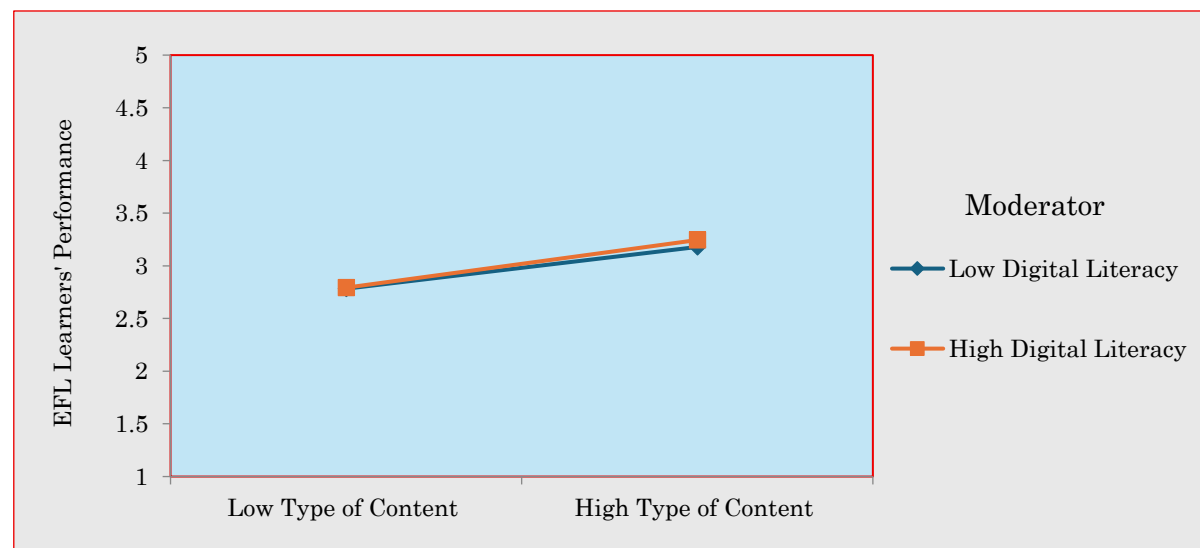
	DL	EFLLP	FW	LEC	TC
Digital Literacy					
EFL Learners' Performance	0.752				
Frequency of Watching	0.792	0.595			
Learner Engagement with Content	0.647	0.691	0.705		
Type of Content	0.638	0.727	0.554	0.663	

The second stage of the PLS-SEM analysis involved the application of the bootstrapping procedure (Hair & Sarstedt, 2019). Bootstrapping is a non-parametric resampling method employed in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling to evaluate the statistical significance of relationships within the model. This technique involves generating numerous subsamples from the original dataset and re-estimating the model repeatedly to assess the stability and significance of the estimated parameters. Within this process, the directionality of relationships was assessed through beta coefficients, while significance was determined using the t-value threshold of 1.96. As shown in Table 5, all three dimensions of YouTube education—frequency of watching, type of content, and learner engagement with content—demonstrated statistically significant relationships with EFL learners' performance. Each of these constructs yielded t-values exceeding 1.96 and positive beta coefficients, thereby supporting Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

In addition, Hypothesis 5, which tested the moderating role of digital literacy in the relationship between type of content and EFL learners' performance, was also supported. This moderating effect is illustrated in Figure 3 and indicates that digital literacy strengthens the positive influence of content type on learners' language outcomes. Conversely, the moderating effects examined in Hypotheses 4 and 6, relating to frequency of watching and learner engagement with content respectively, were not supported. These findings suggest that while digital literacy significantly enhances the impact of content type, it does not exert a similar moderating influence on the other two dimensions within the current model.

Table 5: Results.

	β	Mean	SD	T Statistics	P Values
Frequency of Watching -> EFL Learners' Performance	0.167	0.165	0.059	2.832	0.005
Learner Engagement with Content -> EFL Learners' Performance	0.52	0.523	0.058	8.974	0
Moderating Effect 1 -> EFL Learners' Performance	0.051	0.05	0.06	0.839	0.402
Moderating Effect 2 -> EFL Learners' Performance	0.014	0.013	0.004	3.49	0.001
Moderating Effect 3 -> EFL Learners' Performance	0.002	0	0.061	0.025	0.98
Type of Content -> EFL Learners' Performance	0.212	0.217	0.071	3.01	0.003

**Figure 3: Moderation Effect of Digital Literacy between Type of Content and EFL Learners Performance.**

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of watching YouTube educational videos on the performance of Iraqi EFL learners in acquiring English language skills. The research objective was addressed through the development of six hypotheses, focusing on both direct and moderating effects involving three dimensions of YouTube usage—frequency of watching, type of content, and learner engagement—and their relationship with EFL learners' performance. The study was situated within the context of EFL education in Iraq, with emphasis on evaluating the practical impact of digital learning tools. The findings offered key insights and provided empirical support for four out of the six proposed hypotheses. The results corresponding to Hypothesis 1 demonstrated that the frequency with which learners engage with English-language videos contributes significantly to their performance. The positive relationship suggests that regular exposure to English through multimedia platforms reinforces essential language skills, such as vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and overall fluency. This observation aligns with existing literature, including the work of [Brinton et al. \(2015\)](#), which highlighted the positive influence of learners' video-watching habits on academic performance, though not specifically in the context of EFL learners. Similar conclusions were reported by [Ozan & Ozarslan \(2016\)](#), who examined the impact of video lecture engagement on student outcomes.

Hypothesis 2 was also supported, confirming that the type of content accessed by learners plays a pivotal role in language development. The results indicated that instructional materials focusing on grammar, vocabulary, listening practice, and pronunciation were particularly effective in enhancing EFL learners' performance. This finding reinforces the argument that not only the quantity but also the quality and relevance of content are essential. Studies by [Uchidiuno et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Dart \(2020\)](#) similarly underscored the importance of targeted, educational content in improving learner outcomes. The current study supports the notion that structured instructional videos are more beneficial for language acquisition than general or entertainment-oriented media.

In relation to Hypothesis 3, the results revealed that learner engagement with video content significantly influences EFL performance. Greater levels of interaction and attentiveness during video-based learning were associated with higher language achievement. This emphasises that the educational value of YouTube is not solely dependent on viewing frequency but is enhanced by the learner's active participation and focused involvement. Engaged learners are more likely to internalise vocabulary, reinforce comprehension, and improve both speaking and listening abilities. This finding is supported by prior research ([Carroll et al., 2021](#); [Galal et al., 2023](#); [Jiang & Peng, 2025](#)), which similarly found a strong connection between engagement and academic success. However, the study also indicates the necessity for learner training and guidance to ensure effective utilisation of online resources.

Further insight was obtained through the analysis of digital literacy as a moderating variable. Hypothesis 4, which tested the moderating effect of digital literacy between frequency of watching and EFL learners' performance, was not supported. Likewise, Hypothesis 6, exploring the moderation between learner engagement and performance, did not yield statistically significant results. Nevertheless, support was found for Hypothesis 5, where digital literacy was shown to moderate the relationship between type of content and EFL learners' performance. This finding implies that learners with stronger digital competencies are better equipped to navigate, select, and benefit from high-quality educational content, leading to enhanced learning outcomes. In particular, digital literacy appears to amplify the impact of targeted video materials, such as grammar or listening practice sessions, thereby improving language acquisition more effectively for digitally proficient learners.

Study Implications

This study addressed a significant educational concern while filling a notable gap in the literature by examining how various dimensions of YouTube utilisation influence the English language performance of Iraqi EFL learners—an area previously underexplored in empirical research. The findings present important implications for policymakers seeking to improve language learning outcomes through the integration of digital media. As such, the results may be of practical benefit to educators, curriculum developers, and educational administrators who aim to enhance EFL instruction through technology-enhanced learning approaches. One key implication is the need for educators to actively encourage frequent engagement with educational video content. Repeated exposure to such materials can familiarise learners with authentic language use, including real-world expressions, diverse accents, and conversational structures that are often insufficiently addressed in traditional, textbook-driven instruction. Teachers should incorporate digital video content into pedagogical strategies to support learners' development in speaking, listening, and comprehension skills. Policymakers are advised to consider not only the frequency of learners' interaction with YouTube content but also the quality and relevance of that content. Emphasis should be placed on helping students develop purposeful digital learning behaviours, guided by educators who can direct them towards goal-oriented, high-quality educational resources. Furthermore, school administrators should advocate for the broader adoption of educational technology as a means of enhancing learner autonomy, engagement, and linguistic competence in foreign language education. Given the confirmed moderating effect of digital literacy, it is essential for governments, teachers, and policymakers to recognise its pivotal role in maximising the benefits of YouTube-based learning. Targeted digital literacy programmes should be introduced, including training sessions to equip learners with the necessary skills to navigate, evaluate, and utilise digital content effectively. Strengthening digital competence among EFL learners is crucial for supporting their success in increasingly technology-mediated educational environments.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite offering valuable insights, this study is subject to certain limitations that also suggest directions for future research. Firstly, the investigation was confined to a specific group of Iraqi EFL learners from only two secondary schools—Alkhansaa Secondary School for Girls and Almarkazia Secondary School for Boys. This limited sampling frame restricts the generalisability of the findings across different educational or cultural settings. Future research should seek to include a broader and more diverse sample to enhance the external validity of the results. Secondly, the study did not undertake an in-depth analysis of the varying levels and dimensions of digital literacy, which may influence learners' ability to engage effectively with YouTube for educational purposes. Subsequent research should consider a more comprehensive assessment of digital literacy by examining its multiple facets, including operational, cognitive, critical, social, emotional, and projective dimensions. Thirdly, the present study relied on self-reported data to evaluate EFL learners' performance, rather than employing standardised or objective assessment tools. This approach may introduce subjectivity or bias in performance evaluation. To obtain more robust and measurable outcomes, future studies should incorporate direct assessments such as structured writing tasks, listening comprehension exercises, oral communication evaluations, and reading proficiency tests to more accurately capture learners' actual language competence.

References

- Abiddin, N. Z., Ibrahim, I., & Aziz, S. A. A. (2022). Advocating Digital Literacy: Community-Based Strategies and Approaches. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 11(1), 198-211. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2022-0018>
- Ajaj, I. E. (2024). The Reality of Using Modern Educational Methods and Technologies in Teaching English Language in Iraq. *Journal of Language Studies*, 8(3), 291-311. doi: <https://doi.org/10.25130/Lang.8.3.16>
- Almurashi, W. A. (2016). The effective use of YouTube videos for teaching English language in classrooms as supplementary material at Taibah University in Alula. *International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research*, 4(3), 32-47. Retrieved from <https://ejournals.org/ijellr/vol-4-issue-3-april-2016/the-effective-use-of-youtube-videos-for-teaching-english-language-in-classrooms-as-supplementary-material-at-taibah-university-in-alula>

- Beautemps, J., & Bresges, A. (2021). What Comprises a Successful Educational Science YouTube Video? A Five-Thousand User Survey on Viewing Behaviors and Self-Perceived Importance of Various Variables Controlled by Content Creators. *Frontiers in Communication*, 5, 600595. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2020.600595>
- Brinton, C. G., Buccapatnam, S., Chiang, M., & Poor, H. V. (2015). Mining MOOC Clickstreams: On the Relationship Between Learner Video-Watching Behavior and Performance. *CoRR*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1503.06489>
- Burke, S. C., & Snyder, S. L. (2008). YouTube: An Innovative Learning Resource for College Health Education Courses. *International Electronic Journal of Health Education*, 11, 39-46. Retrieved from <https://www.iejhe.com/archives/2008/4168-14079-1-CE.pdf>
- Carroll, M., Lindsey, S., Chaparro, M., & Winslow, B. (2021). An applied model of learner engagement and strategies for increasing learner engagement in the modern educational environment. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 29(5), 757-771. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2019.1636083>
- Chintalapati, N., & Daruri, V. S. K. (2017). Examining the use of YouTube as a Learning Resource in higher education: Scale development and validation of TAM model. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(6), 853-860. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2016.08.008>
- Curran, V., Simmons, K., Matthews, L., Fleet, L., Gustafson, D. L., Fairbridge, N. A., et al. (2020). YouTube as an Educational Resource in Medical Education: a Scoping Review. *Medical Science Educator*, 30(4), 1775-1782. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40670-020-01016-w>
- Daniel, Y. I., Jamilah, L. N. L., Miftakh, F., & Abdurrahim, N. (2022). The Frequency of Watching Television Media Programs of Students and Its Relation to Their Moral. *Jurnal Perspektif*, 6(2), 121-138. doi: <https://doi.org/10.15575/jp.v6i2.175>
- Dart, S. (2020). Khan-Style Video Engagement in Undergraduate Engineering: Influence of Video Duration, Content Type and Course. In *Proceedings of the 31st annual conference of the australasian association for engineering education (AAEE 2020)* (pp. 9-16). Engineers Australia. Retrieved from <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/206935>
- Dashtestani, R., Hejazi, Y., & Albadri, M.-A.-S. (2025). Blended Courses in the English-as-a-Foreign-Language context of Iraq: examining university students' attitudes and gender effect. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 17(35), 99-116. doi: <https://doi.org/10.22034/elt.2025.66455.2769>
- Detlor, B., Julien, H., La Rose, T., & Serenko, A. (2022). Community-led digital literacy training: Toward a conceptual framework. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 73(10), 1387-1400. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.24639>
- Galal, S., Vyas, D., Ndung'u, M., Wu, G., & Webber, M. (2023). Assessing Learner Engagement and the Impact on Academic Performance within a Virtual Learning Environment. *Pharmacy*, 11(1), 36. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/pharmacy11010036>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson, New York.
- Hair, J. F., Howard, M. C., & Nitzl, C. (2020). Assessing measurement model quality in PLS-SEM using confirmatory composite analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 109, 101-110. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.11.069>
- Hair, J. F., & Sarstedt, M. (2019). Factors versus Composites: Guidelines for Choosing the Right Structural Equation Modeling Method. *Project Management Journal*, 50(6), 619-624. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/8756972819882132>
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(1), 115-135. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8>
- Huang, Y.-N., & Hong, Z.-R. (2016). The effects of a flipped English classroom intervention on students' information and communication technology and English reading comprehension. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 64(2), 175-193. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-015-9412-7>
- Jiang, Y., & Peng, J.-E. (2025). Exploring the relationships between learners' engagement, autonomy, and academic performance in an English language MOOC. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 38(1-2), 71-96. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2022.2164777>
- Jones, T., & Cuthrell, K. (2011). YouTube: Educational Potentials and Pitfalls. *Computers in the Schools*, 28(1), 75-85. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07380569.2011.553149>
- Kanber, H. A., Jassim, K. J., Al-Taai, S. H. H., Ibrahim, M. M., & Farhan, N. D. (2025). The Role of Digital Educational Content in Eliminating Traditional Methods in the Educational Process within Iraqi Universities. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 14, e2025050. doi: <https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.14.50>
- Kusmaryono, I., & Basir, M. A. (2024). Learning media projects with YouTube videos: a dynamic tool for improving mathematics achievement. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 13(2), 934-942. doi: <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v13i2.26720>
- Lee, E. (2025). An Analysis of YouTube English-Speaking Tutorials: Focusing on Content Characteristics and Learner Reactions. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 28(2), 77-98. doi: <https://doi.org/10.15702/mall.2025.28.2.77>

- Mehta, V., Selvakumar, P., Anute, N. B., Gandhimathi, S., Seelam, P. K., & Manjunath, T. C. (2025). Second Language Acquisition Support Through Media Literacy and Digital Media Platforms. In J. Tussey & L. Haas (Eds.), *Supporting Linguistic Differences Through Literacy Education* (pp. 361-388). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-3496-7.ch011>
- Meng, X. (2013). Scalable Simple Random Sampling and Stratified Sampling. *Proceedings of the 30th International Conference on Machine Learning*, 28(3), 531-539. Retrieved from <https://proceedings.mlr.press/v28/meng13a.pdf>
- Mohammadi, K., Jafarpour, A., Alipour, J., & Hashemian, M. (2024). The Impact of Different Kinds of Collaborative Prewriting on EFL Learners' Degree of Engagement in Writing and Writing Self-Efficacy. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 40(1), 1-18. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2022.2157783>
- Ndibalema, P. (2025). Digital literacy gaps in promoting 21st century skills among students in higher education institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review. *Cogent Education*, 12(1), 2452085. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2452085>
- Novarita, P., satya Gumelar, W., & Ainun, N. (2025). The Influence of English Youtube Videos on The Disoriented Language of The Mother Tongue Among Young Children on Their Language Development Process. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 13(1), 2995-3013. doi: <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v13i1.6401>
- Ozan, O., & Ozarslan, Y. (2016). Video lecture watching behaviors of learners in online courses. *Educational Media International*, 53(1), 27-41. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523987.2016.1189255>
- Palacios-Hidalgo, F. J., & Huertas-Abril, C. A. (2025). Developing digital literacy in initial EFL teacher education: A study in a Spanish distance university. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 40(1), 50-66. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2022.2157709>
- Rahmawati, F., Pasandalan, S. N., & Novitasari, H. (2024). An Analysis of YouTube as Sustainable Educational Resources for EFL Learners. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 594, 05003. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202459405003>
- Razzaq, S., & Hamzah, M. H. (2024). Unraveling the impact of metacognitive planning on writing performance through willingness to write in Pakistani ESL learners: a mixed-methods study. *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences*, 46(02), 213-228. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4038/sljs.v46i02.8830>
- Shehzad, M. W., Razzaq, S., Dahri, A. S., & Shah, S. K. B. (2019). The Association between Reading Self-efficacy Beliefs and Meta cognitive Reading Strategies among Saudi PYP students. *Dialogue*, 14(2), 33-45. Retrieved from https://www.qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/The%20Dialogue/14_2/04-Waleed.pdf
- Shi, Y., Yang, H., MacLeod, J., Zhang, J., & Yang, H. H. (2020). College Students' Cognitive Learning Outcomes in Technology-Enabled Active Learning Environments: A Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Literature. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 58(4), 791-817. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735633119881477>
- Teng, Y., & Wang, X. (2024). Full caption, English proficiency and their relationships with behavioral, cognitive and emotional student engagement in Chinese EFL college content-based instruction video learning. *Education and Information Technologies*, 29(1), 861-880. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-12342-y>
- Uchidiuno, J., Koedinger, K., Hammer, J., Yarzebinski, E., & Ogan, A. (2018). How Do English Language Learners Interact with Different Content Types in MOOC Videos? *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, 28(4), 508-527. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40593-017-0156-x>
- Xu, J., & Qiu, X. (2024). Engaging L2 Learners in Information-gap Tasks: How Task Type and Topic Familiarity Affect Learner Engagement. *RELC Journal*, 55(1), 29-45. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882211061628>
- Yu, B., & Wang, W. (2025). Using digital storytelling to promote language learning, digital skills and digital collaboration among English pre-service teachers. *System*, 129, 103577. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103577>
- Zheng, Y.-B., Zhou, Y.-X., Chen, X.-D., & Ye, X.-D. (2025). The influence of large language models as collaborative dialogue partners on EFL English oral proficiency and foreign language anxiety. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1-27. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2025.2453191>