

The Influence of the Movie Zootopia on Improving 8th Grade Junior High School Students' Vocabulary Mastery

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i3.2463>

*Ishmatul Muflihah, Nur Fauzia^{ab} 

¹²Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: ishmatul.22173@mhs.unesa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Vocabulary mastery plays a crucial role in English language learning as it supports the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. However, the lack of engaging learning materials means that many junior high school students still struggle with vocabulary acquisition. This study aims to determine the effect of using the movie *Zootopia* on students' vocabulary mastery. This study employed a pre-experimental design using a one-group pre-test and post-test model involving 31 eighth-grade students. Data were collected through a vocabulary test and analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test. The results showed that the mean score increased from 79.42 on the pre-test to 89.06 on the post-test, representing a 12.13% increase. Furthermore, the analysis revealed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the use of the film Zootopia has a significant effect on improving students' vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: *Vocabulary Mastery, Zootopia Movie, Audiovisual Media, EFL, Junior High School*

Article History:

Received 29th April 2026

Accepted 19th May 2026

Published 26th May 2026



INTRODUCTION

English is a required subject in Indonesia and is widely recognized as a global language that plays a vital role in international communication. Mastering English enables students to engage in global interactions, keep pace with technological advancements, and better prepare themselves for future career opportunities in a competitive world. In language learning, Vocabulary is essential since it forms the basis of all linguistic abilities, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. According to Zhou, (2025), vocabulary mastery is the foundation of effective communication; therefore, its instruction should integrate explicit strategies – such as direct teaching, morphological analysis, and collaborative learning – with incidental strategies – such as extensive reading and contextual inference – as well as technology-based strategies. When students have a limited vocabulary, they often struggle to understand learning materials, express their ideas, and communicate effectively in various situations. Mukhtar et al., (2023) state that limited vocabulary is a major barrier to reading comprehension and that the breadth and depth of vocabulary are important factors in the success of learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

However, many middle school students still face difficulties in learning English. One of the main factors is the use of traditional teaching methods, which tend to be unengaging and insufficiently effective in helping students absorb and retain new vocabulary. This situation indicates that students need stronger motivation as well as more creative and effective learning strategies. Mahbub, (2023) highlights that a limited vocabulary is a major barrier to reading comprehension, while also emphasizing the importance of vocabulary

The Influence of the Movie Zootopia on Improving 8th Grade Junior High School Students' Vocabulary Mastery

mastery for individuals learning English as a second language (EFL). Qureshi & Usman, (2025) emphasize that vocabulary is the foundation of English language learning and encourages the growth of additional language abilities. They also recommend better instructional planning and the use of innovative strategies to enhance vocabulary learning.

In today's digital age, visual media – particularly films – have become increasingly important in supporting vocabulary acquisition. Advances in audiovisual technology have transformed the way information is conveyed by integrating sound, music, and moving images, making learning more engaging and meaningful. Arif, (2020) research indicates that audiovisual media and vocabulary acquisition both have a positive impact on student studying consequences. In the classroom, audiovisual materials can help students better understand content and improve their ability to retain new information. Ma'ruf Nurrizal, (2021) found a significant increase in learners' vocabulary scores subsequent the utilize of audiovisual media. Similarly, Setiawan & Firdaus, (2025) state that well-designed audiovisual materials can increase students' interest in learning because they are interactive and engaging. Additionally, Munir, (2016) also demonstrates that the utilize of cartoon media can enhance students' vocabulary mastery due to its engaging and enjoyable presentation. This supports their theory, given by Mayer, n.d. (2002), who contends that learning occurs more successfully when information is communicated through both verbal and visual channels.

Various studies have confirmed the effectiveness of this approach. Adrefiza et al., (2024) revealed that watching English-language films can enhance students' vocabulary, particularly in learning idioms, slang, and everyday expressions. Similarly, Saputra et al., (2023) state that films contribute to improved language proficiency by strengthening students' understanding of vocabulary. Furthermore, research by Mahbub, (2023) indicates that exposure to English-language films, television programs, and cartoons can enhance all four language skills: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. The use of subtitles also acts a crucial part in assisting the development of reading and writing skills while enhancing cultural understanding.

The integration of technology and visual media offers a more engaging also efficient learning experience. One example is the animated film *Zootopia*, which combines entertainment with educational value through an engaging storyline and rich vocabulary. Mubarakah & Rizal, (2025) found that the majority of students responded positively to the use of English-language films in learning. Such media provide meaningful contexts that help students understand how language is used in real-life situations. Conversely, traditional methods that rely heavily on memorization often become less effective over time, as they can make students feel bored, passive, and unmotivated. Consequently, students may struggle to expand their vocabulary through monotonous learning approaches. Bakar et al., (2023) state that the utilize of films with subtitles can enhance students' vocabulary mastery because it helps them understand word meanings through visual and textual contexts,

Further research highlights the benefits of interactive learning strategies. Ayana et al., (2024) found that techniques such as semantic mapping, the keyword method, and context-based learning are more effective than rote memorization. Similarly, Munawir et al., (2022) demonstrated that the use of animated films in the classroom can significantly improve students' vocabulary comprehension. This is because animated films combine visual and auditory elements, making it easier for students to understand word meanings while keeping them engaged. Furthermore, Maulida & Warni (2024) state that watching English-language films helps students acquire new vocabulary, understand context, and improve pronunciation.

The primary objective is to refine the English vocabulary acquisition of junior high school learners by integrating audiovisual tools, specifically the animated feature *Zootopia*. This cinematic medium is deemed highly effective as it fosters an emotional bond between the students and the narrative's characters. Such psychological engagement is crucial for maintaining student focus and facilitating a more natural process of comprehending and internalizing new linguistic terms. Unlike traditional pedagogical methods, audiovisual media offer a dual-sensory experience through synchronized visual and auditory stimuli. This combination allows learners to grasp word meanings within a richer context. Consequently,

the present study seeks to determine if there is a statistically meaningful difference in students' vocabulary proficiency following the implementation of *Zootopia* as a learning instrument.

Supporting this view, Zwiky et al., (2024) discovered that personal film preferences are closely associated with neural activity during emotional processing, which can significantly boost a student's internal motivation to study. Therefore, this investigation intends to validate the importance of audiovisual resources in language acquisition and showcase *Zootopia* as a functional tool for expanding a learner's lexicon. Furthermore, this research underscores the potential of utilizing movies as a practical and advantageous resource for language education.

METHOD

This study used a pre-experimental quantitative design with a one-group pre-test and post-test model to analyze how effectively students' vocabulary mastery was enhanced by watching the movie *Zootopia*. Purposive sampling was used to choose 31 eighth-grade junior high school students for the study. This approach made it possible to gather information that could be statistically examined to see how students' language mastery changed following the intervention.

Respondents

The research was executed in the first semester of the 2025–2026 school year at MTs Al-Azhar, Lamongan Regency. Students in the eighth grade served as the research subjects. 31 students from MTs Al-Azhar's VIII class participated in this study. Purposive sampling was used to choose the subjects; students were chosen from a particular class rather than at random.

Instruments

20 multiple-choice questions and 5 short-answer questions comprised the 25-question test used in this study. The test had a thirty-minute time limit. The test was administered using a pre-test and a post-test. The pre-test is administered before the intervention to determine the students' initial level of English vocabulary competency. After students complete the intervention, which entails learning through the movie *Zootopia*, a post-test is given to gauge how much their vocabulary has improved.

The questions in the instrument were designed based on vocabulary mastery indicators, which include understanding word meanings, synonyms, antonyms, and the use of words in sentence contexts. In this study, each correct answer on a multiple-choice question was scored as 1, and each incorrect answer was scored as 0. For short-answer questions, scores were based on the accuracy of students' responses. The total scores were then used as data for analysis.

Data Analysis

To ascertain the treatment's efficacy, statistical techniques were applied to the data analysis. The distribution of the data was examined using a normality test. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was employed to examine the difference between pre-test and post-test because the data were not regularly distributed. The findings were utilized to assess whether students' vocabulary mastery significantly improved following the intervention.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	31	50	95	79.42	11.372
Post-test	31	75	95	89.06	5.543
Valid N (listwise)	31				

Figure 1 Descriptive Statistics

Test Statistics

	Post-test - Pre-test
Z	-4.622 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Figure 2. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Thirty-one junior high school students in the eighth grade participated in this study. The mean score pre-test score of 79.42 rose to 89.06 on the post-test, according to the results, suggesting that the students' vocabulary had improved. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha revealed that the instrument utilized in this investigation had a reliability coefficient of roughly 0.656. Nonetheless, a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) was found using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, suggesting that using the movie *Zootopia* as an audiovisual medium improved students' vocabulary. The effective use of the movie *Zootopia* as an audiovisual medium that offers both visual and auditory stimuli at the same time is responsible for this improvement. Visuals, conversation, and plot all work together to help students comprehend terminology in context, improve retention, and increase their enthusiasm to study.

Discussions

Students' vocabulary mastery before and after utilizing the movie *Zootopia* as an audiovisual medium differed significantly, according to the data analysis results. The improvement in scores between the pre-test and post-test makes the clear, showing students improved their vocabulary mastery following the intervention.

Additionally, the descriptive statistics demonstrate that students' language skills have improved, as evidenced by the mean post-test being greater than the pre-test. Since the outcomes of the normality test indicate the data are not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was leveraged to proceed with the investigation. The Wilcoxon test results, which had a significance value under 0.05, showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test findings. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was supported, and the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, indicating that using the movie *Zootopia* as an audiovisual medium improves students' vocabulary mastery.

The results above are consistent with a study by Maulida & Warni (2024), which confirms that watching English-language films offers many benefits, including enriching vocabulary, improving pronunciation, and providing enjoyable contextual learning, as well as helping to enhance attention and motivation to learn. Furthermore, based on Younas & Dong (2024), the use of animated films significantly improves learners' receptive and productive vocabulary compared to conventional methods, as visuals and real-world contexts aid vocabulary comprehension and retention. Film media can reduce boredom and increase interest in learning.

These findings align with Multimedia Learning Theory, which explains that the learning process is more effective when information is delivered through two cognitive channels: the visual and auditory channels Zhang & Zhang, (2024) . The combination of these two channels helps students process language information more effectively, particularly in vocabulary learning. The combination of visual and audio elements can enhance understanding and retention of information. These outcomes indicate that the use of the film *Zootopia* as a visual tool significantly improves students' vocabulary skills. These findings not only answer the research questions but also demonstrate that the effective use of audiovisual resources in language studies can significantly enhance learning outcomes, particularly in vocabulary acquisition.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study indicate that watching the movie Zootopia significantly improved students' understanding. This is evidenced by an average increase from 79.42 on the pre-test to 89.06 on the post-test. Furthermore, the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test indicate a significant difference ($p < 0.05$), meaning that this method is effective. These results show relevant pedagogical ramifications for learning English. Teachers are therefore encouraged to use audiovisual materials, like movies, as a substitute method for teaching vocabulary. This method can enhance retention, increase motivation and engagement, and help students grasp terminology in context, all of which can lead to better learning outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express deep appreciation to the headmaster and teachers of MTs Al-Azhar for granting permission and supporting the enactment. Gratitude is also conveyed to the English teacher for the guidance and cooperation during the study process. The author would like to thank all eighth-grade students who actively participated and contributed as the research subjects. It is expected to provide meaningful contributions to the development of English vocabulary learning through the use of audiovisual media, particularly movies such as Zootopia.

REFERENCES

- Adrefiza, A., Wulandari, K., & Haryanti, R. (2024). Habit of watching English movies in improving vocabulary: What do the students say? *Langue (Journal of Language and Education)*, 3(1), 13–29. <https://doi.org/10.22437/langue.v3i1.38146>
- Arif, T. Z. Z. Al. (2020). *J-SHMIC : Journal of English for Academic*. 7(1), 57–65.
- Ayana, H., Mereba, T., & Alemu, A. (2024). *Effect of vocabulary learning strategies on students' vocabulary knowledge achievement and motivation: the case of grade 11 high school students*. August. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2024.1399350>
- Bakar, A., Hasyim, U., & Hasyim, U. (2023). *The Influence Of Subtitled Movies On Students Vocabulary Mastery*. 1(4).
- Ma'ruf Nurrizal, L. S. (2021). *Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery By Using Audio Visual Media* Ma'ruf Nurrizal, Lisda Septiani.
- Mahbub, R. M. (2023). *Impact of Watching English Movies, Series, and Cartoons on English Language Learning of a Private University in Bangladesh*. 45–58.
- Maulida, S., & Warni, S. (2024). *Students' Perceptions Toward the Impact of English Movies on Students' Vocabulary Knowledge*. 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.35961/salee.v5i2.1448>
- Mayer, R. E. (n.d.). *Multimedia Learning*. 41.
- Mubarokah, E. N., & Rizal, D. (2025). *EFL Students' Perceptions on Watching English Movies as Audio-visual Media to Improve Student's Vocabulary Mastery*. 5(2).
- Mukhtar, H. P., Ali, Z., & Amal, R. (2023). The Importance of Vocabulary in Reading Among EFL Learners. *Proceedings of International Conference of Research on Language Education (I-RoLE 2023)*, 13-14 March, 2023, Noble Resort Hotel Melaka, Malaysia, 7, 681–691. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epes.23097.61>
- Munawir, A., Inayah, N., Firmansyah, N. P., Huda, N., & Info, A. (2022). *Students' Vocabulary Mastery By Using Animation*. 1(3), 354–362.
- Munir, F. (2016). *The Effectiveness of Teaching Vocabulary by Using Cartoon Film toward Vocabulary Mastery of EFL Students*. 1(1), 13–37.
- Qureshi, A. W., & Usman, W. (2025). *Significance Of Vocabulary Learning For EFL Learners: A Review* Significance Of Vocabulary Learning For EFL Learners: A Review. January 2023. <https://doi.org/10.59670/jns.v33i.3276>
- Saputra, A., Hardiyanti, L., Wanodya, T., & Isnaini, N. (2023). *Student Perceptions of the Impact of English Language Films on English Language Ability*. 2(2), 37–41.
- Setiawan, M. D., & Firdaus, R. A. (2025). *Developing audio-visual materials to teach vocabulary to*

The Influence of the Movie Zootopia on Improving 8th Grade Junior High School Students' Vocabulary Mastery young learners. 2, 62–71.

Younas, M., & Dong, Y. (2024). The Impact of Using Animated Movies in Learning English Language Vocabulary: An Empirical Study of Lahore, Pakistan. *SAGE Open*, 14(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241258398>

Zhang, P., & Zhang, S. (2024). Multimedia enhanced vocabulary learning: The role of input condition and learner-related factors. *System*, 122(February), 103275. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103275>

Zhou, L. (2025). Vocabulary Teaching Strategies for EFL Learners. *Education and Social Work*, 2(2), 100. <https://doi.org/10.63313/esw.9081>

Zwicky, E., König, P., Herrmann, R. M., Küttner, A., Selle, J., Ptasczynski, L. E., Schöniger, K., Rutenkröger, M., Enneking, V., Borgers, T., Klug, M., Dohm, K., Leehr, E. J., Bauer, J., Dannlowski, U., & Redlich, R. (2024). *How movies move us – movie preferences are linked to differences in neuronal emotion processing of fear and anger: an fMRI study.* June, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2024.1396811>