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EFFECTIVE OR NOT: LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH YOUTUBE

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Abstract

This study examines YouTube's effectiveness as a tool for English language learning, focusing on its influence on language acquisition, student perceptions, content preferences, and educational integration. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, data were collected through a survey questionnaire comprising 14 closed-ended and one open-ended question targeting English student college. The results show that YouTube improves vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and listening comprehension. BBC Learning English, English with Lucy, and Lingua Marina are well-known organized channels. Distractions, false information, and a lack of organized direction were noted as problems, nevertheless. To maximize YouTube's extensive resources, the study emphasizes the value of integrating it into formal education through carefully selected playlists and self-regulated learning techniques. Teachers can provide students with freedom and crucial feedback by integrating YouTube with conventional classroom techniques, resulting in a well-rounded learning strategy. Diverse learning styles were shown by open-ended responses, with some students using unconventional content, such as social media and video games to increase their vocabulary. According to the study's results, carefully incorporating YouTube into curricula can greatly improve students' English language proficiency. Future research should look at how different YouTube videos affect particular linguistic abilities and how student engagement is affected by tailored algorithms.

Keywords: YouTube, English language learning, self-regulated learning, educational technology.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, rapid technological advances have revolutionized the way humans access information and knowledge, including language learning. English as a global language is an important skill needed in the world of education career, and international communication. Therefore, a flexible, interesting, and time-appropriate learning approach is required by English language learners at various levels of education. From the various digital platforms available, YouTube has emerged as one of the most popular English learning mediums, easily accessible and rich in interesting content, thus being able to provide an enjoyable learning experience.

In Indonesia, YouTube has become part of students' daily lives as a means of entertainment as well as learning. Many of them rely on YouTube as a complement to lecture materials and independent learning media, especially in the face of limited access to

conventional learning resources in the classroom. YouTube offers a variety of educational content ranging from tutorials, interviews, cultural discussions, storytelling, to interactive exercises that suit various learning styles and preferences. The audiovisual format allows students to develop English language skills, especially in the aspects of listening, speaking, vocabulary, and pronunciation, in a more contextual and fun way than conventional methods.

In addition to supporting learning flexibility, YouTube's engaging and adaptive audiovisual format also encourages learners to understand content more meaningfully, imitate correct pronunciation, and expand cultural insights through authentic expressions delivered visually and aurally. Hamsia, Riyanto, and Arianto (2021) emphasized that online learning systems rely on accessibility, connectivity, and feature flexibility, which are also YouTube's main strengths. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when learning was carried out online, the role of YouTube as a learning medium became increasingly important. With its open access and wide variety of content, many students use it not only for academic purposes but also for self- development in English.

YouTube's role as a learning medium is emphasized by its unique features. Unlike traditional LMS platforms such as Edmodo or Google Classroom (Singgih & Ismail, 2017), YouTube not only offers flexibility and accessibility to students but also an enriched learning experience through its audiovisual content. Previous research has also shown that YouTube has a significant role in supporting language skill mastery. Tahmina (2023) found that the majority of students felt helped in improving listening skills, enriching vocabulary, and developing speaking through educational videos on YouTube. This is in line with Rusman's criteria for an effective e-learning system, which includes interactivity, independence, and enrichment (Hanum, 2013). Its extensive content allows learners to explore a wide range of topics that cater to a wide range of learning preferences and proficiency levels. In addition, YouTube's audiovisual format supports different learning styles, making it very effective for improving listening and pronunciation. These features position YouTube as a versatile tool for improving English learning, both in and out of the classroom.

In addition, YouTube also encourages language acquisition through diverse perspectives and learning approaches. According to Malik and Asnur (2019), students often

use YouTube for educational purposes in addition to their social media activities. This trend highlights the integration of the YouTube platform into students' daily routines, making it a natural extension of their learning environment. Kim and Kim (2021) emphasize that YouTube serves as a "lush language learning site" where learners can explore multilingual and multicultural content, which further enhances their learning experience, both in language education and general knowledge.

Tahmina (2023) in her research found that most students felt helped in learning vocabulary, improving listening skills, and developing speaking skills through YouTube videos. They also feel that YouTube makes the process of learning English more interesting and easier to understand. However, the study also shows that the use of YouTube has limitations, especially in helping with formal academic tasks such as writing assignments and mastering grammar. This shows that although YouTube has great potential as a learning medium, its effectiveness still depends on the context of use and the purpose of learning. However, despite the widespread use of YouTube, research that specifically highlights students' perceptions of the platform's effectiveness in English learning is still limited, especially that which examine students' subjective experiences and the types of content they find most useful in English learning. Most studies have only highlighted the general effectiveness of YouTube without delving deeper into the specific aspects of English skills that help the most, nor the type of content that students find most helpful to their learning process. Therefore, this research is here to fill these gaps through a more in-depth and contextual exploration.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore the perception of English Education students towards the use of YouTube as a tool in English learning. This research is focused on three research questions, namely:

1. How effectively is YouTube used for learning English?
2. What aspects of English do students think they have developed the most through YouTube?
3. What types of YouTube content are considered most beneficial in learning English?

The results of this research are expected to provide a deeper understanding of

YouTube's role in language learning. In addition, this research can also make practical contributions for lecturers, English teachers, and educational content creators in developing digital-based English teaching strategies that are relevant to the needs of today's students. The findings of this study can also be the basis for the development of a blended learning approach that combines formal and informal learning resources in a balanced manner.

LITERARY REVIEWS

YouTube has grown to become one of the most widely used English learning platforms in this digital age. Various studies show that YouTube has a significant contribution to increasing the motivation and effectiveness of language learning, especially English. Angreany et al. (2020) and Yusri et al. (2018) found that YouTube-based learning media significantly increased students' interest and motivation in learning English, mainly because of its attractive, accessible, and appropriate visual and auditory learning styles. These findings are reinforced by Kim and Kim (2021) and Khairata et al. (2024), who highlight how YouTube's audiovisual features provide authentic exposure to language use in real-world contexts, thus encouraging better listening skills.

In addition to motivation, YouTube has also been proven to contribute to the development of language skills. Gracella and Nur's (2020) research on high school students showed that the use of YouTube helped significantly improve listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills. These findings are in line with a study by Dabamona and Yunus (2022), which emphasizes that engaging and authentic YouTube content allows learners to learn more deeply and independently. Both studies show that exposure to real, varied content on YouTube provides a contextual learning experience that is closer to the use of language in everyday life. Not only does YouTube provide cognitive and linguistic benefits, but it also plays an important role in supporting independent and personalized learning. A study by Wang and Chen (2019) showed that EFL students in Taiwan use YouTube to organize their learning process independently outside of the classroom. They select material based on personal interests, explore culturally relevant topics, and gain additional knowledge beyond the formal curriculum. These findings show continuity with the opinions of Malik and Asnur

(2019), who reveal that students not only use YouTube as an entertainment medium but also as an additional learning resource that has been integrated into their academic routine. In other words, YouTube has become part of a digital learning ecosystem that supports personalized learning.

The social dimension of learning through YouTube can also be seen from the level of interaction between students and the content they access. Wang and Chen (2019) note that students not only watch learning videos, but also actively participate through comment, like, and share videos with their friends. This shows that learning through YouTube is not only individualized but also creates a space of participation and social engagement that supports indirect learning collaboration, which is an advantage that is rarely found in more structured formal learning approaches.

However, not all studies show completely positive results. Still in the study of Wang and Chen (2019), it was found that some students feel that learning through YouTube is less effective in more formal academic contexts, such as exam preparation or the development of grammar and writing skills. This shortcoming shows that while YouTube excels at providing flexibility and variety of content, it still has limitations in terms of structure and depth of learning. Therefore, a blended learning approach that combines YouTube as a supporting medium with formal classroom learning is considered a more ideal solution. In this approach, learners can enjoy the flexibility and personal engagement advantages of YouTube, while still getting the systematic structure and direction of traditional teaching.

While studies have proven the benefits of YouTube in English learning, most of these studies have focused on general advantages or specific aspects of skills, such as listening and speaking. Research that specifically explores English education students' subjective experiences of YouTube's effectiveness in language learning, the most developed skill aspects, and the most useful types of content is still very limited. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the perception of English Education students comprehensively and contextually, to find out the extent to which YouTube plays a role as an effective English learning medium and by the actual needs of students in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative design to investigate students' perceptions and experiences regarding the effectiveness of YouTube as a language learning tool. This approach is appropriate for exploring attitudes and behaviors systematically and measurably without manipulating variables. A structured questionnaire was used to collect both quantitative and limited qualitative data, allowing the researcher to identify observable patterns while capturing individual insights.

The population of this study consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at the State Islamic University of Raden Mas Said Surakarta. A total of 53 students participated in this study, selected using purposive sampling, which allows researchers to intentionally select individuals who are most relevant to the study objectives (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Participants were chosen from four different academic levels: first, third, fifth, and seventh semesters. This stratified selection aimed to gather a variety of perspectives based on academic experience, ranging from freshmen with minimal exposure to digital learning tools to senior students with broader and deeper language learning experiences. This range allowed for a richer understanding of how YouTube is perceived across different stages of study

Data were collected through an online mixed questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The instrument consisted of 14 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. The closed-ended questions used a 4-point Likert scale to assess students' agreement levels, structured as follows:

Scale	Description
1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Agree
4	Strongly Agree

The Likert scale was selected because it is widely used for measuring opinions and attitudes in social research. The questions were self-developed by the researcher and

designed based on indicators relevant to digital learning, particularly language learning via YouTube. The open-ended item allowed students to elaborate on what types of YouTube content they found most helpful in learning English.

The responses to the closed-ended questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage distributions, to identify trends and general perceptions among the students. The goal was to describe how frequently students used YouTube, how effective they perceived it to be, and which language skills they felt were most improved through its use. Responses from the open-ended question were analyzed using thematic analysis, a flexible method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within qualitative data. Recurring themes were categorized to gain deeper insight into students' preferred types of content and the perceived advantages of using YouTube in English language learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Perceptions of YouTube's Effectiveness in Learning English

Table 1: Questionnaire result of research question 1

Questions	SA	A	D	SD
Q1. I use YouTube to learn English.	22.6%	75.5%	1.9%	0.0
Q2. I find YouTube helpful for learning English.	34%	66%	0.0	0.0
Q3. I believe that YouTube improves my listening skills in English.	34%	64.2%	1.8%	0.0
Q4. YouTube content makes learning English more enjoyable for me.	17%	75.5%	6%	1.5%
Q5. Using YouTube has increased my confidence in using English.	3.8%	73.6%	22.6%	0.0
Q6. I would recommend YouTube as a tool for learning English to others.	15.1%	71.7%	13.2%	0.0

Table 2: Statistics of research question 1

Questions	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Q1. I use YouTube to learn English.	25.00	12.25	30.47
Q2. I find YouTube helpful for learning English.	25.00	17.00	27.44
Q3. I believe that YouTube improves my listening skills in English.	25.00	17.90	26.37
Q4. YouTube content makes learning English more enjoyable for me.	25.00	11.50	29.70
Q5. Using YouTube has increased my confidence in using English.	25.00	13.20	29.33
Q6. I would recommend YouTube as a tool for learning English to others.	25.00	14.15	27.58

The questionnaire results revealed a generally favorable view among students regarding the use of YouTube as a learning tool for English. Notably, 98.1% of respondents either agreed (75.5%) or strongly agreed (22.6%) that they use YouTube for learning English, with a mean score of 25.00 and a standard deviation of 30.47, indicating moderately consistent responses. Additionally, all students (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that YouTube helps learn English, with a mean of 25.00, suggesting a highly positive perception with minimal variance (SD = 27.44). Regarding listening skills, 98.2% of students responded positively, and this item scored a mean of 25.00 and a median of 17.90, showing that most students positioned their agreement above average levels.

When asked if YouTube makes learning English more enjoyable, 92.5% of participants gave affirmative responses (mean = 25.00; SD = 29.70), reinforcing the platform's motivational appeal. However, on the matter of confidence, only 3.8% strongly agreed and 73.6% agreed, while 22.6% disagreed. This question showed more variation, as reflected by a relatively high standard deviation of 29.33, suggesting differing levels of self-assurance gained through YouTube. Lastly, when asked if they would recommend YouTube to others, 86.8% agreed or

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strongly agreed, with 13.2% disagreeing, despite a mean still at 25.00 (SD = 27.58), which reflects an overall positive trend with moderate variation

2. English Skills Most Improved Through YouTube

Table 3: Questionnaire result of research question 2

Questions	SA	A	D	SD
Q7. I feel that my vocabulary has improved by watching YouTube content.	9.4%	83%	7%	0.6%
Q8. I have learned grammar concepts through YouTube videos.	24.5%	58.5%	15.1%	1.9%
Q9. Watching YouTube videos has helped improve my English pronunciation.	22.6%	66%	6.4%	7%
Q10. I watch vlogs by native speakers to improve my English.	15.1%	52.8%	28.3%	4.6%
Q11. YouTube content helps me understand English culture better.	7.5%	67.9%	20.8%	3.7%

Table 4: Statistics of research question 2

Questions	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Q7. I feel that my vocabulary has improved by watching YouTube content.	25.00	8.20	33.64
Q8. I have learned grammar concepts through YouTube videos.	25.00	19.80	20.94
Q9. Watching YouTube videos has helped improve my English pronunciation.	25.50	14.80	24.27
Q10. I watch vlogs by native speakers to improve my English.	25.20	21.70	18.01

Q11. YouTube content helps me understand English culture better.	24.98	14.15	25.58

The aspect most positively impacted by YouTube was vocabulary: 92.4% of students responded favorably (SA = 9.4%, A = 83%), with a mean of 25.00 and a relatively high standard deviation of 33.64, indicating widespread agreement but also diverse intensity of perception. Grammar improvement yielded more mixed results. 24.5% strongly agreed, 58.5% agreed, while 17% disagreed or strongly disagreed, with a mean of 25.00, median 19.80, and SD = 20.94. This suggests that while most students perceive grammatical benefits, the response strength varies.

Similarly, for pronunciation, 88.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, although 7% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 25.50, slightly higher than the others, while the SD = 24.27, showing moderate variability. In terms of watching vlogs by native speakers, only 67.9% agreed or strongly agreed, while 32.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This result had a mean of 25.20 and SD = 18.01, suggesting a more balanced view. For cultural understanding, 75.4% agreed or strongly agreed, with 24.5% responding negatively. The mean was 24.98, SD = 25.58.

3. Preferred Types of YouTube Content for English Learning
Table 5: Questionnaire result of research question

Questions	SA	A	D	SD
Q12. I use YouTube more than other platforms for learning English.	9.4%	49.1%	34%	7.5%
Q13. I watch specific YouTube channels dedicated to learning English.	4.7%	69.8%	24.5%	1%
Q14. I find English language tutorials on YouTube helpful.	13.2%	83%	3.8%	0.0

Table 6: Statistics of research question 3

Questions	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Q12. I use YouTube more than other platforms for learning English.	25.00	21.70	17.40
Q13. I watch specific YouTube channels dedicated to learning English.	25.00	14.60	27.37
Q14. I find English language tutorials on YouTube helpful.	25.00	8.50	33.83

As for the preferred types of YouTube content, the most favorably rated item was English tutorials, with 96.2% of students agreeing they were helpful (mean = 25.00; SD = 33.83), and no disagreement at all, highlighting their high relevance and acceptance. Watching dedicated English learning channels also received positive responses: 74.5% agreed or strongly agreed, while 25.5% disagreed. The high SD = 27.37 indicates that although the majority were positive, the strength of agreement varied considerably. Interestingly, for the question on whether students prefer YouTube over other platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram), only 58.5% agreed, while 41.5% disagreed, suggesting YouTube's dominance is strong but not absolute. The SD = 17.40 and median = 21.70 reflect a somewhat neutral central tendency.

4. Students' Reflections on Beneficial YouTube Content (Open-Ended Responses)

In addition to the closed-ended responses, an open-ended question was included to explore students' personal reflections on the types of YouTube content they find most helpful for learning English. Thematic analysis of their responses revealed several recurring patterns. A significant number of students highlighted structured English learning channels as their top choice. Channels such as Lingua Marina, English with Lucy, Rachel's English, IELTS English Academy, Learn English with TV Series, BBC Learning English, Speak

English with Tiffani, and Kampung Inggris LC - Language Center were frequently mentioned.

a.   Lingua Marina was praised for its strategic learning advice, including tips on consistency, vocabulary building, grammar, and idioms. Students also noted that her motivational style and personal experiences inspired them to be more confident in speaking English.

b.   BBC Learning English was described as comprehensive and level-inclusive. Students highlighted various formats such as 6-Minute English, English at Work, and news-based lessons that helped them stay up-to-date while improving listening, pronunciation, grammar, and speaking skills.

c.   English with Lucy was favored by students looking to refine their grammar and pronunciation, especially in British English. Her structured approach and clarity made her lessons appealing to learners aiming for fluency and precision.

d.   Rachel's English was particularly useful for students focused on American pronunciation. The channel offers step-by-step guides on how to sound more natural, along with lessons for job interviews, vocabulary, and conversational English.

e.   IELTS English Academy and Speak English with Tiffani were appreciated for test preparation and practical speaking strategies, especially for academic and professional purposes.

f.   Kampung Inggris LC – Language Center, a local Indonesian-based English learning channel, was also mentioned by some students who found its delivery relatable and easy to follow.

g.   Learn English with TV Series was valued for its authentic exposure to slang, phrases, and informal conversation through clips from movies and shows. Students described this method as both fun and effective.

Beyond structured channels, students also cited TED Talks, TED-Ed, and Aaron's English as educational resources that provided cultural knowledge, listening practice, and

inspiring language use in global contexts. Some participants reported using YouTube more spontaneously, searching for grammar tutorials, test preparation tips, or pronunciation examples, depending on their current needs. This emphasizes YouTube's role in facilitating flexible, self-directed learning.

A few students mentioned unconventional or entertaining content, such as Cocomelon and Teletubbies, citing these as unexpectedly helpful for vocabulary acquisition and listening, especially for beginners. These humorous or nostalgic choices suggest that engagement and comfort may also play important roles in language learning. However, some participants also expressed challenges such as distractions, lack of guidance, or difficulty in evaluating content quality. A few preferred to use alternative platforms like language learning apps, games, or social media groups to support their English learning.

The open-ended responses reaffirm YouTube's role as a highly flexible, learner-centered platform offering both structured lessons and informal learning opportunities. However, its effectiveness depends on learners' ability to choose suitable content and manage distractions.

Discussion

1. Effectiveness of YouTube as a Learning Tool

The results of this study confirm that YouTube is perceived as an effective supplementary tool for English language learning. Most participants agreed or strongly agreed that YouTube enhances their listening skills, makes the learning process more enjoyable, and boosts their confidence in using English. The fact that a majority would recommend YouTube to others further supports the platform's overall acceptance and perceived value.

These results align with Pangondian et al. (2019), who emphasized YouTube's accessibility and adaptability in educational contexts. Kim and Kim (2021) also described YouTube as a "fertile ground for language learning," providing authentic resources that promote self-directed study. Survey participants echoed these views, highlighting YouTube's flexibility, especially in enabling anytime, anywhere learning.

Furthermore, the audiovisual nature of YouTube was credited for making English

learning more engaging, especially in improving listening comprehension. This observation supports previous findings by Angreany et al. (2020) and Khairata et al, (2024), who noted that exposure to native accents and real-life language through YouTube significantly enhances listening ability. However, some students noted a lack of structured feedback, which hindered their confidence. This concern supports Wang and Chen's (2019) suggestion that YouTube functions best as a supplementary rather than a primary learning platform. To address this limitation, a blended learning approach, combining YouTube with teacher guidance or peer feedback, is recommended to ensure optimal outcomes.

2. Impact on English Language Skills

This study found that vocabulary was the most improved language skill through YouTube, with many respondents citing engaging, context-rich videos as a contributing factor. Malik and Asnur (2019) emphasized that multimedia content enhances vocabulary acquisition by illustrating how words are used, pronounced, and understood. Moreover, consistent exposure to contextualized vocabulary aids long-term retention.

Grammar and pronunciation were also positively impacted, particularly through structured channels like Lingua Marina and English with Lucy, which offer targeted grammar instruction and accent-focused lessons. These findings align with Dabamona and Yunus (2022), who highlighted YouTube's potential to support self-directed, structured language learning. Exposure to native speakers, supported by features like subtitles and adjustable playback speed, further improves pronunciation and comprehension.

Cultural understanding was another area influenced by YouTube. While some students reported gaining cultural insights from content like TED Talks or vlogs, others noted that the effectiveness of such exposure depends on the type of content viewed. This reflects Wang and Chen's (2019) argument that cultural learning on YouTube is often incidental. To address this, educators could curate playlists with cultural themes or assign reflective tasks to deepen cultural learning.

3. Content Preferences and Learning Challenges

Participants expressed a strong preference for language tutorials, with channels such as Learn English with TV Series, Rachel's English, English with Lucy, and BBC Learning English frequently mentioned. These channels offer clear, structured lessons that meet learners' goals, confirming Pangondian et al.'s (2019) view of YouTube as an ideal platform for a range of educational needs. Other sources, such as the Learning English podcast and IELTS English Academy, were appreciated for covering practical vocabulary, test preparation, and real-life topics.

Interestingly, several students reported learning English through humorous or unconventional content such as Cocomelon, Teletubbies, and animated series. Although non-traditional, these materials appeared to reduce anxiety and increase comfort in learning, especially among beginners. This reflects the growing recognition that informal and entertaining content can supplement formal instruction and encourage consistent engagement.

Nonetheless, several challenges were noted. Students reported difficulties with distraction, unverified information, and a lack of feedback when using YouTube alone. These limitations support previous findings by Wang and Chen (2019) and Singgih and Ismail (2017), who emphasized the need for critical media literacy and proper guidance. To overcome this, integrating digital literacy training into language instruction is essential to help students evaluate content and manage their learning more effectively.

4. Future Implications for English Language Learning

The findings underscore YouTube's usefulness as a supplementary learning tool, particularly in improving listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation skills. However, to maximize its benefits, educators should consider integrating YouTube into blended learning environments that combine informal content with formal instruction, peer collaboration, and guided reflection.

Future research could further explore YouTube's role in developing productive skills, such as speaking and writing. Additionally, teachers might utilize YouTube's interactive features, such as comments, quizzes, and community posts, to increase learner engagement.

Investigating the impact of gamified elements in YouTube content may also reveal innovative ways to enhance motivation and language acquisition.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study confirms that YouTube plays a valuable role as a supplementary tool in English language learning. Its flexibility, accessibility, and diverse content make it appealing to students, particularly for improving listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Structured channels like Lingua Marina, English with Lucy, and BBC Learning English were highly favored, while platforms such as TED Talks supported authentic language exposure and cultural awareness.

Despite its benefits, challenges such as distractions, lack of structured guidance, and content overload highlight the need for critical content selection and strategic integration into formal learning environments. Students' varied responses also reflect the importance of aligning digital tools like YouTube with individual learning styles. Overall, while YouTube should not replace formal instruction, it holds strong potential to complement and enhance English learning when used purposefully and reflectively.

To maximize the effectiveness of YouTube in English language learning, educators should integrate it strategically into formal instruction by recommending credible channels, curating relevant content, and guiding students to set learning goals and critically evaluate materials. Encouraging media literacy and self-regulated learning can help students avoid distractions and use YouTube more effectively. Combining YouTube with classroom activities ensures structured feedback and deeper understanding. Future research is recommended to explore how different types of content affect specific language skills, the long-term impact of YouTube-based learning, and the influence of personalized algorithms on learner engagement and outcomes.

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