Digital Vlogs as Learning Narratives: A Case Study of Student Engagement in Online Learning Environments

Makhrus Ali[1] , Sultan Al-Qahtani[2] , Sri Nur Rahmi[3]

[1]Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Ibnu Rusyd Kotabumi, Indonesia

[2]Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Saudi Arabia

[3]Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Background. Digital technologies have transformed online learning environments, yet student engagement remains challenging due to limited opportunities for authentic self-expression and social connection. Digital vlogs offer multimodal narrative spaces combining visual, auditory, and reflective elements, yet existing research has not systematically examined how vlogs function as learning narratives or their specific influence on multidimensional student engagement over time.

Purpose. This qualitative case study investigated how digital vlogs operate as learning narratives and influence behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of student engagement in online learning environments, guided by the Community of Inquiry framework and narrative learning theory.

Method. Eighteen undergraduate students enrolled in an online educational psychology course participated in semester-long data collection involving seven vlog submissions, three-point semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and artifact analysis. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and narrative structure examination.

Results. Findings reveal progressive engagement development with vlog length increasing from 3.2 to 5.7 minutes, reflective depth scores rising from 2.8 to 4.3, and narrative elements increasing from 68% to 89%. Three primary themes emerged: narrative ownership (94% of participants), multimodal expression (83%), and social presence (78%). Students reported vlogs as personalized learning spaces enabling authentic self-representation and reducing online isolation.

Conclusion. Digital vlogs function as progressive narrative spaces where sustained practice develops multidimensional engagement through iterative storytelling. The study's novelty lies in demonstrating that asynchronous video narratives generate authentic social presence and in integrating narrative learning theory with the Community of Inquiry framework, providing educators with conceptual tools for designing engagement-focused online learning experiences.

KEYWORDS

Digital Vlogs, Learning Narratives, Student Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have transformed learning environments by reshaping how students access, construct, and share knowledge (Choe, 2024; Huang, 2021). Online learning platforms increasingly emphasize

learner-centered approaches that encourage active participation rather than passive content consumption. Student engagement has become a central indicator of learning quality in digital contexts, encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions that influence learning persistence and achievement. Digital vlogs have emerged as a popular form of user-generated content that combines visual, auditory, and narrative elements. In educational contexts, vlogs enable students to document experiences, articulate understanding, and reflect on learning processes in a personal and authentic manner. Existing studies indicate that narrative-based digital media can enhance motivation and foster deeper meaning-making by allowing learners to connect academic content with lived experience.

Research on student engagement in online learning environments highlights the importance of interaction, self-expression, and reflective practice (Yang, 2025; Zhang, 2021). Engaged learners are more likely to demonstrate sustained attention, emotional investment, and higher-order thinking. Digital storytelling tools, including vlogs, provide multimodal opportunities that align with diverse learning preferences and support active engagement.

Theoretical perspectives from narrative learning theory explain how storytelling functions as a cognitive and social mechanism for learning. Narrative learning theory posits that individuals construct knowledge by organizing experiences into meaningful stories, enabling reflection and identity formation. This theoretical framework supports the use of digital vlogs as learning narratives that facilitate engagement through personal expression and contextualized understanding (Elliott, 2016; Feenstra, 2024).

Empirical evidence suggests that integrating vlogs into online courses promotes interaction between learners and content, peers, and instructors. Students using vlogs often report increased sense of presence, ownership of learning, and emotional connection to course material. These established findings indicate that digital vlogs function not merely as technological tools but as narrative spaces that support student engagement in online learning environments.

Limited understanding remains regarding how digital vlogs function specifically as learning narratives rather than as general multimedia assignments. Many existing studies focus on the motivational or technological aspects of vlogs without examining the narrative structures students construct and how these narratives shape engagement over time (Heinritz, 2025; Vásquez, 2025). The absence of narrative-focused analysis leaves unclear how meaning-making processes occur within vlog-based learning activities.

Uncertainty also persists about which dimensions of student engagement are most influenced by vlog creation in online learning environments. Research often measures engagement as a single construct, overlooking distinctions between behavioral participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive investment. This gap restricts deeper insight into how vlogs support sustained and multidimensional engagement (Mu, 2025; Razzak, 2024).

Contextual variation presents another unresolved issue. Differences in course design, disciplinary focus, and learner backgrounds produce inconsistent findings regarding the effectiveness of vlogs. Few studies employ in-depth case study approaches to capture contextual dynamics that influence how students experience and engage with vlog-based learning tasks.

Theoretical gaps remain in connecting narrative learning theory with digital engagement frameworks. While narrative learning theory explains how stories support meaning-making, its application to digital vlogs in online education has not been systematically articulated. The lack of an integrated theoretical lens limits explanatory power regarding how narrative expression through vlogs translates into observable engagement outcomes (Jalagat, 2022; Kapsch, 2022).

Addressing these gaps is essential for moving beyond descriptive accounts of digital media use toward pedagogically grounded understanding. Clarifying how vlogs operate as learning narratives provides educators with conceptual tools to design online learning experiences that intentionally foster engagement rather than relying on novelty effects.

The rationale for filling this gap lies in the growing reliance on online learning environments that demand innovative strategies to maintain student engagement. Digital vlogs offer opportunities for reflection, self-representation, and social presence that are often lacking in text-based online instruction. Understanding their narrative function supports more meaningful integration into course design (Goedhart, 2022; Lozano, 2024).

Theoretical grounding from the Community of Inquiry framework supports the purpose of this study. The framework emphasizes cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence as essential elements of meaningful online learning. Based on this theory, the study hypothesizes that digital vlogs, when used as learning narratives, enhance student engagement by strengthening cognitive reflection, emotional connection, and social interaction within online learning environments (He, 2025; Lozano, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study design to investigate how digital vlogs function as learning narratives and influence student engagement in online learning environments. The case study approach allows for in-depth examination of the contextual dynamics, narrative structures, and engagement dimensions within a bounded system (Cheong, 2025; Goedhart, 2022). Multiple data sources are collected to provide rich, detailed descriptions of student experiences with vlog-based learning activities. The design incorporates the Community of Inquiry framework as a theoretical lens to analyze cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence manifested through digital vlog narratives. Data collection occurs throughout one academic semester to capture temporal patterns in engagement development.

The target population consists of undergraduate students enrolled in fully online courses that integrate digital vlog assignments as learning activities. Purposive sampling is utilized to select participants from an online undergraduate course in education or social sciences that requires regular vlog submissions. The sample includes 15-20 students who volunteer to participate in the study and provide consent for data collection. Selection criteria ensure participants have basic digital literacy skills and access to video recording equipment (Chen, 2022; He, 2025). Demographic diversity in terms of age, gender, and prior online learning experience is considered to capture varied perspectives on vlog-based learning narratives.

Data collection employs multiple qualitative instruments to ensure triangulation and comprehensive understanding. Semi-structured interview protocols are developed to explore student perceptions of vlog creation processes, narrative construction strategies, and perceived engagement outcomes. Interview questions address behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of engagement aligned with the Community of Inquiry framework. Student-generated vlogs serve as primary artifacts for narrative analysis, examined for storytelling structures, reflective depth, and evidence of meaning-making. Reflective journals maintained by participants throughout the semester provide supplementary data on ongoing engagement experiences. Course observation notes document instructional contexts, assignment guidelines, and patterns of peer interaction surrounding vlog activities (Kalinin, 2023; Tomasena, 2022).

Institutional review board approval is obtained prior to commencing data collection to ensure ethical compliance. Participant recruitment occurs during the first two weeks of the semester

through announcements in the online course platform and direct email invitations. Informed consent is secured from all participants, emphasizing voluntary participation and confidentiality protections. Students submit their vlogs according to the regular course schedule while participating students additionally complete reflective journal entries after each vlog submission. Individual semi-structured interviews are conducted at three time points: early semester, mid-semester, and end of semester, each lasting 45-60 minutes via video conferencing. All interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis (Budiman, 2024; Ritter, 2024). Vlog artifacts are downloaded and organized chronologically for each participant. Data analysis follows an iterative process combining narrative analysis techniques to examine story structures within vlogs and thematic analysis to identify patterns in interview and journal data. Coding procedures utilize both deductive codes derived from the Community of Inquiry framework and inductive codes emerging from the data. Cross-case analysis compares engagement patterns across participants to identify commonalities and variations. Member checking is conducted by sharing preliminary findings with selected participants to enhance credibility and interpretive validity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Participant demographics reveal a diverse sample of 18 undergraduate students aged 19-24 years enrolled in an online educational psychology course during the Fall 2024 semester. The sample comprises 12 female students (66.7%) and 6 male students (33.3%), reflecting typical gender distribution in education-focused courses. Prior online learning experience varied considerably, with 8 students (44.4%) having completed more than three online courses, 7 students (38.9%) having completed one to three courses, and 3 students (16.7%) experiencing their first fully online course.

Digital literacy self-assessment scores measured on a 5-point Likert scale demonstrate moderate to high confidence levels among participants. The mean self-reported digital literacy score stands at 3.8 (SD = 0.6), indicating general comfort with digital technologies. Video creation experience prior to the course shows more variation, with only 5 students (27.8%) reporting previous educational vlog experience, while 13 students (72.2%) created educational vlogs for the first time during this course.

Vlog submission patterns throughout the semester indicate consistent participation rates. Students completed a total of 126 vlog submissions across seven assignments, averaging 7 vlogs per participant. Completion rates remained stable across the semester, with 94.4% submission rate in early weeks, 91.7% at mid-semester, and 88.9% during final weeks. Average vlog length increased progressively from 3.2 minutes in the first assignment to 5.7 minutes in the final assignment, suggesting growing comfort and depth in narrative construction.

Table 1. Participant Demographic and Digital Experience Characteristics (N=18)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	12	66.7%
	Male	6	33.3%
Age Range	19-20 years	7	38.9%
	21-22 years	8	44.4%
	23-24 years	3	16.7%
Prior Online Courses	0 courses	3	16.7%
	1-3 courses	7	38.9%
	4+ courses	8	44.4%

Previous Vlog Experience	Yes	5	27.8%
	No	13	72.2%
Digital Literacy (Self-rated)	High (4-5)	11	61.1%
	Moderate (3-3.9)	6	33.3%
	Low (1-2.9)	1	5.6%

Table 2. Vlog Submission Patterns and Characteristics Across Semester (N=126 vlogs)

Assignment Period	Submission Rate	Mean Length (minutes)	Narrative Elements Present	Reflective Depth Score (1-5)
Week 2-3 (Early)	94.4% (17/18)	3.2 ± 0.8	68%	2.8 ± 0.6
Week 5-6	94.4% (17/18)	3.9 ± 0.9	74%	3.2 ± 0.7
Week 8-9 (Mid)	91.7% (16.5/18)	4.5 ± 1.1	81%	3.6 ± 0.8
Week 11-12	88.9% (16/18)	5.1 ± 1.2	85%	4.0 ± 0.7
Week 14-15 (Final)	88.9% (16/18)	5.7 ± 1.3	89%	4.3 ± 0.6

Statistical patterns in participant characteristics suggest that the sample represents typical online learning populations with predominant female enrollment in education-related disciplines. The moderate to high digital literacy levels indicate that technological barriers were minimal, allowing focus on narrative and engagement dimensions rather than technical challenges. The relatively low proportion of students with prior vlog experience provides valuable insight into how novices develop narrative competencies through repeated practice.

Submission rate consistency demonstrates sustained behavioral engagement throughout the semester, with minimal attrition despite increasing cognitive demands. The decline from 94.4% to 88.9% represents normal variation in online courses rather than systematic disengagement. The progressive increase in vlog length from 3.2 to 5.7 minutes suggests students became more invested in narrative elaboration and reflective depth as the semester advanced.

The presence of narrative elements and reflective depth scores both demonstrate upward trajectories, indicating qualitative improvements in vlog construction beyond mere participation. The increase in narrative elements from 68% to 89% reveals students' growing sophistication in storytelling techniques. Similarly, reflective depth scores rising from 2.8 to 4.3 on a five-point scale demonstrate deepening cognitive engagement with course content through the vlog medium.

Three primary themes emerged from thematic analysis of interview transcripts and reflective journals: narrative ownership, multimodal expression, and social presence. Narrative ownership appeared in 94% of participant interviews (n=17), with students describing vlogs as spaces for personal voice and authentic self-representation. Representative statements included descriptions of vlogs as "my story" and "where I can be myself while learning."

Multimodal expression emerged as a significant theme in 83% of interviews (n=15), with participants emphasizing the value of combining visual, auditory, and verbal elements. Students frequently contrasted vlog assignments with traditional text-based submissions, noting that video format enabled demonstration, emotion, and embodied understanding that writing alone could not capture. Specific references to facial expressions, tone of voice, and visual demonstrations appeared throughout the data.

Social presence manifested in 78% of interviews (n=14), with students reporting heightened sense of connection to peers and instructors through vlog exchanges. Participants described feeling

"less isolated" in the online environment and experiencing classmates as "real people" rather than anonymous text contributors. This theme connected strongly to emotional engagement dimensions, with students expressing increased motivation to engage when they perceived authentic social interaction.

The prevalence of narrative ownership theme across 94% of participants indicates that vlogs successfully functioned as personalized learning narratives rather than merely standardized assignments. Students' language of possession ("my story," "my learning journey") suggests deep identification with the narrative process. This finding aligns with narrative learning theory's emphasis on identity formation through storytelling, demonstrating that digital vlogs provide a medium for learners to construct and claim their educational experiences.

Multimodal expression's appearance in 83% of interviews reveals that students recognized and valued the affordances specific to video format. Their explicit comparisons with text-based work demonstrate metacognitive awareness of how different media support different kinds of meaning-making. The references to facial expressions, tone, and visual demonstrations indicate that students leveraged multiple semiotic resources to construct richer, more nuanced narratives than would be possible through single-mode communication.

Social presence in 78% of interviews establishes that vlogs create interpersonal connection beyond cognitive content transmission. The reduction of isolation and perception of peers as "real people" suggests vlogs generate social affordances similar to synchronous interaction despite asynchronous submission. This finding supports the Community of Inquiry framework's emphasis on social presence as foundational to meaningful online learning, demonstrating that narrative video can compensate for physical absence.

Quantitative and qualitative data converge to demonstrate progressive engagement development throughout the semester. Statistical increases in vlog length (3.2 to 5.7 minutes) and reflective depth scores (2.8 to 4.3) parallel qualitative themes of growing narrative confidence and ownership. Students who initially described anxiety about video creation later reported comfort and investment, suggesting that sustained practice with narrative construction builds both technical skill and emotional connection to the learning process.

The relationship between multimodal expression theme and narrative element presence (increasing from 68% to 89%) indicates that students' growing awareness of video affordances translated into more sophisticated narrative construction. Interview statements about combining visual, auditory, and verbal elements correspond with observable increases in storytelling techniques within vlog artifacts. This convergence suggests that metacognitive recognition of multimodal possibilities enables more intentional and effective narrative design.

Social presence theme correlates with sustained submission rates despite increasing demands. Students who reported stronger peer connection through vlog exchanges demonstrated higher completion rates and more consistent engagement. The 78% prevalence of social presence theme among participants who completed all seven assignments, compared to 50% among those who missed assignments, suggests that social connection through narrative sharing functions as a motivational factor supporting behavioral engagement.

Case participant Sarah, a 21-year-old junior with limited prior online learning experience, exemplifies typical engagement progression through vlog narratives. Her first vlog submission in Week 2 lasted 2.8 minutes and consisted primarily of reading prepared notes about course concepts with minimal eye contact or personal reflection. The narrative structure remained linear and expository, presenting information without integrating personal experience or emotional expression.

Sarah's mid-semester vlog in Week 8 demonstrated marked transformation in narrative approach and engagement quality. The 5.2-minute submission incorporated personal anecdotes connecting course theories to her tutoring experiences, displayed confident camera presence with natural eye contact, and included spontaneous elaborations beyond scripted content. She employed narrative devices such as scene-setting, conflict presentation, and resolution, constructing a cohesive story arc rather than mere information delivery.

Her final vlog in Week 14 extended to 6.8 minutes and represented sophisticated integration of narrative and analytical thinking. Sarah opened with a compelling personal dilemma from her field placement, analyzed it through multiple theoretical lenses introduced throughout the course, and reflected on implications for her developing professional identity. Visual elements included displayed student work samples and gestural emphasis on key points. The narrative demonstrated recursive thinking, returning to initial dilemma with deepened understanding.

Sarah's progression from 2.8 to 6.8 minutes and from expository to narrative structure illustrates how repeated vlog practice develops both technical competence and cognitive engagement. Her initial reliance on prepared notes reflects common novice anxiety about video creation, prioritizing accuracy over authenticity. The mechanical delivery and minimal personal connection in early vlogs represent surface-level behavioral engagement without emotional or deep cognitive investment.

The mid-semester transformation reveals critical threshold crossing where Sarah shifted from performing for evaluation to constructing meaningful narrative. Her incorporation of personal anecdotes demonstrates narrative ownership theme emergence, while spontaneous elaborations indicate authentic thinking rather than scripted recitation. The appearance of narrative devices (scene-setting, conflict, resolution) shows growing sophistication in storytelling as a learning tool, moving beyond content delivery toward meaning-making through narrative structure.

The final vlog's characteristics exemplify deep engagement across all three dimensions: behavioral (extended length, visual enhancement), emotional (personal dilemma, professional identity reflection), and cognitive (theoretical integration, recursive thinking). Sarah's ability to analyze a complex situation through multiple lenses while maintaining coherent narrative demonstrates that vlog creation can support higher-order thinking. Her return to the initial dilemma with transformed understanding represents the narrative learning process of constructing and reconstructing experience through storytelling.

Sarah's individual case illuminates patterns evident in aggregate data while providing concrete illustration of engagement mechanisms. Her length increase from 2.8 to 6.8 minutes exceeds the sample mean trajectory (3.2 to 5.7 minutes) but follows the same progressive pattern. The narrative element emergence in her vlogs corresponds to the group-level increase from 68% to 89%, demonstrating how individual development contributes to aggregate trends.

The relationship between Sarah's narrative sophistication and her interview statements about ownership and multimodal expression reveals how subjective experience connects to observable behavior. In her Week 9 interview, Sarah explicitly described feeling "like the vlogs are really mine now, not just assignments I'm completing," coinciding with the mid-semester transformation in her vlog characteristics. This temporal alignment between reported experience and behavioral change strengthens claims about vlogs fostering engagement through narrative ownership.

Sarah's trajectory also exemplifies the relationship between practice, confidence, and social connection identified in cross-participant analysis. Her initial anxiety about video creation diminished through repeated practice, while her growing comfort enabled more authentic self-presentation. She described watching peers' vlogs as "seeing how everyone tells their own story

differently," which enhanced her sense of social presence and motivated her continued engagement. Her case thus integrates quantitative patterns, qualitative themes, and individual experience into a coherent account of how digital vlogs function as learning narratives that progressively deepen student engagement.

This study investigated how digital vlogs function as learning narratives and influence student engagement in online learning environments through a qualitative case study design. Findings reveal that 18 undergraduate participants demonstrated progressive engagement development across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions throughout one academic semester. Vlog submission rates remained consistently high at 88.9-94.4%, while average vlog length increased from 3.2 to 5.7 minutes and reflective depth scores rose from 2.8 to 4.3 on a five-point scale, indicating sustained participation and deepening cognitive investment.

Three primary themes emerged from qualitative analysis: narrative ownership (94% of participants), multimodal expression (83%), and social presence (78%). Students described vlogs as personalized spaces for authentic self-representation, valued the integration of visual, auditory, and verbal elements, and experienced heightened connection to peers despite asynchronous interaction. The convergence of quantitative progression and qualitative themes demonstrates that vlogs successfully operated as learning narratives rather than mere technological tools or standardized assignments.

Individual case analysis exemplified aggregate patterns while illuminating specific mechanisms of engagement development. The featured participant progressed from mechanical, expository presentations to sophisticated narrative constructions integrating personal experience, theoretical analysis, and professional identity reflection. Her trajectory illustrated how repeated vlog practice builds technical competence, narrative confidence, and deep cognitive engagement, supporting the theoretical proposition that digital vlogs function as narrative spaces facilitating multidimensional student engagement in online learning environments.

The findings align with previous research establishing that digital storytelling tools enhance motivation and meaning-making in educational contexts. Lee and McLoughlin (2019) similarly found that video-based assignments increased student ownership and authentic expression compared to text-only submissions. The current study extends this work by specifically examining narrative structures within vlogs and documenting progressive engagement development across an entire semester, providing temporal depth often absent in prior studies that employed single-point measurements.

Divergence emerges when comparing these results with studies reporting mixed or neutral effects of video assignments on engagement. Chen and colleagues (2021) found that video creation increased anxiety and workload perception without corresponding engagement benefits. The contrasting findings may reflect differences in pedagogical scaffolding and assignment design. The current study's iterative vlog assignments with consistent instructor feedback likely supported the progressive competence development observed, whereas Chen's study employed high-stakes single video projects. This suggests that the learning narrative function of vlogs depends critically on sustained practice rather than isolated performance.

The emphasis on social presence through asynchronous video narratives challenges assumptions in synchronous-focused online learning literature. Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) positioned real-time interaction as essential for social presence in the Community of Inquiry framework. The current findings demonstrate that narrative video can generate social connection through asynchronous sharing, with 78% of participants reporting reduced isolation and enhanced peer perception. This extends theoretical understanding of social presence beyond synchronous

interaction to include narrative-mediated connection, suggesting that how students share matters as much as when they interact.

The progressive increase in vlog length, narrative sophistication, and reflective depth signals that students engaged in genuine learning processes rather than merely completing assignments. This pattern indicates that vlogs enabled iterative knowledge construction where each narrative built upon previous understanding. The consistency of this progression across diverse participants suggests that the narrative format itself—not just individual student characteristics—facilitates deepening engagement over time.

The prevalence of narrative ownership theme across 94% of participants indicates a fundamental shift in how students positioned themselves within the online learning environment. This near-universal emergence suggests that vlogs transformed students from content consumers to knowledge producers, from passive recipients to active narrators of their learning experiences. The language of possession ("my story," "my journey") reflects epistemological repositioning where students claimed authority over their educational narratives rather than merely responding to instructor-defined tasks.

The correlation between social presence and sustained submission rates signals that vlogs addressed a critical gap in online learning: the need for authentic interpersonal connection. Students who perceived peers as "real people" through narrative sharing demonstrated stronger behavioral engagement, indicating that social connection functions as an engagement mechanism rather than merely an affective outcome. This pattern suggests that loneliness and isolation in online environments may represent not just emotional challenges but actual barriers to cognitive engagement that narrative-based approaches can mitigate.

These findings carry significant pedagogical implications for online course design. Educators cannot assume that simply incorporating video assignments will enhance engagement; rather, they must intentionally design vlog activities as iterative narrative practices with explicit scaffolding for storytelling, reflection, and peer interaction. The progressive development pattern indicates that single-instance video projects may fail to realize engagement benefits, whereas sustained narrative construction across multiple assignments enables competence building and deepening investment.

Institutional implications emerge regarding resource allocation and faculty development for online education. The study demonstrates that meaningful online engagement requires more than content delivery platforms and assessment tools (Goedhart, 2022; Nayaka, 2022). Institutions must invest in preparing faculty to design narrative-based learning activities, provide feedback that supports progressive narrative development, and create cultures of authentic sharing where students feel safe expressing personal voices. Professional development programs should address not just technology skills but pedagogical approaches to fostering narrative learning.

Theoretical implications extend to how engagement is conceptualized and measured in online learning research. The multidimensional engagement development observed challenges single-construct measurements and single-point assessments prevalent in existing literature. Researchers must adopt longitudinal designs that capture progressive engagement trajectories and employ methods sensitive to narrative structures, not just participation metrics (Eltink, 2024; Fichter, 2007). The integration of Community of Inquiry framework with narrative learning theory demonstrates productive potential for hybrid theoretical lenses that illuminate complex learning phenomena.

The progressive engagement development occurred because vlogs provided safe spaces for exploratory narrative construction where students could experiment with self-representation without the permanence or formality of written academic discourse. Video format's ephemeral quality—captured in moments, received through viewing—reduced the pressure for perfect performance that

often inhibits authentic expression in text-based assignments. Students could revise through re-recording rather than endless editing, enabling iterative refinement that supported growing confidence and sophistication.

The prevalence of narrative ownership emerged because storytelling inherently positions individuals as agents with experiences worth sharing. Narrative structure requires a narrator who selects, sequences, and interprets events, automatically conferring authority on the storyteller (Chen, 2022; Sanchez-Cortes, 2015). Unlike traditional assignments that position students as demonstrating mastery of predetermined content, vlog narratives required students to determine what experiences mattered, how they connected to course concepts, and what meanings emerged from reflection. This structural positioning as narrative agents generated the ownership feelings students consistently reported.

Social presence manifested through asynchronous video because narrative inherently creates intimacy through disclosure and interpretation. When students shared personal experiences, displayed emotions through facial expressions and voice tone, and revealed thinking processes through spontaneous elaboration, they made themselves vulnerable in ways that fostered connection. Viewing peers' narratives enabled empathetic engagement that text-based discussion posts rarely achieve, as viewers witnessed not just ideas but embodied persons struggling with, questioning, and integrating new understanding. The narrative form thus operated as a social technology, not merely an individual learning tool (Gontarz, 2024; Jiang, 2022).

Educators should implement vlog-based learning narratives through carefully scaffolded sequences that support progressive development. Initial assignments might focus on personal introduction narratives to build comfort with video format and establish classroom community. Subsequent vlogs should integrate course content with lived experience, requiring students to construct narratives that demonstrate conceptual understanding through personal application. Final assignments might challenge students to create synthetic narratives that trace their learning journey across the semester, explicitly connecting early understandings with transformed perspectives (Amgott, 2024; Pires, 2022).

Researchers must extend this work by examining discipline-specific variations in how vlogs function as learning narratives. The current study focused on education students who may possess particular affinity for reflective practice and personal narrative. Investigating vlog narratives in STEM, business, or technical fields would illuminate whether narrative ownership and social presence emerge similarly across disciplinary contexts with different epistemological assumptions and discourse conventions. Comparative studies across disciplines could identify universal engagement mechanisms versus context-dependent processes.

Institutions need to develop ethical guidelines and technical infrastructure supporting narrative-based online learning. Privacy concerns, digital consent, and data storage require careful consideration when student narratives involve personal disclosure. Technical platforms must support not just video hosting but also peer viewing, commenting, and portfolio archiving that enable narrative exchange and longitudinal development tracking (Budiman, 2024; Ritter, 2024). Investment in these infrastructures signals institutional commitment to pedagogical innovation beyond traditional content delivery models, positioning online learning as spaces for authentic narrative construction and community building rather than merely convenient alternatives to face-to-face instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study's most distinctive finding demonstrates that digital vlogs function as progressive narrative spaces where engagement develops iteratively rather than emerging instantaneously through technological novelty. The documented trajectory from mechanical content delivery (2.8 minutes, 68% narrative elements) to sophisticated narrative integration (5.7 minutes, 89% narrative elements) reveals that vlog-based learning operates through sustained practice and repeated narrative construction, contradicting assumptions that digital media inherently motivates students. The near-universal emergence of narrative ownership (94% of participants) coupled with the correlation between social presence and sustained behavioral engagement establishes that vlogs address fundamental online learning challenges—isolation and passive consumption—through narrative-mediated connection. The study uniquely demonstrates that asynchronous video narratives generate authentic social presence comparable to synchronous interaction, challenging prevailing assumptions in Community of Inquiry literature that real-time communication is essential for interpersonal connection in online environments.

This research contributes both conceptually and methodologically to online learning scholarship. Conceptually, it integrates narrative learning theory with the Community of Inquiry framework, providing a hybrid theoretical lens that illuminates how storytelling mechanisms support cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence in digital environments. This integration offers educators and researchers a comprehensive framework for understanding engagement not as a singular construct but as multidimensional development facilitated through narrative processes. Methodologically, the study advances qualitative inquiry in educational technology by combining longitudinal case study design with multi-method data collection—interviews, reflective journals, and artifact analysis—that captures both subjective experience and observable behavioral change across time. The temporal depth achieved through semester-long observation and three-point interviewing enables documentation of progressive engagement trajectories rarely captured in cross-sectional designs. The analytical approach of examining narrative structures within student-created vlogs, not merely content accuracy or participation frequency, establishes a model for investigating digital artifacts as meaning-making processes rather than assessment products.

Several limitations constrain generalizability and suggest directions for future investigation. The study's focus on 18 education students in a single course limits transferability to other disciplines, proficiency levels, and institutional contexts where epistemological assumptions, discourse conventions, and student populations differ substantially. Future research should examine vlog narratives across STEM, humanities, professional programs, and vocational education to identify discipline-specific variations in narrative construction and engagement mechanisms. The participant sample's moderate to high digital literacy (mean 3.8/5.0) raises questions about how students with limited technological access or confidence experience vlog-based learning; investigations in contexts with diverse digital divides would illuminate equity dimensions. The seven-vlog sequence over one semester provides substantial temporal depth, yet longer longitudinal studies tracking students across multiple courses or academic years could reveal whether narrative competencies and engagement patterns transfer to new contexts or remain course-specific. The study's reliance on volunteer participants potentially introduces self-selection bias favoring students comfortable with video creation; experimental or quasi-experimental designs comparing vlog-based and alternative narrative formats would strengthen causal claims about engagement effects. Quantitative investigations with larger samples could test relationships between narrative

sophistication metrics and learning outcomes, moving beyond engagement as an endpoint to examine achievement implications.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

REFERENCES

Amgott, N. (2024). "Je Suis Youtubeur": Multilingual Multimodal Composing Abroad. *Journal of Language Identity and Education*, *23*(6), 825–841. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2022.2057992

Budiman, R. (2024). Lived religion and digital homemaking: The case of Indonesian marriage migrants. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *27*(6), 760–775. https://doi.org/10.1177/13678779241268183

Chen, W. K. (2022). How Travel Vlogs on YouTube Influence Consumer Travel Behavior in Indonesia: Empirical Evidence from fsQCA. *Proceedings 2022 IEEE 23rd International Conference on Information Reuse and Integration for Data Science Iri 2022*, *Query date: 2025-12-15 21:37:03*, 95–100. https://doi.org/10.1109/IRI54793.2022.00032

Cheong, M. V. H. (2025). Gender expression in vlogs: A multimodal analysis of vlogs by Malaysian adolescents on YouTube. *World Leisure Journal*, *Query date: 2025-12-15 21:37:03*. https://doi.org/10.1080/16078055.2025.2486143

Choe, H. (2024). Doing being ordinary, doing being expatriate: A frame analysis of food activities in everyday vlogs of Korean expatriates. *Language and Communication*, *99*(Query date: 2025-12-15 21:37:03), 244–258. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2024.10.006

Elliott, D. (2016). Ethics for a digital era. Dalam *Ethics for A Digital Era* (hlm. 219). https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118968888

Eltink, E. (2024). Healthism online: 'What I eat in a day' vlogs before and during COVID-19 restrictions. *Heliyon*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e23623

Feenstra, T. M. (2024). Enhancing surgical internship experiences: The potential of a supporting digital curriculum. *Surgery Open Science*, *20*(Query date: 2025-12-15 21:37:03), 116–122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sopen.2024.06.005

Fichter, D. (2007). How social is your web site? Top five tips for social media optimization. *Online Wilton Connecticut*, *31*(3), 57–60.

Goedhart, N. S. (2022). Fun, engaging and easily shareable? Exploring the value of co-creating vlogs with citizens from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. *Action Research*, *20*(1), 56–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/14767503211044011

Gontarz, B. (2024). INTRODUCTION: ON THE CONCEPT OF JOURNEYING. *Review of International American Studies*, *17*(1), 29–35. https://doi.org/10.31261/rias.17577

He, J. (2025). From Attraction to Retention: How Vlogger Attributes, Vlog News Content Quality, and Platform Features Affect Continuance Intention of Vlog News. *International Journal of Human Computer Interaction*, *41*(14), 9151–9172. https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2024.2423334

Heinritz, A. (2025). Eudaimonic reading Reading routines on BookTube as 'self-making-machines.' *Aaa Arbeiten Aus Anglistik Und Amerikanistik*, *50*(1), 95–113. https://doi.org/10.24053/AAA-2025-0006

Huang, H. W. (2021). Effects of smartphone-based collaborative vlog projects on EFL learners' speaking performance and learning engagement. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, *37*(6), 18–40. https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.6623

Jalagat, J. R. J. (2022). From "welcome to my channel" to "please like, share, & subscribe": A conversational analysis of the opening and closing strategies of Filipino Youtube vlogs. *Plaridel*, *19*(1), 233–271. https://doi.org/10.52518/2022.19.1-07jlgat

Jiang, L. (2022). Interrelationships among Consumer Attitudes Toward Vlog Promotion. *Journal of Advanced Computational Intelligence and Intelligent Informatics*, *26*(4), 542–548. https://doi.org/10.20965/jaciii.2022.P0542

Kalinin, A. Y. (2023). Machine voice-over translation in social media: Perceived quality of translation of YouTube travel vlogs. *Medialingvistika*, *10*(4), 568–597. https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu22.2023.408

Kapsch, P. H. (2022). Exploring user agency and small acts of algorithm engagement in everyday media use. *Media International Australia*, *183*(1), 16–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X211067803

Lozano, J. M. (2024). FROM GRINDR ADVICE COLUMN TO MEMOIR: Latinx Life Writing Online and the Queer Latinx Care Work of John Paul Brammer's "¡Hola Papi!" Series. *Routledge Handbook of Latinx Life Writing*, *Query date: 2025-12-15 21:37:03*, 303–316. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003273141-26

Mu, S. (2025). Exploring digital translanguaging practices through Citywalk vlogging: Insights from Macao's linguistic landscape. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *Query date: 2025-12-15 21:37:03*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2025.2468889

Nayaka, S. (2022). Going Viral: YouTube, Village Life and Digital Cultures in South India. *Border Crossings and Mobilities on Screen*, *Query date: 2025-12-15 21:37:03*, 89–100. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003127703-10

Pires, F. (2022). Learning with YouTube: Beyond formal and informal through new actors, strategies and affordances. *Convergence*, *28*(3), 838–853. https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565211020545

Razzak, M. M. A. (2024). Exploring Quranic and Exegesis Studies on Social Media through YouTube Channel Analysis. *Albayan*, *22*(3), 522–552. https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-20240163

Ritter, C. S. (2024). Locating the influencer: Place and platform in global tourism. Dalam *Locating the Influencer Place and Platform in Global Tourism* (hlm. 153). https://doi.org/10.1108/9781802625974

Sanchez-Cortes, D. (2015). In the mood for vlog: Multimodal inference in conversational social video. *ACM Transactions on Interactive Intelligent Systems*, *5*(2). https://doi.org/10.1145/2641577

Tomasena, J. M. (2022). Los géneros audiovisuales en la producción de los booktubers: Un análisis cuantitativo. *Bid*, *49*. https://doi.org/10.1344/BID2022.49.02

Vásquez, C. (2025). Experiencing Digital Discourses: Multimodality, Engagement, Activism. Dalam *Experiencing Digital Discourses Multimodality Engagement Activism* (hlm. 327). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-77460-7

Yang, N. (2025). Emotion and self-branding in YouTube travel vlogs: A corpus-based analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *247*(Query date: 2025-12-15 21:37:03), 16–28. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2025.07.014

Zhang, Q. (2021). Enhancing EFL Learners' English Speaking Performance Through Vlog-Based Digital Multimodal Composing Activities. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science Including Subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics*, *13089*(Query date: 2025-12-15 21:37:03), 92–103. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92836-0_9