



The Role of Thematic Videos in Teaching Basic Skills to Young Learners: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of thematic videos in teaching basic English skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—to early childhood students at the elementary level. Guided by constructivist and multimodal learning theories, the study examines the pedagogical benefits and practical challenges of video-based learning. The researchers employed a library research method. Data collection began by identifying scholarly sources from trusted databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate. Keywords such as thematic videos, young learners, multimodal learning, and basic English skills were used to retrieve relevant studies. The findings indicate that thematic videos, when carefully selected and aligned with learning objectives, can improve vocabulary retention, pronunciation accuracy, and contextual understanding. Thematic videos also foster student motivation, positive attitudes, and collaborative engagement. However, challenges arise in maintaining attention, ensuring language comprehension, and addressing teachers' limited digital access and media literacy. Excessive exposure to visual stimuli without guided scaffolding can further limit productive language use. This study concluded that thematic videos serve as an engaging and accessible medium for supporting basic English language skills. Their effectiveness depends on interactive integration, teacher mediation, and the use of culturally relevant materials.

Keywords: thematic videos, young learners, English language teaching, basic skills, multimodal learning, pedagogical challenges.

A. INTRODUCTION

English is one of the commonly used languages in the world in most especially education. Due to this international significance of English, Learning English early in life entails several cognitive, social, as well as academic benefits. Students who learn English early have enhanced critical thinking than students who learn English later. Learning English at an early phase of life increases cognitive abilities that support complex thinking and problem-solving in various situations (Mauliska and Angelo, 2024).

English is among the commonly spoken languages on the planet, particularly in education. Since it is a world language, learning English at an early age has various cognitive, social, and academic benefits. English students who learn English at an early age are discovered to have better critical thinking skills compared to students who begin learning English later in life. Early English learning develops cognitive abilities that support complex thinking and problem-solving throughout the learning process (Mauliska and Angelo, 2024).

To achieve such cognitive benefits, there is a requirement to prioritize the fundamental aspects of language acquisition. English must be mastered through reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills as these are core skills necessary for communication and language acquisition

(Hammad and Ali, 2022). The four core skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are not only indispensable for language acquisition of English but also aid in good social conversation (Sharma and Puri, 2020). Moreover, these language skills are vital to childhood development and future academic achievement, where parents and teachers play a crucial role in engaging and developing these skills (Novianti, 2022).

Although the importance of these language skills is already definite, the challenge is how to properly build these skills in young learners. However, to best take advantage of the benefits of learning English early, there must be an effective learning process tailored to the nature of learners. In this regard, technological advancement holds significant potential for creating more innovative and engaging learning processes. The use of technology-based learning media not only facilitates English materials to be presented more interactively but also facilitates cognitive abilities listed above to be fostered. Therefore, English learning through technology is a significant field that needs to be considered in this age. The current rapid pace of science and technology has far-reaching impacts on all walks of life, including education. The growth and development of technology, particularly educational technology, have significantly impacted the implementation of the learning process, particularly the use of learning media. In the education field, learning media has become a significant factor in terms of benefits, particularly for teachers and students (Safaruddin et al., 2024).

Learning technology, or more precisely instructional media, simplifies the teaching and learning process and facilitates teachers to achieve desired learning outcomes. Instructional media plays a very significant role in English language learning for young learners. Teaching English to children requires interactive learning media that allow for the acquisition of the four basic language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Thematic videos, an interactive and supportive learning medium for children that have become increasingly popular in recent years, are utilized. The videos offer language input in a meaningful context through the inclusion of themes that are integral to children's daily lives. Thematic videos are specifically designed audiovisual materials based on one theme to reinforce communication, participation, and learning process. Thematic videos can be utilized to facilitate language learning of the four basic skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing by presenting content in a specific subject or theme, thus making the learning process more engaging and meaningful for the learners. Use of thematic videos facilitates learning as an interactive and focused learning atmosphere through the linking of audiovisual material to specific instructional functions.

The impact of using audiovisual media such as YouTube videos and interactive presentations on elementary school students' vocabulary mastery illustrates sweeping improvements in vocabulary meaning, understanding, pronunciations, and utilization of words. Students become more optimistic, focused, and engaged in learning when audiovisual media are utilized (Amalia, 2025). Thematic videos, including animated videos and YouTube-based videos, are effective in facilitating the learning of vocabulary through active learning, better understanding, and increased motivation among young learners. Teaching strategies such as freeze-framing and active viewing maximize the acquisition of vocabulary within a rich context (Kurniawan, 2024).

Despite the high potential, the utilization of thematic videos is also faced with several challenges. Inadequate selection of content (Wedlock and Binnie, 2023), suboptimal classroom environment, and lack of availability of technological tools are some of the impediments to learning (Shafirova and Cassany, 2023). Teachers should also consider students' intellectual growth and ensure the used media are aligned with learning objectives and appropriate for the age group. With these opportunities and constraints, one must determine how thematic videos can help contribute to the development of basic language skills for early learners.

Although thematic videos are widely used in early childhood learning, research on their effectiveness in improving basic English skills is limited. Therefore, this study aims to examine the benefits and challenges of using thematic videos as an English language learning medium, particularly in developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Using a library research

approach, this study analyzes theoretical frameworks and previous empirical findings to provide a clearer picture of the benefits and challenges of thematic videos. The results are expected to help teachers select and utilize thematic videos appropriately to increase children's interest, motivation, and language acquisition.

B. METHODS

The present study employs a library research design, which focuses on the systematic collection, review, and synthesis of information from existing literature rather than from field-based empirical data. According to Abdussamad (2021), library research involves gathering and interpreting data from a wide range of documented sources such as books, scholarly journals, official reports, and archival materials. The central aim of this method is to construct a comprehensive theoretical and conceptual framework that informs the understanding and analysis of a given issue. In this study, library research is utilized to explore and critically examine various theories, pedagogical perspectives, models, and empirical findings related to the use of thematic videos in teaching basic skills to young learners.

This approach allows the researcher to synthesize diverse viewpoints and identify patterns, benefits, and challenges discussed across different studies. The process includes organizing, categorizing, and analyzing sources to generate insights that contribute to the formulation of well-grounded conclusions. By comparing multiple theoretical and empirical references, library research supports the identification of gaps in existing literature and provides a foundation for future empirical investigation. The materials reviewed include journal articles, books on multimedia learning and early childhood education, curriculum documents, and policy reports relevant to English language instruction. Hence, library research in this context serves not only as a means of gathering secondary data but also as a methodological framework for conceptual analysis, critical synthesis, and academic reflection on the integration of thematic videos in the primary language learning curriculum.

In this library research, the researcher followed a systematic procedure to select, analyze, and synthesize relevant literature on the use of thematic videos in early English language learning. The data collection began by identifying scholarly sources from reputable databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate. Keywords such as *thematic videos*, *young learners*, *English language teaching*, *basic skills*, *multimodal learning*, *pedagogical challenges* were used to retrieve pertinent studies. The inclusion criteria consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and policy documents published between 2019 and 2025.

The analysis process involved three steps. First, all retrieved literature was screened and classified according to recurring themes related to the pedagogical use of thematic videos. Second, each source was critically evaluated based on its methodological rigor, relevance to early language learning, and contribution to understanding the benefits and challenges of video-based instruction. Third, the findings were synthesized by comparing and integrating insights across the selected studies. This synthesis produced two main thematic categories—benefits and challenges—which provided a balanced and evidence-based understanding of the use of thematic videos in early English language instruction.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

The Benefits

Findings from the reviewed literature consistently show that thematic videos significantly support the development of the four fundamental English language skills among young learners. For listening, thematic videos offer multimodal input that combines audio and visual cues, making spoken language more comprehensible and reducing cognitive load for beginners (Genezla, 2024). Studies by González and Larenas (2025) similarly report notable gains in listening comprehension, supported by contextual visuals that help learners infer meaning. These findings align with Abbas et al. (2024), who highlight that thematic videos enhance motivation, attention,

and willingness to rewatch materials, thus reinforcing sustained exposure to authentic input.

In speaking development, thematic videos function as authentic linguistic models that demonstrate pronunciation, intonation, and conversational patterns. Exposure to such models builds learners' confidence and strengthens their pragmatic competence (Genezla, 2024). Activities such as role-plays, imitation, and visual storytelling—often supported by platforms like YouTube Kids—encourage active participation and provide meaningful contexts for oral practice (Chau, 2023). Abbas et al. (2025) further observe higher motivation to communicate verbally when videos are integrated into speaking tasks.

Reading skills also benefit, particularly when subtitles or transcripts accompany videos. These features provide contextual clues that help learners decode written forms, expand vocabulary, and improve comprehension (Chau, 2023). Moreover, thematic videos increase learners' interest in literacy activities, encouraging more sustained and purposeful reading (Abbas et al., 2023).

For writing, thematic videos supply rich linguistic input and content ideas that support creative expression through tasks such as summarizing plots, describing characters, or rewriting story endings (Abbas et al., 2025). Genezla (2024) notes that connecting writing tasks with video themes improves text organization, vocabulary use, and narrative development. Video-based writing tasks also promote deeper engagement by encouraging learners to think critically, participate in discussions, and revise their work more actively (Chau, 2023).

Across the four skills, a consistent theme in the literature is the substantial increase in learner engagement and motivation. The visual and auditory appeal of thematic videos captures attention and sustains interest, making language learning more interactive and enjoyable for young learners who benefit from multimodal input (Mayer, 2021). The videos also provide exposure to authentic language use, allowing learners to observe real-life communication patterns and connect linguistic forms with cultural contexts (Sherman, 2003). Features such as pausing, replaying, and reviewing further support self-paced and autonomous learning.

Recent studies reinforce these findings. Yin (2022) found that thematic video-based learning enhances listening and speaking skills while reducing anxiety. A systematic review by Aini et al. (2024) confirmed that videos consistently support all four skills and increase learners' motivation and confidence. Research by Setiawan and Novita (2024) highlights improved listening skills and learner autonomy through YouTube-based materials, whereas Tran (2022) reports notable gains in listening comprehension and positive attitudes toward video-assisted instruction. Norasiah et al. (2023) document substantial improvement in speaking proficiency, including a 9.2-point score increase and greater oral confidence. Taken together, studies from 2022 to 2024 conclude that thematic and authentic videos enhance both individual and integrated language skills, particularly when aligned with relevant and engaging themes for young learners.

The Challenges

Findings from the reviewed literature consistently indicate several challenges in using thematic videos to support the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in young learners. In listening, learners often struggle with unfamiliar English accents and rapid speech, which creates difficulties in comprehension and leads to frustration or boredom (Alamri, 2025). Additional challenges arise from limited technological infrastructure and the increased workload teachers face when selecting appropriate video materials (Abbas et al., 2025). Speaking development also encounters obstacles, as students tend to become passive when teachers do not creatively integrate thematic videos with productive activities such as role-playing or imitation tasks; teachers themselves may lack precision in selecting video content suitable for learning goals (Abbas et al., 2025; Genezela, 2024). In the area of reading, learners may become overly reliant on visual and auditory cues, which reduces the development of independent reading skills, while transcripts sometimes contain vocabulary and structures beyond learners' proficiency levels, causing comprehension gaps unless simplified (Alamri, 2025). Writing instruction faces an additional challenge due to the input-output conversion gap, as videos provide rich ideas but do

not directly teach writing—requiring explicit strategy instruction, scaffolding, and aligned assignment design to ensure relevance to curricular standards (Abbas et al., 2025).

Beyond these skill-specific issues, broader cognitive and pedagogical factors further complicate the use of thematic videos in the classroom. The combination of visual, auditory, and linguistic elements may trigger cognitive overload, especially when videos contain dense vocabulary, unfamiliar topics, or rapid delivery (Sweller, 2019). Without sufficient scaffolding, learners may focus more on entertaining visual elements than the intended linguistic input. Attention management also becomes problematic, as young learners are easily distracted by animations, music, or characters that diminish their focus on language content. Technological and pedagogical readiness likewise poses obstacles: teachers often face unstable internet connections, limited access to devices, or insufficient training in multimedia-based instruction, all of which hinder effective video integration (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). In some cases, cultural and contextual mismatches between video content and learners' real-life environments may reduce comprehension or relevance, making careful content selection and contextual adaptation essential.

These challenges are echoed in several empirical studies. Lauragia and Nnancy (2025) note that learners experience auditory limitations in listening, require clearer visual-text alignment for reading, and face anxiety and limited practice opportunities in speaking, while writing remains underdeveloped due to insufficient structured stimuli in thematic videos. Safira and Isna (2025) similarly report that short thematic videos support listening and reading but are constrained by limited vocabulary exposure; meanwhile, speaking and writing are less facilitated due to the passive nature of videos, low engagement, and restricted device availability. Rahmayati et al. (2025) emphasize that although video assignments improve speaking and listening, learners still struggle with grammar, pronunciation, and psychological barriers such as low confidence, while reading and writing receive less instructional attention. Gökçe (2022) further identifies rapid speech, accent variation, and limited interactivity as key challenges in listening; although subtitles and visuals help reading, improvements in speaking and writing occur only indirectly through increased input. Material suitability and students' technical competence also emerge as inhibiting factors.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that despite their strong potential—particularly for enhancing listening and speaking—the integration of thematic videos in language instruction still faces significant technical, psychological, cognitive, and design-related challenges. To ensure that all four language skills develop optimally, thematic video use must be accompanied by careful material selection, explicit scaffolding, and pedagogical strategies that balance multimodal input with active, meaningful language production.

D. CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature shows that thematic videos offer clear benefits for young learners' English acquisition by providing multimodal input that supports vocabulary growth, comprehension, and engagement across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Their effectiveness, however, depends on careful material selection, teacher mediation, and explicit learning objectives. While videos can enhance motivation and provide authentic language exposure, challenges remain—such as limited attention spans, overreliance on visual cues, teacher workload in selecting appropriate content, and the risk of passive viewing without guided tasks. To achieve meaningful learning outcomes, thematic videos must be integrated with interactive activities, scaffolding, and strategies that build learners' autonomy. Overall, thematic videos hold strong pedagogical potential, but their impact is maximized only when teachers thoughtfully align video use with curriculum goals and provide structured support throughout the learning process.

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