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Using YouTube to Support Student Interest in History Learning at Senior High School

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Abstract

History lessons can become difficult to follow when students encounter past events mainly through verbal explanations and textbook narratives. This study examined how YouTube was used in history learning, which conditions supported or constrained its implementation, and how students described their learning interest at SMA Negeri 4 Sigi, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. A descriptive qualitative design involved two history teachers and twenty-one students, with seven students selected purposively from each of three grade levels. Data were collected through classroom observation, semistructured interviews, and documentation, then analyzed through data reduction, narrative presentation, and conclusion verification. Triangulation compared evidence across collection techniques and participant perspectives. Findings identified a teaching sequence comprising an initial explanation, video viewing, identification of historical information, discussion, presentation, and concluding reflection. An observed example concerned the 1825–1830 Diponegoro War and resistance to Dutch colonial rule. Students described enjoyment, curiosity about historical events, increased attention, and greater readiness to ask questions or discuss ideas. Teachers connected these responses with audiovisual explanations and structured classroom activities. Laptops, projectors, and teacher preparation supported implementation, while unstable internet, equipment problems, unclear sound, and excessive video duration disrupted engagement. Students also requested more opportunities to search for and examine historical videos independently. The findings suggest that YouTube can support situational interest when teachers select relevant content and connect viewing with discussion. They do not establish a measured causal increase in interest or achievement. Schools should strengthen technical preparation and guided participation, while further research should examine sustained interest through repeated observation and appropriate assessments.

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1. Introduction

History learning requires students to make sense of events that they cannot observe directly. Textbook accounts and classroom explanations introduce historical actors, causes, and consequences, but learners must still construct relationships among those elements. When lessons emphasize remembering names and dates, students may struggle to connect information with a meaningful account of the past. The research problem at SMA Negeri 4 Sigi concerned students' interest in these learning activities and the classroom use of YouTube to make historical material easier to follow. Preliminary observation in May 2026 identified an existing practice of using videos alongside conventional explanation. The relevant question was how that practice operated and what students experienced, rather than whether introducing a new platform would automatically improve learning.

YouTube offers teachers access to narrated explanations and historical representations that can be incorporated into classroom instruction. However, the availability of a video does not determine its educational contribution. A teacher must select content appropriate to the lesson, explain why it is being shown, and help students use the information afterward. Students may enjoy a presentation while remaining uncertain about the historical explanation it offers. They may also lose attention when sound is unclear or viewing continues too long. Investigating video use therefore requires attention to the relationship between content, classroom activities, and students' responses. In this study, learning interest concerns enjoyment, attraction to the material, attention, and active involvement, as expressed in interviews and observed during instruction.

Interest theory provides a basis for interpreting these responses without treating every favorable reaction as a lasting disposition. Hidi and Renninger (2006) distinguish triggered and maintained situational interest from emerging and established individual interest. Their model makes the duration and development of interest important questions. A striking historical scene can attract attention during a lesson, while an enduring inclination to study history requires evidence of subsequent engagement. Harackiewicz, Smith, and Priniski (2016) similarly describe interest as both an immediate state involving attention and affect and a tendency to engage again over time. These perspectives support examining students' enjoyment and curiosity while retaining a distinction between interest within a particular learning situation and sustained interest in the subject. That distinction is especially relevant when evidence consists of classroom observations and retrospective accounts.

The design of audiovisual explanations also matters. Mayer (2017) reviews principles for learning with words and graphics, emphasizing how instructional materials can support meaningful processing. This perspective suggests that historical images and narration are most useful when they help learners organize relevant information. Merely increasing the amount of visual material does not resolve difficulties in understanding a sequence of events. For a history lesson, the instructional task might involve identifying a conflict's causes, explaining an actor's decisions, or connecting developments across time. The video should contribute to that task. Consequently, investigating YouTube in a school setting requires examining how teachers frame the material and what learners are asked to do with it, rather than assuming that visual presentation alone produces understanding.

Historical videos also require a distinction between representation and evidence. A narrated scene may make a conflict easier to imagine without establishing the accuracy of every detail. Students need opportunities to ask how the account was produced and which claims can be checked against other materials, such as textbooks and documented historical sources. In a lesson about colonial resistance, for example, a coherent narrative can help organize events, but understanding also depends on examining explanations of causes and consequences. This makes the teacher's mediation relevant to both engagement and the quality of the historical account students construct.

Brame (2016) organizes effective educational video use around cognitive load, student engagement, and active learning. Although developed in relation to higher education, this account offers practical questions for examining classroom viewing: whether students can follow the presentation, whether their attention is maintained, and whether activities require them to process its content. Fiorella and Mayer (2018) likewise examine instructional features that influence learning from video, including segmentation and perspective. These studies direct attention to design and implementation rather than platform popularity. In the present context, their relevance lies in explaining why teacher preparation, manageable presentation, and opportunities to discuss historical content may matter. They do not establish that any particular technique was systematically tested at SMA Negeri 4 Sigi.

Broader evidence also cautions against equating video availability with a uniform educational effect. Noetel et al. (2021), in a systematic review of randomized studies in higher education, found benefits from video under several instructional conditions, while acknowledging potential biases in the evidence. Their review concerns learning outcomes among university students. It therefore provides support for investigating instructional video but cannot supply an effect estimate for secondary students' interest in history. The distinction between outcomes is consequential: understanding historical content, participating in a discussion, and enjoying a lesson are related educational concerns, but each requires suitable evidence. A descriptive study can explain experiences and implementation conditions without making the causal claims associated with a controlled comparison.

Indonesian research makes the implementation questions more specific. Jamilia, Firmansyah, Mirzachaerulsyah, Firmansyah, and Putri (2022) examined YouTube content in history instruction at SMAS Mujahidin Pontianak through observation, interviews, and document study. They identified differences between planned and implemented instruction, together with limitations in supporting equipment and internet connectivity. These findings show why classroom organization and infrastructure require examination alongside students' reactions. Khaeruddin (2023), discussing YouTube for online history learning, emphasizes the educational possibilities of accessible historical video while recognizing the importance of how the platform is used. Together, these accounts support a contextual approach: educational potential needs to be considered in relation to actual teaching practices and the conditions under which students encounter the material.

Other studies address different outcomes and age groups. Fitriyaningrum and Alrianingrum (2023) investigated YouTube digital storytelling and historical literacy among secondary students using a quasi-experimental design. Komering and Sumardi (2022) examined YouTube and understanding of historical material within primary social studies, incorporating interviews and comprehension assessments.

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These studies extend the discussion beyond media preference, but their findings concern particular instructional arrangements and populations. They cannot determine how interest is experienced in the present school. Nurjannah (2021), examining discussion and interest in Islamic cultural history, also draws attention to the learning activities surrounding content presentation. This is relevant because discussion may contribute to students' willingness to participate, making it necessary to examine the whole lesson sequence rather than isolate video viewing conceptually from its classroom use.

The literature thus identifies several issues that converge in the present research problem. Audiovisual representations can make historical narratives easier to approach; instructional organization can turn viewing into an activity requiring explanation; and technical conditions can interrupt that activity. Interest theory adds a further requirement to distinguish an immediate response from a continuing relationship with the subject. What remains to be explained locally is how these elements operate together at SMA Negeri 4 Sigi. Evidence from other schools, primary classrooms, online instruction, or universities offers useful comparisons but does not answer how teachers in this setting organize viewing or how students across three grade levels describe the experience. The contextual gap concerns the interaction of teaching practice, learning interest, and implementation conditions within an existing school practice.

Examining teacher and student perspectives together can clarify that interaction. Teachers can describe why particular videos are selected and how lessons are prepared. Students can explain which features attract attention, when they feel able to contribute, and what makes viewing difficult. Observation can situate these accounts within the sequence of classroom activities, while documentation supplies contextual support. Differences among these sources may be informative. A teacher's intention to make history engaging does not itself establish that students remain attentive throughout a video, and a student's wish for independent searching does not demonstrate that such searching already occurs. Preserving these distinctions allows the analysis to identify practical needs without turning expectations into findings or attributing all participation to a single technological feature.

The local focus is consequently practical as well as conceptual. Decisions about which video to show, when to discuss it, and how to respond to interruptions affect the experience students describe. An account of these decisions can help identify whether difficulties arise from unsuitable content, extended viewing, or technical disruption. It can also reveal where existing participation could be expanded, particularly when students themselves ask for opportunities to locate and examine material.

Accordingly, this study asks how YouTube is used in history learning at SMA Negeri 4 Sigi, which factors support or constrain its use, and how students describe their interest after participating in these lessons. The objectives are to describe the instructional sequence, identify implementation conditions, and examine responses involving enjoyment, attraction, attention, and involvement. The contribution is a contextual account connecting classroom practice with these dimensions of interest across grades X, XI, and XII. It offers teachers evidence for reviewing content selection and learning activities while defining the limits of the conclusions.

The study investigates an established teaching practice through qualitative description; it does not estimate a treatment effect or claim that positive interview responses demonstrate lasting interest in history.

2. Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative design to examine YouTube use and students' interest in history learning at SMA Negeri 4 Sigi, Binangga Village, Marawola District, Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. Qualitative description was appropriate for presenting participants' experiences and classroom practices in terms close to their accounts, consistent with Bradshaw, Atkinson, and Doody (2017). The inquiry addressed an existing teaching practice without assigning an intervention or creating a comparison group.

Participants comprised two history teachers and twenty-one students selected purposively. Seven students came from each class group: X A, XI A, and XII A. Student selection considered experience of history lessons using YouTube, direct participation in classroom activities, and willingness to provide information. Teachers contributed perspectives on lesson preparation and implementation. Interview extracts were dated August and September 2026. School permission and participants' willingness were sought before data collection.

Data collection combined classroom observation, semistructured interviews, and documentation. Observation examined how teachers introduced material, presented videos, and organized subsequent activities, together with students' attention and participation. The documented lesson example concerned the Diponegoro War. Teacher interviews addressed reasons for using YouTube, content selection, instructional procedures, available facilities, and constraints. Student interviews explored perceived understanding, enjoyment, curiosity, attention, participation, and difficulties. Follow-up questions allowed participants to clarify their experiences.

The researcher served as the principal instrument, supported by observation sheets and interview guides. Documentation included classroom photographs, teaching documents, and images of video use. These materials helped relate participants' accounts to instructional practice. Interest was examined through four descriptive dimensions discussed by Nurjannah (2021): enjoyment, attraction to historical material, attention during instruction, and active involvement. The dimensions organized interpretation rather than constituting a scored psychological scale.

Analysis proceeded through data reduction, narrative presentation, and conclusion verification. Relevant observation notes, interview accounts, and documents were selected and organized around instructional use, supporting conditions, constraints, and interest. Triangulation compared collection techniques and teacher and student perspectives. Conclusions were checked against the available evidence, retaining the distinction between observed activities, reported experiences, and suggestions. Short interview excerpts were translated from Indonesian into English for presentation.

Students were identified by grade rather than by name. Because there were no standardized interest scores or baseline measurements, the analysis describes perceived and observed interest without quantifying improvement. Accounts of participation were considered alongside descriptions of discussion and presentation. Suggestions for improvement were distinguished from observations of activities already implemented, preserving differences between reported experiences and expectations.

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3. Result

Video use within the lesson sequence

YouTube was used mainly to present teacher-selected historical videos alongside explanation, observation, discussion, and presentation. In the documented Diponegoro War lesson, the teacher introduced the topic and learning objectives before projecting a video about the conflict's background, principal actor, resistance, and consequences. Students identified important information, discussed causes and events, presented their understanding, and joined the teacher in drawing conclusions. The video supplied a shared reference for these activities rather than replacing instruction.

A grade X student associated the video with a clearer account of how the conflict began:

> *"After watching the YouTube video about the Diponegoro War, I understood better how the war began." (Grade X student, August 27, 2026; translated)*

Other accounts linked viewing with greater readiness to explain historical material and compare ideas during discussion. However, two students also described use as predominantly teacher-directed playback. They requested more varied content and opportunities to find and discuss historical videos independently. These statements identify desired development rather than an established practice of independent searching.

Enjoyment attention and participation

Students described history lessons as more enjoyable when historical material included images, sound, and narrative explanation. A grade XII student contrasted this experience with earlier boredom:

> *"I enjoy attending history lessons more. I used to get bored quickly, but watching the videos now makes me enthusiastic because the material feels alive." (Grade XII student, August 27, 2026; translated)*

Accounts of attraction concerned curiosity about historical figures and a clearer picture of events beyond memorizing dates. Students also reported paying closer attention when the presentation stimulated questions. Involvement appeared through exchanging ideas, asking for clarification, answering questions, and presenting discussion outcomes. Observation described students attending to the video and participating in subsequent activities. These responses represented complementary dimensions of interest, although the evidence did not provide numerical scores or establish that every student responded similarly.

A grade XI student described learning about previously unfamiliar historical figures, while a grade X student associated greater attention with curiosity during viewing. A grade XII student explained that videos generated questions to bring to discussion. These accounts connected interest with particular learning activities. Students described consulting classmates when they needed further clarification. Teachers associated the responses with the combination of images and narration, which helped present events that students otherwise found difficult to imagine through oral explanation alone.

Support and constraints

Laptops, LCD projectors, internet access, and teachers' ability to select relevant material supported implementation. Teachers emphasized matching videos to the historical topic and preparing equipment before instruction. Technical difficulties included buffering, projector connections, and unstable electricity. One teacher described checking equipment and preparing previously downloaded videos or alternative teaching activities when connectivity failed.

A student additionally reported unclear sound and videos whose duration made sustained attention difficult. Thus, engagement depended on presentation quality as well as access to equipment. The same service could support visual explanation while losing students' attention under unsuitable conditions. The findings indicate favorable experiences within a structured lesson, together with specific technical and instructional needs; they do not isolate the contribution of YouTube from teacher guidance and discussion.

4. Discussion

Interpreting interest in the learning situation

Enjoyment, curiosity, and attention suggest that audiovisual presentation helped trigger interest within the history lesson. Hidi and Renninger's (2006) model supports interpreting these responses as situational interest rather than assuming an enduring commitment to the subject. Harackiewicz et al. (2016) likewise distinguish an immediate state of engagement from a continuing tendency to return to a topic. Students' retrospective comparisons with boredom are valuable accounts of experience, but they cannot substitute for repeated measurement. The study therefore supports a contextual interpretation of interest while leaving its persistence beyond the observed learning situation unresolved.

The requests for independent video searching are important in this respect. They suggest that some students wanted a more active relationship with the material. However, wanting such opportunities differs from demonstrating sustained independent study. A useful next step would be to provide guided choices and examine whether students return voluntarily to historical questions after the initial lesson.

Connecting audiovisual material with classroom activity

The lesson sequence offers an explanation for why viewing supported participation. An introductory explanation established the topic, and discussion required students to retrieve and communicate information afterward. This is consistent with Brame's (2016) emphasis on engagement and active learning around video. Mayer (2017) provides a complementary rationale for connecting verbal explanations with relevant graphics. In this study, those ideas help interpret participants' responses; cognitive processing itself was not measured.

The findings also indicate that historical representation should be examined critically. Seeing a narrated reconstruction does not give students direct access to the past. Teachers can ask who produced a video, what evidence supports its account, and how it compares with other sources. Such questions extend the existing discussion activities toward evaluating historical representations. They remain recommendations, since the evidence does not establish systematic source criticism or gains in historical literacy.

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Fitriyaningrum and Alrianingrum (2023) examined historical literacy, while Komering and Sumardi (2022) considered comprehension. These outcomes require evidence beyond favorable reactions. For classroom evaluation, a short historical explanation produced after viewing could complement students' accounts of interest, provided it is assessed against explicit criteria and interpreted within the historical lesson context.

Conditions for implementation and further evaluation

Internet disruption and equipment problems resemble the implementation difficulties reported by Jamilia et al. (2022). The additional concerns about sound and duration show why infrastructure alone is insufficient. Fiorella and Mayer (2018) identify instructional design features that can influence learning from video, supporting careful selection of manageable material. Teachers could review audibility and relevance before lessons, divide extended content into purposeful segments, and prepare alternatives when access fails.

Noetel et al. (2021) provide broader evidence that video can support learning, but their higher education findings cannot establish effectiveness in this school. Similarly, discussion may contribute to participation independently of video, an issue relevant to Nurjannah's (2021) research on interest and discussion. The present design cannot separate these contributions. Its value lies in showing how audiovisual content, teacher preparation, and classroom exchange operated together. Future evaluation should document the videos used, compare experiences over time, and include students who remain disengaged, so that improvement addresses variation as well as favorable responses.

5. Conclusion

YouTube supported history learning at SMA Negeri 4 Sigi through its integration into a sequence of teacher explanation, video observation, discussion, presentation, and reflection. Students described enjoyment, curiosity about historical material, closer attention, and greater readiness to participate. These findings indicate that audiovisual resources can support interest when teachers connect them with purposeful classroom activities. They do not demonstrate that the platform independently caused an increase in interest, achievement, or historical reasoning.

The contribution of video depended on both instructional preparation and technical conditions. Relevant content, available projectors and laptops, and teacher guidance supported implementation. Buffering, equipment connections, unstable electricity, unclear sound, and excessive duration could interrupt attention. Schools should therefore review the conditions of actual classroom use rather than treat the presence of digital equipment as sufficient. Teachers can check content and audibility in advance, prepare alternatives for technical failures, and allocate time for students to explain what they have understood.

Students' requests for independent searching suggest a practical direction for development. Teachers can provide guided opportunities to locate historical videos, discuss their relevance, and compare their accounts with other learning materials. These activities should include questions about authorship and supporting evidence. Their value would need to be evaluated through students' explanations and participation rather than inferred from access alone. A more varied approach could build on the existing

viewing and discussion sequence without assuming that every learner has identical preferences or technical access. Such tasks should remain feasible for students with limited internet access outside school.

The study is limited to a single school and a purposively selected group. Interview accounts and classroom observations explain experiences but do not supply standardized baseline comparisons or evidence of lasting interest. Future research should follow engagement across repeated lessons, document content and teaching procedures more precisely, and investigate responses among students who find video instruction unhelpful. Combining qualitative accounts with suitable interest measures and assessments of historical understanding would clarify how immediate enjoyment relates to continued learning. The central implication is that YouTube's educational contribution depends on how teachers select, organize, and discuss historical content within the conditions of their classrooms.

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