

Higher Education Student's Perceptions on English Movies for English Vocabulary Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

Grounded in Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Nation's theory of vocabulary learning from context, this study explores English Language Education students' experiences of learning vocabulary through English movies by examining their perceptions of the benefits and effectiveness of English movies for vocabulary acquisition, the types of vocabulary they acquire and how their vocabulary develops over time, and the challenges they encounter during the learning process. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected from 25 English Language Education students through open-ended questionnaires and analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. The findings reveal that students perceive English movies as an engaging and effective medium for vocabulary acquisition because they provide authentic language input in meaningful communicative contexts. Participants reported acquiring various types of vocabulary, particularly daily expressions, slang, idioms, and cultural expressions, while regular exposure gradually expanded their vocabulary knowledge and enhanced listening comprehension, pronunciation, speaking confidence, and cultural understanding. Although students encountered challenges related to fast speech, unfamiliar expressions, different accents, and context-dependent meanings, they adopted strategies such as using English subtitles, replaying scenes, and consulting dictionaries or translation applications. Overall, English movies provide meaningful contextual exposure that facilitates vocabulary acquisition and promotes autonomous English language learning.

Keywords: *English Movie, English Language Education Students, Vocabulary Acquisition, Students' Perceptions, Vocabulary Learning Experiences*

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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is widely recognized as one of the most fundamental components of language learning because it supports learners' ability to understand and produce meaningful communication (Sun et al., 2023). Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, students may experience difficulties in comprehending spoken and written texts as well as expressing their ideas effectively (Lestari & Hardiyanti, 2020). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, vocabulary acquisition remains a major concern because learners often encounter limited opportunities to interact with authentic language outside the classroom (Ajisoko, 2020). Consequently, language educators continuously seek effective approaches and learning resources that can facilitate vocabulary development among learners (Dindar et al., 2021). Vocabulary growth significantly contributes to learners' overall language proficiency and communicative competence.

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed language learning practices by providing learners with various multimedia resources that support vocabulary acquisition (Ajisoko, 2020). Traditional vocabulary learning methods that rely heavily on memorization are increasingly complemented by technology-enhanced learning environments that provide

authentic linguistic exposure (Dindar et al., 2021). Digital platforms, language-learning applications, audiovisual materials, and online streaming services have become accessible tools for EFL learners (Alhazmi, 2024). These resources enable students to encounter vocabulary in meaningful and contextualized situations, thereby enhancing vocabulary retention and comprehension (Teng, 2023). As a result, technology-mediated learning environments have become increasingly relevant in contemporary language education.

Among various multimedia resources, English movies have gained considerable attention as a valuable source of language input for EFL learners (Teng, 2023). Movies present authentic language use through dialogues, visual contexts, cultural representations, and real-life communicative situations (Younas & Dong, 2024). Unlike conventional classroom materials, movies expose learners to natural pronunciation, colloquial expressions, and contextualized vocabulary that may not be adequately represented in textbooks (Mohamed et al., 2023). Furthermore, the combination of visual and auditory elements enables learners to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words through contextual clues (Dizon & Thanyawatpokin, 2024). These characteristics make English movies a potentially effective medium for vocabulary learning.

The use of English movies has been associated with various language-learning benefits beyond vocabulary acquisition (Abdul Karim et al., 2024). Previous research indicates that movies can improve learners' listening comprehension, speaking performance, pronunciation, and cultural awareness (Rahmah & Pranata, 2024). Exposure to authentic dialogues allows learners to observe how vocabulary is used in real communicative contexts while simultaneously developing their understanding of language functions (Lien & Dan, 2024). Through repeated exposure to lexical items, learners can gradually internalize new vocabulary and apply it in meaningful interactions (Alfaiz et al., 2025). Therefore, English movies can support language development from multiple perspectives.

Previous studies have consistently reported that English movies can enhance vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, pronunciation, and learners' motivation by providing authentic language input in meaningful contexts (Mayer, 2021; Nation, 2022). Recent research has primarily examined the effectiveness of English movies in improving vocabulary learning outcomes or focused on learners' motivation and language achievement using quantitative approaches. Other studies have investigated audiovisual media in English language learning without exploring in depth how students perceive the vocabulary learning process, the types of vocabulary they acquire, how their vocabulary develops over time, and the challenges they encounter while learning through English movies. Furthermore, relatively little attention has been given to the lived experiences of higher education students, particularly those enrolled in English Language Education programs, whose learning needs and strategies may differ from learners at other educational levels. Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions, vocabulary learning experiences, vocabulary development, and learning challenges when using English movies as a medium for vocabulary acquisition.

Several empirical studies have specifically investigated the relationship between watching English movies and vocabulary development. The findings of Apulisa et al. (2021), Fikriyah et al. (2021), and Tnomat et al. (2022) consistently indicate that learners who frequently watch English movies tend to have better vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary mastery than those with limited exposure. The contextualized nature of movie-based learning allows learners to acquire vocabulary incidentally while enjoying entertainment content (Br Simamora & Oktaviani, 2020). In addition, subtitles and visual cues can facilitate comprehension and increase opportunities for vocabulary retention (Dizon & Thanyawatpokin, 2024). These findings indicate that English movies can serve as an effective medium for supporting vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners.

Students' perceptions also play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of learning media because positive perceptions often contribute to greater motivation and engagement in the learning process (Mazlan & Kamal, 2022). Learners who perceive a learning resource as useful and enjoyable are more likely to utilize it consistently and benefit from its educational potential (Huong & Ngoc, 2024). The findings of Rosalia et al. (2024) indicate that students generally have positive perceptions toward the use of English movies in language learning. Students often describe movie-based learning as engaging, enjoyable, and beneficial for improving vocabulary knowledge (Maulida & Warni, 2024). Positive learner perceptions can therefore contribute to sustained exposure and increased opportunities for language acquisition.

Recent studies have also explored students' experiences and perceptions regarding the use of English movies for vocabulary learning. The findings of Maulida & Warni (2024) reveal that students perceive movies as an accessible source of authentic vocabulary, contextual learning, and cultural understanding. This finding is further supported by Adrefiza et al. (2024), who found that movies help learners retain vocabulary more effectively, as words are presented in meaningful contexts rather than as separate vocabulary lists. Additionally, visual elements provide contextual support that facilitates comprehension and reduces learning difficulties (Mubarakah & Rizal, 2025). Such experiences indicate that English movies may create favorable conditions for incidental vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners.

Vocabulary acquisition refers to the process through which language learners develop knowledge of new words and their meanings, forms, and appropriate usage in different communicative contexts (Annisa et al., 2025). Adequate vocabulary knowledge is essential because it enables learners to understand spoken and written texts as well as express ideas effectively in a second or foreign language (Sun et al., 2023). Vocabulary can be acquired through both intentional learning activities and incidental exposure to language in meaningful contexts, such as reading, listening, and viewing audiovisual materials (Teng, 2023). In contemporary language learning, multimedia resources have been widely utilized to facilitate vocabulary development by providing contextualized and authentic language input that supports comprehension and retention (Alhazmi, 2024). Vocabulary acquisition is regarded as a fundamental aspect of language learning that contributes significantly to learners' overall communicative competence.

According to Krashen (1982), the Input Hypothesis explains that language is acquired through exposure to comprehensible input rather than through explicit instruction alone. Learners acquire language most effectively when they are exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence, commonly referred to as $i+1$. This input remains understandable because learners can use contextual clues, background knowledge, and situational information to interpret the language they encounter (Krashen, 1982). Language acquisition is a subconscious process that develops naturally through meaningful communication rather than through conscious memorization of linguistic rules (Younas & Dong, 2024). Authentic language materials can function as sources of comprehensible input because they provide meaningful linguistic exposure supported by contextual information that facilitates learners' understanding and acquisition of new language forms (Dizon & Thanyawatpokin, 2024).

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input in second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). According to Krashen, language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence but remains understandable through contextual support. English movies can provide such comprehensible input through visual information, situational contexts, gestures, and subtitles that assist learners in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary (Annisa et al., 2025). Therefore, movie-based learning may create opportunities for natural vocabulary acquisition through meaningful

exposure to authentic language (Teng, 2023). The concept of comprehensible input remains highly relevant in explaining vocabulary learning through audiovisual materials.

Although numerous studies have examined the effectiveness of English movies in improving vocabulary knowledge, many of these investigations have employed quantitative approaches focusing on measurable learning outcomes. Comparatively fewer studies have explored learners' subjective perceptions and experiences through qualitative inquiry. Understanding students' perceptions is essential because learners' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences influence how they engage with learning resources and interpret their educational value (Alfaiz et al., 2025). Furthermore, qualitative exploration can provide deeper insights into the mechanisms through which English movies contribute to vocabulary acquisition (Adrefiza et al., 2024). Such perspectives remain particularly valuable in higher education contexts where students possess diverse learning experiences and language-learning strategies.

In the context of Indonesian higher education, particularly among students enrolled in English Language Education programs, research investigating students' perceptions of English movies for vocabulary acquisition remains relatively limited. As future English teachers, these students are expected to develop strong vocabulary knowledge and effective language-learning strategies. Exploring their perceptions can contribute to a better understanding of how English movies support vocabulary acquisition and how such resources may be integrated into language-learning practices. This study aims to explore: 1) How English Language Education students perceive the benefits and effectiveness of using English movies for vocabulary acquisition? 2) What types of vocabulary they acquire and how their vocabulary develops over time? and 3) What challenges they encounter in understanding English movies during this process?

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research design proposed by Sekaran & Bougie (2016) to examine students' perceptions of learning English vocabulary through English movies. A qualitative approach was suitable because it allows the researcher to explore participants' experiences, views, and interpretations in depth. Rather than emphasizing numerical measurement, the study focused on how students understood the contribution of English movies to their vocabulary learning. The research was conducted in the higher education context of a state university in Semarang. This design allowed the researcher to capture rich descriptive data that reflected the participants' learning experiences.

The participants of this study were students from the English Language Education Program Class of 2022. They were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that the respondents matched the criteria relevant to the objectives of the study. The participants were students who had a habit of watching English movies and had learned English vocabulary from that activity. This sampling technique was used to obtain participants who could provide relevant and meaningful information about this study. A total of 25 students participated in this study, a sample size considered adequate for qualitative research because it enabled the researcher to analyze diverse perspectives while remaining manageable for in-depth analysis.

Data were collected through an online open-ended questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. This method was chosen because it allowed participants to respond freely and conveniently in their own words. The research instrument was adapted from Adrefiza et al. (2024) and was designed to capture students' perceptions of vocabulary learning through English movies. The questionnaire focused on the main aspects relevant to the study and provided space for participants to express their experiences in detail. Using this instrument helped the researcher gather rich qualitative data from the respondents.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the framework proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). The analysis began with repeated reading of the responses

to become familiar with the data. After that, meaningful statements were coded and grouped into categories according to their similarities. These categories were then developed into broader themes that represented the participants' responses. The themes were interpreted to identify patterns in vocabulary acquisition, students' perceptions, learning experiences, and challenges related to vocabulary learning through English movies.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and the respondents were informed about the purpose of the research before completing the questionnaire. Their identities were kept anonymous, and no personal information was collected. All responses were treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes. These procedures were applied to protect the participants and maintain the integrity of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The analysis of students' responses revealed several key themes regarding students' perceptions of the benefits and effectiveness of English movies for vocabulary acquisition, the types of vocabulary acquired and vocabulary development over time, and the challenges encountered during vocabulary learning through English movies. These themes are presented below, supported by representative excerpts from the participants' responses.

Students' Perceptions of English Movies for Vocabulary Acquisition

Students generally perceived English movies as an effective medium for vocabulary acquisition. They believed that movies helped them learn new vocabulary naturally through meaningful communicative contexts while also providing authentic language exposure. Participants also highlighted several benefits and supporting features that enhanced vocabulary learning, including subtitles, visual context, repeated dialogues, and authentic interactions. In addition, many students reported that watching English movies contributed to the development of other language skills beyond vocabulary acquisition. The following tables present students' perceptions regarding these aspects.

Table 1. Perceived Benefits of English Movies for Vocabulary Acquisition

Respondent	Statement
Student 2	"Watching English movies helps improve English vocabulary because I can learn new words and expressions in a natural context. By hearing how native speakers use words in conversations, it becomes easier to understand their meanings and remember them."
Student 3	"Watching English-language movies can improve our vocabulary. We are likely to come across many new words and expressions that native speakers use in their everyday conversations."
Student 10	"Watching English movies is very helpful because it provides context for new words. Instead of just memorizing definitions, I can see how words are used in conversations."
Student 15	"Watching English movies is very helpful in improving English vocabulary because I often find new words used in various situations, making them easier to understand and remember."
Student 16	"Watching English movies helps me improve my English vocabulary because I can hear new words and see how people use them in real conversations."
Student 23	"Watching English movies has helped me improve my English vocabulary in many ways. Through movies, I learn new words and expressions in real-life contexts, which makes them easier to understand and remember."
Student 24	"Watching movies provides visual and audio support, making it easier to understand the meaning and pronunciation of words. The actors' actions also help me remember vocabulary better."

Students consistently perceived English movies as beneficial because they provided authentic exposure to vocabulary used in everyday communication. Unlike conventional vocabulary learning through memorization, movies enabled learners to observe how words and expressions were naturally used by native speakers in different situations. The combination of audio, visual context, and authentic dialogues also helped students understand and remember unfamiliar vocabulary more effectively.

Table 2. Perceived Effectiveness of English Movies for Vocabulary Acquisition

Respondent	Statement
Student 3	"Watching English-language movies is more effective than memorizing vocabulary lists because I learn new words in real-life contexts. I can hear the correct pronunciation, understand the meaning through the situation, and remember the words more easily."
Student 6	"Watching a film will not increase your knowledge if you don't pay attention. However, if you really pay attention to the vocabulary used in movies, it can be more effective than other learning methods."
Student 12	"Watching English movies is more effective because I learn vocabulary in real contexts, not just by memorizing words. It is also more enjoyable, so I stay motivated to learn. Movies help me remember new vocabulary more easily because I see and hear how the words are actually used."
Student 15	"Watching English movies is quite effective for improving vocabulary compared to memorizing word lists or using learning apps. I can see how words and expressions are used in everyday conversations, so they are easier to understand and remember."
Student 22	"Movies are more effective than memorizing lists because they teach vocabulary in action. Seeing and hearing words used in real-life stories helps me understand their exact meaning and tone much faster than standard language-learning apps."

Most participants considered English movies more effective than conventional vocabulary learning methods because they combined language learning with entertainment. Rather than focusing solely on memorizing individual words, students explained that movies helped them understand vocabulary within meaningful situations while simultaneously improving other language skills. This learning experience also increased their motivation to continue learning English through authentic audiovisual materials.

Table 3. Factors Supporting Vocabulary Acquisition through English Movies

Respondent	Statement
Student 2	"Several factors make English movies effective for learning vocabulary. Subtitles help learners understand new words, while visual context and gestures make meanings clearer. Repeated dialogue also helps learners remember vocabulary because they hear the same words and expressions more than once."
Student 9	"Subtitle helps a lot since we need to know what is the meaning of the word that they just said."
Student 11	"English subtitles, visual context, facial expressions, and repeated dialogue help me understand new words."
Student 16	"English movies are effective for learning vocabulary because they have subtitles, visual context, gestures, and repeated dialogue. Subtitles help me match the spoken words with the written words. The scenes and characters' actions make it easier to understand the meaning of new vocabulary. Gestures and facial expressions also help me guess the meaning without using a dictionary."
Student 22	"Visual context and subtitles are key. Subtitles help me catch the exact words being spoken, while the characters' actions and emotions show me exactly how and when to use that vocabulary in real life."
Student 23	In my opinion, the most helpful factors are English subtitles, visual context, and the characters' gestures and facial expressions. English subtitles help me connect the pronunciation with the spelling of new words, while the scenes and visual context make it easier to understand their meanings.

Students identified several features of English movies that supported vocabulary acquisition. The most frequently mentioned factors were subtitles, visual context, repeated dialogues, gestures, and authentic conversations. These features helped students infer the meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary without relying solely on direct translation. Overall, the responses showed that students considered the combination of visual and auditory information helpful for understanding vocabulary in authentic communicative situations.

Table 4. Additional Learning Benefits from Watching English Movies

Respondent	Statement
Student 4	"Pronunciation."
Student 7	"Watching English movies helps me learn pronunciation, accents, and become more familiar with English."
Student 11	"Yes, it really helps improve my listening skills, pronunciation, and understanding of Western culture."
Student 12	"Besides vocabulary, watching English movies has improved my listening and pronunciation. I also learn everyday expressions and understand English-speaking cultures better."
Student 17	"Besides improving my vocabulary, watching English movies also helps me improve my listening skills, pronunciation, and understanding of different cultures. It also makes me more confident when speaking English."
Student 20	"Since watching English movies, I have become more fluent in speaking English. I am also more accustomed to understanding spoken English without subtitles."
Student 22	"Besides improving my vocabulary, watching English movies has also helped me improve my pronunciation and listening skills. By listening to native speakers, I learn how words are pronounced naturally, including their intonation and stress."

Students emphasized that watching English movies contributed not only to vocabulary acquisition but also to the development of other language skills. Listening comprehension and pronunciation were the most frequently mentioned benefits because students were regularly exposed to authentic speech produced by native speakers. Many participants also reported gaining a better understanding of cultural expressions and communication styles commonly found in English-speaking communities.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Development through English Movies

Students reported acquiring a wide variety of vocabulary through watching English movies. Besides learning different types of vocabulary, participants described how their vocabulary knowledge gradually developed through continuous exposure to authentic language. Many students also explained that their movie-watching habits evolved over time, reflecting increased vocabulary knowledge and greater independence in learning. The following tables illustrate the vocabulary acquired by students and its development throughout their learning experiences.

Table 5. Types of Vocabulary Acquired through English Movies

Respondent	Statement
Student 1	"I mostly gain everyday vocabulary that is commonly used by native speakers in daily conversations."
Student 3	"I mostly learn everyday vocabulary, slang, and idiomatic expressions."
Student 6	"By watching movies, I learn the vocabulary that people use in everyday conversations. I also learn expressions that cannot be translated literally because their meanings depend on the context and culture rather than the individual words."
Student 10	"Mostly daily informal words and idioms, for example, using 'couch potato' to describe someone lazy."
Student 17	"I mostly learn daily and informal vocabulary from watching English movies."

Higher Education Student's Perceptions on English Movies for English Vocabulary Acquisition

Student 22	"I mostly gain informal vocabulary and idioms. Movies show how native speakers actually talk in real life, not just in textbooks. This helps me understand conversational English much better."
Student 23	"The type of vocabulary I gain the most from watching English movies is slang."

The responses revealed that students primarily acquired vocabulary related to everyday communication rather than formal or academic language. Daily vocabulary, informal expressions, slang, and idiomatic expressions were the most frequently mentioned lexical categories because they commonly appeared in authentic dialogues between movie characters. Students explained that repeated exposure to these expressions across different situations enabled them to become familiar with their meanings and appropriate usage. Overall, the responses show that English movies exposed students to authentic spoken English commonly used in everyday communication.

Table 6. Examples of Vocabulary Learned through English Movies

Respondent	Statement
Student 2	"One expression I learned from watching English movies is 'hang out'. At first, I did not understand its meaning, but after hearing the characters use it several times in different situations, I realized that it means spending time with friends in a relaxed way. Later, I confirmed its meaning in a dictionary."
Student 3	"Some expressions I learned from English movies are 'spill the beans', 'under the weather', and 'the ball is in your court'. I understood their meanings from the context, the characters' actions, and facial expressions. If I was still unsure, I looked them up in an online dictionary."
Student 6	"One new expression I learned is 'Hang in there'. At first, I thought it meant holding onto something physically. After watching the characters use it in difficult situations, I realized that it means 'Don't give up' or 'Stay strong'. I understood it from the context and later confirmed it in an online dictionary."
Student 10	"I learned the expression 'break a leg' (which means 'good luck'). I understood its meaning from the context of the scene and the characters' actions."
Student 21	"I learned the expression 'won't hurt'. At first, I was confused about what it meant. After searching for its meaning, I realized that it is often used to give a suggestion or recommend an idea."
Student 23	"One expression I learned is 'once in a blue moon'. I heard it in a movie when a character was talking about something that rarely happens. From the context and the subtitles, I understood that it means 'very rarely'. I later checked the meaning in an online dictionary."

Students' examples further demonstrate that English movies expose learners to vocabulary that is closely connected to authentic communicative contexts. Most participants explained that they understood unfamiliar words and expressions by observing the storyline, characters' interactions, gestures, facial expressions, and the situations in which the vocabulary was used. Rather than relying solely on direct translation, students inferred meanings from contextual clues before confirming them through dictionaries or translation applications when necessary. These responses highlight the importance of contextual exposure in helping students understand and remember newly encountered vocabulary.

Table 7. Perceived Improvement in Vocabulary Knowledge

Respondent	Statement
Student 1	"Yes, I feel that my vocabulary has increased, making it easier for me to speak English."
Student 5	"Yeah, obviously. I learn specific words that I didn't know before from movies."
Student 8	"Yes, besides improving my vocabulary, I have become more confident in speaking English."
Student 14	"Yeah, since I started watching English movies regularly, I have noticed that my vocabulary has gradually improved. I also find it easier to remember new vocabulary"

Students Perception on the Use of Speech Texter Application in Teaching Pronunciation Skills

	because I learn it through the context of the movie rather than by memorizing word lists."
Student 18	"Yes, I have. Since watching English movies regularly, I have learned many new words and can understand conversations more easily. I also remember vocabulary better because I hear it used in real situations."
Student 23	"Yes, I have. Watching English movies regularly has helped me learn many new words, idioms, and slang in context, making it easier to use them in daily conversations."
Student 25	"I feel more confident when reading English texts, writing assignments, and communicating in English. Overall, watching English movies has made my vocabulary broader and easier to use in real-life situations."

Students consistently reported improvements in their vocabulary knowledge after regularly watching English movies. Many participants explained that they had learned new words, expressions, idioms, and slang while becoming more confident in understanding and using English. Several students also mentioned that learning vocabulary through contextualized movie scenes made new words easier to remember than memorizing vocabulary lists.

Table 8. Vocabulary Learning Progress through Watching English Movies

Respondent	Statement
Student 2	"My vocabulary has improved gradually over time. At the beginning, I could only understand basic words and often depended on subtitles. Now, I can understand more words and expressions without checking their meanings as often. I also feel more confident using new vocabulary in conversations, assignments, and daily communication."
Student 3	"Since I started watching English-language movies regularly, my vocabulary has improved gradually. At the beginning, I only understood a few common words and relied heavily on subtitles. Now, I can recognize more vocabulary, understand everyday expressions more easily, and rely less on subtitles while watching."
Student 4	"I used to be stupid but now I'm smart enough to the point I could have a free flow conversation with a native speaker."
Student 12	"At the beginning, I only understood basic words and often depended on subtitles. Now, I understand more vocabulary, including common expressions and idioms, and I don't need to translate every unfamiliar word. I can often guess the meaning from the context."
Student 17	"At the beginning, I could only understand a few simple words and often relied on subtitles. Now, I can understand more vocabulary, recognize common expressions, and follow conversations more easily. Watching English movies regularly has made me more confident in using new words."
Student 19	"Started with basic everyday words, but now I can easily understand complex expressions and humor."

Students reported that the strategies they adopted helped them gradually overcome vocabulary learning difficulties. Continuous exposure to English movies enabled them to expand their vocabulary knowledge, rely less on translation, and become more confident in understanding English in real-life contexts. Many participants also described becoming more independent learners as they continued watching English movies regularly.

Table 9. Changes in Movie-Watching Habits over Time

Respondent	Statement
Student 2	"When I first started watching English movies, I usually used Indonesian subtitles because it was easier to understand the story. Later, I switched to English subtitles to learn new vocabulary and improve my listening skills."
Student 6	"Previously with Indonesian subtitles, then now I don't use subtitles at all."

Higher Education Student's Perceptions on English Movies for English Vocabulary Acquisition

Student 12	"When I first started, I always used Indonesian subtitles because I understood very little English. Now, I usually use English subtitles, and sometimes I watch without subtitles if the movie is easy to follow."
Student 15	"I have become more confident watching movies without translating every unfamiliar word."
Student 20	"Yes, now even if I use English subtitles I can still understand it, or even without subtitles."
Student 22	"Yes, I used to watch with Indonesian subtitles, but now I prefer using English subtitles or none at all. This change allows me to challenge myself, practice my listening skills, and absorb new vocabulary more naturally."
Student 23	"Yes. When I first started watching English movies, I always used Indonesian subtitles because I found it difficult to understand the dialogue. Over time, I switched to English subtitles, which helped me connect spoken and written words."

The responses showed that students gradually adopted more independent vocabulary learning strategies as their English proficiency developed. Many participants explained that they had reduced their dependence on Indonesian subtitles and translation tools, relying instead on English subtitles or contextual clues to understand unfamiliar vocabulary. These changes illustrate how students gradually adjusted their learning habits while continuing to watch English movies.

Challenges in Vocabulary Acquisition through English Movies

Although students viewed English movies positively, they also encountered various challenges while learning vocabulary through authentic audiovisual materials. The most common difficulties involved fast speech, unfamiliar slang, idiomatic expressions, different accents, pronunciation, and context-dependent meanings. To overcome these challenges, students adopted several learning strategies that enabled them to improve vocabulary comprehension during the learning process. The following tables present the challenges experienced by the participants and the strategies they used to address them.

Table 10. Challenges in Vocabulary Acquisition through English Movies

Respondent	Statement
Student 1	"Sometimes native speakers speak unclearly and too fast, making it difficult for me to understand."
Student 2	"One difficulty I experience is understanding unfamiliar words and slang, especially when characters speak very fast. Different accents can also make some words difficult to recognize."
Student 5	"The slang or idioms are difficult because I am a non-native speaker, so I can barely understand their meanings from movies."
Student 8	"The difficulty I often experience is when the characters speak too fast or use slang and idioms that I have never heard before."
Student 12	"Sometimes the characters speak too fast, use slang or idioms, or have different accents. There are also words that have more than one meaning, so I get confused if I translate them literally."
Student 13	"Connected speech. Native speakers tend to speak like they're rapping."
Student 22	"The biggest difficulty is the fast speaking pace and unfamiliar accents of native speakers. Characters often blend their words together, making it hard to identify individual words."

Students described several recurring challenges while learning vocabulary through English movies. Fast speech was the most frequently reported difficulty, followed by unfamiliar slang, idiomatic expressions, and different accents. Several participants also explained that literal translation was often insufficient because many words and expressions depended on the conversational context. These responses illustrate the kinds of difficulties students experienced when learning vocabulary from authentic spoken English.

Table 11. Strategies for Overcoming Vocabulary Learning Challenges

Respondent	Statement
Student 1	"I use subtitles and replay the scene."
Student 3	"The subtitles help me connect the spoken words with their written forms, making it easier to understand unfamiliar vocabulary and remember new expressions."
Student 5	"I try to Google the meaning."
Student 6	"I watch it more than once with subtitles and without subtitles. If there is unfamiliar vocabulary, I look for the meaning in a dictionary or on the internet."
Student 8	"I usually replay the scene."
Student 11	"I use English subtitles, replay difficult scenes, and check unfamiliar words in a dictionary."
Student 16	"I usually use English subtitles, replay difficult scenes, and check the meaning of new words in a dictionary or translation app. These methods help me understand and remember new vocabulary better."

Students employed a variety of strategies to overcome the difficulties they encountered while learning vocabulary through English movies. The most common approaches included using English subtitles, replaying difficult scenes, and checking unfamiliar words in dictionaries or translation applications. Several participants also reported watching the same movie more than once or searching for unfamiliar vocabulary on the internet to reinforce their understanding. These responses demonstrate that students actively combined contextual learning with various supporting resources while watching English movies.

Discussion

The findings of the present study indicate that English Language Education students generally perceived English movies as an effective medium for vocabulary acquisition. Students explained that movies enabled them to learn vocabulary more naturally because words and expressions were presented in meaningful communicative contexts rather than through isolated memorization. They also considered English movies more engaging than conventional vocabulary learning methods because authentic dialogues, subtitles, visual context, gestures, and repeated interactions facilitated vocabulary learning while maintaining their motivation. According to Krashen (1982), language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input presented in meaningful contexts, and the present findings support this perspective while corroborating previous studies on vocabulary learning through English movies (Adrefiza et al., 2024; Alfaiz et al., 2025; Annisa et al., 2025).

Students also perceived English movies as effective because they provided more than isolated vocabulary learning by helping learners understand pronunciation, communicative functions, and the appropriate use of unfamiliar words in authentic situations. Participants emphasized that the combination of audio, visual information, subtitles, gestures, and repeated dialogues enabled them to understand vocabulary within meaningful contexts, making new words easier to comprehend, retain, and apply in everyday communication. This finding is consistent with multimedia learning principles, which emphasize that integrating verbal and visual information facilitates deeper comprehension, strengthens vocabulary retention, and enhances meaningful language learning experiences (Alhazmi, 2024; Teng, 2023). Similar perceptions were reported by Maulida & Warni (2024), Huong & Ngoc (2024), and Mubarakah & Rizal (2025), who found that students regarded English movies as an enjoyable, engaging, and effective medium for vocabulary learning.

The findings further reveal that students acquired various types of vocabulary through English movies, particularly everyday expressions, slang, idioms, and cultural expressions commonly used in authentic communication. Rather than learning isolated vocabulary items, participants understood unfamiliar words by observing conversations, visual cues, characters' actions, facial expressions, and storylines before confirming meanings through dictionaries or translation applications when necessary. According to Krashen (1982), meaningful contextual

input promotes language acquisition more effectively than isolated memorization, which explains how learners were able to infer vocabulary from authentic communicative situations. These findings are also consistent with Apulisa et al. (2021), Fikriyah et al. (2021), and Tnomat et al. (2022), who reported that regular exposure to English movies contributes to improved vocabulary mastery among EFL learners.

Vocabulary acquisition through English movies was perceived as a gradual developmental process rather than an immediate outcome. Students explained that continuous exposure gradually expanded their vocabulary knowledge, enabled them to recognize familiar words more quickly, infer meanings from context, reduce their dependence on subtitles, and become more confident in using English for academic and everyday communication. Participants also reported improvements in listening comprehension, pronunciation, speaking confidence, and cultural understanding as a result of regular exposure to authentic speech produced by native speakers. These findings reflect previous studies showing that English movies enhance broader language proficiency (Abdul Karim et al., 2024; Lien & Dan, 2024; Mohamed et al., 2023) while repeated exposure promotes gradual vocabulary development and long-term retention (Sun et al., 2023; Younas & Dong, 2024).

Although students expressed overwhelmingly positive perceptions, they also encountered several challenges while learning vocabulary through English movies. Fast speech, unfamiliar slang, idiomatic expressions, different accents, reduced pronunciation, and context-dependent meanings were identified as the primary obstacles that made it difficult for students to understand unfamiliar vocabulary during movie conversations. These findings indicate that authentic spoken English simultaneously provides valuable linguistic input while presenting learners with natural communicative challenges that require contextual interpretation and greater listening comprehension. Similar difficulties have also been identified in previous studies concerning learners' comprehension of authentic pronunciation, colloquial language, and culturally specific expressions in English movies (Annisa et al., 2025; Dizon & Thanyawatpokin, 2024; Rosalia et al., 2024).

To overcome these challenges, students adopted various independent learning strategies, including using English subtitles, replaying difficult scenes, checking unfamiliar vocabulary in dictionaries or translation applications, and searching for additional explanations online. Rather than relying on a single strategy, most participants combined contextual understanding with external learning resources to confirm meanings and reinforce vocabulary retention. These strategies demonstrate that English movies encourage learner autonomy by motivating students to regulate their own vocabulary learning process while developing effective ways to comprehend authentic language input. This finding is in line with previous studies highlighting the importance of subtitles, repeated exposure, and dictionary use in supporting vocabulary acquisition through audiovisual materials (Annisa et al., 2025; Dizon & Thanyawatpokin, 2024; Mohamed et al., 2023).

Overall, the findings indicate that English movies provide meaningful opportunities for vocabulary acquisition by exposing learners to authentic language use in engaging communicative contexts. Students perceived English movies as an effective and enjoyable medium for learning vocabulary, acquired various types of vocabulary that gradually developed through continuous exposure, and experienced improvements in broader language skills. Although learners encountered challenges related to authentic spoken English, they actively employed independent learning strategies to overcome these difficulties and strengthen their vocabulary knowledge. These findings highlight the value of English movies as a complementary learning resource that supports vocabulary acquisition while fostering authentic language learning experiences and learner autonomy among EFL students.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that English Language Education students generally perceive English movies as an effective and engaging resource for vocabulary acquisition. Through authentic communicative contexts, English movies support vocabulary development while also enhancing listening comprehension, pronunciation awareness, speaking confidence, cultural understanding, and autonomous learning. Although students encountered challenges such as fast speech, unfamiliar slang and idiomatic expressions, different accents, and context-dependent meanings, they employed strategies including using English subtitles, replaying scenes, and consulting dictionaries or translation applications to overcome these difficulties. These findings suggest that English movies are most effective when integrated as a complementary instructional resource alongside formal vocabulary instruction, enabling learners to engage with authentic language in meaningful contexts. Overall, this study contributes to a better understanding of higher education students' vocabulary learning experiences through English movies and highlights their pedagogical value as a contextualized and engaging medium for English vocabulary development. Future research is encouraged to involve more diverse participant groups and educational contexts to extend the applicability of these findings.

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Students Perception on the Use of Speech Texter Application in Teaching Pronunciation Skills

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