

The Role of the YouTube Channel Learn English for Kids in Children's English Vocabulary Acquisition

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Abstract:

The present study focused on the role of the YouTube channel Learn English for Kids in teaching English to children aged 3--6 years. To achieve the research objectives and address the research questions, the descriptive-analytical method and a content analysis tool were employed. A purposive sample was selected, and forty-six videos designed to teach English vocabulary to children were analysed. The main findings indicated that most of these videos did not exceed 3 minutes, with an average duration of 2.41 minutes. The channel's content was characterised by its variety and relevance to both school and social life. The use of static and animated images, as well as auditory and visual elements, played a significant role in teaching children vocabulary and sentences by transforming abstract concepts into tangible ones, thereby enabling children to understand the meanings of words and sentences.

Keywords: vocabulary; YouTube; English language; child

1. INTRODUCTION

YouTube is one of the most important technological applications in education and its methodologies. It represents a new model that transforms the traditional educational system within institutions by promoting global collaborative learning, continuous education, and ongoing training in various academic and scientific fields. YouTube also constitutes a learning method based on modern communication technologies, including computers, networks, and multimedia such as sound, image, and graphics. Its primary value lies in conveying knowledge to learners in the shortest possible time, with minimal effort and maximum benefit.

Studies confirm that online learning provides the most effective methods, tools, and techniques for creating an interactive learning environment that captures learners' attention, thereby becoming an influential factor in the educational process. It is also regarded as an active response to the worldwide information revolution. Abu Zakaria, through the *Learn English for Kids* channel, has invested material resources and technical tools, including devices and software, to provide high-quality educational content. YouTube thus serves as a platform aimed at achieving multiple educational objectives.

Many electronic platforms have emerged, enhancing the educational process and serving as vital links between teachers and learners. Among the most prominent of these platforms is YouTube, which specialises in delivering videos that combine visual and auditory content, allowing viewers to engage as if they were experiencing the events firsthand. Learning English from an early age is a crucial step in shaping a child's personality and fostering self-confidence. By acquiring this global language, children can develop a range of skills that support their personal growth and active participation in society. As language proficiency strengthens self-assurance, the English language plays a central role in broadening children's understanding of the world around them. English language learning aims to enhance linguistic and communicative skills, which, in turn, build confidence and strengthen children's presence in various real-life situations.

Learning English through the YouTube channel *Learn English for Kids* by Abu Zakaria during a child's early years is a decisive step in developing personality and self-confidence. Interacting with a language other than the mother tongue at an early age is a key factor in fostering linguistic and social skills. The earlier a child begins learning English, the greater their ability to develop fluency in speaking, which boosts self-assurance, improves their capacity to engage effectively in various life situations, enhances memory, and strengthens concentration and attention.

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YouTube plays a vital role in English vocabulary learning by providing rich audiovisual content that enables learners to associate words with real-life contexts, thereby enhancing their ability to remember and comprehend them. Building on this foundation, the present study seeks to address the following main research question: *What is the role of the YouTube channel Learn English for Kids by Abu Zakaria in children's English vocabulary acquisition?*

To achieve a more comprehensive understanding, this study raises the following subquestions:

- What are the steps involved in using the *Learn English for Kids* YouTube channel?
- What presentation methods does the *Learn English for Kids* channel employ in the educational process?
- What themes are emphasised in the videos published on the *Learn English for Kids* channel?
- What language is used in the videos on the *Learn English for Kids* channel?
- What is the duration of the videos published on the *Learn English for Kids* channel?
- What target audience does the *Learn English for Kids* channel focus on in its content?
- How do viewers engage with and respond to videos in the *Learn English for Kids* channel?

2. Research Objectives

- To understand how the artistic techniques employed by the communicator, *Learn English for Kids* by Abu Zakaria, enhance the effectiveness of messages directed at the audience, particularly children, by stimulating their engagement and facilitating effective message delivery.
- To analyse how the types of topics presented in the videos on the *Learn English for Kids* channel influence viewers' interest and benefit, especially for children.
- To identify the pedagogical methods and the audiovisual tools and media used on the channel.
- To highlight the importance of educational YouTube channels, such as *Learn English for Kids*, in training children to develop perceptual,

visual, and auditory discrimination skills that enable them to decode words, recognise them visually, and enhance comprehension.

Theoretical Framework

3. Theoretical Approach of the Study

There are two main opposing approaches to explaining language acquisition, much as in debates over the nature of intelligence. The first approach emphasises the role of innate structures in language acquisition, whereas the second highlights the influence of environmental factors.

3.1. Innatist theory

Proponents of the innatist theory posit the existence of innate developmental structures that enable children to acquire language, whereas imitation and reinforcement play only a secondary role. Noam Chomsky (1972) argues for the existence of an innate language faculty through which raw linguistic input is stored and processed, enabling the child to generate a set of relatively stable and coherent linguistic rules that may differ from those used by adults. Most typically developing children begin acquiring language at roughly the same age and use similar mechanisms, despite variations in the linguistic input provided by their parents and environments.

3.2. Environmental Theory

In contrast, environmental theorists view language acquisition as a form of learning subject to the same principles and laws that govern other forms of learning, such as imitation, reward, punishment, and reinforcement. As children become able to produce speech sounds, they imitate words they hear in their environment. When their speech approximates the prevailing linguistic pattern, adults reinforce it. Consequently, language acquisition and learning are interpreted as outcomes of environmental and socialisation processes. Language is therefore seen as a learned behaviour like any other (Al-Samadi, Fawaz, n.d., p. 129).

4. Previous studies

Al-Atiyat (2018) conducted a study to examine the impact of using YouTube to teach correct English pronunciation to kindergarten children in private schools in the governorate of Amman. The study sample consisted of 43 children from Carthage International Kindergarten, selected purposively. The findings revealed statistically significant differences

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between the mean scores of the two groups on the observation checklist, in favour of the experimental group, which was taught English via YouTube.

Similarly, Al-Shahrani and Ahmed Sadiq (2024) investigated the design of an educational YouTube channel and its impact on English vocabulary acquisition among early childhood learners. An English vocabulary acquisition test was used to collect the data. A purposive sample of children from Wadi Bin Hashbal was selected, with one group assigned as the experimental group and the other as the control group. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in vocabulary acquisition (at the levels of recall, analysis, and application) between the experimental group, which learned through the YouTube educational channel, and the control group, which was taught via traditional methods, in favour of the experimental group.

The researcher noted that these studies align with the present research in their aim to explore the level of English vocabulary acquisition through YouTube.

5. Definitions of Concepts and Terms

Operational Definition of “Child.”

A child is an individual aged between 2 and 6 years, representing the early childhood stage during which essential skills such as walking and language are acquired.

YouTube.

YouTube is an electronic platform that provides a wide variety of videos across different fields, allowing users to watch content directly in real time (Al-Shahrani & Ahmed Sadiq, previously cited, p. 168).

Operational Definition of YouTube.

YouTube is a tool and medium used by English language teachers to explain and simplify educational content for children through video clips published and shared online.

Language.

Language is a set of sound symbols governed by a specific system, the meanings of which are mutually agreed upon by members of a given culture to achieve communication (Taima, n.d., p. 153).

English as a Second Language.

In most societies, English is considered a secondary language learned to meet educational requirements, professional goals, academic aspirations, or personal needs. It is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world (Al-Shahrani & Ahmed Sadiq, previously cited, p. 169).

Operational Definition of the English Language for Children.

English language instruction for children refers to teaching and presenting English at an early stage, whether as a second or foreign language, to enable children to develop communicative and comprehension skills in a manner appropriate to their age, cognitive abilities, and psychological development.

Vocabulary.

Vocabulary refers to the total number of words a person knows in a language, whether actively used or not. Vocabulary typically develops and expands with age, serving as a fundamental tool for communication and knowledge acquisition. The words a person uses in daily activities are called *active vocabulary*, whereas the words they understand but do not use are referred to as *passive vocabulary* (ar.wikipedia.org).

Vocabulary Teaching.

Vocabulary teaching is the process of enabling learners to pronounce vocabulary accurately, understand its meaning, identify its derivations, use it correctly within linguistic structures, and select appropriate words in the right contexts (Taima, previously cited, p. 611).

Operational Definition of English Vocabulary Learning.

English vocabulary learning involves teaching letters, words, correct pronunciation, writing, and spelling through songs, images, and educational videos from the YouTube channel *Learn English for Kids* by Abu Zakaria.

Operational Definition of the Learn English for Kids Channel.

The *Learn English for Kids* channel is an online platform that offers a variety of prerecorded videos, including a program dedicated to teaching English vocabulary to children. The videos used in this study were selected to align with the research topic and sample.

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6. Illustrative Steps for Using the YouTube Channel *Learn English for Kids*

- Access the *Learn with Zakaria* channel through **Google** or **YouTube**.

Figure 1

Illustrative method of accessing the *Learn with Zakaria* YouTube channel via Google

Source: Google website (<https://www.google.com/search>)

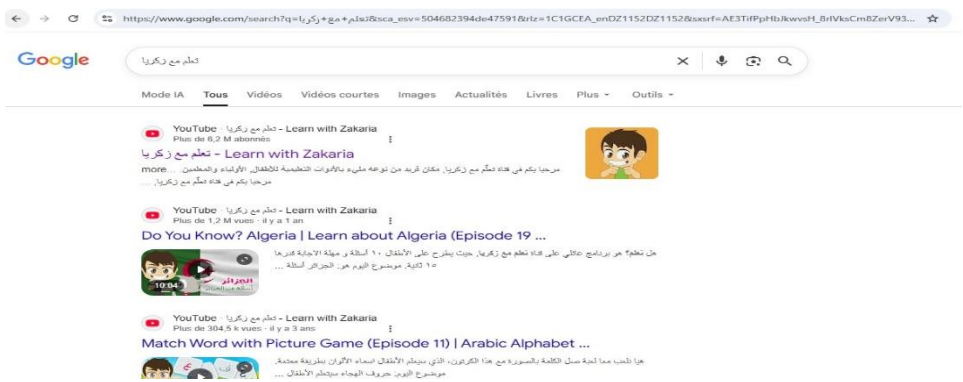
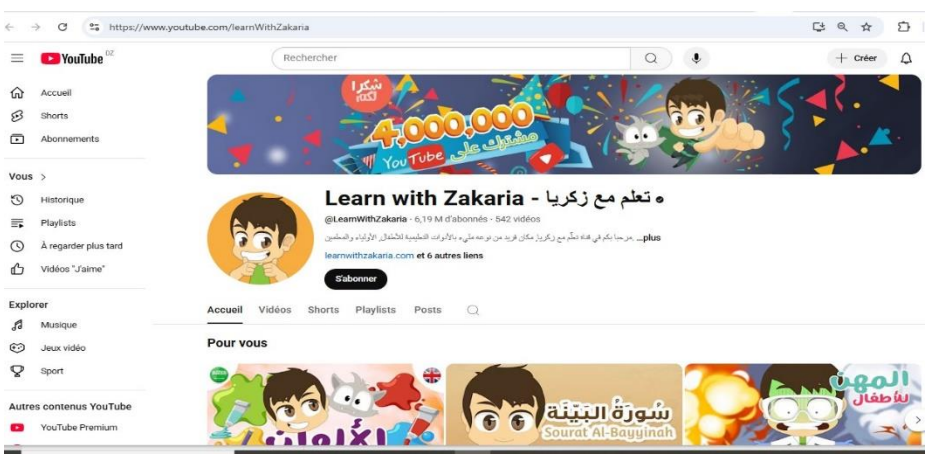


Figure 2

Illustrative of how to access the *Learn with Zakaria* channel through YouTube



(<https://www.youtube.com/learnWithZakaria>).

- Locate the channel icon on the YouTube or Google homepage.
- The types of programmes and content available on the YouTube channel are identified, and the appropriate programme for parents or the child is selected. Parents should use the channel for the first time to adjust video-viewing settings and ensure that their child has access to the content they need.
- A “show” screen will appear, along with the channel’s content categories, including children’s songs without music, Arabic, French, and English language learning, as well as other topics such as exploration.
- The English language program is selected, the content suitable for the child’s age is chosen, and the play button is clicked to watch the video.

Figure 3

Illustrative of the icon and access page for English-language learning content on YouTube.

Source: (<https://www.youtube.com/learnWithZakaria>)



Figure 4

Illustrative of the icon and content page for learning the color blue in English.

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Source: ([https://www.youtube.com/watch](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FA_Nbh-BQ1o&list=PLEaGEZnOHpUOfreeYb8RYr5NehXZ2FMKz&index=2))



The steps for viewing and downloading videos from the *Learn with Zakaria* YouTube channel are straightforward, making it easy for any user, whether familiar with technology or not, to follow them.

7. Fieldwork

7.1. Research Method and Tool

The nature of the research problem determines the method to be chosen. This study adopts a descriptive analytical method, which is based on "describing specific phenomena, events, or objects, collecting facts, information, and observations about them, describing their particular conditions, and reporting their actual state as it exists in reality" (Al-Mahmoudi, 2009, p. 47).

In line with this approach, a research tool was used for data collection and analysis, namely, content analysis, which is defined as "a deconstructive study of communicative materials written, audio, or audiovisual, such as online content which relies primarily on analysing formal categories (how it is said) and content categories (what is said)" (Dalio, 2004, p. 252). Two categories—form and content—were selected for analysing the YouTube videos.

- The **form category** includes duration and presentation methods.
- The **content category** includes scientific material, the target audience, and the level of interaction.

7.2. Research Population and Sample

7.2.1. Research population

The research population comprises English-language programs on the educational YouTube channel *Learn with Zakaria* (*Learn English for Kids*) from 16 October 2015 to 15 March 2020.

7.2.2. Research Sample

For sample selection, a purposive sampling method was used, defined as "a sample in which the researcher intentionally selects individuals because they possess specific characteristics not found in others" (Hamed, 2008, p. 136).

A total of 46 videos for learning English vocabulary were recorded on the *Learn English for Kids* YouTube channel. The channel includes 23 videos focused on developing letter recognition skills (letter sounds and shapes), followed by six videos dedicated to improving reading accuracy by teaching short vowels, shapes, and colours. The third group, comprising three videos, focuses on kitchen tools and their components. The fourth group, with four videos, focuses on learning about family members and parts of the human body. The fifth group, which also consists of 4 videos, explores the external world through lessons on professions and means of transportation. Finally, the sixth group, consisting of 2 videos, aims to develop reading comprehension and written expression skills.

7.3. Introduction to the Zakaria Channel

The *Learn with Zakaria* YouTube channel contains 542 educational videos designed for children, including those with special educational needs. The channel has over 6.19 million subscribers and 1,296,572,245 views. It was launched on 16 September 2012 in the United Arab Emirates and is distinguished by its use of creative content delivery methods. The channel features a variety of specialised programs aimed at teaching children aged 3-6 years, the Holy Qur'an, songs, "Laila's World," and other educational programs designed to promote learning in a stimulating and accessible way within a specific timeframe. Additionally, the channel helps learners enhance their cognitive skills, intellectual development, and capacity for thinking and understanding. The channel name is presented in both Arabic and English—*تعلم مع زكريا*/*Learn with Zakaria*—and its YouTube channel link is <https://youtube.com/@learnwithZakariakids>. It also maintains accounts on other social media platforms (see Figure 5).

In this study, we analysed the content of the *Learn English for Kids* section of the *Learn with Zakaria* channel. This channel is primarily educational, offering a wide range of teaching tools and resources for children. It provides engaging videos that make children smile, laugh, and

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learn simultaneously, covering the alphabet, colours, shapes, animal names, fruits, vegetables, and many other topics in English.

Figure 5:

Officials *Learn with the Zakaria* YouTube Channel and Social Media Platforms



8. Analysis of Form Categories

8.1. Duration Category

Table 1

Distribution of the percentage of videos according to the skill being taught.

Skill Name	Duration (min)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Learning to write letters A–Y/Learning A–B–C	2.41/4.56	23	50.00
School dialogue	3.22/9.29	1	2.17
Means of transport/Car colours	4.19	2	4.43
Numbers 1–10/1–20	2.10/7.47	2	4.34
Shapes/Colours	3.58/14.8/2.35	1	2.17
Kitchen tools/Vegetables/Fruits	3.53/6.16/4.36	3	6.51
Family members/Human body/Fingers	4.13/5.38/3.06	3	6.51
Planets/Days of the week	4.11/1.57	2	4.34

Professions	3.56	1	2.17
Written expression	2.28	1	2.17
Opposites	10.03	1	2.17
Forest animals/Sea animals	3.36/5.36	2	4.34
Total	100.67	46	100.00

Source: Research design by Saifi Radia, 2025.

The analytical study of the 46-video sample from the English language learning program on the *Learn with Zakaria* channel (*Learn English for Kids*) revealed that the highest proportion of content (50%) focused on letter recognition, with an average duration exceeding 2 minutes and 41 seconds. Approximately 4.43% of the videos lasted more than 4 minutes and addressed topics related to means of transport and car colours. In contrast, 2.77% of the videos dealt with vocabulary related to family members, kitchen tools, forest animals, planets, professions, written expressions, opposites, shapes, and numbers.

These findings indicate that video duration plays a crucial role in influencing viewer engagement and comprehension. Children particularly prefer short videos of 1--3 minutes that cover familiar, concrete topics such as kitchen tools, forest animals, days of the week, professions, the five senses, and shapes. Such topics are closely tied to children's cognitive environment, increasing the likelihood of vocabulary acquisition in real-life contexts that can be applied in everyday conversation. Shorter videos also tend to be more effective in maintaining attention, preventing boredom, and facilitating repeated viewing and better understanding than longer videos, which require greater cognitive effort to process.

The longest recorded video duration, 14.8 minutes, was observed in a lesson on colours and shapes, followed by 10.03 minutes for a lesson on opposites and 9.29 minutes for a school dialogue. This suggests that certain videos exceeded 9 minutes because they were designed to sustain attention and align with modern learning approaches that promote focus and structured engagement. These longer videos typically cover complex topics or involve extended dialogues that rely on role-playing, repetition, and imitation among multiple characters. Such extended exposure gives children more opportunities to hear, repeat, and internalise vocabulary and sentences, enriching their linguistic repertoire and expressive abilities.

8.2. Language Category

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Language refers to the set of symbols, words, and signs that Abu Zakaria uses to engage viewers and convey messages on specific topics. The channel's creator consistently uses English to deliver content aimed at teaching children vocabulary and words in this language. Acquiring a new language is an essential skill in contemporary life. Linguists and language education specialists emphasise the importance of introducing a foreign language at an early age, as children at this stage possess the cognitive ability to learn multiple languages without negatively affecting their mother tongue.

8.3. Artistic Techniques Category

The programs used to design and produce the educational videos on the *Learn English for Kids* channel vary. The channel owner relies on tools from the Adobe Creative Cloud, which can be summarised as follows:

- Adobe Illustrator: Used to illustrate speech and create visual elements.
- Adobe After Effects: Used to enlarge scenes and incorporate sound effects and animated graphics.
- Adobe Animate: Used to create interactive animations.
- Adobe Audition: Used to mix and record audio.

The production process begins by drawing characters—including facial expressions, mouth movements, backgrounds, and scene elements—in Illustrator. These illustrations are then transferred to animate, where they are animated according to the required scene. The characters and backgrounds are assembled in After Effects, and finally, sound effects are added to Audition. Through this workflow, the channel's educational videos are produced.

The findings indicate that the artistic techniques used in the channel play a key role in enhancing information delivery, making the learning process more engaging and effective.

9. Content Category Analysis

9.1. Topic Category

The videos on the *Learn with Zakaria* channel demonstrate how children learn letter sounds through two primary methods: the first uses flashcards, and the second involves watching videos that present letter sounds in an audiovisual format to enhance comprehension. These topics

reflect a digital educational context that reorders pedagogical priorities according to content appeal and popularity rather than solely pedagogical value. Letter-related content holds a central position, not only because it serves as the primary gateway to language acquisition but also because it is typically presented through engaging visual methods, such as songs, colours, and animations. This approach makes the content appealing to children and easy for parents and educators to use, as reflected in high repetition rates and view counts.

Topics related to animals, body parts, and tools are presented as edutainment experiences that blend information with entertainment. These topics generate moderate engagement but still lag behind letters and numbers in popularity. This suggests that children are more drawn to content that involves sound, images, and direct sensory or playful connections. Consequently, numbers and shapes also attract high viewership.

Conceptual skills such as singular and plural forms, opposites, professions, or days of the week are treated as secondary content, presented briefly or in general terms. This approach assumes that children acquire such concepts naturally through their environment and daily life. However, this traditional perspective marginalises key conceptual skills within digital educational spaces, despite their importance in building children's mental lexicon and supporting social interaction.

Overall, the content spans a wide range of topics, including fruits and vegetables, school tools, colours, insects, cars, numbers, and days of the week that are familiar to children in their daily environment. This thematic diversity constitutes an effective pedagogical strategy, as it broadens children's vocabulary, particularly when presented in conversational and performative contexts.

In conclusion, digital content reflects the classical progression of language acquisition: beginning with sound (letters), moving to words (singular and plural), and then to sentences and meaning. However, it prioritises formal levels of language over contextual communicative skills. This tendency presents a challenge for digital content creators, who must integrate both engagement and educational functionality to keep children actively involved without falling into repetitive patterns or neglecting deeper semantic learning.

9.2. Audience Category

The analytical study of the *Learn with Zakaria* channel revealed that its content primarily targets beginners and learners who seek to acquire

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English vocabulary and practice correct pronunciation, as well as children with difficulties in concentration and attention.

The channel's creator deliberately employs diverse visual and explanatory techniques that align with children's inherent learning characteristics. Some children respond well to abstract symbols; others require movement to maintain engagement, and emotions and affective cues stimulate most of them. Consequently, the variety of video content reflects an awareness of individual differences and learner diversity.

These videos effectively support differentiated instruction, addressing children's varied learning styles — whether kinesthetic, emotional, or cognitive — by stimulating thinking and encouraging active, enthusiastic participation in the learning process.

9.3. Interaction and Viewership Category

Viewership refers to the number of viewers who watch educational video content. At the same time, *interaction* includes various forms of engagement between viewers and the content creator on the platform, such as comments, likes and dislikes, sharing, and subscriptions. These elements play a significant role in strengthening the connection between viewers and content creators.

The results of the analytical study on children's interaction with the videos show notable engagement, as evidenced by view counts and likes. The video “Learning Numbers in English from 1--20” had the highest number of views, reaching 12,001,563, and the most likes, with 117,000. It was followed by “Learning the Days of the Week”, which achieved 5.6 million views and 60,000 likes, and “Learning Car Colours”, which reached 5.4 million views and 33,000 likes. The “Learning Letters A to Y” video recorded 3.6 million views and 29,000 likes, whereas “Learning to Write the Letter A” reached 2.7 million views and 23,000 likes.

The “Learning Fruits” video achieved 1.5 million views and 10,000 likes, whereas the “Learning Numbers from 1 to 10” video reached 1.9 million views and 12,000 likes. Finally, “Dialogue at School: It's Raining” recorded 2.7 million views and 22,000 likes. The remaining 35 educational videos on the channel, including those on writing letters (Y–T–X–W–V–U–S–P–O–M–N–L–K–J–I–H–G–F–E–D–C–B), opposites, planets, body parts, fingers, family members, professions, kitchen tools, shapes, and forest and sea animals, did not exceed 900,000 views or 800,000 likes individually.

These findings indicate that high viewership reflects strong visual and auditory engagement and that enjoyable, stimulating content on YouTube helps sustain learners' motivation, making language learning less tedious and more appealing.

The *Learn English for Kids* channel by Abu Zakaria focuses on children's interests and familiar daily experiences, thereby strengthening vocabulary retention and promoting meaningful language learning.

Visual materials and images play crucial roles in the teaching and learning process and can be utilised in multiple ways. They help capture and sustain learners' attention, stimulate motivation to learn, and can be effectively used to support the acquisition of various skills, such as speaking, listening, and oral presentation. Moreover, they help address pronunciation difficulties and verbal errors, thereby enhancing overall language-learning outcomes for children.

10. General Findings of the Study

- A key characteristic of the videos on the *Learn English for Kids* channel by Abu Zakaria is that most do not exceed 3 minutes, with average durations of 2 minutes and 41 seconds. This short length is one of the main reasons behind the popularity of such videos on YouTube.
- The longest recorded video duration was 14.8 minutes (colours and shapes), followed by the opposite video (10.03 minutes) and a school dialogue video (9.29 minutes). Videos lasting longer than nine minutes are designed to maintain attention, align with modern learning methods, and support concentration. These longer videos typically cover complex topics or extended dialogues involving role exchange, repetition, and imitation among multiple characters. This length allows for increased exposure to words and sentences, enriching children's linguistic repertoire and expressive skills.
- The use of English in both its spoken and written forms is a core element of the channel's content.
- Language development plays a crucial role in reading instruction. The more children speak, the richer their vocabulary becomes and the more their knowledge expands.
- Visual materials are used extensively with children: images of different shapes (animals, humans, and plants), colours (red, yellow, and blue), and sizes (large, small, and medium).

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- The channel features diverse content, including 46 educational videos on themes related to school and social life, as well as weekly activities.
- The topics cover a wide range of familiar elements from children's everyday environment, including fruits and vegetables, school tools, colours, insects, cars, numbers, and days of the week. This variety of themes functions as an effective educational strategy to broaden children's vocabulary, especially when presented through conversational and performative contexts.
- The *Learn English for Kids* channel by Abu Zakaria focuses on children's interests, linking vocabulary learning to their daily experiences.
- The channel creator employs a variety of visual and explanatory tools that are suited to children's natural learning characteristics. Some children excel at understanding abstract symbols, others need movement, and some are more responsive to emotions and affective stimuli. The diverse video content accommodates individual differences, addressing kinaesthetic, emotional, and cognitive learning styles to stimulate thinking and promote active engagement.
- The use of static and animated images, as well as auditory and visual elements, plays a significant role in teaching children vocabulary and sentence structure by transforming abstract concepts into tangible experiences, helping them grasp word meanings and sentence functions more effectively.
- The channel combines informative and modelling approaches, which represent one of the most effective strategies for teaching young learners.
- The highest viewership and engagement were recorded for the "Learning Numbers from 1 to 20" video, which achieved 117,000 likes and 12,001,563 views, reflecting its strong appeal and effectiveness.

11. CONCLUSION

The *Learn English for Kids* YouTube channel is an effective educational tool for teaching English, as it integrates sounds, visuals, and colour to significantly enhance comprehension and learning. The use of realistic imagery and attractive colours in educational videos captures learners' attention and motivates them to concentrate, making vocabulary and grammar acquisition easier and more engaging. Furthermore, the visual

diversity of the videos helps construct explicit mental representations of new concepts, thereby supporting the development of listening, speaking, and writing skills among children.

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