

## Students' Voices on the Use of YouTube in Enhancing Lexical Competence among EFL Learners at Le Hoang Chieu High School

Nguyen Gia Thuan<sup>1</sup>, Nguyen Thi Thu Hang<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

\*Corresponding author's email: hang.ntt@vlu.edu.vn

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7696-1882>

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** YouTube lexical competence, high school students, perception

This study investigates how EFL (English as a Foreign Language) high school students in Vietnam perceive the use of YouTube to enhance their lexical competence. Using a mixed-methods approach to address the research questions, the study was conducted with the participation of 60 students at Le Hoang Chieu High School in Vinh Long Province. The results gained from a detailed analysis of a survey and eight semi-structured interviews indicated that high school students found YouTube to be an effective tool for vocabulary learning. Moreover, the students emphasized that teacher guidance for valuable videos and brief videos with subtitles was critical for effective use of YouTube. The study encourages high school teachers to integrate YouTube into their instruction and suggests future research on high school teachers' perspectives on the use of YouTube in their teaching and the effectiveness of other social media in language learning.

### Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition plays a vital role in learning a foreign language. Nation (2011) emphasized that lexical learning is a prerequisite for understanding written and spoken texts as well as for communicating. In the same vein, Schmitt and Schmitt (2020) posited that second language acquisition and communicative competence depended greatly on lexical knowledge. Jannah et al. (2022) supplemented the idea with the notion that limited vocabulary mastery affects learners' proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Indeed, "vocabulary is essential for successful second language use, because without sufficient vocabulary, people cannot communicate and express their feelings in the form of spoken and written language effectively" (Rivers, as cited in Nunan, 1991, p. 117).

High school students often struggle with vocabulary acquisition. AG et al. (2024) stated that students faced diverse difficulties in learning vocabulary, mainly in meaning and grammar, followed by pronunciation and spelling. Reportedly, the study suggested implementing media to facilitate lexical learning and enhance students' motivation. Supporting this recommendation,

a subsequent synthesis indicated that multimedia and multimodal learning resources effectively promote vocabulary acquisition by fostering learner engagement and providing repeated opportunities to encounter lexical items, thereby strengthening vocabulary retention and long-term learning (Nguyen, 2026). Similarly, other researchers noted that lexical learning remains a challenge for high school students, who often struggle with pronunciation, spelling, word usage, and idiomatic expressions (Susanto, 2021). Furthermore, Machfudi and Afidah (2022) highlighted that high school students faced difficulties with vocabulary mastery due to challenges in translating words with multiple meanings, understanding word meanings, handling pronunciation variations, misspelling, and retaining vocabulary due to a lack of practice. These challenges highlight the need for innovative learning tools to enhance lexical knowledge in engaging and accessible ways.

Among the various digital learning resources available, YouTube has emerged as a promising platform for addressing these vocabulary-learning challenges. As a global educational platform, it offers both formal and informal learning opportunities (Shoufan & Mohamed, 2022). Its wide availability and multimedia features support vocabulary development, especially among EFL learners, by providing exposure to diverse content, pronunciation models, and contextual language use (Muzdalifah et al., 2023; Kusumariana, 2022). Indeed, the platform's interactive features, such as the comment section, encourage learners to use newly acquired vocabulary in authentic communication, thereby fostering engagement, a sense of community, and sustained motivation (Alkathiri, 2019). Furthermore, most of its content is freely accessible, making it a convenient and cost-effective learning resource for students with internet access (Kim & Kim, 2021). Given these advantages, YouTube has considerable potential to support vocabulary acquisition and address many of the lexical challenges faced by high school EFL learners.

Furthermore, students' perceptions of YouTube's usefulness and ease of use significantly impact their acceptance and adoption of the platform for learning purposes (Kalburgi et al., 2023). Research also indicates that both instructors and students prioritize factors like accuracy and content creator expertise, reflecting their views on the platform's educational value (Greeves & Oz, 2023). Since students are the key end users of any pedagogical innovation, it is pivotal to examine their voices regarding the use of YouTube for vocabulary acquisition.

In essence, the review of previous studies demonstrates that there have been some studies on the use of YouTube in foreign language learning. Conversely, research on the effectiveness of this platform in lexical learning remains scarce. In Vietnam, there is a lack of research investigating high school students' perspectives on using YouTube for vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, this study is conducted to bridge the research gap by exploring how high school students in Vietnam utilize YouTube to enhance their lexical resources and examining their perceptions of its effectiveness as a learning tool.

## Literature review

### *Definition of Perception*

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), perception is “a belief or opinion, often shared by many individuals, based on the appearance of things.” In the context of student learning, the term “students' perceptions” refers to how learners interpret and understand their educational experiences. Weimer (2013) claimed that these perceptions encompassed students' thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions regarding various components of their learning environment, including the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and the support provided by the institution. In the same way, in their research, Ly et al. (2024) claimed that these statements reflected how

students assess the quality, relevance, fairness, and effectiveness of their educational experiences, informed by their individual perspectives and unique contexts. Understanding these perceptions is essential for enhancing educational outcomes and fostering a more supportive learning environment.

### *YouTube*

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), YouTube is a video-sharing website that enables users to upload, view, and comment on videos. The platform was founded in February 2005 by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim and has since become one of the most widely used video-sharing platforms worldwide (YouTube, n.d.). As a global hub for content creation, YouTube provides instructional videos and tutorials that support learning and language acquisition. According to Snelson (2018, p. 300), “Free video hosting, basic video editing, and online captioning tools are available for video creators.” This enhances cross-cultural sensitivity and develops skills in second language content while improving global communication understanding (Kim & Kim, 2021).

### *The role of vocabulary in language acquisition*

Lexical resources are essential in language learning, as they provide learners with the vocabulary and phrases needed for effective communication (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). These resources include a variety of lexical items, such as single words, collocations, idiomatic expressions, and fixed phrases, all of which are vital for achieving fluency and comprehension (Debabi & Guerroudj, 2018). According to Lewis (1997), by concentrating on these lexical patterns, learners can enhance their ability to produce and understand language in context, resulting in more natural and effective communication. Additionally, exposure to authentic language through lexical resources enables learners to recognize and utilize common collocations, thereby improving their overall language proficiency and boosting their confidence. Correspondingly, AG et al. (2024) claimed that to communicate well in a second language, learners should build a broad lexical repertoire and practice accurate usage.

### *Challenges in learning vocabulary*

The contemporary literature review has demonstrated that students encounter several challenges when learning vocabulary. A study conducted by Surmanov and Azimova (2020) highlighted that students had difficulty pronouncing words and becoming familiar with a variety of word forms. Salawazo et al. (2020) posited that students found it challenging to remember and retain the vocabulary that they have learned due to limited learning time and a lack of practice. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition is a continuous process that requires repeated exposure to new words within relevant and understandable contexts (Okyar & Çakır, 2019). Susanto (2021) supplemented the notion with the idea that the discrepancy between English and the students’ native language led to challenges in understanding and pronouncing the words. Similarly, Thornbury (2006) affirmed that students were misled and confused by words or phrases similar to those of their first language. Another reason for students’ difficulties in acquiring vocabulary is the traditional learning method, which often lacks engagement and, thus, reduces learners’ motivation (Afzal, 2019). These issues underscore the need for more innovative approaches to support vocabulary acquisition and enhance lexical competence.

### *The merits of using YouTube in language learning*

YouTube has significantly transformed the landscape of language learning by providing learners with a diverse range of authentic content produced by native speakers (Wahidah et al., 2026). This exposure allows learners to immerse themselves in real-life conversations, helping them understand cultural nuances, slang, and the natural rhythm of the language elements that

are often absent from traditional textbooks. According to Kusumariana (2022), learners encounter vocabulary in context via educational videos, enhancing understanding and retention. Another key advantage of using YouTube for language learning is its interactive and engaging format. Learners can actively participate by pausing, replaying, and practicing along with the videos, which enhances both retention and comprehension (Daeli & Santosa, 2025). The ability to access content anytime and anywhere encourages self-paced learning, allowing individuals to customize their study schedules to fit their circumstances (Kim & Kim, 2021). In addition, YouTube cultivates a sense of community among language learners, as many channels feature vibrant comment sections where users can ask questions, share experiences, and connect, creating a supportive environment for practice and motivation (Perry, 2026). Generally, YouTube is a valuable resource for EFL learners seeking to expand their vocabulary in an accessible way (Oddone, 2011). Similarly, Listiani et al. (2021) affirmed that YouTube helped students understand word meanings and usage more deeply by presenting them in different communicative situations, thereby improving their retention. Indeed, the platform hosts channels in various languages and proficiency levels, ensuring that learners can find tailored materials suited to their specific needs, whether they are beginners or advanced speakers (Tran et al., 2026). Overall, the existing literature highlights the potential of YouTube as an innovative, engaging, and accessible tool to support vocabulary acquisition.

#### *Students' perceptions toward the use of YouTube in language learning*

Several studies have investigated students' perceptions of using YouTube in English language learning. Truong and Le (2022) conducted research with 106 EFL university students to discover their voices on the use of YouTube in enhancing speaking skills. The results obtained through a mixed-methods approach using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews demonstrated that students had positive attitudes towards the use of YouTube for English learning. Specifically, students view YouTube as a valuable tool for enhancing their speaking skills, with increased vocabulary, grammar knowledge, and confidence in communication.

Another detailed study collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of the use of YouTube in learning English was conducted by Tahmina (2023). The study, which involved sixty-six undergraduates from Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh, revealed that students voiced agreement on the efficiency of YouTube in facilitating language acquisition. Specifically, the participants reported that YouTube was beneficial in improving their speaking and listening skills and enhancing their lexical resources.

Ly et al. (2024) undertook a study with over 300 students to discover EFL students' perspectives on the use of YouTube to learn English. The findings indicated that a significant majority of students perceived YouTube as a valuable educational tool that helped to enhance speaking and listening skills. Moreover, the students appreciated YouTube's efficacy in boosting their learning autonomy and motivation through authentic, varied, and enjoyable English learning materials. However, the participants expressed concerns about distractions and a lack of interaction through excessive use of YouTube.

Another study conducted by Novawan et al. (2021) with the participation of 159 tertiary students enrolled in English Language Courses across several Indonesian universities investigated students' perceptions, experiences, and expectations regarding the use of YouTube in online English learning. Findings from an online questionnaire and video call interviews showed that students perceived YouTube as an innovative learning tool that effectively improved their language skills and vocabulary competence. The research also discussed students' difficulties in selecting suitable videos due to variability in video quality. Internet

connectivity was also a challenge that affected students' engagement and learning motivation.

In fact, a detailed review of the existing literature shows that several rigorous studies have examined language learners' perceptions of using YouTube in educational contexts. Most of these studies report positive attitudes toward YouTube as a tool for learning English. However, they have primarily focused on university students and have paid limited attention to high school learners. Compared with university students, high school students generally have lower English proficiency, fewer opportunities for autonomous learning, and greater dependence on teacher guidance. Their cognitive maturity, digital literacy, and learning autonomy are also still developing, which may influence how they use YouTube for vocabulary learning and how they perceive its effectiveness. Moreover, previous studies have rarely investigated high school students' perspectives on using YouTube as a supplementary tool for vocabulary acquisition or collected their suggestions for its effective pedagogical use, particularly in suburban schools where educational resources and learning opportunities may be more limited. These gaps highlight the need to investigate how this specific group of learners perceives and utilizes YouTube to support vocabulary development. Therefore, the present study was conducted with students at Le Hoang Chieu High School in the province of Vinh Long, Vietnam, to bridge the research gap. In light of the findings, high school teachers in rural areas gain deep insights into integrating media into their teaching instruction. In addition, the research may serve as a foundation for future studies on the effectiveness of various social media platforms in supporting language acquisition.

### Research Questions

To fulfill the above purposes, the study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do high school students utilize YouTube to enhance their lexical competence?
2. What are high school students' opinions on using YouTube to enhance their lexical competence?

## Methods

### *Pedagogical Setting & Participants*

This research was conducted in the second semester of the 2024- 2025 school year with the participation of 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students who were non-English majors at Le Hoang Chieu High School in Vinh Long Province, which was established in 1997. The school places a strong emphasis on English language education and integrates information technology into its teaching methods. Equipped with computer labs dedicated to English learning, the school ensures that English remains a compulsory subject within the curriculum. The primary objective of English instruction is to equip students with the necessary linguistic skills to excel in examinations and effectively engage in a globalized world. Consequently, student performance in English is notably high, with survey results indicating that 90% of students achieved excellent scores in the graduation exam.

Convenience sampling was chosen as the sampling method for this study because it is easy, inexpensive, and less time-consuming (Acharya et al., 2013). Specifically, participants are selected based on practical criteria such as availability, ease of access, geographic distance, and willingness to participate. By applying this method, participants can easily participate in the research in any location and at any time that is most convenient for them. In this study, sixty students from Le Hoang Chieu High School were selected as participants, including 32 students

from grade 11 and 28 students from grade 12. Including 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders aimed to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research findings, as English is a compulsory subject in their graduation examination. These students were considered to have a solid foundation of knowledge, a rich learning experience, and the ability to provide well-reasoned and insightful responses. Moreover, since they were already familiar with using YouTube as a learning tool, they felt confident and well-prepared to participate in the study. Subsequently, the researchers employed a purposive sampling method to select eight out of sixty participants for the semi-structured interviews. In fact, based on their first-semester English grades, eight students were chosen, of whom two got excellent grades (9–10 points), two with good grades (7–8 points), two with average grades (5–6 points), and two with poor grades (2–4 points).

### *Design of the Study*

The study employed a mixed-method approach to collect comprehensive data to answer the research questions. A mixed-method approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study, allowing for a deeper and more reliable understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Quantitative data were gathered through a paper-based questionnaire to identify patterns and ensure generalizability (Bhandari, 2023), while qualitative data were obtained via semi-structured interviews to provide deeper insights into students' experiences (Sofaer, 1999). The combination of both methods enhances the overall validity and richness of the research findings and allows the study to capture not only statistical trends but also the underlying reasons behind students' behaviors and preferences. It helps ensure a well-rounded understanding of how participants utilize YouTube to support vocabulary acquisition, including usage patterns, benefits, potential limitations, and their useful suggestions for effective use of this popular platform.

### *Data collection & analysis*

#### *Questionnaire*

The survey was meticulously designed to align with the research objectives and ensure clarity and relevance for the participants. The questions were developed based on key aspects of the study, including students' frequency of YouTube use, learning methods, perceived benefits, challenges, and recommendations. The questionnaire was reviewed by teachers in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University to ensure content validity and appropriateness. Revisions were made based on feedback to enhance question clarity and relevance. Before final distribution, a small group of students (outside the main sample) completed the survey to test its effectiveness.

Reliability and validity are crucial for useful research that accurately communicates the rigor of the research process and the reliability of the results, while also avoiding misleading users (Roberts & Priest, 2006). The questionnaire is a crucial component of the research methods section as it defines the research objectives and clarifies the specific questions that need to be answered through data collection and analysis. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the questions were adapted from a previously validated study by Sakkir et al. (2020) and Ly et al. (2024). The questionnaire was carefully modified to fit the context of high school students using YouTube for vocabulary learning while maintaining its original structure and intent. Additionally, language education specialists reviewed the questionnaire to confirm content validity and appropriateness for the target participants.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, the researchers employed Cronbach's Alpha as a statistical measure to assess internal consistency. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), a Cronbach's Alpha value exceeding 0.7 is generally deemed acceptable, while a value above 0.8

signifies strong reliability. In fact, Cronbach's Alpha for the 17 Likert-scale questions in the questionnaire was 0.91, indicating strong interrelatedness among survey items and confirming consistent responses across the 17 questions.

The paper-based questionnaire was structured into two main sections. The first section consisted of two questions that collected participants' demographic information. The second section comprised 24 items, including 7 multiple-choice questions assessing students' YouTube usage patterns and 17 Likert-scale items measuring their perspectives on YouTube as a supporting learning tool. This section was further divided into four subsections according to the research objectives. The first subsection (items 1–7) explores students' experiences with using YouTube as a tool for learning vocabulary. The second subsection (items 8–15) examines students' perspectives on the effectiveness of YouTube in vocabulary acquisition. The third one (items 16 – 21) investigates difficulties that students encounter when using YouTube to enhance their lexical competence. Lastly, the fourth subsection (items 22–24) focuses on students' recommendations for optimizing YouTube in vocabulary learning. Overall, this structured approach ensures a comprehensive analysis of students' engagement with YouTube as an educational resource.

The questionnaire was printed on two sides of A4 sheets, and the survey was distributed to students offline, in a classroom setting, due to their busy timetable and to maintain uniform conditions. Each student received a printed questionnaire and was given clear instructions on how to complete it. The participants were allocated 10 minutes to complete the survey, ensuring they could respond thoughtfully while maintaining efficiency. Then, all completed surveys were collected immediately to prevent loss or misplacement.

The collected quantitative data were processed using the software called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 26 (SPSS 26), allowing for statistical analysis and the generation of output results.

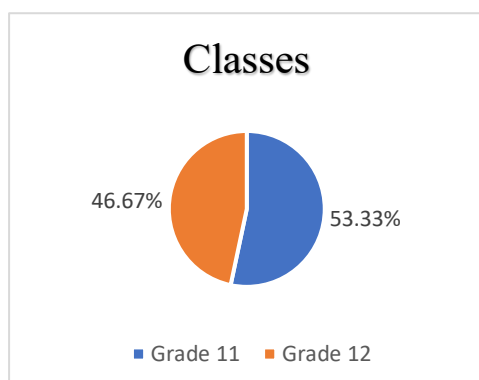
#### *Semi-structured interview*

Given the study's mixed-methods design, the interview questions were carefully aligned with the questionnaire items to ensure consistency and complementarity. Specifically, this study employed semi-structured interviews to gain in-depth insight into students' perceptions of using YouTube for vocabulary learning (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). Eight students from Le Hoang Chieu High School were selected based on their first-semester English grades, ranging from excellent to poor, to ensure diverse perspectives. Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, with responses later translated into English. Each session, lasting about five minutes, followed a semi-structured format covering YouTube usage, its benefits, learners' challenges, and students' recommendations. With participants' consent, the interviews were recorded. Subsequently, the recorded interviews were transcribed by carefully listening to the audio multiple times and converting the spoken content into text. The transcribed data were then systematically coded, and the responses were categorized into themes to identify key patterns, including experiences, effectiveness, challenges, and recommendations.

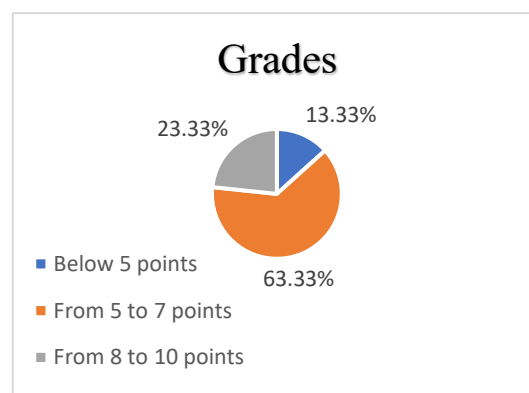
## Results/Findings

*Question 1: How do high school students utilize YouTube to enhance their lexical competence?*

*Demographic information*



**Figure 1.** *The Participants' Classes*



**Figure 2.** *The Participants' Grades*

The findings presented in Figures 1 and 2 display the participants' classes and their first-semester English grades. According to the statistics, the number of students in grade 11 was approximately equal to that of grade 12 participants. In fact, 32 were from grade 11, accounting for 53.33% of the sample (N=32), while 28 were from grade 12, composing 46.67% of the total. In terms of English proficiency, the majority of students had average performance in their first-semester academic results. Reportedly, more than 60% of the participants scored between 5 and 7, while nearly one-fourth had good grades ranging from 8 to 10 points. The number of participants whose grades were below 5 points was slightly more than 10%. The statistics reflected that most participants were at an average level of English performance.

*Students' practices in using YouTube for Vocabulary Acquisition*

**Table 1**

*Frequency of Using YouTube in Learning English*

| Item | Questionnaire                                  | Frequency of use | Percentages |
|------|------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1    | How often do you use YouTube to learn English? | Daily            | 13.33%      |
|      |                                                | Once a week      | 55.0%       |
|      |                                                | Once a month     | 25.0%       |
|      |                                                | Never            | 6.67%       |

Table 1 presents descriptive data on the frequency of students' engagement with YouTube for English acquisition. As shown in the table, almost all participants used YouTube to learn English, accounting for nearly 95% of the sample. Specifically, more than half of the participants (55%) used YouTube weekly for learning, while nearly 15% (13.33%) used YouTube every day to learn English. The other one-fourth of the participants used YouTube for their learning on a monthly basis. Only a small minority (6.67%; N = 4) reported never using YouTube regularly for learning purposes.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of Devices Used by Students to Watch Vocabulary Videos on YouTube*

| Item | Questionnaire                                                                  | Devices                    | Percentages |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| 2    | What devices do you use to watch videos on YouTube? (Multiple answers allowed) | Mobile phone               | 58.70%      |
|      |                                                                                | Laptop or desktop computer | 23.9%       |
|      |                                                                                | Tablet (iPad)              | 17.4%       |

According to Table 2, mobile phones were the most popular kind of device used by high school students to watch videos on YouTube. Fifty-four students (58.7%) reported that they used their mobile phones most when accessing YouTube videos. Laptops or desktop computers ranked second with 23.9% of the participants ( $N = 22$ ), while tablets were the least preferred device, with only 16 students (17.4%) reporting using them to learn vocabulary through YouTube.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics of the Frequency of Watching Vocabulary Videos on YouTube*

| Item | Questionnaire                                              | Frequency             | Percentages |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| 3    | How often do you watch YouTube videos to learn vocabulary? | Every day             | 46.7%       |
|      |                                                            | Twice a week          | 31.7%       |
|      |                                                            | Every week            | 21.6%       |
|      |                                                            | Once a month          | 0.0%        |
|      |                                                            | Once every two months | 0.0%        |

The results in Table 3 show that most of the participants frequently incorporated YouTube into their English learning process. In particular, nearly half of the students (46.7%) reported using YouTube on a daily basis, and more than 30% of the participants ( $N = 19$ ) watched YouTube twice a week to enrich their lexical resources. Meanwhile, the remaining 13 students (21.67%) accessed YouTube videos weekly for vocabulary-related learning activities. No participants reported using YouTube only once a month or once every two months for their vocabulary lessons.

The qualitative data corroborated the results of the paper-based questionnaire. The interviewees asserted that one of the notable benefits of YouTube was its diverse learning resources. They appreciated the wide variety of educational videos, including teacher-led lessons, songs with subtitles, and grammar and vocabulary exercises, which made learning more engaging and effective (Participants 2 and 3)

“YouTube supports me a lot in learning English vocabulary by diversifying learning materials and reliable sources of information with just one click.” (Participant 2)

More importantly, these resources are reliable since many of them are lectures that teach students “general and theoretical knowledge” (Participant 1). Specifically, by watching and listening to these videos, students learn how to pronounce words, what they mean, and how to use them in context (Participants 5 and 6). Another plus point of using YouTube is that it is easy to access videos because the platform is “user-friendly and allows users to access a variety of information sources” (Participant 4). In addition, the students believed that studying on YouTube for a short period each day helped them establish a consistent learning routine, develop self-discipline and concentration, and gradually improve their English proficiency (Participants 7 and 8).

“I often use YouTube to learn vocabulary by watching and listening to teachers pronounce, explain meanings, and categorize words. It’s also convenient because I can pause, rewind, or replay any part until I fully understand the word or usage.” (Participant 6)

Watching YouTube provides images, and everything is more accessible and easier to search for, making it more interesting and less boring. I find it saves time and money compared to going to extra classes at tutoring centers or hiring private tutors. I believe that I will form a habit of learning vocabulary daily thanks to a consistent learning routine. (Participant 7)

**Table 4***Topics of YouTube Vocabulary Videos Watched by Students*

| Item | Questionnaire                                                               | Topics                                  | Percentages |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------|
| 4    | What topics are covered in the vocabulary videos that you watch on YouTube? | Topics related to the school curriculum | 40%         |
|      |                                                                             | Entertainment topics                    | 10%         |
|      |                                                                             | Historical topics                       | 20%         |
|      |                                                                             | Political topics                        | 20%         |
|      |                                                                             | Other topics (please specify)           | 10%         |

As presented in Table 4, the most common type of vocabulary videos watched by students was those related to the school curriculum, representing 40% of the responses. Additionally, social topics, particularly history and politics, attracted students' attention, with 20% of the participants indicating that they frequently viewed videos related to these fields. Entertainment and other topics received equal attention, with 10% of the responses, suggesting that students still combine learning with diverse content. Overall, the findings demonstrate that students tended to focus on topics related to their lessons, indicating their determination to improve their academic results.

The interview findings further explained these preferences by revealing that most of the interviewed students reported intentionally searching for videos closely related to their academic needs. To be more specific, more than half of the participants affirmed that they preferred videos that matched the themes of classroom lessons (Participants 1 and 2). Participants 3 and 4 explained that YouTube videos provided vivid explanations, including both audio and visuals, making abstract vocabulary more comprehensible. Furthermore, they could replay the videos as many times as necessary until they fully understood the meanings, pronunciation, and contextual use of unfamiliar lexical items (Participant 5).

I don't really watch random vocabulary videos. I usually choose the ones that match what my teacher is teaching. They often show pictures, examples, and pronunciation together, so I can understand the words much faster. Sometimes when I only read the textbook, I still don't get the meaning, but after watching a video, it becomes much easier. (Participant 4)

If there's a word I don't understand, I don't have to move on immediately. I can pause the video, replay it, or even watch another video about the same word. After listening a few times, I usually know both the pronunciation and how to use it in a sentence. That's something I can't always do in class because the lesson has to continue. (Participant 5)

The interviewees also expressed their preference for YouTube videos discussing social topics, especially in history and politics (Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4). They claimed that these videos introduced "academic vocabulary and formal expressions" (Participant 1) that were useful for "reading articles or listening to authentic materials" (Participant 2).

I find videos about social issues interesting since they introduce a lot of useful vocabulary about society, government, and world events. When I read online newspapers or watch documentaries in English, I recognize many of the words that I learned from those videos. (Participant 3)

These videos teach me many formal words and expressions. They also explain difficult topics with pictures and examples, so I can remember the vocabulary better. I think they have improved both my reading and listening comprehension. (Participant 4)

Several students admitted that they were attracted to entertainment videos to learn vocabulary. The popular ones were cartoons (Participants 1 and 2), movies (Participants 3 and 4), and gaming videos from various streamers (Participant 5). Music videos were also a popular choice, with students specifically mentioning listening to artists while following the subtitles to learn new words (Participant 6).

I watch videos while turning on English subtitles to practice my reading and listening skills. This way, I can learn both the written form and how to pronounce and stress words. The channel I often watch is Khanh Vy's channel. This method also helps me improve my sentence structure and recognize collocations naturally. (Participant 5)

I usually listen to music by Taylor Swift and Selena to learn more vocabulary from the songs. In addition, I also watch some gaming videos from various streamers. It's more relaxing than traditional studying, so I tend to stay motivated and study more consistently. (Participant 6)

**Table 5**

*Descriptive Analysis of the Time Students Spent on Watching YouTube Vocabulary Videos*

| Item | Questionnaire                                             | Duration          | Percentages |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 5    | How long do you use YouTube to learn vocabulary each day? | 10 minutes        | 23.3%       |
|      |                                                           | 15–30 minutes     | 60.0%       |
|      |                                                           | 1 hour            | 11.7%       |
|      |                                                           | More than 2 hours | 5.0%        |

According to Table 5, most participants (60%) were willing to spend 15 to 30 minutes each day learning vocabulary on YouTube, compared with the other 14 students (23.3%) who reported spending 10 minutes daily watching vocabulary videos on the platform. A smaller proportion, with 7 participants composing around 12% of the responses, spent an hour on vocabulary videos, while only 5% ( $N = 3$ ) spent more than 2 hours each day on this activity. These figures indicate that most learners tend to spend a moderate amount of time using YouTube for their daily vocabulary learning.

The qualitative results demonstrated that the participants used YouTube for vocabulary learning regularly as part of their daily routine (Participants 1, 2, 3, and 5). Although their study time varied from 20 minutes to 2-3 hours per day, they emphasized that consistent practice helped them develop better study habits and improve their English.

I usually use YouTube to support my vocabulary learning for about 30 minutes each day. The repetition through maintaining a daily study schedule helps me develop discipline and establish better habits to improve my English. (Participant 1)

Furthermore, Participants 2, 3, 4, and 5 highlighted that daily practice and gradually increasing study time helped them maintain motivation and become more focused during online learning.

I usually use YouTube for about 30 minutes each day to listen to music, and then I watch the subtitles to learn vocabulary from the songs, or practice grammar and vocabulary exercises in English. This helps me develop a sense of study and concentration while learning online without being disturbed by other factors. (Participant 3)

I usually spend about 2 hours a day, and on some days, I can study for up to 3 hours. I find it helpful to suggest diverse sources as well as interesting videos that are suitable for the theme of each lesson and the exercises in class. (Participant 5)

**Table 6***Types of English Vocabulary Noted by the Participants When Watching YouTube Videos*

| Item | Questionnaire                                                                            | Vocabulary type                              | Percentages |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 6    | When learning English vocabulary from YouTube videos, what do you usually take notes on? | Difficult vocabulary                         | 45.0%       |
|      |                                                                                          | Interesting vocabulary                       | 13.3%       |
|      |                                                                                          | Vocabulary related to topics in the textbook | 25.0%       |
|      |                                                                                          | Vocabulary used in daily life                | 16.7%       |

The findings in Table 6 indicate that a majority of respondents reported using YouTube as a supplementary learning tool to support their formal English studies. Particularly, 45% of the students took note of difficult vocabulary, while one-fourth of them (25%) noticed words related to their textbook topics. Meanwhile, vocabulary learning based on practical use or personal interest was less common. Only 16.7% of learners noted down vocabulary used in daily life, and 13.3% paid attention to words simply because they found them interesting. These results suggest that most students approached the platform as an academic resource, prioritizing purposeful vocabulary development and alignment with their learning goals.

**Table 7***Descriptive Statistics on Effective Note-Taking Techniques for Vocabulary Retention*

| Item | Questionnaire                                                                                                  | Techniques                                   | Percentages |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 7    | What note-taking technique do you use to remember the meaning of vocabulary? (You can choose multiple answers) | Images                                       | 48.3%       |
|      |                                                                                                                | Definitions                                  | 26.7%       |
|      |                                                                                                                | Mind maps                                    | 16.7%       |
|      |                                                                                                                | Examples                                     | 20%         |
|      |                                                                                                                | Creating your own sentences and translations | 6.7%        |

The results in Table 7 reveal that students applied various note-taking techniques to retain vocabulary, with the most commonly preferred strategy being visual aids. In detail, nearly half of the responses (48.3%) selected images as a useful technique to support their vocabulary retention. Using definitions ranked second (26.7%), showing that many high school students relied on explicit explanations to remember new words. Moreover, 20% of the participants employed examples as an effective technique to support their memory, while a smaller portion (16.7%) utilized mind maps to organize vocabulary in a systematic way. Meanwhile, the least common technique was creating their own sentences and translations, which was reported by only 6.7% of the participants.

*Question 2: What are high school students' opinions on using YouTube to enhance their lexical competence?*

*Students' perspectives on the benefits of using YouTube in learning vocabulary*

**Table 8***The Participants' Perspectives on the Advantages of Using YouTube to Improve Lexical Competence*

| Item | Statement                                                                                                                                        | Strongly disagree (%) | Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Agree (%) | Strongly agree (%) | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|-----------|
| 8    | Learning vocabulary from YouTube videos helps you understand the meanings of words better.                                                       | 0.0                   | 3.3          | 40.0        | 50.0      | 6.7                | 3.60     | 0.61      |
| 9    | Learning vocabulary from YouTube videos helps enhance your English vocabulary resources.                                                         | 0.0                   | 0.0          | 30.0        | 48.3      | 21.7               | 3.91     | 0.71      |
| 10   | Learning vocabulary from YouTube videos helps you pronounce words better.                                                                        | 0.0                   | 1.7          | 31.7        | 48.3      | 18.3               | 3.83     | 0.74      |
| 11   | YouTube videos provide a lot of vocabulary related to the topics of the lessons in the curriculum.                                               | 0.0                   | 3.3          | 36.7        | 41.7      | 18.3               | 3.75     | 0.79      |
| 12   | You feel more confident when taking vocabulary tests after a period of watching YouTube videos.                                                  | 0.0                   | 6.7          | 33.3        | 46.7      | 13.3               | 3.66     | 0.74      |
| 13   | Thanks to watching YouTube videos, you use vocabulary accurately and flexibly when speaking and writing.                                         | 0.0                   | 1.7          | 43.3        | 40.0      | 15.0               | 3.68     | 0.74      |
| 14   | You find that you remember vocabulary longer thanks to watching YouTube videos.                                                                  | 3.3                   | 1.7          | 40.0        | 46.7      | 8.3                | 3.55     | 0.81      |
| 15   | YouTube is more effective for improving English vocabulary skills compared to other learning methods (such as TikTok, TED Talk, Duolingo, etc.). | 0.0                   | 3.3          | 58.3        | 31.7      | 6.7                | 3.41     | 0.63      |

Based on the data presented in Table 8, most participants had a positive perspective towards using YouTube to enhance their lexical resources. In terms of mastering word meanings, the participants agreed that watching YouTube videos was beneficial to understand meanings better

( $M = 3.6$ ) and remember word meanings longer and more easily ( $M = 3.55$ ). Regarding their confidence in using vocabulary, the majority of the students (60%) expressed their agreement that watching YouTube increased their confidence in the vocabulary test ( $M = 3.66$ ) since the platforms provided a lot of vocabulary relevant to lessons in the curriculum ( $M = 3.75$ ), and boosted their repertoire ( $M = 3.91$ ). Additionally, the participants reported better pronunciation ( $M = 3.83$ ) and more accurate vocabulary use when speaking and writing ( $M = 3.68$ ). However, the respondents were neutral, stating that YouTube was a more effective tool for enhancing vocabulary than other platforms like TikTok, Duolingo, or TED Talks.

The interview findings supported the questionnaire results by providing further explanations for students' positive perceptions of using YouTube to enhance vocabulary learning. While the questionnaire indicated that participants believed YouTube helped them understand word meanings, remember vocabulary more effectively, improve pronunciation, and expand their lexical repertoire, the interviews revealed several reasons behind these perceptions.

A common theme emerging from the interviews was that YouTube enabled vocabulary to be learned in meaningful contexts. Six of the eight participants explained that watching authentic videos showed them how words were naturally used “in real-life situations” (Participant 2), making vocabulary easier to understand and retain.

In my opinion, the biggest benefit is that vocabulary is used in real contexts, which makes it easier to remember. Listening to native speakers' pronunciation also helps me speak better. (Participant 3)

In my opinion, the benefit of this is that I can both listen and see the context in which to use those words. By combining learning with the vivid images and videos on YouTube, it becomes easier to remember and apply what I've learned compared to just studying from books. (Participant 5)

Furthermore, most interviewees highlighted that the combination of images, audio, subtitles, and authentic pronunciation created “a richer learning experience than traditional text-based materials” (Participant 6). These findings are consistent with the questionnaire results, which showed relatively high levels of agreement that YouTube improved pronunciation and increased learners' confidence in vocabulary use.

The biggest benefit is seeing realistic and clear images of the quality of the lessons that teachers passionately deliver online. Additionally, it helps me better understand the English language and learn many new words. (Participant 1)

*Students' perspectives on the potential concerns of using YouTube to enhance their lexical competence*

**Table 9**

*The Participants' Perspectives on the Potential Concerns of Using YouTube in Enhancing Lexical Competence*

| Item | Statement                                                                                                | Strongly disagree (%) | Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Agree (%) | Strongly agree (%) | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|-----------|
| 16   | You often find it difficult to find YouTube videos that match the topics of the lessons in the textbook. | 1.7                   | 6.7          | 51.7        | 28.3      | 11.7               | 3.41     | 0.84      |
| 17   | Sometimes, you get distracted when using YouTube to learn vocabulary.                                    | 1.7                   | 1.7          | 35.0        | 40.0      | 21.7               | 3.78     | 0.81      |
| 18   | Sometimes, you have difficulty with the internet connection when trying to watch videos on YouTube.      | 1.6                   | 6.7          | 11.7        | 33.3      | 46.7               | 4.16     | 0.99      |
| 19   | Some vocabulary videos on YouTube are not interesting due to long-winded explanations.                   | 0.0                   | 6.7          | 43.3        | 33.3      | 16.7               | 3.60     | 0.81      |
| 20   | Some vocabulary videos on YouTube don't have subtitles, making them difficult to understand.             | 1.7                   | 11.7         | 38.3        | 38.3      | 10.0               | 3.43     | 0.88      |
| 21   | You will continue using YouTube as a learning tool to expand your English vocabulary.                    | 1.7                   | 8.3          | 3.3         | 45.0      | 41.7               | 4.16     | 1.03      |

The results shown in Table 9 indicate that the mean scores fall within the medium-to-high assessment range ( $M = 3.41\text{--}4.16$ ), reflecting a mix of neutral-to-slightly concerned attitudes toward the challenges of using YouTube for vocabulary learning. The participants expressed

strong agreement on the issue of internet connection ( $M = 4.16$ ), suggesting that technical problems remain a significant barrier to using YouTube effectively for vocabulary learning in rural areas. Moreover, more than 60% of the respondents agreed that distraction from other content on YouTube was also a challenge ( $M = 3.78$ ). However, the students adopted a neutral position on the difficulties of finding YouTube videos aligned with lessons in textbooks ( $M = 3.41$ ). They remained neutral in mentioning that a lack of subtitles in YouTube videos led to incomprehension of the content ( $M = 3.43$ ). Although the participants agreed that sometimes long-winded explanation vocabulary videos on YouTube bored them ( $M = 3.6$ ), they expressed a strong intention to continue utilizing YouTube as a vocabulary learning tool ( $M = 4.16$ )

The interview findings generally supported the questionnaire results by providing deeper insights into the challenges students encountered when using YouTube for vocabulary learning. The most frequently mentioned challenge was distraction (Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4). Most interviewees (Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5) reported that advertisements, notifications, and “too much entertainment content on YouTube” (Participant 3) often diverted their attention from learning. Several participants also acknowledged that the biggest challenge was “not having self-discipline or motivation” (Participant 2) when using a platform primarily designed for entertainment

There are a few difficulties, such as getting bored because after learning a little, ads pop up, which often distract me and make it hard to focus. I might suddenly encounter ads or get notifications from other apps, or after learning for 5 minutes, I want to play games. (Participant 4)

Another concern was information overload. Three out of eight interviewed students explained that the enormous number of available videos made it difficult to identify materials that matched their learning needs. Therefore, they spent a lot of time searching for suitable videos.

I find difficulties in several areas. The most notable is that YouTube has too many different videos to choose from. This can lead me to select videos that don't align with my learning goals, resulting in wasting time as I have to go back and search for other videos that match my objectives. (Participant 5)

Consistent with the questionnaire findings, the interview results expressed concern about the lack of video subtitles. Some interviewees stated that videos without subtitles made it difficult to understand the content, particularly when unfamiliar vocabulary was introduced.

The biggest challenge is that I easily get distracted because there is too much entertainment content on YouTube. Additionally, if a video doesn't have subtitles or the speaking speed is too fast, I find it hard to keep up and feel discouraged. (Participant 2)

I find it difficult to learn from videos without subtitles because I cannot always catch what the speaker is saying. If the speech is too fast or the vocabulary is unfamiliar, I easily lose track of the content and become less confident in understanding the lesson. (Participant 8)

*Students' suggestions for an efficient application of YouTube in learning vocabulary***Table 10***The Participants' Recommendations for An Efficient Implementation of YouTube*

| Item | Statement                                                                                              | Strongly disagree (%) | Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Agree (%) | Strongly agree (%) | M    | SD   |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|------|------|
| 22   | Vocabulary videos on YouTube should include subtitles to help students understand the material better. | 0.0                   | 5.0          | 23.3        | 40.0      | 31.7               | 4.0  | 0.87 |
| 23   | Vocabulary videos on YouTube should be under 5 minutes long to avoid boring the learners.              | 0.0                   | 6.7          | 31.7        | 28.3      | 33.3               | 3.9  | 0.95 |
| 24   | Teachers should suggest reliable video sources on YouTube for students learning English.               | 0.0                   | 1.7          | 15.0        | 35.0      | 48.3               | 4.30 | 0.78 |

As shown in Table 10, with the mean scores of a high range from 3.9 to 4.3, the participants favored the suggestions for efficient use of YouTube to enhance their lexical resources. Particularly, the participants showed a strong consensus on the necessity of teacher support in recommending reliable YouTube video sources for students to learn English ( $M = 4.3$ ), indicating the important role teachers play in guiding students toward trustworthy and effective learning resources on YouTube. Moreover, the respondents supported the inclusion of subtitles in vocabulary videos on YouTube to enhance comprehension ( $M = 4$ ). They also preferred shorter videos lasting around 5 minutes ( $M = 3.9$ ). Overall, the students showed their preference for subtitled short videos and those recommended by their teachers.

Consistent with the questionnaire findings, the interviewees emphasized the importance of teacher guidance and video subtitles. Most participants suggested that teachers should recommend “appropriate and reputable learning channels” (Participant 6) to ensure the videos matched students’ proficiency levels and learning objectives.

I think teachers should introduce a list of reliable YouTube channels for students. Their recommendations can help students save time and avoid videos with incorrect or confusing information. (Participant 7)

Sometimes I am confused by the diversity of YouTube videos. If my teacher recommends a few good channels, I feel more confident and motivated to watch vocabulary videos. (Participant 8)

The interview data also supported students’ preferences for videos with subtitles. The interviewees explained that subtitles enabled them to follow speakers and understand the content more easily (Participants 3 and 4). Moreover, reading subtitles while listening to the

video content provided them with opportunities to practice pronunciation and have better vocabulary retention (Participants 5 and 6).

I think it's best to choose channels that are easy to understand and offer subtitles. Additionally, taking notes on new vocabulary and reviewing them multiple times can help with long-term retention. (Participant 3)

I prefer videos with subtitles since I can understand video content more easily. Moreover, I can pick up new vocabulary and practice pronunciation when reading subtitles. (Participant 5)

## Discussion

### *Question 1: How do high school students utilize YouTube to enhance their lexical competence?*

The present study investigated how students at Le Hoang Chieu High School employed YouTube to enhance their lexical competence in two main themes: the frequency of YouTube integration and students' learning habits.

Regarding the frequency of using YouTube for English vocabulary learning, the results showed that most participants practiced frequently. The data from the semi-structured interview supported the quantitative findings. The interviewed students reported that YouTube provided diverse and accessible learning resources, such as instructional videos, subtitled songs, and language exercises, which enhanced engagement, promoted consistent learning habits, and supported their English development. This conclusion is consistent with the ideas discussed by Tran et al. (2026), who assert that the enormous number of YouTube videos presents authentic materials at different proficiency levels that are suitable for personalized learning.

Regarding students' learning habits, the results indicated that students at Le Hoang Chieu High School tended to form a habit of utilizing YouTube as a source of language input to improve their lexical competence. Although they spent different amounts of time watching YouTube vocabulary videos, they attempted to keep this habit daily. The results from the semi-structured interviews clarified the tendency. Students explained that consistent practice of watching YouTube videos for learning vocabulary enhanced their learning autonomy. The finding is similar to that of the study by Ly et al. (2024), indicating that YouTube was effective in boosting learners' autonomy and motivation with authentic, varied, and enjoyable English learning materials.

In addition, the participants claimed that videos related to the school curriculum were the most preferred type of vocabulary content. Specifically, the students primarily focused on lesson-related materials to support their academic improvement. The interviewees asserted that YouTube provided clear explanations with vivid demonstrations, including sound and images, thereby helping them understand classroom lessons more deeply. This conclusion supports the findings of research by Wahidah et al. (2026), stating that watching YouTube videos immersed learners in authentic conversations with cultural nuances and colloquial expressions that were not adequately represented in traditional textbooks

Moreover, the participants frequently applied note-taking techniques and repeated the content of YouTube videos for better retention. Data from the structured interviews support these findings. Many students reported actively writing down new vocabulary they encountered in the videos, then looking up the meanings and reviewing them during their free time.

*Question 2: What are high school students' opinions on using YouTube to enhance their lexical competence?*

Based on the findings of the current study, both 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students at Le Hoang Chieu High School believed that YouTube is an effective tool that helps to enhance their lexical competence. The findings indicate that 50% of students agreed that learning vocabulary through YouTube videos improved their understanding of word meanings and better long-term retention of lexical terms. This enhancement in vocabulary comprehension subsequently contributed to students' increased confidence in using English for speaking and writing. The respondents explained that YouTube provided a dynamic and engaging platform for language learning, offering students access to a diverse source of authentic content that enhances both vocabulary and overall language skills in an enjoyable and entertaining learning environment. These results align with research by Kusumariana (2022) and Listiani et al. (2021), who argued that YouTube improved students' vocabulary understanding by demonstrating how words are used in different contexts, thereby supporting better retention.

Discussing the challenges encountered during the process of using YouTube to learn vocabulary, the students at Le Hoang Chieu High School reported problems of distraction arising from advertisements, entertainment content, and notifications of the platform. The interviewed students claimed that they found it hard to focus and remain consistent since the ads frequently popped up and other highly recommended entertaining videos appeared at regular intervals. These observations align with the conclusion of research conducted by Ly et al. (2014), which highlighted that distraction from advertisements and the excess of information in online environments significantly hinder learners' focus. Another notable challenge was the vast amount of video content, which led to confusion in selecting appropriate learning materials and to time-consuming practice. The interviewees explained that a variety of YouTube videos made it difficult to choose suitable ones for their learning objectives. Furthermore, YouTube without subtitles also caused difficulty for learners. These findings were consistent with those of research by Novawan et al. (2021), claiming that diverse YouTube videos made it difficult for students to select suitable videos matching their learning needs and proficiency levels.

In terms of suggestions for an effective use of YouTube for vocabulary acquisition, most participants affirmed the importance of teacher guidance for suitable channels and reputable videos. They also expressed a preference for short videos with subtitles.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how EFL students at Le Hoang Chieu High School perceived the use of YouTube to enhance their lexical competence. A mixed-methods design was employed: quantitative data were collected via a questionnaire completed by 60 eleventh- and twelfth-grade students, and qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with eight students. The study concludes that YouTube has considerable potential to support English vocabulary learning in EFL contexts by providing students with accessible, diverse, and authentic language input. As a supporting learning resource, it can promote learner autonomy, increase motivation, and create opportunities for students to expand their vocabulary beyond the classroom lessons. However, to maximize its educational value, students require teachers' guidance in selecting appropriate content and developing effective learning strategies to avoid distractions and information overload.

The findings also suggest several pedagogical implications. English teachers should integrate YouTube purposefully into vocabulary instruction by recommending reliable educational

channels that align with learning objectives and students' proficiency levels. Moreover, their guidance on active vocabulary-learning techniques such as note-taking and contextual practice makes the use of YouTube for vocabulary acquisition more efficient. In addition, subtitled videos with concise and well-structured content may further enhance students' comprehension and retention. Finally, high school educators should encourage students to develop independent language learning through applying media platforms to their learning habits. Generally, YouTube can complement traditional classroom instruction and contribute to vocabulary development among EFL high school students when they receive teacher guidance and carefully select video content.

### Limitations

This study has several remaining limitations. Firstly, the research employed a convenience sample of 60 students from a single high school and a small group of interviewees, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the study was conducted exclusively at Le Hoang Chieu High School in a specific province of Vietnam, so the cultural, social, and educational factors unique to that setting may affect the applicability of the results to other regions, schools, or student populations. Moreover, the study did not conduct direct assessments of vocabulary improvement under controlled conditions, which may limit the analysis of some questions.

### Recommendations

The findings of this research may serve as a foundation for future studies on the effectiveness of various social media platforms in supporting language acquisition or promoting learner autonomy. For educators, the results can offer insights into integrating YouTube into the English language curriculum to enrich vocabulary instruction. Specifically, at Le Hoang Chieu High School, where students encounter challenges in vocabulary learning, incorporating YouTube as a supplementary learning tool may provide students with increased exposure to authentic language use and more interactive learning experiences.

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## Biodata

Ms. Nguyen Thi Thu Hang, M.A., is a lecturer at Van Lang University, 69/68 Dang Thuy Tram St., Binh Loi Trung Ward, Ho Chi Minh City. She has more than 15 years of experience teaching English majors. Her main interests include Language Teaching Methodology, Learner Autonomy, and Language Assessment.

Ms. Nguyen Gia Thuan is a senior at Van Lang University's Faculty of Foreign Language, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She is majoring in English teaching. As a curious and detail-oriented individual, she enjoys conducting research and analyzing various topics related to English language teaching and literature.