

## **EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE USE OF ENGLISH SUBTITLED YOUTUBE VIDEOS TO ENHANCE THEIR LISTENING COMPREHENSION: THE CASE OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITAS NEGERI SEMARANG**

**Raudlatul Firdaus Al Amanah, Issy Yuliasri**

English Education, Faculty of Language and Arts,  
Universitas Negeri Semarang

alqomarfirda@gmail.com

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the perceptions of English Language Education students at Semarang State University (UNNES) regarding the use of YouTube videos with English subtitles as a medium to improve their listening comprehension. Using a quantitative descriptive survey method, the study involved 61 students in their second, fourth, and sixth semesters. Data were collected through a questionnaire and open-ended questions that assessed three aspects of perception: cognitive, affective, and conative. The results showed that students positively perceived using YouTube videos with English subtitles. From the mental aspect, they believed that subtitles effectively helped students understand comprehension, context, and sentence patterns. From the affective aspect, students felt more motivated, confident, and comfortable learning using this media. Finally, from the conative aspect, these positive perceptions encouraged active learning behaviors, such as looking up the meaning of new words, replaying videos for related utterances, and trying to use learned phrases in everyday conversations. This study concludes that YouTube videos with English subtitles are a preferred and effective tool for students, improving listening

skills and encouraging motivation and productive study habits.

**Keywords:** *English Subtitled Video, Listening Comprehension, Students' Perception*

## INTRODUCTION

English has emerged as a global lingua franca, spoken by over 430 million individuals as a second or foreign language, exceeding the number of native speakers (Liu, 2023). This change reflects the dominance of English in international communication, particularly in education, commerce, and diplomacy (Karam, 2023). According to Lee et al. (2022), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has formally declared English as the official working language in the region of Southeast Asia. To prepare students for the global world, English is the primary foreign language taught in Indonesian higher education institutions (Kirkpatrick, 2022; Korompot et al., 2024).

Listening is one of the four elements comprising the core English language abilities. It is essential for comprehending messages that are communicated verbally. Renukadevi (2014) asserts that 45% of language proficiency is attained through hearing. Listening is a fundamental skill in communication, involving the ability to recognize and respond to spoken and nonverbal language through the sense of hearing. Brown (2014) emphasizes the importance of this skill, particularly in classroom learning, where students tend to listen more than they speak. This demonstrates the crucial role of listening in everyday life, enabling individuals to grasp the meaning of the information they receive.

From a linguistic perspective, Pourhosein Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) explain that listening skills encompass several stages: auditory discrimination, understanding spoken grammar, sorting out important information, storing it in memory, and connecting sounds with meaningful forms. This demonstrates that listening is not just about hearing but also about processing information comprehensively. In this regard, Richards and Schmidt (2013) also explained that listening

comprehension is the process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language. This process begins with receiving information in sounds, words, clauses, and sentences, which are then analyzed and interpreted so the listener can grasp the speaker's message. Therefore, listening activity is not just listening but also involves actively understanding and interpreting the speaker's intentions attentively.

Nevertheless, numerous Indonesian students disregard this talent as they prioritize reading and writing (Novika et al., 2020). Listening skills are fundamental competencies that EFL students, or those learning English in an academic setting, must acquire. Given that English is not the first language of Indonesian students, it is difficult for them to rapidly engage and acquire proficiency in the skills (Burhanuddin et al., 2020). Lack of vocabulary, difficulty recognizing phonemes, long and intricate spoken texts, strange accents, and rapid speech tempo are other challenges that students encounter (Izzah & Keeya, 2019).

To overcome these obstacles, teachers must use more efficient resources and media. The search for suitable educational resources could begin with YouTube, an excellent place to start. Using videos, especially those from YouTube, the most significant online video source, can help students' listening comprehension. Additionally, it can be applied to create a wide range of new topics or issues (Chamundesawari, 2018). According to Lathifah and Prastowo's research from 2020, YouTube is provided at no cost to anyone interested in acquiring knowledge and can be utilized to foster both independent and creative learning. Moreover, YouTube added enjoyment to the learning process. It might encourage students to acquire information and experience in their learning process. Additionally, it can be utilized as a teaching tool to decrease monotony and increase students' excitement for learning in the classroom (Marbun et al., 2023).

YouTube has become an invaluable social media channel for language acquisition, providing many videos that can enhance student engagement and motivation (Yaacob & Saad, 2020). Subtitles are a standard feature on YouTube videos and can significantly improve understanding. It is generally understood as translating a message from a spoken source

language into a written target language, displayed synchronously with the spoken dialogue on screen. Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997:161) state that subtitling is the process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue (more recently for live opera).

Gottlieb (2004) defines subtitling as the diasemiotic translation of polysemiotic media (such as films, television series, videos, and DVDs) in the form of one or more lines of written text displayed on the screen in harmony with the original dialogue. Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) further explained that subtitles result from a translation process involving the display of written text at the bottom of the screen. This text represents spoken dialogue, graphic elements, and other important audio information in a program. They also emphasized three main elements in subtitled media: audio text, visuals, and the subtitles themselves. The relationship between these three elements, coupled with the audience's ability to absorb visual and textual information simultaneously within the screen's dimensions, forms the main characteristics of audiovisual media.

### **Literature Review**

Generally speaking, a large number of studies have demonstrated that subtitled audio-visual materials offer a rich multimodal input, which considerably aids in the process of language acquisition and understanding. Sources such as Gass et al. (2019) and Fatma (2021) emphasize the role of subtitles in enhancing English comprehension, vocabulary development, and grammar acquisition. When students are presented with visual and auditory stimuli concurrently, they can establish a connection between what they perceive and what they hear, which ultimately aids in the process of information understanding (Muñoz Rodríguez, 2024).

Some studies particularly investigate the advantages of subtitles for particular language abilities, with listening being the skill that benefits the most (Fiaz, 2019; Firdausi, 2024; Alzahrani & Alghamdi, 2025). Researchers Erazo (2020) and Saragih et al. (2022) found that adding subtitles to films resulted in considerable improvements in the listener's ability to comprehend the film's content. Students can concentrate

more on the audio, which in turn can improve their listening skills (Baranowska, 2020). Subtitles facilitate this by reducing the cognitive load that students are experiencing.

Using subtitles also helps people learn new words. According to studies conducted by Dumlao et al. (2020) and Zawia and AL-Darraj (2024), students' listening comprehension and vocabulary growth are greatly enhanced when they utilize subtitles, particularly those in English. The research conducted by Napikul (2018) and Fage (2020) also discovered that students were more likely to acquire new vocabulary, phrases, idioms, and slang when they watched films with subtitles. The findings of Qazi and Khan (2023), who demonstrated an increase in vocabulary capacity in the group that used subtitles compared to the group that did not use English subtitles, also support this statement. Furthermore, students benefit from subtitles because they allow them to comprehend context, imitate pronunciation, and speed up auditory processing (Irvan, 2020; Alabsi, T. 2020; Mulyani et al., 2022). As evidence of the broader range of advantages offered by this form of media, Yaacob et al. (2021) conducted a study in which they discovered that subtitles can even help participants improve their reading and speaking skills. It can be concluded that subtitles are more effective than traditional methods due to the inclusion of authentic input, which is crucial for real-world language learning (Ünal & Ekmekçi, 2022)

The use of subtitles is not always practical, even though there are apparent benefits associated with it; it depends essentially on the level of linguistic proficiency possessed by the learner. According to research by Yeldham (2018) and Yan Li (2025), proficient learners integrate visual, auditory, and textual cues, whereas impaired learners rely primarily on text. Therefore, Aldukhayel (2021) warns that low-proficiency students may experience cognitive overload when handling multiple modalities simultaneously. This means that subtitles do not always help students understand better; the type of subtitle also affects learning outcomes. Learners preferred subtitles in their native language for comprehending the meaning of words, but they preferred subtitles in English for understanding sentence patterns, spelling, and slang (Aksu

Atac & Koprulu-Gunay, 2018). The findings of Andi and Darvishi (2019) indicated that L1 subtitles and dual subtitles (L1 and L2) were more helpful for listening comprehension and vocabulary development than L2 (English) subtitles alone, providing further support for this comparison. It is essential to consider that there is data that indicates that subtitles in English (L2) have a more significant and beneficial effect on the acquisition of a second language than subtitles in the native language (Maulidiyah, 2021). Rawanita, F. R. (2018) found that watching animated movies without English subtitles makes the students more critical in listening. However, students find it easier to catch the context in listening activities with English subtitles. Both subtitles (L1 & L2) offer significant benefits; educators can enhance students' English listening comprehension and vocabulary development by adjusting subtitles to their learning styles and preferences (Ng, Y. R., 2024).

Additionally, affective components have a vital role, in addition to the cognitive benefits discussed. Many studies have demonstrated that students have favorable opinions regarding audio-visual media, including subtitles. Research conducted in other nations, such as Hungary (Fajt, 2021) and Indonesia (Kusumawati & Hasan, 2018 ; Andriani & Patricia, 2020; Putri et al., 2023), demonstrates that students see the method as both interesting and efficient. To put this into perspective, Mazlan and Kamal (2022) surveyed in Malaysia. They discovered that most students felt that English subtitles were necessary to comprehend films better.

Moreover, subtitles enhance student engagement and focus during learning (Puspitaningtyas & Vianney, 2018; Saputra et al., 2024). These benefits result in a more immersive learning experience and enhanced engagement through subtitled videos (Teng, 2024). Research regularly demonstrates that subtitles are an effective and engaging instrument for second language acquisition. However, their efficacy may fluctuate based on the learner's competency level and the kinds of subtitles implemented. Nonetheless, prior studies mainly concentrated on outcomes, neglecting students' impressions of the learning media. Favorable perceptions can boost students' motivation and academic performance

(Sanacore, 2008). According to Sabarini (2021), perception is a direct cognitive response to information acquired through the five senses, manifested as perceptions or images resulting from information processing. This illustrates that subtitles are not only ancillary text but can also provide distinct imagery and meanings that enhance students' comprehension. Wurarah (2022) believes that perception encompasses cognitive and psychological abilities to comprehend external information and serves as a fundamental source of knowledge that empowers individuals to operate efficiently. Subtitles in videos, serving as a medium of visual and verbal information, influence students' views of educational content.

Therefore, students' views of subtitle usage in videos substantially affect their comprehension and reactions to the content. Subtitles are not only ancillary but also an essential component of the learning process, especially in foreign language acquisition, as they are intrinsically linked to students' information processing and knowledge construction. According to Woodworth and Marquis, as cited by Walgito (2003), perception has three main aspects. The cognitive aspect relates to an individual's beliefs, knowledge, and past experiences, which shape their perspectives and how they acquire information. The affective aspect concerns the feelings or emotions that arise when interpreting a stimulus, which then influences their attention and awareness. Finally, the conative aspect refers to the motivations, attitudes, and actions an individual takes as a result of their beliefs and feelings. These three aspects, such as attitudes, impressions, and behaviors, emerge and play a crucial role in the learning process.

Given the significance of vision in learning, perception studies are just as essential. This perceptual study provides individuals with conceptual and empirical data regarding students' perceptions of learning. Furthermore, the research on perception assists English language teachers in choosing suitable instructional materials, media, and pedagogical approaches. Therefore, this study will examine how English education students at Universitas Negeri Semarang perceive the use of subtitled videos to enhance their listening comprehension.

## METHODS

This study used a survey method to answer the research questions related to the students' perception of the use of English-subtitled YouTube videos to enhance their listening comprehension. This method allows for the collection of valid and representative data from a large population in a short time so that these findings can provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of these tools in the context of language learning (Creswell, 2012). This study was conducted on August 9-11, 2025, at Semarang State University, involving 61 English Education students from semesters 2, 4, and 6. This study intentionally involved students from different semesters to gain a variety of perspectives. Second-semester students may have different perspectives than sixth-semester students because they have been studying longer and in addition the fourth semester give a bridge in between. Data were collected using questionnaires and open-ended questions. The descriptive quantitative approach was also used in this study; as explained by Sugiyono (2023), researchers find it easier to measure and describe students' perceptions without providing special treatment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

By using a Google form, the data were described with numbers and percentages in a table, and the data will be categorized based on the three aspects of perception.

### 1. Cognitive Aspect

The cognitive aspect relates to an individual's beliefs, knowledge, and past experiences, which shape their perspectives and how they acquire information. In terms of the use of English subtitles, this aspect shows the efficacy of English subtitles in helping students improve their listening comprehension. There were ten statements related to students' perception of the use of English-subtitled YouTube videos in the cognitive aspect.

Nearly half of those who participated in the survey (49.2%) were in strong agreement that subtitles made it simpler for them to comprehend new vocabulary or phrases. The percentage reached 86.9% when those who agreed with



the statement were also included, suggesting that subtitles are effective in the process of vocabulary acquisition. When it comes to acquiring vocabulary in a foreign language, this is consistent with research by Zawia and Al-Darraj (2024), who have demonstrated that multimodality approaches, particularly English subtitles, can be beneficial. On the other hand, only 34.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had trouble understanding new words even when subtitles were present in a negative statement.

The good results were also found in the second statement, which stated that even when there are new words in the content, the overwhelming majority of respondents (57.4%) strongly felt that subtitles aid in understanding the information's overall context. The combined percentage of responders who agreed or strongly agreed was 91.8%. To put it into perspective, 67.2% of respondents disagreed with the negative statement that English subtitles did not aid them, and they strongly disagreed with the statement altogether.

*"Subtitles make it easier for me to understand the meaning of words as well as the context of the conversation. Over time, this will train your ear to understand without the use of text."* AMRA (August 9th, 2025)

However, the findings from the open-ended questions show several different opinions when it came to improving their listening comprehension and understanding the video content, as follows:

*"I don't believe that to be the case because I'll be concentrating on what is written rather than the audio. Although I do occasionally catch a few phrases for the purpose of practicing my pronunciation, I find that it is more beneficial for comprehending sentence patterns and learning new vocabulary."* ZHM (August 10th, 2025)

*"Not all the time. Sometimes YouTube content uses terms that I don't understand. Even with subtitles, I had to look up the meanings of the terms and read over the video's content."* AHS (August 10th, 2025)

*"In my opinion, it is less effective for listening because it relies on my reading comprehension."* DAP (August 9th, 2025)

*"I think it's difficult for YouTube, because sometimes the subtitles*

*provided don't match the audio at all."* FY (August 9th, 2025)

The opinions of the survey participants remind us that the use of multimodal learning can increase students' cognitive load, especially for students with low English proficiency. Regarding this issue, it is important for teachers to consider the type of subtitles and video duration as mentioned by Aldukhayel (2021).

The data demonstrates that more than half of the respondents, or 47.5%, concurred with the statement that they are able to detect common sentence patterns in English through the use of subtitles. An overall positive reaction was given by 91.8% of respondents, in addition to those who decided to agree with the statement strongly. This is supported by the negative statement, which demonstrates that 65.5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that subtitles do not make it simpler to understand the patterns. These two findings complement each other and consistently show that subtitles are a valuable and efficient tool to help English learners identify frequently used sentence structures, which is an important skill in understanding grammar and improving language fluency.

One of the statements that drew the most positive responses was the one that asserted that English subtitles boost knowledge. As a result of using subtitles, 63.9% of respondents strongly agreed that their general knowledge was enhanced. In the negative statement, 65.6% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that subtitles did not boost their understanding. It shows that English subtitles help increase students' general knowledge. The results of these statements above lined up with the findings of the research conducted by Napikul (2018) and Fage (2020), that students were more likely to acquire new vocabulary, phrases, idioms, and slang when they used English subtitles.

Furthermore, more than half of respondents (52.5%) strongly agreed that subtitles help them remember important details or information from videos. The total number of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed reached 83.6%. This finding aligns with the results of the negative statement, which stated that the majority of respondents (62.3%)

disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had difficulty remembering important information even with an English subtitle.

The majority of respondents, according to the data obtained, had a generally favorable opinion of the advantages that come with the use of English subtitles. The significant percentage of respondents who said they agree or strongly agree with those remarks is evidence that this is the case. In contrast, the proportion of respondents who concur with the negative statements is significantly lower, reinforcing the conclusion that the majority of participants regard English subtitles as effective, as stated by Baranowska (2020).

## 2. Affective Aspect

The affective aspect refers to the sentiments or emotions that are triggered as a result of the interpretation of a stimulus, which eventually has an effect on the individual's attention and consciousness. When it comes to this topic, the affective aspect displays the feelings that students experience when they are using English subtitles. Ten items about how students felt about watching YouTube videos with English subtitles were described below.

The first statement reveals that a total of 75.4% of respondents, including 27.9% of those who agree and 47.5% of those who strongly agree, report feeling more motivated to study English as a result of doing so after using subtitles. This finding is supported by the findings of the negative statement, which reveals that 72.2% of respondents, including 36.1% of those who strongly disagree and 36.1% of those who disagree, do not agree with the statement that they are not motivated when utilizing subtitles. These two findings complement each other and confirm that subtitles are an effective tool for increasing learning motivation. Rather than being distracting, the use of subtitles actually facilitates and encourages students to continue learning English with greater enthusiasm.

Almost half of those who participated in the survey believed that they experienced an increase in their level of confidence when they listened to English content that was accompanied by subtitles. Specifically, 47.5% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, whereas 37.7% of

respondents agreed with it. This finding is further supported by a negative statement that demonstrates that respondents disagreed with the statement that subtitles cause them to feel anxious. The percentage of respondents who disagreed with this statement was 78.7%, with 45.9% strongly disagreeing and 32.8% disagreeing. The combination of these two findings suggests that subtitles not only serve as a comprehension aid but also play a crucial role in creating a comfortable and supportive learning environment. Rather than causing anxiety, the presence of subtitles provides a much-needed sense of security and positive reinforcement for language learners.

The result shows that 45.9% of respondents strongly agree that they do not feel burdened or uncomfortable when using subtitles as an educational tool, which is supported by 37.7% of respondents who agree with this statement. Furthermore, 36.1% of respondents disagreed, and 42.6% strongly disagreed with the statement that they feel burdened or uncomfortable with subtitles. The respondents also mentioned it as follows:

*"I usually watch English videos about nature, animals, and travel."* NMM (August 9th, 2025)

*"I watch vlogs, travel videos, tutorials, movie or music reviews, and sometimes watch English learning videos."* AMRA (August 9th, 2025)

*"Podcasts, touring vlogs, film clips, and history are the content that I often watch."* TB (August 9th, 2025)

Most of the respondents named entertainment YouTube videos, such as tourism vlogs, podcasts, and animations. These findings are in line with the researchers who demonstrated that students have opinions that are really favorable regarding the use of audiovisual media that includes English subtitles and believe it enhances student engagement and focus during the learning process, not only in class but also independently.

The perception that subtitles are an efficient method for enhancing listening abilities is held by a total of 90.2% of respondents, with 41% of them agreeing with this statement and 49.2% of them strongly agreeing with it, and this result lines up with a study conducted by Dumlao et al. (2020). In contrast, 27.9% of respondents said they disagreed with the

claim that subtitles are an ineffective tool, and 50.8% strongly disagreed. In summary, these data convincingly demonstrate that subtitles are perceived as a very valuable and effective tool in improving listening skills.

Furthermore, 37.7% of respondents agree that it is easier to listen to English videos ever since they started using subtitles, while 47% of respondents went with the Strongly Agree option. This is further backed by a negative statement that demonstrates that 65.6% of respondents found it challenging to listen to English videos, despite the fact that they employ subtitles. This is a combination of 24.6% of respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement and 41% of respondents who disagreed with the statement.

The results of this demonstrate that subtitles are a useful tool for overcoming these challenges for the majority of responders in the opinions below:

*"I like watching with subtitles since it makes it easier to understand the spoken words, especially if the speaker speaks quickly or with a specific accent."* KLK (August 9th, 2025)

*"Because there are some words I'm not familiar with, and to ensure that what the video is saying matches my understanding, I prefer to watch with subtitles."* AWP (August 9th, 2025)

*"Yes, English subtitles help understand video content because they make it easier to catch unclear words or phrases and strengthen vocabulary and context understanding."* FDL (August 9th, 2025)

According to the findings of the table analysis, the use of English subtitles has a very favorable effect on the process of learning. Those who participated in the survey considered it to be an efficient and motivational tool that also helped them feel more confident. Statements that indicated adverse effects, such as feeling overwhelmed, worried, or unmotivated, were regularly declined by them throughout the process. The findings of this study provide strong evidence in support of the idea that students are willing to accept and respect the use of English subtitles as a technique of language acquisition.

### 3. Conative Aspect

The conative aspect refers to the motivations, attitudes, and actions taken by individuals as a result of their beliefs and feelings. In this case, the conative aspect shows the actions students take after using English subtitles and the feelings they have experienced. There were six statements related to students' perception of the use of English-subtitled YouTube videos in a cognitive aspect.

According to the data acquired, 68.8% of respondents are accustomed to searching up the meaning of new terms that appear in subtitles after watching the videos. This is a combination of 26.2% of respondents who agree and 42.6% of respondents who strongly agree. A negative statement that shows that 37.7% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement that they never look up the meaning of new terms is also used to emphasize this statement. In addition, 37.7% of respondents chose "strongly disagree" with this statement. Similar findings were also found in the open-ended results below:

*"It would be much easier to understand with English subtitles. In situations where I am unable to comprehend a text, the only solution I have is to make use of the subtitle function. Even if we are unable to figure out the subtitles, we can still look up the sentence's meaning on Google or another search engine."*  
TB (August 9th, 2025)

The results also show that 72.1% of respondents, a combination of 31.1% who agree and 41% who strongly agree, try to replay or rewind parts of the video to match the speech with the subtitles. This finding is in line with the findings of the negative statements, which show 24.6% disagree that they never try to replay the video to match the speech with the subtitles, with 39.3% of respondents choosing Strongly Disagree. This shows that respondents consciously used the playback feature to compare and match spoken language with text, a highly effective method for understanding pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary in the target language.

The last finding is that 70.5% of respondents (32.8% agree and 37.7% strongly agree) frequently make an effort to

incorporate the terminology or phrases that they have learned from subtitles into their everyday discussions or writing. This finding is further supported by the findings of the negative assertion that they never attempt to utilize words or phrases from subtitles in ordinary discussions. Remarkably, 39.3% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement, while 27.9% disagreed. The detailed explanation is as follows:

*"Yes, because mastering the proper pronunciation of a word will greatly improve your ability to understand spoken language even when subtitles are not available."* AAR (August 9th, 2025)

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents do not use English subtitles passively. Rather, they use them as a foundation for more comprehensive studying initiatives. The substantial proportion of respondents who sought new vocabulary, rewatched videos, and practiced word usage demonstrate their active use of subtitles as a valuable resource for enhancing their English proficiency. This demonstrates a learning technique that is both healthy and productive, as stated in Mulyani et al. (2022).

## CONCLUSION

Overall, this study found that English Language Education students at UNNES had an excellent attitude towards using YouTube videos with English subtitles as a learning tool. They see subtitles as an effective, motivating, and non-burdensome tool for encouraging them to participate in more active and productive learning activities. This demonstrates that subtitles are more than just supplemental text; they are an essential component of foreign language acquisition, aiding understanding and listening abilities.

Despite its numerous benefits, such as providing instantaneous and expansive access to educational content, this convenience also presents a challenge for teachers to maintain their central role in the learning process. As students become more independent in sourcing information, educators are called upon to adapt to these technological changes by redefining their pedagogical roles. To remain practical and



relevant, teachers must act as facilitators and motivators, instructional designers, and learning guides, creating engaging classroom experiences that support student achievement.

This study suggests that teachers use English subtitles to help develop students' listening comprehension skills. Students will gradually gain confidence in watching videos without subtitles. Choosing the correct audiovisual input for students with appropriate criteria is important. YouTube videos should be appropriate and engaging for the students' age and level of English comprehension.

Furthermore, the subtitles should be at the correct speed and present grammar, vocabulary, speaking style, and the percentage of speech/dialogue that is appropriate or slightly above the students' level. Teachers should ensure they present videos that students may not have seen before; otherwise, they may rely on their memory to complete the task and not watch or pay attention to the video. Choosing videos with good subtitles is recommended, meaning the written speech matches the audio. Sometimes, YouTube subtitles and audio do not match, which can confuse students.

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