



JEELS

(Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)

P-ISSN: 2407-2575 E-ISSN: 2503-2194

<https://jurnalfaktarbiyah.iainkediri.ac.id/index.php/jeels>

FOSTERING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING THROUGH YOUTUBE AND WHATSAPP: INSIGHTS FROM EFL READING COMPREHENSION COURSES

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Abstract: The integration of social media platforms in EFL reading instruction remains underexplored, particularly regarding their combined pedagogical potential for enhancing collaborative learning experiences. This study investigates how YouTube and WhatsApp function as complementary collaborative learning tools in EFL reading courses, addressing the gap in research on their synergistic effects on reading comprehension and peer interaction. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 100 third-semester students through questionnaires, with 40 randomly selected participants providing reflective journals. The research examined students' perceptions of these platforms' effectiveness in supporting collaborative

¹**Citation in APA style:**

Isma A., Sudewi P.W., Putri A.M.J. (2025). Fostering collaborative learning through YouTube and WhatsApp: Insights from EFL reading comprehension courses. *JEELS*, 12(2), 815-841.

DOI: 10.30762/jeels.v12i2.5138

Submission: March 2025, Revision: August 2025, Publication: October 2025

reading activities and identified correlations between platform use and learning engagement. The findings indicate that students perceived both platforms positively, with YouTube presentations supporting comprehension of reading materials and WhatsApp discussions fostering collaborative engagement. However, challenges such as limited interaction during video presentations, technological barriers, and message overload in group chats were also reported. Thematic analysis further revealed five key themes: learning engagement, collaborative experiences, online learning challenges, platform benefits, and improvement suggestions. The study contributes practical insights for optimizing social media integration in EFL reading instruction through structured engagement strategies, balanced participation guidelines, and blended learning approaches that combine synchronous and asynchronous collaborative reading activities.

Keywords: *collaborative learning, EFL reading comprehension, social media, WhatsApp, YouTube*

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, the integration of social media platforms into education has revolutionized the way students engage with learning materials, interact with peers, and develop their language skills (Isma, 2023; Isma et al., 2024). Among the various social media platforms available, YouTube and WhatsApp have emerged as powerful tools for language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The growing reliance on these digital platforms is driven by their ability to provide learners with flexible, engaging, and collaborative learning experiences (Albahiri & Alhaj, 2020; Apoko & Waluyo, 2025; Qureshi et al., 2023). Given the increasing demand for innovative pedagogical strategies that cater to 21st-century learners, exploring the potential of YouTube and WhatsApp as instructional tools in EFL classrooms is both relevant and necessary.

The integration of YouTube and WhatsApp in EFL reading instruction aligns with key educational theories that emphasize collaborative learning and social constructivism. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory posits that learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative meaning-making processes, where learners construct knowledge through dialogue and shared experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of digital literacy, Gee's (2017) concept of affinity spaces provides a framework for understanding how online platforms create communities where learners with shared interests collaborate and learn from each other. These theoretical foundations support the use of social media platforms as spaces for collaborative reading activities, where students can engage in peer discussions, share interpretations, and co-construct understanding of texts.

Collaborative learning, as defined by Dillenbourg (1999), refers to educational situations where learners work together in small groups to accomplish shared learning goals through coordinated efforts and mutual support. In EFL reading contexts, collaborative learning encompasses activities such as peer-assisted reading, group text analysis, shared comprehension strategies, and collective meaning-making processes (Amrang et al., 2025; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Wahyurianto & Sylvia, 2024). Digital platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp operatively operate collaborative learning by providing asynchronous and synchronous communication channels that facilitate peer interaction, content sharing, and collective knowledge construction beyond traditional classroom boundaries.

Recent studies have highlighted the benefits of using YouTube in language learning. For instance, Saed et al. (2021) found that YouTube significantly enhances students' speaking skills by providing authentic pronunciation models, engaging visual content, and diverse linguistic input. Similarly, Jin (2024) demonstrated that YouTube's interactive features, such as commenting and content creation, contribute to reducing writing anxiety and improving students' proficiency in written communication. However, research specifically focusing on

YouTube's role in EFL reading comprehension remains limited, with most studies concentrating on oral skills development.

WhatsApp, on the other hand, has been widely recognized for its role in fostering collaboration and peer learning. Mulyono et al. (2021) reported that WhatsApp enhances student engagement by facilitating real-time discussions and providing a platform for exchanging ideas beyond classroom settings. Arifani (2019) found that WhatsApp-based group discussions significantly improved students' writing cohesion and coherence, while Farahian and Parhamnia (2022) emphasized its role in promoting reflective learning among EFL students. Additionally, Enakrire and Kehinde (2022) identified WhatsApp as a useful platform for knowledge sharing, particularly in mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) environments.

Despite the growing body of research on social media in language learning, significant gaps remain in the literature regarding the combined use of YouTube and WhatsApp for fostering collaborative learning in EFL reading courses. Most existing studies focus on the impact of these platforms individually rather than examining their synergistic potential, the enhanced educational outcomes that emerge when platforms are integrated strategically to complement each other's affordances (Albahiri & Alhaj, 2020; Apoko & Waluyo, 2025; Jin, 2024; Mulyono et al., 2021). This synergistic approach is theoretically important because it addresses the multifaceted nature of reading comprehension, which involves visual processing, auditory input, textual analysis, and peer discussion. Pedagogically, understanding this synergy is crucial because reading instruction in EFL contexts requires diverse input modalities and collaborative meaning-making opportunities that single platforms cannot adequately provide.

The significance of studying their combined use lies in the unique affordances each platform offers for reading comprehension. YouTube provides multimodal input through visual and auditory channels, supporting comprehension through video-based text explanations, while WhatsApp enables sustained peer discussion and collaborative text interpretation. When integrated, these platforms can create

comprehensive learning ecosystems that address different aspects of reading comprehension, from initial content exposure to deeper collaborative analysis (Jiang & Zhao, 2025; Saed et al., 2021).

Furthermore, existing research has predominantly focused on YouTube for developing listening and speaking skills (Albahiri & Alhaj, 2020; Baroroh & Rizal, 2023; Bella & Huda, 2022; Haerudin et al., 2023; Saed et al., 2021) and WhatsApp for enhancing writing and discussion skills (Arifani, 2019; Hartati et al., 2023; Mulyono et al., 2021; Tanashur et al., 2024; Yuliantini et al., 2021). Few studies have explored their integrated use in improving reading comprehension through collaborative activities such as peer-assisted text analysis, group reading discussions, and collaborative interpretation of complex texts. Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence on how the combination of these platforms influences student engagement and peer interaction specifically in EFL reading contexts, where learners need scaffolding for both linguistic comprehension and critical thinking skills.

This study aims to investigate the role of YouTube and WhatsApp in fostering collaborative learning in EFL reading courses. The specific objectives are to examine students' perceptions of YouTube and WhatsApp as collaborative learning tools in EFL reading instruction, identify key benefits and challenges associated with their integrated use in reading courses, analyze correlations between platform usage, student engagement, and collaborative reading outcomes, and provide pedagogical recommendations for optimizing their integration in EFL reading education. Based on these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What are students' perceptions of the use of YouTube and WhatsApp in fostering collaborative learning in EFL reading instruction? (2) What are the perceived benefits and challenges of using YouTube and WhatsApp collaboratively to support student engagement, peer interaction, and reading comprehension?

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2017), which involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data followed by qualitative data collection and analysis to provide deeper insights into the initial findings. This design was specifically chosen for this Indonesian EFL context because it allows for comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena where students' perceptions (quantitative) need to be explained through their lived experiences (qualitative). The explanatory design was particularly suitable as the qualitative phase serves to explain and elaborate on the quantitative results, providing contextual understanding of why students perceive YouTube and WhatsApp in certain ways and what underlying factors influence their collaborative learning experiences (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Ivankova et al., 2006). In practice, the qualitative phase extends the quantitative results by revealing the mechanisms behind students' perceptions, uncovering specific challenges not captured in survey responses, and identifying practical suggestions for improving the integration of these platforms.

Context and Participants

The study was conducted at Universitas Sulawesi Barat, Indonesia, specifically within the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. The population consisted of all third-semester students enrolled in reading courses ($N = 105$). The target sample included 100 students from five different reading classes who were selected using purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria: (1) active enrollment in reading courses that integrated YouTube and WhatsApp, (2) completion of at least three collaborative learning activities using both platforms, and (3) basic familiarity with both platforms prior to the study. For the qualitative phase, 40 participants were randomly selected from the 100 survey respondents using systematic random sampling (every 2.5th participant) to ensure representativeness across different classes. No additional criteria such

as gender balance or GPA were applied to maintain the randomness of selection, as the study aimed to capture diverse perspectives across the student population. The instructional design involved students creating and sharing presentation videos on YouTube related to reading texts and participating in follow-up discussions via WhatsApp groups. These activities were specifically designed to support collaborative reading comprehension through peer interaction, shared interpretation of texts, and collective meaning-making processes.

Instruments and Measures

A questionnaire was developed based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework (Davis, 1989) and collaborative learning principles (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 1999) to assess students' perceptions of YouTube and WhatsApp as collaborative reading tools. The instrument was adapted from validated surveys on technology integration in language learning (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000) and contained nine Likert-scale items rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was piloted with 30 students from similar reading courses who were not part of the main study. Based on pilot feedback, items were refined for clarity and cultural appropriateness. The final instrument covered perceived benefits (Items 1-5) and challenges (Items 6-9) associated with using these platforms specifically for collaborative reading activities. The reliability of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.82$), indicating good internal consistency. Reflective journal prompts were developed and validated by two experts in EFL education and educational technology. The final version of the reflective journal prompts is presented in Appendix A. These prompts were designed to elicit detailed responses about collaborative reading processes rather than general technology use.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred over one academic semester (16 weeks). The questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms to all 100 participants after they had completed a series of collaborative

reading activities using YouTube and WhatsApp, including peer text analysis, video-based reading discussions, and collaborative interpretation tasks. Following the survey, the selected 40 participants (S1-S40) were asked to complete their reflective journals within two weeks. Clear instructions were provided for both instruments, and participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated to assess the central tendency and variability of responses. Correlation analysis was conducted using Pearson's correlation coefficients to examine relationships between different aspects of students' experiences, with statistical significance set at $p < .05$ to ensure rigor in identifying meaningful relationships. Reflective journals were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase approach outlined by Clarke and Braun (2017): familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This process involved multiple readings of the journals, systematic coding of relevant segments using NVivo software, and the identification of recurring patterns across the data set. To ensure intercoder reliability, two researchers independently coded 25% of the data, achieving an agreement rate of 87% (Cohen's kappa = 0.84), indicating substantial agreement. Disagreements were resolved through discussion and consensus. The emerging themes were then reviewed and validated by both researchers to ensure their relevance to the research questions and their grounding in the data.

FINDINGS

The results section presents findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses, providing insights into students' perceptions and experiences of using YouTube and WhatsApp as collaborative learning tools specifically for reading comprehension activities.

Students' Perceptions of YouTube and WhatsApp for Collaborative Reading

Descriptive statistical analysis revealed students' overall perceptions regarding the use of YouTube and WhatsApp for collaborative learning in reading courses. Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for each survey item, specifically focusing on how these platforms support reading comprehension through collaborative activities.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of students' perceptions on YouTube and WhatsApp use for collaborative reading (N=100)

Item	Survey Statement	Mean	SD
1	Using YouTube video presentations helps me better understand reading texts and their main concepts	3.51	0.78
2	Watching peers' presentation videos on YouTube increases my engagement in reading comprehension discussions	3.48	0.87
3	WhatsApp group discussions facilitate better collaboration in analyzing and interpreting reading texts	3.43	0.89
4	Peer feedback via WhatsApp helps me improve my understanding of complex reading materials	3.57	0.91
5	I feel more engaged in reading activities through collaborative discussions on WhatsApp and YouTube	3.49	0.88
6	Creating group presentation videos about reading texts is challenging for me	2.70	1.10
7	WhatsApp discussions about reading materials are sometimes difficult to follow due to message volume	3.20	1.05
8	I struggle to understand reading content through video presentations without direct interaction with presenters	3.60	0.90
9	Technological limitations hinder my full participation in collaborative reading activities	3.56	1.05

The findings indicate generally positive perceptions toward both platforms for supporting collaborative reading comprehension, with mean scores for beneficial aspects ranging from 3.43 to 3.57 on a 5-point scale. Notably, students particularly valued peer feedback received through WhatsApp for improving reading comprehension (M = 3.57, SD = 0.91) and acknowledged YouTube's contribution to better

understanding of reading texts and concepts ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.78$). The data reveals that students found WhatsApp group discussions effective for collaborative text analysis and interpretation ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.89$), while YouTube presentations enhanced their engagement in reading comprehension discussions ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.87$). Overall engagement in reading activities through these collaborative platforms was positively perceived ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.88$).

Despite these positive perceptions, students also identified significant challenges specifically related to reading comprehension activities. The most prominent challenge was understanding reading content through video presentations without direct interaction ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.90$), followed closely by technological limitations that hindered participation in collaborative reading activities ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.05$). Students reported moderate difficulty with message volume in WhatsApp reading discussions ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.05$). Among the challenges, creating group presentation videos about reading texts appeared to be the least problematic ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.10$), though the relatively high standard deviation suggests considerable variation in students' experiences.

Correlations among Key Aspects of the Learning Experience

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between different aspects of students' experiences using YouTube and WhatsApp for collaborative reading activities. The analysis revealed several significant relationships ($p < .05$), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation matrix of survey items related to collaborative reading experience

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	1.00	0.45*	0.28*	0.30*	0.35*	-0.06	0.22*	-0.07	0.03
2	0.45*	1.00	0.40*	0.38*	0.51*	-0.15	0.02	-0.18	0.06
3	0.28*	0.40*	1.00	0.47*	0.64*	-0.13	-0.14	-0.19	-0.13
4	0.30*	0.38*	0.47*	1.00	0.53*	-0.11	-0.13	-0.13	-0.01
5	0.35*	0.51*	0.64*	0.53*	1.00	-0.35*	-0.16	-0.23*	-0.03
6	-0.06	-0.15	-0.13	-0.11	-0.35*	1.00	0.40*	0.29*	0.24*
7	0.22*	0.02	-0.14	-0.13	-0.16	0.40*	1.00	0.48*	0.30*

8	-0.07	-0.18	-0.19	-0.13	-0.23*	0.29*	0.48*	1.00	0.26*
9	0.03	0.06	-0.13	-0.01	-0.03	0.24*	0.30*	0.26*	1.00

Note: * indicates $p < .05$

The strongest positive correlation was observed between WhatsApp discussions facilitating better collaboration in text analysis (Item 3) and overall engagement in reading activities (Item 5) ($r = 0.64$, $p < .001$). This suggests that effective collaborative text analysis through WhatsApp significantly enhances students' engagement with reading materials. Similarly, peer feedback via WhatsApp for reading comprehension (Item 4) showed a strong positive correlation with overall engagement ($r = 0.53$, $p < .001$), highlighting the importance of peer interaction in collaborative reading processes.

YouTube-related items also demonstrated positive relationships with reading engagement metrics. Watching peers' presentations about reading texts (Item 2) correlated positively with better understanding of reading materials (Item 1) ($r = 0.45$, $p < .001$) and with overall engagement in reading activities (Item 5) ($r = 0.51$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that both platforms contribute complementary benefits to collaborative reading comprehension experiences.

Notably, difficulties in creating group presentation videos about reading texts (Item 6) negatively correlated with overall engagement in reading activities (Item 5) ($r = -0.35$, $p < .001$), indicating that technical challenges may hinder full participation in collaborative reading tasks. The struggle to understand reading content without direct interaction (Item 8) showed a negative correlation with engagement ($r = -0.23$, $p < .05$), suggesting that the asynchronous nature of video presentations may limit comprehension for some students.

Key Themes from Students' Reflective Journals

After going through students' reflective journals, we identified five recurring themes:

Engagement in Learning

Engagement varied considerably across the student group. While many reported that video and multimedia content sparked greater interest in the material, others struggled to maintain consistent involvement. One student described their experience this way:

"I feel more engaged in discussions because watching videos makes the material easier to understand." (S17)

The visual and audio elements in video presentations seemed to help students grasp concepts more easily while keeping their attention. Another student shared a similar thought:

"The combination of video presentations and group discussions helped me stay focused on the topic." (S6)

However, the engagement was not universal. Some students struggled to stay actively involved in WhatsApp discussions:

"I still find it difficult to stay engaged in WhatsApp discussions because not everyone participates actively." (S4)

These different experiences suggest that while videos and multimedia typically boost engagement, online discussions might need better organization to keep everyone consistently involved.

Collaboration in YouTube and WhatsApp

Students found that working together on YouTube videos and talking about the work in WhatsApp groups was very helpful. Creating a video forced them to understand the topic deeply. As one student said,

"Making a video presentation helped me understand the material better since I had to explain it clearly to others." (S7)

This process not only strengthened their own grasp of the topic but also built up their presentation skills. However, these collaborative projects also highlighted a common problem in group work: uneven contribution. As one student pointed out,

"Not all group members contributed equally, which made the collaboration less effective." (S14)

Coordination difficulties surfaced repeatedly in student reflections:

"It was hard to coordinate because some members did not respond on time in the WhatsApp group." (S15)

What we see here is that while creating content together has real value, there's clearly a need for better approaches to handle unequal participation and timing issues.

Challenges in Online Learning

Students ran into several problems when using YouTube and WhatsApp for coursework. Internet connectivity issues came up repeatedly:

"Sometimes I struggle to upload videos due to poor internet connection, and it delays my participation." (S4, S18, S20, S25, S33, S36)

WhatsApp's asynchronous format created friction for some learners:

"I prefer live discussions because WhatsApp messages can be confusing and lack immediate responses." (S9)

A number of students mentioned feeling overwhelmed by the volume of messages accumulating in group chats, which complicated their ability to follow discussion threads. These challenges highlight an important consideration for educators: despite the genuine opportunities these platforms provide, they bring technical limitations and communication complexities that can't be ignored.

Benefits of YouTube and WhatsApp

Even with these challenges, students still saw major benefits. They repeatedly said that video content helped them understand the lessons much better. As one student put it,

"Watching YouTube videos related to the topics made the lessons clearer and easier to comprehend." (S10, S13, S18, S20, S32)

Getting feedback from classmates was another benefit that many students valued:

"Receiving feedback from my classmates helped me improve my understanding and writing skills." (S7, S15, S17, S24, S31, S38)

Students also liked being able to learn on their own schedule:

"WhatsApp discussions help me to reflect on the topic since I can read others' perspectives." (S6, S21, S24, S31, S38)

What comes through in these comments is how YouTube and WhatsApp support different parts of learning, from getting the basics down to thinking more deeply about the material and building new skills.

Suggestions for Improvement

Looking forward, students provided constructive feedback to enhance the learning model. A prominent suggestion was to blend the flexibility of asynchronous platforms with the immediacy of live interaction. Students voiced this,

"It would be better if we had live discussions in addition to WhatsApp to clarify things in real-time." (S12, S16)

Other recommendations focused on providing a clearer structure. A significant number of participants, emphasized that

"Having a structured schedule for discussions would make the collaboration more organized and effective." (S7, S15, S17, S24, S31, S34)

These suggestions show that students understand both what these platforms can do and where they fall short, and they have got thoughtful ideas about how to get more out of them. Looking at everything students shared in their journals, we get a complex picture. These platforms have real potential to transform how students learn and work together, but there are genuine practical challenges that need attention if we want them to work as well as they could for collaborative learning.

Taken together, the qualitative findings complement the survey results by providing explanatory depth. The high mean scores for peer feedback and WhatsApp collaboration are clarified by students' reflections that feedback enhanced their understanding of complex texts. Likewise, the quantitative challenges of message overload and difficulties in video-based comprehension were substantiated in the journals, where students described the overwhelming number of WhatsApp messages and the absence of immediate clarification during video presentations. These connections indicate that the qualitative data not only corroborate but also enrich the interpretation of the quantitative findings, showing how students experienced both the strengths and the limitations of these platforms in practice.

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the integration of YouTube and WhatsApp as collaborative learning tools in an EFL reading course. The findings suggest that these platforms not only enhance student engagement and foster peer collaboration but also play a role in supporting reading comprehension. Specifically, YouTube facilitated multimodal access to reading content, enabling students to present and visualize main ideas from texts, while WhatsApp provided a space for asynchronous dialogue, clarifications, and co-construction of textual understanding. These functions are essential in reading instruction, where comprehension involves interpreting meaning, analyzing structures, and engaging in reflective discussion.

YouTube supported reading comprehension by allowing students to break down complex texts using visual and verbal cues, which aligns with dual coding theory (Clark & Paivio, 1991). This multimodal format helped learners access difficult vocabulary and abstract ideas more easily. WhatsApp, on the other hand, enabled collaborative meaning-making, consistent with social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978), where learning is socially negotiated. Students benefited from sharing different perspectives, clarifying confusing parts of the text, and constructing deeper understanding

through discussion. Compared to other language skills such as speaking or writing, reading comprehension demands not only individual processing but also collective interpretation, which these platforms effectively supported.

These findings align with prior studies emphasizing the benefits of social media platforms in enhancing student interaction and motivation (Chen, 2025; Gulzar et al., 2022; Hatamleh, 2024; Jiang & Zhao, 2025; Meirbekov et al., 2024). Similarly, Almobarraz (2018) found that the integration of YouTube into university courses significantly influenced student engagement, reinforcing the notion that multimedia learning fosters deeper comprehension. However, the current study extends this understanding by demonstrating that YouTube also improves engagement specifically in reading courses through peer-created explanatory videos, making it a valuable tool for collaborative text comprehension.

The use of WhatsApp as a discussion tool for collaborative reading also demonstrated significant advantages, as students found peer interactions and feedback beneficial for their text interpretation processes. This is in line with Mulyono et al. (2021), who found that WhatsApp facilitated stronger peer collaboration and a sense of community among EFL students in online learning contexts. Moreover, research by Farahian and Parhamnia (2022) highlighted that WhatsApp-based knowledge sharing enhanced reflective practice among teachers, suggesting that similar benefits can be extended to student collaboration in reading comprehension activities. The current study specifically shows how WhatsApp discussions enable students to share different interpretations of reading texts, engage in collaborative meaning-making, and develop critical thinking skills through peer interaction, processes that are particularly crucial for EFL reading development.

Comparing these results with earlier research, the study supports findings from Orús et al. (2016), who demonstrated that learner-generated videos on YouTube positively impacted students' learning outcomes and satisfaction. Additionally, Albahiri and Alhaj (2020)

highlighted the role of visual elements in improving spoken discourse among EFL students, which complements the current study's emphasis on multimedia learning in reading comprehension. The present study extends this understanding by showing how peer-created videos about reading texts help students process complex written materials through multimodal explanations. Similarly, Jin (2024) found that YouTube-integrated writing activities reduced students' writing anxiety while enhancing their overall writing proficiency. The present study demonstrates that YouTube also improves engagement in reading courses through collaborative video creation about texts, making it a valuable tool across different language skill areas.

Moreover, research by Apoko and Waluyo (2025) suggested that social media platforms, including WhatsApp and YouTube, provide authentic learning experiences that align with constructivist and connectivist theories. Their study emphasized that these platforms promote student autonomy, engagement, and interaction. The findings support these conclusions by showing that students value the flexibility and interactivity offered by YouTube and WhatsApp specifically in their collaborative reading processes, where they can engage with texts at their own pace while benefiting from peer support.

Another study by Al Fraidan and Al-Harazi (2023) examined the role of social media in post-pandemic online learning and found that WhatsApp was among the most frequently used platforms for academic discussions. Their findings indicated that structured use of WhatsApp enhanced students' exam preparation, supporting the findings that well-organized discussion formats improve student learning experiences in reading comprehension contexts. Similarly, research by Enakrire and Kehinde (2022) found that WhatsApp promoted ease of access to learning materials, a sentiment echoed by students in the present study who appreciated the ability to review reading discussions asynchronously and seek clarification about complex texts from classmates.

Despite these benefits, the study also identified notable challenges that require critical evaluation. A key issue was the

difficulty in understanding reading content through video presentations without direct interaction ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.90$), which aligns with findings from Al Fraidan and Al-Harazi (2023), who noted that students in online learning environments often struggle with content comprehension when lacking real-time instructor guidance. This challenge reflects the limitations of asynchronous communication for complex cognitive processes like reading comprehension.

Similarly, Alshaye et al. (2024) reported that while social media platforms enhance vocabulary learning, students often require supplementary instructor support to fully benefit from such tools. This suggests that while YouTube is an effective aid for collaborative reading activities, its success depends on a structured instructional framework that combines peer-created content with guided reading strategies and teacher facilitation.

The current study also found that message overload in WhatsApp groups sometimes hindered participation in reading discussions, which echoes the concerns raised by Samaie et al. (2018), who found that excessive messaging could be counterproductive in online learning environments. From a cognitive load theory perspective (Sweller, 1988), this challenge can be understood as extraneous cognitive load that interferes with meaningful text processing. When students must navigate overwhelming amounts of discussion messages about reading texts, their cognitive resources are diverted from reading comprehension to information management, potentially reducing learning effectiveness.

Additionally, the persistence of technological limitations ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.05$) despite widespread platform familiarity indicates structural barriers that extend beyond individual user competence. This finding aligns with research on digital equity in education (Reich & Mehta, 2020), suggesting that effective integration of technology for collaborative reading requires systemic support including reliable internet access, appropriate devices, and technical literacy training, rather than merely assuming universal access and capability.

Furthermore, technological limitations, including internet connectivity and device constraints, were cited as barriers to full participation in collaborative reading activities. Research by Mercado and Shin (2025) found similar technological barriers when investigating the role of social media in teacher professional development, reinforcing the need for reliable internet access and device availability for optimal engagement in digital collaborative reading environments.

The study also reveals unique characteristics of collaborative reading that distinguish it from other language skills. Reading requires processing existing texts and interpreting layered meanings rather than generating original content. As such, peer collaboration becomes essential for uncovering nuanced interpretations and connecting ideas to prior knowledge or broader contexts. In this respect, YouTube helps clarify lower-level comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, sentence structure), while WhatsApp discussions facilitate higher-order processing (e.g., inference, critique, integration).

Pedagogically, these findings suggest that effective integration of YouTube and WhatsApp into EFL reading instruction must be supported by clear instructional design. Teachers are encouraged to assign structured collaborative reading tasks with defined roles, such as having different students focus on summarizing, analyzing, or questioning a text. WhatsApp discussions should be guided by sequenced prompts that lead students from literal to critical comprehension. Additionally, blending digital collaboration with occasional synchronous interactions can help address real-time comprehension needs. These strategies align with Apoko and Waluyo's (2025) recommendations for maximizing the educational potential of social media. Moreover, training students in digital literacy, particularly in managing discussions and interpreting multimodal content, is essential to fully leverage these tools.

By focusing on reading comprehension, this study addresses an important gap in existing research that tends to emphasize speaking and writing. It contributes to understanding how YouTube and

WhatsApp, when used together, provide synergistic support for collaborative reading: YouTube facilitates content explanation, while WhatsApp fosters interpretive dialogue. This dual-platform approach not only enhances engagement but also strengthens learners' capacity for analytical thinking and textual interpretation, skills central to academic reading in EFL contexts.

In summary, this study affirms that the combined use of YouTube and WhatsApp offers meaningful support for collaborative reading in EFL classrooms. While both platforms show great promise, maximizing their potential requires attention to pedagogical structure, technological access, and cognitive demands of reading comprehension. With thoughtful design and support, digital platforms can be powerful allies in fostering deep, collaborative engagement with texts.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the integration of YouTube and WhatsApp as collaborative learning tools in EFL reading instruction. The findings demonstrate that these platforms offer complementary affordances that enhance students' engagement, peer interaction, and reading comprehension. YouTube facilitated multimodal explanation and content synthesis through student-created videos, while WhatsApp enabled extended peer dialogue and collaborative interpretation of texts. Together, they supported deeper textual understanding and fostered meaningful participation in reading activities. By focusing on reading, this study highlights the unique contribution of combining video-based explanation with peer discussion to strengthen comprehension. It confirms that when used thoughtfully, YouTube and WhatsApp not only increase engagement but also encourage collaborative meaning-making, critical thinking, and interpretive literacy in EFL contexts.

The study's findings offer several pedagogical implications. Teachers are encouraged to design structured collaborative reading tasks, assign rotating peer roles, and guide WhatsApp discussions

using layered comprehension prompts. Incorporating digital literacy training and occasional synchronous interaction can further enhance the effectiveness of these platforms. Importantly, instructional design should consider the specific cognitive demands of reading and provide scaffolding that supports both individual understanding and collaborative analysis. Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. It was conducted within a single university using self-reported data. Future research could include performance-based assessments, direct observations, and broader institutional samples to validate the results. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to evaluate the sustained impact of social media integration on students' reading development. Additionally, comparative research examining different combinations of digital platforms for reading instruction would further inform best practices in technology-enhanced EFL learning.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES

The authors declare that Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used during the preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, ChatGPT was used to discuss ideas and generate outlines, DeepL was employed to translate sentences and select appropriate synonyms, and Quillbot together with Grammarly were utilized to paraphrase sentences and check grammatical accuracy. All outputs produced by these tools were carefully reviewed, revised, and verified by the authors to ensure accuracy, originality, and academic integrity.

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Appendix A. Reflective Journal Prompts

The following reflective journal prompts were given to participants. Students were asked to provide written reflections after engaging in collaborative reading activities using YouTube and WhatsApp.

1. How was your experience collaborating with classmates through YouTube video presentations and WhatsApp discussions?
2. Did you feel that your engagement in learning increased? Please explain why or why not.
3. What was the biggest challenge you faced while using YouTube for group presentations? How did you overcome it?
4. What challenges did you experience during WhatsApp discussions? How did you respond to them?
5. In what ways did YouTube and WhatsApp help you better understand the reading materials?
6. In your opinion, what could be done to make collaboration on WhatsApp and YouTube more effective in the future?
7. Did you feel more engaged in learning through video-based presentations and WhatsApp discussions? Why or why not?
8. Did feedback from your peers on WhatsApp help improve your understanding? Please explain.