

Maximizing Multimodal Literacies for Listening and Pronunciation Purposes Using YouTube Resources

Diah Kristina¹⁾

diahkristina@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract: YouTube resources have contributed significantly to the language learning especially for multimodal literacies including listening and pronunciation. By using different kinds of mode, learners are exposed to more natural and received pronunciation of audiovisual texts in English. Minimal pairs, word transition, intonation, word stress combined with facial expressions, body language, eye contact, pose, pictures, photographs, musical instrument as backgrounding illustration have been a rich multimodal source to activate students' awareness on how meaning-making efforts are not solely constructed verbally. In a more complex digitalized world, technology has provided a more natural setting of communication that students need to be aware of and make use to substitute the limited availability of native speakers especially in remote areas of extended Indonesian archipelago.

Keywords: *YouTube, multimodal literacies, minimal pairs, word transition, pose.*

Abstrak: YouTube telah banyak menyumbangkan materi pembelajaran bahasa bagi proses belajar mengajar terutama aspek literasi *multimodal* termasuk *listening* (menyimak) dan *pronunciation* (pengucapan). Dengan menggunakan berbagai *mode*, pembelajar dihadapkan pada pengucapan ekspresi dalam teks *audiovisual* berbahasa Inggris yang bersifat lebih alamiah. *Minimal pairs* (pasangan kata yang memiliki kemiripan bunyi), *word transition* (bunyi khusus sebagai pelumas dalam merangkai dua kata), intonasi, tekanan kata yang dikombinasikan dengan ekspresi wajah, bahasa tubuh, kontak mata, *pose*, gambar, foto, iringan musik, merupakan sumber *multimodal* yang kaya untuk membuat siswa sadar bahwa pembentukan makna tidak semata-mata dikonstruksi secara verbal. Di era digital yang kompleks ini teknologi telah memungkinkan munculnya komunikasi dengan *setting* yang lebih alamiah yang mengharuskan siswa memanfaatkan kekayaan sumber pembelajaran tersebut sebagai pengganti keberadaan *native speaker* terutama di daerah terpencil di kepulauan Nusantara (Indonesia) yang maha luas ini.

Kata-kata Kunci: *YouTube, literasi multimodal, pasangan kata yang memiliki kemiripan bunyi, transisi kata, pose.*

¹⁾ *Professor of Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta (UNS)*

YouTube has become one of the most popular websites in the world (Alexa, 2011). One of the examples is a manual instruction video entitled 'Learn English Listening Skills' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?y=s-suiqtreiBg>) that has been viewed by more than 8 million viewers. Apparently, people, especially millennials are addicted and refuse to live without it. The question raised then is how would teachers and professors remove the most helpful technological tools like laptop, phone, and iPod from the hands of the students to keep them engaged in the classroom sessions and discussions? Students enjoy viewing and sharing visual content online.

Experts widely believe that visual aids make greater impact in contrast to traditional learning tools. Visual tools establish a connection between content and viewer (McKenzie, 2008).

By watching videos, students are exposed to scenarios, hear explanations from experts, see images, and listen to conversations that make the content and learning activities more relevant and understandable to them. Eventually, the classroom experience using online materials lead them to the 'Ah Ha' moment for new innovative ideas. The positive atmosphere occurred from excitement brought by these visual aids can energize both the students and the teachers that stimulate more discussions on the issue under question. Consequently, classroom site turns into a place for learning, engagement, and creativity (Harris, 2011). YouTube materials offer illustrations to simplify concepts and create enjoyment and thus promote motivation to classroom participants. Many experts believe that use of internet for education purposes has a positive impact, especially videos (Seilstad, 2012; Rice et al. 2011; Terantino, 2011; Bonk, 2009; Duffy, 2008; Boster et al. 2006; Whithaus and Neff, 2006). Almurashi, (2016) reported in his study that online video materials provided by YouTube support very positively the teaching and learning activities especially in terms of helping students to understand their English lessons, improving performance, and advancing understanding of English using the multimodal texts. Additionally, Mannes (2004) asserted that students can gain better achievement when they watch authentic and real life clips like the ones provided by YouTube.

Multimodal Literacy

Multimodal literacy is originally drawn

from the discipline of social semiotics and refers to the study of language that combines two or more modes of meaning (Mills & Unsworth, 2017). Perceived from a social semiotic approach, modes are the socially and culturally shaped resources or semiotic structure for making meaning. Some examples of modes from a social semiotic perspective include speech, gesture, written language, music, mathematical notation, drawings, photographic images, or moving digital images.

Multimodal literacy is a term that originates in social semiotics, and refers to the study Someone is called digitally literate whenever he/she is able to search, select, and compose through writing and other media using different types of digital platforms.

Someone is called digitally literate whenever he/she is able to search, evaluate, select and construct a new product of composition using diverse digital platforms. Therefore, digital literacy has to do with an individual's ability to find, evaluate, and compose clear information through writing and other mediums on various digital platforms (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki>). Additionally, other experts believe that digital literacy means having the skills to live, learn, and work in a society where communication and access to information is increasingly through digital technologies like internet platform, social media, and mobile devices (www.western-sydney.edu.au).

With regard to teaching listening and pronunciation, teacher's digital literacy will certainly boost his/her creativity in providing motivating materials for the students. With bulks of teaching materials available in YouTube, access to both authenticity and diverse teaching scenarios make the work of a teacher easier and professionally accomplished.

Listening

Listening differs significantly to hearing. The former refers to the ability to receive and infer messages accurately in the communication process while the latter means a physical process done automatically by letting the sounds enter our ears. Listening requires focus and concentration both mentally and physically. To listen effectively means listening not only to the content but also how the content is presented, the ways language and voice are used, and the way the speaker makes use of his/her body movement and other non-verbal features to support his/her communication.

Bell (2011) asserts that in terms of their

functions, there are four types of listening namely appreciative listening, critical listening, relationship listening, and discriminative listening. Each category will be discussed in detail as follows. Appreciative listening aims at enjoying the content and illustrations that we hear. Critical listening however, includes hearing what our partner of speaking says in terms of identifying the key points and/or arguments, solidifying our opinion, and analyzing what the speaker says and his/her agenda. Additionally, relationship listening or commonly called therapeutic or emphatic listening functions to provide support and show sidedness. Finally, discriminative listening means listening to partners by not only concentrating on verbal expressions but also the body language, and nuances of sounds of which the listener is sensitive to attributes including rate, volume, pitch, accent, and emphasis in speaking.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation is a crucial component of listening in which meaning is drawn from the way a person accurately pronounces a word. As a meaning-making device, a good pronunciation may hinder or facilitate intention of the speaker and might endues or avoid misunderstanding. Two or more words having similar pronunciation but different meaning is widely known as *minimal pairs*. An insensitive speaker to sounds when pronouncing words inaccurately may create confusion, especially loose words, as follows.

1. Police/place/please/palace
2. Foul/vowel
3. Fairy/very
4. Refuse/reviews
5. Force/fourth
6. Sigh/thigh
7. Sit down/shit down
8. Snack/snake
9. Pick/tick/sick/kick
10. Bed/bad

Other than minimal pairs, word stress is also problematic when a speaker is unable to distinctively differentiate which part of the syllable deserves stress as shown by the example of ‘comMUUniCation’ in picture 1.

Apart from that, different stress also changes word classes as shown by the word REcord (noun) in ‘This is the best REcord ever made’ and reCORD (verb) in ‘He is reCORDING his voice’. One important principle of word stressing is that a voiced sound is pronounced longer than the voiceless. Similar principle goes with content words (verb,



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIapQVNq3D4>

Picture 1. Word Stress

adjective, adverb, noun) which are pronounced longer than the grammatical words (article, preposition, pronoun).

Temporary stop in pronunciation is called pause. Sometimes a pause creates confusion mainly because it may change meaning as presented in the following examples.

Let’s eat/ Mommy.	Let’s eat Mommy
The guard says/ the guest is impo- lite.	The guard/says the guest/ is impolite.

Rhythm refers to a strong, regular, and repeated pattern of sounds. The word rhythm is derived from *rhythmos* (Greek) which means ‘measured motion’. In the following example we are able to predict the atmosphere of the nursery rhyme from the way a reader constructs the rhythm to make it lively.

Tippy, tippy, tiptoe
Here we go, here we go
Tippy, tippy, tiptoe to and fro
Tippy, tippy, tiptoe like a little mouse
Tippy, tippy, tiptoe, go into the house.

To a poem or nursery rhyme lover, the above text may relate the imagination of a reader to a small baby girl aged two or three years with her funny body movements tip-toeing to and fro while laughing. That idea is mainly drawn from the way the nursery rhyme is read and the literary experience or literacy repertoire owned by the reader/listener.

Exclamation words or emotive expressions belong to para-language that include emotion and empathy of the speaker when expressing his/her attitude or feeling. Here, the speaker needs to show his/her emotion

or attitude while expressing the chunks, for example:

1. GEE...you DID it AGAIN!
2. WOW.....you MAKE it at last!
3. GOOD on you!
4. I'll be WITH YOU in happiness or sadness.
5. What's the HELL YOU ARE DO-ING!

Youtube as Resource of Teaching

So far in every listening and pronunciation class that I teach, students have found YouTube materials assist them to understand concepts better and easier. The multimodal features of YouTube resources have made use of diverse modes to explain and expose content audio-visually, with colorful illustrations that stimulate all of the students' senses. Even, a complex set of conceptual framework can be presented simply and attractively as seen in picture V.1. about rotation of the earth with images, narration, movement, sound, back-grounding music reflecting closer condition of the object under discussion. Thus, this classroom experience supports McKenzie's (2008) claim that visual representation of a teaching material connects content and viewer's imagination and personal experience.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

Picture 2. Rotation of the earth

Besides simplifying complex concept, YouTube materials can create enjoyment like an example of a story in Picture V.2. about Snow White, a well-known character in the Aesop story. In the video, students are exposed to a story with audio-visual illustrations namely a narration with character-based voices, back-grounding music, and beautiful pictures. By having this kind of materials, students are able to activate their imagination, emotion, and empathy through experiences of the characters. From the video, students indirectly have learnt about the culture and myth of the community where

the story originates. Hopefully there will be a process of language and cultural acquisition taking place.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEzq1I94gZA>

Picture 3. Snow White

When explaining a complex process of photosynthesis for example, it would be more motivating for the students to watch a more natural process of photosynthesis captured by their senses through the video. Students then are able to start using their imagination and perception to comprehend the issue from the multimodal text presented to them. The digital technology has helped the teacher to establish a motivating classroom atmosphere by providing the students with more natural and entertaining materials. In summary, what has been absent in the traditional tools of teaching and learning can be re-addressed and re-exposed using digital technology in a more accurate and natural way.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFaBpVoQD4E>

Picture 4. Photosynthesis

CONCLUSION

Digital media have made the process of learning and classroom interactions change tremendously. Teaching materials available on YouTube require teachers to have digital literacies to make his/her teaching of English more lively and interesting. As a consequence, digital learning tools need to be provided in every classroom. Then, upgrading

for teachers' professionalism is a must and communication among teachers needs to be done periodically for sharing experiences and challenges.

REFERsENCES

- Alexa.com. (2004). Alexatop 500 global sites (online). Retrieved from <http://www.alexa.com/topsites>
- 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 Linguistic Research*, 4(3), 32-47.
- Bell, L. (2011). 4 listening styles communicators should know. Retrieved from <https://www.prdaily.com>
- Bonk, J. (2009). *The world is open: How web technology is revolutionizing education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Boster, F., Meyer, G., Roberto, A., Inge, C., & Strom, R. (2006). Some effects of video streaming on educational achievement 1. *Communication Education*, 55(1), 46-62.
- Duffy, P. (2008). Engaging the YouTube Google-eyed generation: Strategies for using Web 2.0 in teaching and learning. In L. Gay, & P. Airasian, *Educational research* (pp. 173-182). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Harris, M. (2011). Using YouTube to enhance student engagement. Retrieved from [https://www .facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-with-technology-articles/using-youtube-to-enhance-student-engagement/](https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-with-technology-articles/using-youtube-to-enhance-student-engagement/)
- Introduction to Stress and Intonation - English with Jennifer. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIapQVN-q3D4> on 20 November 2019.
- Maness, K. (2004). Teaching media-savvy students about the popular media. *The English Journal*, 93(3), 46-51.
- Mills, K., & Unsworth, L. (2017). Curriculum and pedagogy, technology and education, languages and literacies. Retrieved from doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.232
- Photosynthesis. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com /watch?v=pFaBpVoQD4E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFaBpVoQD4E) on 20 November 2019.
- Rice, K., Cullen, J., & Davis, F. (2011). Technology in the classroom: The impact of teacher's technology use and constructivism. Retrieved from [edtech2](https://www.edtech2.com).
- Rotation of earth. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?> on 20 November 2019.
- Seilstad, B. (2012). Using tailor-made YouTube videos as a pre-teaching strategy for English language learners in Morocco: Towards a hybrid language learning course. *Teaching English with Technology*, 12(4), 31-47.
- Snow White. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEzq1I94gZAv=SkRY1Nu_W7g on 20 November 2019.
- Terantino, J. (2011). Emerging technologies YouTube for foreign languages: You have to see this video. *Language Learning & Technology*, 15(1), 10-16.
- Whithaus, C., & Magnotto Neff, J. (2006). Contact and interactivity: Social constructionist pedagogy in a video-based, management writing course. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 15(4), 431-456.
- Wikipedia. (2019). Digital literacy. Retrieved from <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki>