The Effect of YouTube Comments on Iraqi EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to indicate the effectiveness of comments in facilitating or increasing Iraqi learners' listening comprehension. In this quantitative research, the sample includes 26 male has been selected from the fourth stage of the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Thi-Qar. The participants attending the two sessions where two videos were used during the 2017-2018 academic year. A quasi-experimental design was utilized in this study with an experimental group \((n = 12)\) that watched two videos in YouTube and read relevant comments, in addition to a control group \((n = 14)\) that watched alike videos without comments. After both groups watched each video, they wrote summaries for the video's content, and only the experimental students answered to brief questionnaires examining their views of the video’s comments. \(T\)-tests reflected that the experimental group's summaries had meaningfully more, as well as more accurate. The questionnaires’ results revealed that learners had a positive attitude toward relevant video comments as being a listening help choice. According to these results, YouTube comments may be a valuable tool to enrich listening comprehension. On Pedagogical side, selecting short videos for listening, the relevance and meaningfulness of comments must be among the criteria of video’s choice.

Keywords: Relevant comments, listening comprehension, help choice, social media, YouTube
الخلاصة:

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو توضيح فعالية التعليقات في تسهيل أو زيادة الفهم السمعي لمتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. في هذا البحث الكمي، تضمنت العينة 22 طالبًا تم اختيارهم من المرحلة الرابعة بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة ذي قار. المشاركون الذين حضروا الدورتين حيث تم استخدام مقطع فيديو خلال العام الدراسي 2017 - 2018. بعد أن شاهدت كلتا المجموعتين كل مقطع فيديو، كتبوا ملاحظات لمحتوى الفيديو، وأجاب الطلاب التجربيين فقط على استبيانات مختصرة لفحص مشاهدتهم للتعليقات الفيديو. كشفت النتائج أن ملاحظات المجموعة التجربية كانت ذات محتوى أكبر، وكذلك أكثر دقة. كشفت النتائج أن ملاحظات الفيديو ذات الصلة باعتبارها خيار مساعد لاستماع، وفقًا لهذه النتائج، قد تكون تعليقات الفيديو ذات قيمة لإثراء الفهم السمعي لمتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. من الناحية التربوية، يجب أن يكون اختيار مقاطع فيديو قصيرة للاستماع وملاءمة التعليقات وفائدتها من بين معايير اختيار الفيديو.

الكلمات الرئيسية: التعليقات ذات الصلة، فهم الاستماع، اختيار الساعجة، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، يوتيوب

1. Introduction

In the recent years, practitioners and researchers recommend to make use technological advances in EFL learning. They consider the websites and services as excellent means for enhancing FL teaching and learning process (e.g., Desmond et al., 2018, Luo et al., 2017). Recently, it is also clear that FL learners, with the intensive use of Internet, the availability of free videos in different applications, and the smartphones’ affordability, have plenty of selections for L2 listening practice, such as YouTube, that go beyond the materials of classroom (e.g., Aldukhaye, 2019; Idaryani & Fidyati, 2021; Pamuji, 2019).

No doubt that the benefit of those traditional help options; however, they have been used for many years—when there were only offline materials (such as on CDs) and when there were no social media videos. In fact, FL listening research focuses on exploring the unique help choices that the
internet, and the Web 2.0 and social media, can enrich FL listening comprehension, for example, comments on videos. To explain: YouTube videos and similar social media sites are free for anyone with three embedded, ready-to-use traditional assist choices, such as subtitles, captions, and audio/video control buttons, and one yet to be built, i.e., comments. The former help options should be fully designed before posting or need to be made fully available by platform once the video is posted online. On the other hand, writing comments begins only after completing posting of the video; however, they still grow and increase. As long as the social media comments expands and develops, effectiveness doubtless also improves.

The aim of the present study is to draw the attention of practitioners and researchers to the benefit of social media such as YouTube comments in listening comprehension. Additionally, the study aims to advise FL learners that online comments in the videos they frequently watch on YouTube can help in enhancing their comprehension. In fact, analyzing content of YouTube (e.g., Haryanto et al., 2019; Oxford, 2019; Polat, 2019;) showed that various rhetorical functions are performed by comments, such as restatement, quoting, elaboration, etc. that could give some kind of linguistic help to FL learners.

Hence, this study aims to investigate the value of YouTube comments to listening comprehension as a new listening help choice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 FL listening help choices

Using videos as audio-only materials in FL listening learning was founded on the belief that visual information (e.g., body language, facial expressions, etc,) would facilitate FL listening comprehension (Cross, 2018). Also, technological aids could afford the best tools that could provide significant support for the listening comprehension of FL input. Consequently, different help options, such as mostly text-based and captions, subtitles, scripts, textual annotations, dictionary, grammar notes, audio
control and visual annotations were employed in FL listening learning and teaching (e.g., Bulut, 2019; Crum, 2017; Suárez & Gesa, 2019; Xue, 2017).

According to Cross (2017), assistance choice researches basically have focused on three aspects which are learner perceptions and experiences, comparisons of different conditions and learner variables. In General, there is positive attitudes toward textual help options by EFL learners. In comparing to non-text help options, such as transcripts and captions were considered as being the most beneficial tools for comprehending text (Mirzaei, et al., 2017; Shadiev & Huang, 2020). Concerning comparisons of various conditions, previous studies (e.g., Jones, 2003, 2007) indicated a positive effect from various textual assistance choices on listening comprehension and vocabulary learning. Concerning learner variables, proficiency has been the only element that has been examined regarding to its effectiveness on the use or non-use of textual help options (Cross, 2017). However, other studies confirm contradictory findings (Alabsi, 2020; Grgurovic & Hegelheimer, 2007; Hegelheimer & Tower, 2004). As result, it is difficult for drawing any valuable conclusions.

2.2 Non-use of helpful options issue

Many previous researches emphasize on beneficial options (e.g., Cárdenas-Claros & Gruba, 2014; Cárdenas-Claros, 2020; Pujola, 2002; Jones, 2003; Grgurovic & Hegelheimer, 2007; Seki et al., 2020). Cárdenas-Claros and Gruba (2014), for instance, shows five variables encourage FL learners for using potential helpful options: relevance, recovery, familiarity, challenge, and compatibility. In brief, they identified when FL learners have tendency to make use help options are related to management and completion task, and they learned that using help options was mostly influenced by perceptions of learners toward FL learning, familiarity with help-option use, comprehension failures, and the easiness of interaction in help options.

In a new recent study, Seki et al., (2020) explored how spontaneous choice of learner and using help options were influenced by some complexity
textual features. For those researcher, five problematic textual features, including four kinds of linguistic complexity, i.e., syntactic, lexical, phonological, and discourse, as well as speed of delivery. Four help options, i.e., audio or video control buttons, dictionary, transcript, and glossary, were related to particular textual challenges. Audio/video control was associated with speeds of delivery, transcripts were linked to fast speech difficulties and phonological and lexical complexity, and glossary and dictionary were linked to lexical complexity.

2.3 Recent help option study to listening comprehension

The above-mentioned help selections have been and continue to be beneficial to listening materials. Captions, audio/video, subtitles, and control are useful built-in YouTube features. But studies on FL listening seem to have been, and still are, narrowed to a limited set of help options that were advanced ago, i.e., not only before appearing social media and before Web 2.0 but also before the use of internet, as proved in some current studies (e.g., Cárdenas-Claros, 2020; Caparrini et al., 2020; Guo & Saxton, 2020; Seki et al., 2020; Teng, 2020) in which some exploited videos in YouTube application.

The aforementioned help options are surely beneficial; but, exiting those help options was many years ago in offline listening resources on CDs. The aim of this research is to send a wake-up call to researchers that an important change in listening training and widespread viewing has happened. EFL learners nowadays, with the existing of Internet, the free online video and smartphones, practice much of their FL listening during YouTube and other applications (e.g., Çakmak & Erçetin, 2018; Hilchey, 2021; Kanellopoulou & Giannakoulopoulos, 2021; Yurieva, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to expand FL listening research and discover the rare help options that social media sites and Web 2.0 might afford, and what the social media comments can effect in enhancing FL listening comprehension.
2.4 YouTube comments as an assist option

The facility of commentary is the most noticeable feature social media sites, such as YouTube. In recent years, as “commenting is the key interactive writing space on the site” (Gibson, 2016, p. 19). Though researchers have described YouTube comments as “vernacular literacies,” indicating that “they are voluntary and self-generated, rather than being framed and valued by the needs of social institutions” (Barton & Lee, 2012, p. 283), the potential of YouTube comments has supported FL learners, as reported in the findings of discourse analysis researches (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013). For Dubovi and Tabak (2020), comments are not only texts can be used to express views but also beneficial texts to FL learners.

In the study of Madden et al. (2013), YouTube comments provide accurate information or broadly explanation about the content of video, paraphrase something or summarize the video content, directly quote some parts in video, and sometimes may contain "blue-colored hyperlinks" and a timestamp that can be utilized in directing the reader to a specific idea in the video.

Dubovi and Tabak’s (2020) analysis of 1,019 comments reflected that comments had negotiating meaning (by asking to clarify, by identifying inconsistencies, or by providing restatements) and adding or sharing views, i.e., including definition, description, or statements of observation). Regarding these findings, YouTube comments generally serve a various rhetorical functions (summarizing, restating, emphasizing, paraphrasing, elaborating on, etc. Those functions show that comments are modifying of the video input, and viewers can comprehend the content of video by reading the comment.

In addition, YouTube comments have often been misunderstood as being haphazard, and irrelevant, and incoherent input. Nevertheless, that concept has been refuted by the findings of many experimental studies. For example, Kulgemeyer and Peters (2016) and Schultes et al. (2013). For Kulgemeyer and Peters (2016), 1,365 comments were analyzed as an attempt to discover which quality measures, i.e., numbers of likes,
comments, and views, should be the sign of the quality of 51 videos in YouTube. Those researchers were able to categorize 392 comments as being relevant comments, a quantity was acceptable given that YouTube comments facility is a “largely unregulated space of discourse” that gathers massive comments amounts (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013, p. 361). For Schultes et al., also found “a large amount of comments that do not have offensive statements and can be perceived as content carriers” (p. 667).

2.5 Benefits of YouTube comments as an assist option

Unlike some helpful options are ignored by FL learners for many reasons, YouTube comments have credibility as being a favored assist option. For instance, the content of comments was considered interesting, entertaining, and relaxing to FL learners (Gibbs, 2013, 013). In addition, YouTube comments have simple, intuitive, and a user-friendly design (Cárdenas-Claros & Gruba, 2013) that enables users to scroll down the section of comments while the video keeps playing at the screen top, causing minimal or no interruption. Or distraction. Although YouTube comments have a potential value to listening comprehension, they have never been studied as a potential help option.

As proposed by Madden et al. (2013)—“the benefit of a classification schema is that it allows researchers and practitioners to identify particular types or uses of comments and separate these out for analysis” (p. 711)—this empirical study aims to discover if YouTube comments can help or enhance L2 listening comprehension of videos. Also, This research aims to explore participants’ views toward three constructs of comments as a listening help option (relevance, value, and feasibility). The research questions were:

1. Does reading relevant comments to YouTube help increase listening comprehension of videos?
2. What are perceptions of FL learners of YouTube comments as a help choice for listening?
3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants were male, Arabic-speaking Iraqi EFL learners from the fourth stage of the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University Thi-Qar. The researcher met the participants twice a week for two hours each session. Students ($M_{age} = 21-25$ years) had previously received formal English instruction for about eight years in primary, secondary schools and their first stage at college. The sample was randomly divided into two groups: the control group ($n = 14$) and experimental group ($n = 12$).

In this study, intermediate-level learners were employed to ensure that summaries produced by the experimental group were not solely depended on listening competence if learners at advanced-level were employed. Therefore, it was indicated that less proficient learners were more probable to assess additional listening support (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013). Also, less proficient learners would make use comments with having reasonable reading competence at the same time.

3.2 Materials

YouTube has many benefits over other platforms. That is why, it has been selected to represent social media—it is posting videos and by the way it controls social media. In addition, YouTube often have richer and more educational content, and alike its relevant comments. YouTube also allows public and unlimited length comments compared to other platforms, such as Twitter, allow posting videos’ limited length, or Snapchat, where a public comment is not be allowed.

To get a more reasonable evidence for the impact of YouTube comments on FL learners' listening comprehension, the researcher selected two videos for the study: Video 1 (3’05”) was “Woman’s change of heart
brings out her inner guardian angel” by CBS Evening News, and Video 2 (3’03’’) was “Boston begins removing parking space savers” from CBS This Morning. Video 1 received 791 comments and Video 2 received 2,232 comments by the time the experiment was conducted. For the choice of videos, the linguistic and paralinguistic criteria were those suggested by Garza (1996) for the FL research video materials selection: grammatical and lexical complexity, situational appropriateness, and university-level students’ inherent interest value. Because comments are the essential part of the exploration of this study, an extra criteria element was added: availability of rich and relevant comments.

Regarding these criteria, the videos and comments were checked by three professors at Utara university. For them, both videos met the offered criteria. For instance, research shows (90%) lexical coverage, i.e., known words in a text, is acceptable to listen/view comprehension colloquial words/expressions (Bin-Tahir, & Rinantanti (2016); the 1,200-word level for both videos was 90% coverage, measuring by Cobb’s Lextutor’s Vocab Profile. This supported the idea that the input would be not difficult to be comprehended by the FL students.

Regarding richness and the relevance of comments, it was no doubt, for instance, that some comments contain direct quotes from the videos that are believed to support comprehension. Also, other types of comments were found to restate, emphasize, paraphrase, or elaborate on the video content. Samples of comments believed to provide potential assistance for listening comprehension can be found in Table 1.
## Comment Samples from Video 1 and Video 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commenter’s username</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Video 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Matheka</td>
<td>A great example of what can happen when someone realizes that a life of being mean-spirited, selfish, empathetic and caring and unhelpful isn't as rewarding as being kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum'Thyn Serius</td>
<td>Changing one life. She definitely changed the whole world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Orthmann</td>
<td>You never know what situation may occur when you allow yourself to walk in someone else’s shoes. You may just find the try was all you need for God to answer your prayers. A daily prayer is Lord please order my steps and allow me to get out my own way...Amen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wil Iams</td>
<td>She has a beautiful soul and heart.....Thank you for posting this information.... Thank her and her husband for giving a black man in the United States of America an opportunity to show that he will be a productive and positive attitude member of society... I am a black man on the clock here in Melrose Park Illinois USA watching this video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezeqiel Echeverria</td>
<td>She said, &quot;Life is messy, and if you want to help somebody you have to step into their mess.&quot; Wow. How right is that? Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Video 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OneLovedKid</td>
<td>He lost a mother; he got a brother And parents; God makes beautiful moves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT WM</td>
<td>&quot;i'll go with the guy from the hood&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASMR Kingdom</td>
<td>I LOVE MY CITY! SPACE SAVERS SAVE LIVES AND PREVENT HOMICIDES! RESPECT THE PARKING LAWS OF SOUTHIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nezza</td>
<td>The best thing is work hard, move to the country side, there you will have your own parking spot. Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akumtoshi aier</td>
<td>I sided with the city but after hearing that they need to invest time to dig out a parking spot, I’m with the house owners!! This needs to be change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Half my neighbors are cops...I'm sire he regretted the moment he said it. His smile said it all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 **Data Collection**

### 3.3.1 Written summary and scoring

The written summaries provides information about a comprehension of the text by learners, as they are not mediated by question prompts (Gruba, 1999). For each video, the researcher asked FL learners to produce one written summary that revealed more information about the video as much as they could; the researcher allowed to them to write in Arabic. Because the written summaries is affected by the learners' memory constraints, they were also allowed to take notes to help their written summaries of what they have understood (Cárdenas-Claros & Gruba, 2014).

Markham et al.’s (2001) scoring system of the recall was adopted by counting three raters: The number of idea units, elaborations, and the participants' distortions. An idea unit means any thought that arose in the video. Therefore, a sentence has two idea units. Elaborations are accurate and additional statements which are not mentioned in the video but are related to the video content. However, inaccurate statements, which are produced by participants, are named distortions. Thence, the researchers achieved an interrater reliability of .93 for counting idea units and .88 for counting elaborations and distortions. Because of the shortness of videos, elaborations and distortions were very few. For this reason, the researcher excluded those elaborations and distortions from the last analysis.

### 4 Data analysis

The researcher asked the experimental participants to answer on 11 Likert-scale items of a questionnaire (see Appendix), tapping into opinions of experimental participants toward YouTube comments as a help option for listening over three concepts were: *relevance, effectiveness, feasibility*. The researcher adopted two videos as mentioned before. Therefore, the same questionnaire was administered two times (after watching each video). The first four items were related to the *relevance* concepts, followed by three
items were related to the effectiveness concepts, and final four items were related to the feasibility concepts. Using two different scales were: an agreement scale (A) ranging from strongly disagree (SD) to strongly agree (SA) (items: 1,2,3,5,6,8,9) and an amount scale ranging from very few (VF) to very many (VM) (items: 4,7,10,11).

The questionnaire agreement scale (A) was formulated as follows: strongly disagree (SD) = 1, disagree (D) = 2, neutral (N) = 3, agree (A) = 4, and strongly agree (SD) = 5; the amount scale was formulated as follows: very few (VF) = 1, few (F) = 2, average (A) = 3, many (M) = 4, and very many (VM) = 5. The Cronbach Alpha $\alpha$ coefficient will be documented, and then results of the study will be indicated. Then, providing basic statistical data, i.e. mean and standard deviation, in a table.

5. Research Procedures

The FL participants in the experimental group watched the two videos on YouTube to access the relevant comments. However, the control students watched downloaded video versions using video player software. This study took place in the Classroom. Students watched each video twice. For Field (2008), it is better to participants watching videos at least twice in order to understand its content. Thence, the participants, in both groups, watched each video no more than twice.

The experimental students were asked to read relevant comments for each video as they selected. They were allowed to record summaries of those comments to inform the study results. The participant were told not to worry about the time constraints. Directly after watching each video, all participants had 20 minutes to write a summary, and the experimental students also were asked to answer on the questionnaire.
6. Results

6.1 Written summaries

SPSS software was used to analyze data. To decide which statistical system should be used, the gathered data were tested for normality of the dependent variables with the Shapiro-Wilk test (p > .05). According to the results of the test, the obtained scores from the two scales of the tests presented a regular distribution, so the t-tests were used.

The T-tests regarding the number of idea units produced by the FL participants on the two videos gave important results, as showed in Table 2. Definitely, data reflected that the experimental participants (who read comments) produced longer and more detailed written summaries than their peers. The effect sizes (.91 and 1.02) which are considered large, as stated by Plonsky and Oswald (2014). Though the significant effect of comments on learners' listening comprehension, this massive gain difference between the two groups was unexpected; the researcher provided more details of this result later (see the Discussion section). The average numbers of comments which were read by the experimental students were (17.07) and (16.21) for the two videos.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>11.64</td>
<td>7.67</td>
<td>-3.51</td>
<td>53.33</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>19.62</td>
<td>9.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>-3.98</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>&lt; .000</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>17.24</td>
<td>7.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2 Questionnaires

In this study, Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure of the reliability aspect. For Dörnyei (2003) indicates that this measure, i.e., Cronbach’s alpha is a rate of no less than 0.60 is required to be certain that the questionnaire’s items are evaluating what they are required to evaluate. The Cronbach Alpha quantity of the total scale is 0.71 on the first Video and 0.70 on the second Video, which are both considered acceptable. The researcher administered the same questionnaire twice as mentioned before.

Table 3 was used to describe statistics for three aspects of the YouTube comments on each video: relevance, effectiveness, feasibility. For the relevance, responses to the questionnaires indicate that FL students’ opinions were positive, showing that comments of each video were relevant, as the means of these items are (3.70) and (3.77) on the first video and the second video, respectively. Concerning the comments’ effectiveness on comprehension, students’ views were neutral. Nevertheless, their opinions can be considered as being positive, because of the means are 3.08 and 3.14. In regard to feasibility, the means 3.89 and 3.72 reflect that FL students consider that comments of each video were interesting and easy to comprehend. Generally, the perception of FL students toward comments is positive as shown in the total mean (3.60).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Comments’ Relevance, Effectiveness, and Feasibility</th>
<th>Video 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Video 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Relevance</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Effectiveness</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Feasibility</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Discussion

The results of this study suggest that YouTube's comments have a real, positive impact on EFL learners' listening comprehension. On other hand, these results are significant highlighting on the rich content of YouTube comments. Data concerning the written summaries, which are produced by experimental participants, sufficiently provide some evidence for the impact of YouTube comments on EFL learners' listening comprehension, as the experimental group produced more unit ideas in both written summaries.

This result supports the general findings of preceding assist option studies, which assume that any type of modified input of EFL listening tools, be it titles, subtitles, glosses, dictionaries, etc., is helpful to EFL learners' listening comprehension somehow. The rationale for the providing of a diversity of choices is to give EFL students alternative ways of exploiting auditory texts, but help choices differ essentially on the quality of assist they offer, for example, written records vs. cultural notes (Cárdenas–Claros & Gruba, 2013; Jassim, 2013). As being said, comments are as active as carefully created assist options, for instance, captions or transcripts. On contrary way, the best way to look at YouTube comments as a assist option is to consider of the quality of such assist options as a continuum, and these comments may fall in the middle.

Though It is expected a significant influence of YouTube comments on listening understanding, the massive gain, as the result of the present study showed, was not expected. A possible justification for this is that reading comments enabled EFL students to spend more time with the general content of the video (i.e., watching and reading comments on the video), which probably helped them reveal more on the video and become more engaged; accordingly their comprehension were enhanced.

Some previous studies highlighted the rhetorical purposes of comments by discourse analysis appear to have a significant impact on EFL learners' listening comprehension (Madden et al., 2013; Dubovi & Tabak, 2020). It is assumed that the comments on both videos were effective and increase the comprehension of EFL students in the experimental group, resulting in
producing better and richer summaries by these students. Because they were exposed to such kind of input (i.e., comments that enrich the video content by direct or indirect quoting), the students were able to unite the ideas, or correct themselves of what they think and what they had heard. That is supported by Khan (2017): “YouTube users not only seek information through watching videos, but also through browsing through comments which offer valuable information to users” (p. 243).

The experimental participants were asked to read many comments as much as they could, and the results show that they read many comments; about 19 comments is the average number of comments the students read for each video. A researcher suggests that the assist options design should help EFL students stay on task and lessen probable distractions (e.g., Cárdenas-Claros & Gruba, 2013; Jassim, 2016.); reading the large number of comments by experimental participants suggests that enjoying YouTube comments which have a user-friendly, simple, and intuitive design, given that viewers are allowed by YouTube application to browse comments of any video while it plays at the top.

Listening comprehension can be best helped when viewers of a YouTube video produced relevant and meaningful comments touching on many parts of the video. Schultes et al.’s (2013) support this in their conclusion, “the main characteristics of a comment that creates added value for the users: fair, substantial and relevant for the underlying video are some of them” (p. 672). Yet, we don’t know exactly how understanding was helped, given that a huge number of comment types was posted on both videos, nor do we know which type of comments were more useful. Nevertheless, when we consider the biggest problem in EFL students’ listening, which is the lexical segmentation, i.e., the ability to know where each word begins and ends (Field, 2003), we assume that quote-type comments are very useful, because quotations allow EFL students to recognize word boundaries.
In sum, students have positive attitude toward YouTube comments as a help option for listening. Comments on both videos were relevant and feasible. On the other hand, perceptions of students about the impact of comments were neutral; presumably, their answers were influenced by some type of comparing comments to the best help options, for example, captions or subtitles.

8. Pedagogical Implications

Being familiar with the affordances of comments is necessary for EFL students, given that most EFL students of YouTube do not pay attention to comments (Chen, 2020). With receiving correct training that emphasizes on the interesting features of comments, for instance, flexibility (i.e., to check comments while watching), reading and enjoyment, learners should be able to identify the fundamental benefits of comments. This is supported by Chen (2020), “in the process of engaging in making sense of online texts, students also discovered the features of online language, such as informality, irony, and common uses of abbreviations and capitalizations” (p. 445). With the increasing interest in self-regulated learning, reading comments is mostly suitable for autonomous EFL listening.

9. Conclusion

This study focuses on the impact of YouTube comments on understanding online videos. The results show that reading meaningful and relevant comments has a significant role in enhancing EFL learners' listening comprehension of any video. Experimental participants who read comments of both videos produce better written summaries of the content of the videos than their peers who only watched the two videos. Additionally to the benefits of comments on EFL learners' listening comprehension, The results show students' positive views toward comments as a listening assist option.
10. Limitations of the Study and Future studies

Limitations this study are: the researcher used only short videos, and two videos were in a similar category, i.e., both are news or story-telling videos. The influence of comments might impact negatively on EFL learners’ listening comprehension with using long videos or those belong to different kinds. The other limitation is reducing the difficult level concerning the situational appropriateness of both videos. Thus, it is unknown how reading comments could help in comprehension with using more difficult videos. The third limitation is using only summaries as an instrument to measure learners’ listening comprehension.

Future studies might focus on examining other social media platforms that both videos and comments (e.g., Facebook) are used to measure listening comprehension. This study examined the impact of comments on the listening comprehension of videos. However, it is not uncommon that a video in YouTube receives many comments written in various languages, given that some channels in YouTube are watched by a large number of non-native speakers. For this reason, the value of the comment is not limited to comments written in the original language of the videos; comments written in the language of the reader maybe even more helpful. Thus, a future study may focus on the effect of reading comments on acquiring of vocabulary.
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