EXPLORING ESL LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BBC LEARNING ENGLISH YOUTUBE CHANNEL IN IMPROVING LISTENING COMPREHENSION AND PRONUNCIATION

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Abstract

This study explored ESL learners' perceptions of using the BBC Learning English YouTube channel in improving listening comprehension and pronunciation. A qualitative case study design was used in an exploratory manner with 25 secondary school students from one of the public schools located in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. Data were collected using reflection sheets and semi-structured focus group interviews. The data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The results showed three main themes: 1) perceived improvement in listening skill, 2) perceived improvement in pronunciation skill and 3) difficulty of learning English that appeared in the BBC learning English YouTube channel for learners. The participants felt the videos have enabled them to grasp spoken language better, derive new words from the conversations, and experience real English conversations. They also noted better pronunciation skills due to exposure to native-speaker models, subtitles and replay options. There were, however, some problems that occurred, such as having problems understanding the British accent, speedy speaking rate and unknown vocabulary. However, in spite of these challenges, the participants engaged with a number of strategies in their learning including video replaying and the use of subtitles. The results suggest that students perceived BBC Learning English YouTube as a useful supplementary learning tool to help cultivate their listening and pronunciation skills and offer some useful implications for the use of authentic audio-visual sources in ELT.

Keyword(s): *ESL learners, BBC Learning English, listening comprehension, pronunciation, YouTube-based learning.*

INTRODUCTION

English is understood around the world as an important language and is used in many areas of education, communication and in the future in work. Listening and speaking are the two language skills that are necessary to communicate effectively. However, there are still many ESL learners who are struggling to understand English conversation, and to accurately say English sentences. Students' self-confidence and effective English communication is frequently impacted by these challenges.

With technological advancements, online platforms have gained popularity in language learning. For many students, YouTube is one of the most popular learning tools as they are able

to see authentic content, visuals and interactives that are easily accessible to students. Learners can view the educational videos again and again, listen to native speakers and learn the way they speak English, along with a better understanding of the language.

The BBC Learning English is a popular education YouTube channel for English learners. The channel features different learning resources such as pronunciation lessons, grammar explanations, vocabulary exercises and real conversations delivered by native speakers. The videos also offer clear explanations, subtitles, and visual aids, helping the learner to improve his or her listening comprehension and pronunciation.

Although YouTube is slowly adopted as a tool in L2 learning contexts, the majority of research that has been conducted on YouTube has been focused more on the general application of YouTube in the L2 learning context rather than its application in specific L2 learning channels (Dewi, 2023; Watkins & Wilkins, 2011). Additionally, while studies have been done on the BBC Learning English YouTube channel by Sholeha (2025) and Ni'mah and Purwati (2024), there is limited research on the perception of Malaysian secondary school ESL learners.

Therefore, the aim of the present study is to investigate the perceptions of ESL learners on BBC Learning English YouTube channel as a tool supporting the listening comprehension and pronunciation skills. Unlike the previous studies which had studied the effectiveness of YouTube or students of universities and other settings (Dewi, 2023; Sholeha, 2025), the present research was conducted in the secondary school setting and further using reflection sheets and focus group discussions to study ESL learners in the context of secondary schools. To fulfil these aims, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do ESL learners perceive the use of the BBC Learning English YouTube channel in improving their listening comprehension?
2. How do ESL learners perceive the use of the BBC Learning English YouTube channel in improving their pronunciation?
3. What challenges do ESL learners face when using the BBC Learning English YouTube channel?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening Comprehension in ESL Learning

Listening comprehension is regarded as one of the basic skills in the learning process because it allows learners to understand what they hear and understand the information that has been shared by the speaker or speaker. Rost (2011) suggests that listening is an active process including receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken language. However, there are many challenges that face ESL learners in achieving successful listening comprehension such as fast speech, unfamiliar words, and accents etc. (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Goh & Aryadoust, 2015).In the Malaysian context, Ho et al. (2022) explored secondary school students' perceptions of listening activities in a remote school and highlighted challenges related to students' awareness and use of listening strategies. Similarly, Yaacob et al. (2021) examined the use of YouTube and video podcasts to support listening comprehension among Malaysian primary ESL pupils. These studies highlight the relevance of audio-visual materials and listening strategies in Malaysian English language learning contexts. Authentic audio and video resources have been proposed to have a great influence in enhancing listening skills of language students because they provide learners exposure to listening to natural pronunciation, intonation and real dialogues in the language (Dewi, 2023; Nurislami et al., 2024). In addition, Watkins and Wilkins (2011),

Almurashi (2016), and Aini et al. (2023) highlighted that YouTube provides authentic language input and engaging multimedia materials that support listening comprehension and language learning.

Pronunciation Development through YouTube-Based Learning

Effective pronunciation is crucial to language learning as it influences learners' intelligibility and communication. The use of digital learning platforms such as YouTube recently has been found to offer opportunities for learners to practise pronunciation through repeated exposure to authentic speech and models that are spoken by (and appropriate for) native speakers. Sholeha (2025) discovered that the use of BBC Learning English YouTube channel resulted in the improvements in pronunciation and vocabulary learning, as well as the improvements in the students' speaking confidence. The same is true of Ni'mah and Purwati (2024) who said that structured BBC ELT lessons, subtitles and authentic pronunciation helped students learn to speak English with a better pronunciation and more confidence. Moreover, Dewi (2023) pointed out that, YouTube-based learning can provide flexible and engaging learning opportunities for learners to observe and imitate native speaker pronunciation several times so that it is considered an effective supplementary tool for learners to develop pronunciation skills. The results imply that educational videos on YouTube can be utilized for pronunciation learning both as a language input and a repeated listening and also as a multimodal learning experience.

Multimodal Learning Theory and Digital Language Learning

This study is guided by Multimodal Learning Theory proposed by Mayer (2009). The theory suggests that learning becomes more effective when information is presented through multiple modes, such as words, audio, pictures, and videos. Learners can learn more efficiently when the information is presented through both verbal and visual means. BBC Learning English uses a number of multimodal elements in its YouTube channel, such as voiceovers, subtitles, colour illustrations, animation and models in native English. These features can be useful to help their students develop listening comprehension skills and in pronunciation skills since they offer several sources of input. Learners' affective predispositions (motivation and self-confidence), as well as their perceptions of usefulness and ease of technology use, can also affect their learning experiences. The Multimodal Learning Theory is therefore suitable in explaining the perceptions of ESL learners in the use of BBC Learning English videos to enhance their competence of the English language.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative case study approach to investigate ESL learners' perception of listening comprehension and pronunciation by using BBC Learning English YouTube channel. A qualitative approach was chosen to allow the researchers to have a deep understanding of the feelings, opinions and perceptions of participants about a certain phenomenon.

Participants included 25 lower secondary school ESL learners from one public secondary schools in Sabah, Malaysia. Purposive sampling was used to select students who had used the

BBC Learning English YouTube channel during the intervention period and could provide information relevant to the research objectives.

Two instruments were used to collect the data: reflection sheets and semi-structured focus group interviews. The reflection sheets consisted of five questions, while the semi-structured focus group interviews consisted of six questions. Both instruments were prepared and conducted in English. The questions focused on participants' perceptions and experiences of using BBC Learning English YouTube videos to improve their listening comprehension and pronunciation. The researcher conducted the semi-structured focus group interviews using six questions to explore participants' perceptions and experiences of using BBC Learning English YouTube videos. The reflection sheet questions and semi-structured focus group interview questions are provided in Appendix A and Appendix B.

The data collection process was conducted over a four-week period. During the intervention, participants were exposed to selected videos from the BBC Learning English YouTube channel that focused on listening comprehension and pronunciation activities. The videos were viewed in the classroom, while some participants also watched them at home. The frequency of viewing varied among participants, as reflected in their reflection sheets. During the activities, the teacher observed the students and provided guidance when necessary. Upon completing the activities, participants completed reflection sheets and subsequently participated in focus group discussions.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse data collected from 25 reflection sheets and transcripts from three focus group discussions. All 25 participants completed the reflection sheets, while 15 participants (five students from each focus group) participated in the focus group interviews. There were six stages of the analysis: familiarization with the data, initial coding, searching for themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and final report production. The reflection sheets and transcripts from the interviews were analysed and compared to look for commonalities and themes regarding the perceptions of the learners. The researcher conducted the initial coding with guidance from the supervisor, who reviewed the codes and provided feedback and suggestions for refinement.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, data triangulation was used by comparing the data from the two data sources. Ethical issues were also noted during the whole study. The subjects were requested to participate in this research voluntarily, all of whom were told about the purpose of this research. Participants completed anonymous written reflection sheets, and interview recordings were kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. These measures ensured participants' anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Three major themes emerged that directly addressed the research questions of this study, namely: (1) improvement in listening comprehension, (2) improvement in pronunciation, and (3) challenges encountered when using BBC Learning English YouTube videos.

The participants expressed positive views on using BBC Learning English YouTube as a means of learning English. The results showed that the students felt that the videos helped them to gain knowledge of spoken English and improved their pronunciation skills with the help of subtitles, visuals, and language input from native speakers. However, there were also several difficulties identified such as fast speech, unfamiliar words and problems with understanding British accents. The findings are discussed through the lens of Cognitive Theory of Multimodal Learning Theory (Mayer, 2009), which explains how the integration of visual and auditory elements facilitates

learners' listening comprehension and pronunciation development through multiple modes of input.

RQ1: Perceived Improvement in Listening Comprehension through BBC Learning English YouTube Videos

RQ1 focuses on ESL learners' perceptions of using BBC Learning English YouTube videos to improve listening comprehension. The reflection sheets (RS1-RS25) and focus group discussions (FGS1-FGS15) data were analysed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The coding process generated one overarching theme, namely Dual-Modality Support for Better Listening, which consists of three categories: Audio-Visual Integration, Dual-Coding for Vocabulary Learning, and Clear Auditory Input. These categories reflect participants' perceptions that combining visual and auditory information enhanced their listening comprehension. The following codes were grouped together as they all applied to participants' perception that when spoken English is complemented with written and visual information, they are more likely to comprehend what they are hearing: The theme thus reflects the mode(s) of input used to construct meaning in listening.

Table 1: Themes on ESL Learners' Perceptions of Listening Comprehension Improvement

Research Question	Theme	Categories / Sub-themes	Codes & Data Audit Trail
RQ1: Listening - How do ESL learners perceive BBC Learning English YouTube videos in improving listening comprehension?	Dual-Modality Support for Better Listening	Audio-Visual Integration (Subtitles & graphics)	Clear speech and subtitles support understanding (RS9); Subtitles support understanding of native speakers (FGS4); Understanding through specific video content (RS4)
		Dual-Coding for Vocabulary Learning	Improved listening and vocabulary (RS8); Exposure to native speakers and daily conversations (FGS3); Clear speech and everyday examples (FGS11)
		Clear Auditory Input	Better understanding of spoken English (RS1); Understanding through speaker accent (RS3); Clear speech and explanation (RS15); Clear speech and everyday examples (FGS11); Clear explanation in simple steps (FGS13)

*RS1=Reflection Sheet 1
*FGS1=Focus Group Student 1

The results indicated that in general, the participants found that the BBC Learning English YouTube channel is a useful learning tool in enhancing listening skills. The reflection sheets and focus group discussions indicated that the learners took the media aspects which were added to the videos, such as subtitles, visuals, clear explanations, and authentic native speaker input as a

plus. These helped participants to better comprehend spoken English, acquire new words, and engage with conversations with more confidence. Overarching theme, Dual-Modality Support for Better Listening, up with the coding process that emerged. The theme that came up in process of coding was "Dual-Modality Support for Better Listening", meaning the participants had found it beneficial to receive information through several different channels at the same time. This finding revealed that participants did not only think of the BBC Learning English YouTube channel as a video website, but a potent, useful learning tool to help them develop listening skills.

The reflection sheets also showed that the pedagogical approach in the BBC Learning English videos was presented clearly and effectively. RS4 reflected that "the visuals provide context and clues that help me understand the meaning of words even when I don't know every single vocabulary item," indicating that visual elements supported learners in constructing meaning despite unfamiliar vocabulary. Similarly, RS9 reported that "these videos helped me understand spoken English better because the speakers talked clearly and used subtitles" and that "the subtitles and clear pronunciation are very helpful because they help me understand the words more easily," suggesting that learners relied on written support to confirm what they heard during listening activities. RS15 explained that "These videos help me understand spoken English better because the speakers talk clearly and explain. One video that helped me was about daily conversations." In addition, RS15 noted that "I find subtitles help me understand difficult words, while visuals make the meaning easier to remember." Likewise, RS8 stated that "the subtitles and visuals are very helpful because they make the lessons easier to understand," and added that the pronunciation videos improved both listening and vocabulary. Learners' answers indicate that the subtitles, pictures, and clear explanations were not only perceived as facilitating their listening but as being overlapping aspects of language learning. Furthermore, RS3 reported that the videos helped the learner understand spoken English "because of their accent," indicating that exposure to authentic pronunciation gradually improved learners' familiarity with natural spoken English. Collectively, these reflections suggest that participants viewed the integration of clear explanations, subtitles, visuals, and authentic speech as essential features that supported listening comprehension and increased their confidence when processing spoken English.

The focus group discussions further reinforced these findings. Both FGS11 and FGS13 agreed that the presenters used simple language, spoke clearly, and explained concepts using everyday examples, making the lessons easier to understand. Similarly, FGS3 and FGS4 highlighted that exposure to native-speaker conversations together with subtitles enabled them to understand spoken English more confidently. FGS3 explained, "Sometimes the speakers talk too fast. And there are some difficult words that I do not understand. The British accent can also be a little challenging, but subtitles help me follow the lesson." FGS4 similarly shared, "I can usually follow their fast speaking, but the British accent can be a little hard for me. But I'm getting used to it." These responses suggest that listening comprehension did not improve simply because learners were exposed to authentic English. Instead, participants actively relied on subtitles and repeated exposure to overcome unfamiliar pronunciation and vocabulary. Although the British accent initially created difficulties, learners gradually became more familiar with authentic spoken English through continuous practice, demonstrating that listening development was a gradual process rather than an immediate outcome.

Although most participants had a positive experience, their perception was not uniform. FGS5 commented, "I think it can be effective, but I need to watch more first to be sure because it is free and has subtitle. But I need to watch more video and practice speaking to see real results." Some students needed time to view the videos several times and more speaking practice before they could make a confident judgment on the effectiveness of the videos. FGS5 didn't show hostility towards the usefulness of the BBC Learning English YouTube channel, but rather

saw them as possibly beneficial, but with a caveat, it took time to see a positive change. This finding reveals that pupils' perceptions were not consistent. The majority of participants found the BBC Learning English videos to be positive but they felt it required a prolonged period of watching a certain number of times for them to gain any real improvements in listening skills.

The findings can be explained using Multimodal Learning Theory (Mayer, 2009), which proposes that meaningful learning occurs when learners process information through both visual and auditory channels simultaneously. This is because participants have a better chance of building meaning in the present research by using spoken explanations, subtitles, visuals and authentic pronunciation, as compared with just listening to their pronunciation. Cueing in the form of subtitles mitigated the cognitive load of comprehending unfamiliar spoken English, and visual cues assisted in comprehending the important vocabulary and concepts.

The results of the present study are consistent with recent empirical research on the pedagogical potential of language learning by using YouTube. According to Dewi (2023), the use of YouTube videos has been found to have a positive effect on listening comprehension abilities, with the support of video visuals and subtitles which make it easy for the learner to understand the listening material in the video. This may be because BBC Learning English videos provide both visual explanations with subtitles and also the language is authentic (how people really talk), which helps the learner to support the new language. This multimodal support helps Malaysian secondary school learners to listen the content more easily and is able to make pupils feel confident to listen even they do not get in the classroom to hear authentic English. In the same way, Nurislami et al. (2024) concluded that the audio-visual material that is authentic increases the ability of students to understand spoken words, as well as making students more engaged in listening activities.

Specifically, relating to the listening component, Sholeha (2025) found that the BBC Learning English YouTube channel helped students improve their listening ability, as it provides authentic input, explanations that are easy to understand, and students could listen again. Similarly, Ni'mah & Purwati (2024) found that the subtitles, the structure of the lesson in BBC Learning English videos and spoken pronunciation were effective to help the learners to understand the spoken English and expand their vocabulary. In fact, this similarity with previously conducted studies indicates that the challenges of listening comprehension that are provided to the learners through MLL can make the learning process meaningful for such learners. However, the present findings also highlight an important contextual difference. The participants in this study were secondary school ESL learners in Sabah, where opportunities to interact with authentic British English outside the classroom may be limited. Consequently, subtitles, visual explanations, and repeated exposure were particularly valuable because they helped learners gradually become familiar with unfamiliar pronunciation and speaking styles. Unlike some previous studies involving learners with greater exposure to English, the participants in the present study depended heavily on multimodal support to reduce listening difficulties and build confidence when processing authentic spoken English.

The findings show that BBC Learning English YouTube materials are motivational tools in which subtitles, authentic pronunciation, and images that make up the visual cues and other elements of the English speaking world provide supplementary listening skills training. However, the results also showed that different types of benefits were derived from the videos by students in accordance with their different pre-learners' listening capacity and their familiarity with authentic English. For many of the students it was important to use subtitles, visual support, etc. as a learning tool, however, some needed to see it multiple times and do some exercises before they could feel confident in understanding authentic spoken English. The results indicate that

multimodal resources facilitate students' active interaction with a meaningful text best when enough time and opportunities are provided for them.

RQ2: Perceived Improvement in Pronunciation through BBC Learning English YouTube Videos

The second research question explored ESL learners' perceptions of using the BBC Learning English YouTube channel to improve their pronunciation. The coding process generated one overarching theme, namely Visual and Auditory Modeling for Accent Imitation, which consists of three categories: Visual Phonetic Cues, Audio-Imitation and Accent Copying, and Perceived Usefulness of Speech Practice. The categories indicate participants' understanding of the videos as a useful learning tool that served as a model in terms of the pronunciation used. The categories illustrate the participants' perception of the videos as sources of learning for pronunciation that were based on clear native-speaker pronunciation models, repeated listening, mimicking and participants' continuous speaking. Table 2 presents the theme, categories, and codes together with the corresponding data audit trail derived from the participants' responses.

Table 2: Themes & Categories on ESL Learners' Perceptions of Pronunciation Improvement

Research Question	Theme	Categories / Sub-themes	Codes & Data Audit Trail
RQ2: Pronunciation - How do ESL learners perceive BBC Learning English YouTube videos in improving pronunciation?	Visual and Auditory Modeling for Accent Imitation	Visual Phonetic Cues (Mouth movements)	Imitation improves fluency and word stress (FGS13)
		Audio-Imitation & Accent Copying	Pronouncing a specific word correctly (RS3); Improved pronunciation of difficult word (RS4); Correct pronunciation of "comfortable" (RS8); Pronunciation improved through native-speaker exposure (FGS1); Improved pronunciation of "genuinely" (FGS2); Clearer pronunciation of specific words (FGS8); Imitation improves fluency and word stress (FGS13)
		Perceived Usefulness of Speech Practice	Improved pronunciation (RS1); Clearer and more confident pronunciation (RS9); Improved word pronunciation (RS10); Correct pronunciation of "comfortable" (RS8); Improved pronunciation of "genuinely" (FGS2); Clearer pronunciation of specific words (FGS8)

The findings revealed that participants considered in overall terms that learning to improve the pronunciation of the BBC Learning English YouTube channel was a good resource. The reflections sheets and the discussions in focus groups identified the repeated listening, authentic pronunciation by native speakers, imitation and continuous speech as beneficial for the learners. The analysis process resulted in the overarching theme, the participants' pronunciation development being by visual and auditory modeling for accent imitation, indicating that participants learned their pronunciation by observing and imitating the visual communication of actual mouth movements, listening to the pronunciation of native-speakers, and also realistically imitating the actual speech models multiple times, in various ways. Learners did not want to learn to sound out words as they could not do so naturally; instead they felt that they can repeat some words for some time and copy the pronunciation of the words more accurately and confidently.

Evidence from the reflection sheets further demonstrated that participants perceived noticeable improvements in their English pronunciation after using the BBC Learning English YouTube channel. RS3 explained, "Yes, it changes, I can pronounce 'combine'," indicating that exposure to authentic pronunciation models helped the learner pronounce previously difficult words more accurately. Similarly, RS4 stated, "I used to struggle with the word 'schedule', but after watching the videos, I can pronounce it correctly now,". This indicates that when learners experience the pronunciation of unfamiliar vocabulary repeatedly, they have improved their pronunciation of it. To a similar result, RS8 also reported learning the correct pronunciation of the word "comfortable", which was attributed to repeated listening to the word and imitating the correct pronunciation multiple times. Moreover, the students' pronunciation of English words was improved due to the effect that the videos gave to the students, and the learner spoke with confidence when speaking due to the effect of the videos. These answers indicate that learners were not merely memorising the pronunciation rules but were learning the pronunciation more accurately by listening to authentic sentences and imitating the pronunciation of native speakers. The reflection sheets in total suggest that learners were aware of their pronunciation improvement happening gradually, upon listening, observing, and the repetition of speaking.

These results were further confirmed by the focus group discussions which showed how listeners and imitators could improve their pronunciation through repeated listening and imitation. FGS1 shared, "It has been really hard for me to say transformation, but after hearing how native speakers talk, it has been really easy for me," indicating that repeated exposure to authentic pronunciation models helped learners overcome difficulties with previously challenging words. Similarly, FGS2 explained, "Yes, I noticed that my pronunciation is getting better after watching the BBC Learning English video. Now I know how to pronounce genuinely," suggesting that learners became more aware of accurate pronunciation through continuous listening and imitation. Likewise, FGS3 reported, "I learned how to pronounce words like constable and vegetable correctly by listening to native speakers," while FGS4 stated, "Since this is my first time watching the videos, I have not noticed many changes yet. However, I learned how some words are pronounced by native speakers," referring to the pronunciation of the word comfortable. Rather, they watched models of authentic pronunciation and practiced repeatedly, which helped them to improve their pronunciation and confidence in using English.

While most of the participants said that they did see positive changes, not all learners saw immediate results. FGS5 said, "Not really, I watch the BBC Learning a few times, but I try to copy what it is called." For learners with limited exposure to the videos, this response indicates that the learners felt they did not improve their pronunciation to the same extent. However, the participant still tried to copy the pronunciation used by the native speakers, meaning that he had to keep practicing and listening to the videos again and again to develop his pronunciation.

The findings can be interpreted through Multimodal Learning Theory (Mayer, 2009), which suggests that meaningful learning occurs when learners receive information through multiple channels simultaneously. The BBC Learning English videos used in this study provided a combination of audio, subtitles, visual demonstrations, and authentic pronunciation models, which were beneficial for the participants. Listening to native speakers to learn pronunciation also helped the learners match the written words with their pronunciation while reading the subtitles, which led to better pronunciation and pronunciation patterns. Moreover, as the presenters' mouth movements were observed and repeatedly reproduced, it would be beneficial to learners in articulating English words more accurately as it would help to act as a visual cue. This is an example of the way visual and auditory information helped in the development of pronunciation.

The present results corroborate recent studies that have demonstrated the success of using YouTube in pronunciation learning. The results of Sholeha (2025) showed that the use of BBC Learning English videos was able to enhance the pronunciation skills of the students by providing repeated exposure to authentic native speakers' pronunciation models, and the results of Ni'mah and Purwati (2024) indicated that the use of subtitles and structured pronunciation lessons had positive effects on pronunciation accuracy and confidence of the students. Likewise, Dewi (2023) and Nurislami et al. (2024) pointed out that authentic AV materials can be used to prompt learners to make observations, imitate, and practice pronunciation in meaningful contexts. The present findings do not only confirm these studies, rather, it has shown how multimodal support was beneficial to the secondary school ESL learners in the terrain of Sabah. The opportunities to hear native English pronunciation in the classroom were not that abundant, and participants were forced to listen, observe and repeat numerous times in order to master the pronunciation. The results thus indicate that the effectiveness of the BBC Learning English videos is not just dependent on the presence of authentic pronunciation models, but also on the repeated use of the videos and imitation over time to ensure active use by learners.

RQ3 : Challenges Encountered When Using BBC Learning English YouTube Videos

The third research question explored the challenges encountered by ESL learners when using the BBC Learning English YouTube channel to improve their listening comprehension and pronunciation. The coding process generated one overarching theme, namely Barriers to Learning through BBC Learning English YouTube Videos. This theme was created by clustering of the codes that repeatedly occur in the context of fast speech, British accent, unfamiliar words, re-watching videos, video subtitles and cognitive challenges. These codes were grouped together as they were found to consistently show participants' views that meaningful understanding could not be achieved without a greater listening effort with authentic English videos. The theme reflects the challenges learners faced in engaging with the BBC Learning English YouTube channel in terms of linguistic and cognitive dimensions, and the strategies they used to meet these challenges. The theme, categories and codes are given with the data audit trail data generated from the responses of the participants, as shown in Table 3.

The findings revealed that participants generally perceived the BBC Learning English YouTube channel as a useful supplementary learning resource, although they also encountered challenges when using the videos. The reflection sheets and focus group discussions revealed that the major challenges were related to the British accent of the presenters, unfamiliar vocabulary, and fast speech. The theme, Barriers Affecting Perceived Ease of Use, highlighted that a number of times the learner had difficulty in understanding authentic spoken English, even when he or she realised the learning value of the videos. Nevertheless, these challenges did not necessarily discourage participants from using the platform. Instead, their responses showed that

some learners used strategies such as replaying the videos and referring to subtitles to support their understanding.

Table 3: Themes on Challenges Encountered when Using BBC Learning English YouTube Videos

Research Question	Theme	Categories / Sub-themes	Codes & Data Audit Trail
RQ3: Challenges - What difficulties or challenges do ESL learners face when watching the videos?	Barriers Affecting Perceived Ease of Use	Technical and Pacing Barriers (Fast speech and British accent)	Fast speech; replay strategy (RS4); Fast speech and difficult vocabulary (RS9); Fast speech causes vocabulary difficulty (RS10); Fast speech and difficult words (RS18); Fast speech and new vocabulary (FGS5); Fast speech and British accent difficulty (FGS1); Fast speech, difficult vocabulary and British accent (FGS7); British accent and fast speech; subtitles as support (FGS15)
		Linguistic Constraints (Complex vocabulary, advanced level)	Difficulty understanding content (RS7); Difficult vocabulary (RS8); Fast speech and difficult vocabulary (RS9); Fast speech causes vocabulary difficulty (RS10); Fast speech and difficult words (RS18); Fast speech and new vocabulary (FGS5); Fast speech, difficult vocabulary and British accent (FGS7)
		Cognitive Overload	Fast speech; replay strategy (RS4); Fast speech causes vocabulary difficulty (RS10); Fast speech, difficult vocabulary and British accent (FGS7); British accent and fast speech; subtitles as support (FGS15)

Data from the reflection sheets and focus group discussions showed that participants encountered several challenges when using the BBC Learning English YouTube videos, chiefly fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and unfamiliar accents. RS4 explained that "The main challenge is that sometimes the speakers talk too fast, so I have to replay the videos several times to understand," indicating that the pace of authentic speech required learners to revisit the content before comprehending it fully. RS8 similarly noted that "There are difficult words that I do not understand at first," suggesting that unfamiliar vocabulary hampered comprehension despite learners' recognition of the videos' educational value. Learners also reported that these difficulties often occurred together rather than in isolation. FGS7 stated that "The British accent and difficult vocabulary make some parts hard to understand," while FGS15 observed that

"Sometimes it is difficult to understand what they say because they speak with a British accent while speaking fast, but the subtitles help me follow the lesson." The latter response, echoed by RS9, highlights the role of subtitles as an important support when comprehension broke down. Taken together, these responses suggest that learners perceived authentic English videos as demanding, requiring greater listening effort and concentration. However, these challenges did not detract from the learning experience. Instead, they prompted learners to adopt strategies such as replaying the videos and using subtitles, which in turn helped them become increasingly accustomed to authentic spoken English rather than abandoning the task.

The findings can be attributed to the Multimodal Learning Theory by Mayer (2009), where the learner could be overstimulated by the exposure to multiple information sources simultaneously. In this study they had to decipher spoken language, subtitles, visual information, unfamiliar words and unfamiliar British pronunciation at the same time, which placed greater demands on participants' working memory. Speakers' fast speech and unfamiliar vocabulary caused problems for the ESL learners in processing the spoken English. These cognitive requirements were reduced by promoting the use of media (subtitles, replay, control time etc) so that students could immerse themselves in the more difficult parts, and process information at their own pace, and students would begin to be familiar with the spoken English used by native speakers. This shows that multimodal resources are useful not only for language learning, but for practical support for language learners in their difficulties of listening.

The present findings are consistent with recent studies highlighting the challenges associated with authentic YouTube-based language learning. Fast speaking, vocabulary and accents are issues often faced by learners in comprehending authentic English, as reported by Ni'mah and Purwati (2024), which can be overcome by providing subtitles and explanations that have been structured. In the same way, Sholeha (2025) reported that students at first had some difficulties in producing authentic pronunciation and British accent in using the BBC learning English videos but with frequent exposure and continuous practice they gradually got used to the authentic pronunciation and the British accent. In the same study, Dewi (2023) and Nurislami et al. (2024) also highlighted the importance of using authentic audio-visual materials that help learners to be more independent in replaying the video and learning at their own speed. The results in the present study have not only confirmed previous studies, but have shown how limited exposure to authentic British English outside the classroom had not deterred the positive response of secondary school ESL learners in Sabah to the above challenges. Participants didn't see the fast pace of speech and new words as obstacles to learning, but rather as ways to work around that by replaying videos, using subtitles, and slowing down the playback speed. This research indicates that effectiveness of BBC Learning English videos will be more effective if the students are ready to use the multimedia function provided in the videos to help them to overcome learning difficulties in addition to using language input.

The findings indicate that although learners encountered challenges when using BBC Learning English YouTube videos, these difficulties did not discourage them from learning. Instead, participants viewed fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and British pronunciation as challenges that could be overcome through repeated exposure, subtitles, replay functions, and continuous practice. These findings suggest that authentic English-language videos can support language development when learners actively engage with the multimedia features provided and are given sufficient opportunities to adapt to authentic spoken English.

CONCLUSION

This study explored ESL learners' perceptions of using the BBC Learning English YouTube channel to improve their listening comprehension and pronunciation. The results indicated that the channel was mostly positive in the eyes of the participants and that they felt it was useful in their learning of English. Specifically, the participants reported improvements in listening comprehension as a result of exposure to authentic English conversations, the addition of their vocabulary and the clarity of the explanations given in the videos. Furthermore, the results revealed that the videos helped the learners master the pronunciation by allowing them to listen to native-speaker pronunciation, imitate and have repeated pronunciation practice without the teacher's help.

However, the study did reveal some problems, namely problems with the British accent, the speed of speech and the unfamiliarity of words. However, participants were not deterred by these challenges from using the videos. Instead they used other learning strategies to improve comprehension and pronunciation of the videos, including replaying, slowing down the speed and using the subtitles. Overall, the findings indicated that the BBC Learning English YouTube channel can be utilized as an effective supplementary learning aid in enhancing listening comprehension and pronunciation skills of ESL learners. The study also underscores the importance of incorporating authentic audio-visual resources and digital learning platforms in the teaching and learning of English to provide meaningful, engaging and learner-centred learning experiences.

However, this study was limited to a small number of participants from one secondary school in Sabah. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to all ESL learners. Future studies may involve larger and more diverse samples, employ mixed-method approaches, or investigate the long-term effects of using educational YouTube channels on other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

Author Contribution

The author conducted fieldwork, prepared the literature review, methodology, data entry, performed statistical analysis, and interpreted results.

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Ethics Statement

All ethical norms were followed in the research. Before data collection, permission was given by the school's principal. Participation in this study was voluntary, and all participants were informed about the purpose of this study and their right to withdraw from the study without any consequences. Pseudonyms were used and personal information was kept confidential to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The information gathered was for the purpose of academic and research only.

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