

${\bf ILEIID~2025~|~International~Journal~of~Research~and~Innovation~in~Social~Science~(IJRISS)}\\$

ISSN: 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS

Special Issue | Volume IX Issue XXIV October 2025



Impact of Films on Students' Vocabulary Acquisition among UiTM Shah Alam Non-English Major Students

¹Nur Fatin Izzati Muhamad Rusdan, *²Doreen Azlina Ab.Rahman, ³Wardah Ismail

1,2,3Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA

*Corresponding Author

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.924ILEIID0018

Received: 23 September 2025; Accepted: 30 September 2025; Published: 29 October 2025

ABSTRACT

Given the accelerating pace of globalization, English language proficiency is essential for academic and professional success. However, many non-English major students have difficulty learning language, which limits their ability to communicate effectively. While the pivotal role of English language skills continues to expand, many non-English major students struggle to broaden their vocabulary due to a lack of exposure to appropriate learning strategies. This small-scale study investigates the use of English movies as a learning tool to improve vocabulary acquisition as well as examines the effects of English film subtitling on students' vocabulary acquisition among non-English major students. A quantitative research design using stratified random sampling was employed, yielding 150 participants from non-English major students in UiTM Shah Alam. Data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed through Gmail, WhatsApp, and Telegram, stored in Google Sheets, and analysed in SPSS using descriptive statistics and correlations. Findings showed a significant result which indicates that there are various impacts for students who watch English films with and without subtitles. This displayed that some students agreed that watching subtitled English films help them expand their vocabulary while some see it as challenging due to the different levels of English proficiency. The study is based on Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, that supported the use of multimedia to improve language acquisition. In sum, including films into language learning can be advantageous, yet simultaneously aiding the process of acquiring language. Hence, the study implies that multimedia-based approach can bridge vocabulary gaps particularly in higher education.

Keywords: vocabulary, language, acquisition, films, non-English major

INTRODUCTION

Technology has changed how students acquire new languages by making the process more efficient and engaging. These days, digital platforms provide lessons that combine text, audio and video with feedback to assist learners practice the right skills more effectively (OECD, 2021). According to Shadiev and Wang (2022), the use of text, audio and video may encourage participation and teamwork, which eventually will increase motivation and confidence in language learning. Hence, technology does more than make learning easy.

Besides that, films also help students learn in context by showing how words are used in real situations. When subtitles are added, learners can link spoken words with written forms, which improves vocabulary. Reynolds et al. (2022) claim that English subtitles provide the biggest boost to vocabulary learning. On top of that, films are also interesting with their own storylines, which keeps learners focused and allows repeated exposure. Indirectly, films or movies can turn entertainment into meaningful practice. Combining both, technology and films create a flexible way to learn new vocabulary.

Many non-English majors at UiTM Shah Alam struggle with speaking and writing fluently in English due to lacking in vocabulary skills. Though they understand grammar, but owing to limitation in vocabulary skills, making it hard for them to choose the right words, express ideas clearly and maintain coherency in writing. According to Sukying (2023), deep understanding of vocabulary is more significant than knowing a lot of



ISSN: 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS



Special Issue | Volume IX Issue XXIV October 2025

words. This is owing to, with deep understanding, it assists in writing and effective communication. Hence, other than learning more words, gaining richer word knowledge is equally important. In addition, weakness in vocabulary acquisition may also affect students' ability to understand lessons, join discussions and perform well in exams, which can lead to difficulties in securing jobs. Li and Gan (2022) establish that poor in vocabulary skills will influence reading comprehension as well as learning outcomes which indirectly can contribute to unemployment or underemployment among graduates in Malaysia. Many students do not receive sufficient practice in academic vocabulary hence their word knowledge stays basic and uneven (Read & Dang, 2022). To address this, the current research explores how using English movies with subtitles might help improve vocabulary learning for non-English majors at UiTM Shah Alam.

The general objective of this study is to examine the impact of English films on vocabulary acquisition among non-English major students at UiTM Shah Alam, focusing on how films and subtitling strategies contribute to language development. This research aims to identify practical, engaging methods that enhance lexical knowledge and improve language proficiency for academic and communicative purposes.

Research questions:

- 1. How does the use of English movies as a learning tool improve vocabulary acquisition among non-English major students?
- 2. What are the effects of English film subtitling on students' vocabulary acquisition among non-English major students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning

Richard Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning posits that learners process information through two distinct channels, verbal and visual, where verbal channel handles spoken or written language, while visual channel processes images and animations (Mayer, 2005). The theory highlights that learning will become more effective when instructional materials integrate both verbal and visual elements, allowing learners to construct dual mental representations. Mayer also outlines three core cognitive processes. Firstly, selection, which involves identifying relevant verbal and visual inputs. Secondly, organization which functions as to structure the inputs into coherent verbal and visual models. Lastly, integration, which links the models to each other and to prior knowledge. Therefore, Mayer's theory suited this study as it encompasses multimedia instructional design principles that aimed to enhance comprehension and retention.

Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition is a foundational component of language proficiency enabling individuals to construct meaningful expressions and comprehend spoken or written discourse (Wilkins, 1972). Patesan et al. (2019) argue that vocabulary learning should focus on contextual usage, including collocations and idiomatic expressions, rather than mere memorization of words lists. Wilkins (1972) established that only limited words can be conveyed without grammar. However, without vocabulary, nothing can be expressed, highlighting the importance of lexical or a person's knowledge of words in a language. Effective acquisition requires repeated, contextual exposure rather than rote memorization, focusing on form, meaning, collocations, and usage (Patesan et al., 2019; Nation, 2008; Webb, 2007; Stirling, 2003; Zimmerman, 1997).

Vocabulary Acquisition and Films

The use of films as a pedagogical tool for vocabulary acquisition has gained considerable support in second-language learning contexts. Vocabulary learning can be achieved through captioned viewing as well as reading while listening process, which these two methods may enhance the recognition of word forms and grammatical structures (Feng & Webb, 2020; Teng, 2024). According to Albiladi et al. (2018), most educators claim that English films are very effective in helping language development among learners attributable to films enhance engagement. Auberg (2017) as cited in Roslim et al. (2021) also reported that learners show improvements in



${\bf ILEIID~2025~|~International~Journal~of~Research~and~Innovation~in~Social~Science~(IJRISS)}\\$

ISSN: 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS





vocabulary, pronunciation, listening and speaking skills, including express greater motivation when learning through films as compared to traditional methods. Moreover, exposure to native speakers in the real contexts fosters confidence and facilitates both oral and written language development (Kalra, 2017). Thus, films offer a dynamic and rich in context medium for enhancing vocabulary acquisition among language learners.

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative study explores relationship between English films, subtitling and vocabulary acquisition among non-English major students adopting a positivist paradigm for measurable outcomes (Kessler & Cekmegeli, 2025; Hasumia & Chiu, 2024). This study is anchored in empiricist and positivist paradigm which focuses on observable evidence and measurable outcomes. Structured questionnaires captured influences of films and subtitling effects, analyzed descriptively and via correlations in SPSS (Gao et al., 2024; Alenizi & Adawi, 2024). However, the reliance on self-reported perceptions via questionnaires introduces potential bias, as responses reflect subjective views rather than objective vocabulary growth; future work could incorporate pre- and post-tests for causal inference. A sample of 150 UiTM Shah Alam students enrolled in non-English major courses was selected for this study using stratified random sampling and Cochran's formula:

$$n = Z^2 P (1 - P)$$

 E^2

n = required sample size

Z = score corresponding to the desired confidence level

P = estimated proportion of the population

E = margin of error n = (1.96)2(0.5) (0.5) (0.08)2

n = 0.96040.0064

n = 150.06

Participants were divided into two strata: Science & Technology majors and Social Science majors, using stratified random sampling. Data were gathered via digital platforms such as Gmail, WhatsApp, and Telegram, stored in Google Sheets, reorganized and analysed using SPSS. SPSS perfectly suits this study as it functions to perform descriptive and correlation analyses efficiently which are extremely significant in identifying patterns and relationships among variables (Gao et al., 2024; Alenizi & Adawi, 2024).

Validity of this research is achieved through experts review where the questionnaire was assessed in order to ensure that all items reflected the research questions. Meanwhile, Cronbach's Alpha was utilized with the aim to measure the questionnaire items to certify the results.

While this study primarily employed a quantitative research design, future investigations could benefit from adopting a mixed-methods approach to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of learners' experiences. Incorporating qualitative techniques, such as focus groups or semi-structured interviews, would allow researchers to capture nuanced insights into students' perceptions of films and subtitles as tools for vocabulary acquisition. Besides, the techniques could also add more understanding regarding motivational factors, learning challenges and contextual influences that may not be measurable through quantitative data alone, thereby providing deeper insights that inform more focused and effective pedagogical strategies. Generalizability is constrained to UiTM Shah Alam; thus, comparisons across institutions would strengthen applicability.

RESULTS

RQ1: Use of English movies as a learning tool and vocabulary acquisition

Table 1 illustrates descriptive statistics for five items on the use of English movies in sustaining vocabulary acquisition among non-English major students. The mean scores ranged from 2.72 to 2.99 with standard deviations between 1.01 and 1.17. Item 1 (More exposure to the English language through films/movies



ISSN: 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS



Special Issue | Volume IX Issue XXIV October 2025

helps me improve my speaking and comprehension skills) achieved the highest score (M = 2.99, SD = 1.06), followed by watching English films helps improve social interaction and linguistic skills, item 3 (M – 2.95, SD = 1.08). Students also agreed that watching real-life situations in films/movies increases my English understanding (M = 2.88, SD = 1.11) and that watching a lot of English films/movies with English subtitles helps me understand the English language better (M = 2.87, SD = 1.17). The lowest mean was watching English films without Malay subtitles improves my English language skills (M = 2.72, SD = 1.01). The results show that movies assist vocabulary growth particularly through exposure, contextual cues and supportive onscreen text. These perceptions indicate films' potential, but without pre/post-tests, causal links remain inferential.

Table 1: The use of English movies as a learning tool in improving vocabulary acquisition.

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	More exposure to the English language through films/movies helps me improve my speaking and comprehension skills.	2.99	1.06
2	Watching real-life situations in films/movies increases my English understanding.	2.88	1.11
3	Watching English films helps improve social interaction and linguistic skills.	2.95	1.08
4	Watching English films without Malay subtitles improves my English language skills.	2.72	1.01
5	Watching a lot of English films/movies with English subtitles helps me understand the English language better.	2.87	1.17

RQ2: Effects of English film subtitling on students' vocabulary acquisition

Table 2 summarizes five indicators of subtitling effects on vocabulary acquisition among students. Mean scores spanned 2.73 to 2.89 with standard deviations from 1.07 to 1.16. Item 2 (Watching English films improves my English pronunciation) recorded the highest mean score value (M = 2.89, SD = 1.07), followed by item 1 (M = 2.81, SD = 1.14) indicated that students' sentence writing structure improved significantly through the vocabulary used in English films. Item 4 (M = 2.81, SD = 1.11) revealed that students were able to conquer their anxiety by practicing their spoken English after watching English films. Followingly, item 5 (M = 2.77, SD = 1.08) showed that students' proficiency was increased through speaking after watching English films. Lastly, item 3 (M = 2.73, SD = 1.16) scored the lowest indicating that students' confidence was boosted when speaking after watching English films. Subtitling supports form-sound mapping and sentence construction, but mixed results highlight proficiency variations; correlations suggest positive associations without establishing causality.

Table 2: The effects of English film subtitling on students' vocabulary acquisition

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	Vocabulary use through English films improves my sentence structure in writing.	2.81	1.14
2	Watching English films improves my English pronunciation.	2.89	1.07
3	Watching English films boosts my confidence when speaking in English.	2.73	1.16
4	Practicing my spoken English after watching English films helps me overcome	2.81	1.11



ISSN: 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS



Special Issue | Volume IX Issue XXIV October 2025

	my anxiety.			
5	Speaking in English after watching English films increases my proficiency.	2.77	1.08	

DISCUSSION

Pertaining to the first research question: How does the use of English movies as a learning tool improves vocabulary acquisition among non-English major students?, a significant majority of students strongly agreed that movies can be an effective tool to improve speaking and comprehension skills. This supports research that claims films provide real-life language examples and assist learners to understand words in context (Reynolds et al., 2022; Baranowska, 2020). Lower subtitle preferences may reflect proficiency differences. Advanced learners favour English-only viewing, while others need bilingual support. This exploratory design relies on perceptions via descriptive statistics and correlations, limiting causal claims; self-reporting bias is evident, as direct vocabulary measures (e.g., pre/post-tests) were absent.

Apart from that, the leading score for comprehension matches Mayer's multimedia learning theory, where combining pictures and words together aids learners to understand better. This proves that films can make learning more engaging. Nevertheless, certain students may find it challenging particularly using English subtitles as it depends on their English levels. Students with strong English competence may benefit from English subtitles while others may find it complicated.

Overall, the difference between high scores for comprehension and interaction and the lower score for subtitles indicates that subtitles are effective but not always opted for. This likely stems from students' predominant reliance on textual resources. Despite that, educators may overcome this by utilizing subtitles at first and slowly removing them while performing tasks.

As for the second research question: What are the effects of English film subtitling on students' vocabulary acquisition among non-English major students? student feedback indicated a strong consensus that English films are greatly helpful for improving pronunciation. In other words, it illustrates that listening to real speech and matching it with subtitles assists learners to know the correct sounds. According to Birulès-Muntanè and Soto-Faraco (2016), subtitles facilitate learners to link sounds with written words, improving phonological awareness and listening skills. Hence, the finding of this study agrees with the study that signifying subtitles can influence speech perception and pronunciation. Mixed confidence results suggest subtitles build accuracy but require practice for fluency (Donaghy, 2014; Fidelia & Rohmah, 2023). Overall, films foster engagement per Mayer's theory, but findings' generalizability is limited to UiTM Shah Alam's context; multi-institution studies could test broader applicability.

Beyond these observations, the majority of students confirmed that subtitles assisted them in writing better sentences. This assistance, alongside a reduction in speaking anxiety, was attributed to subtitles, enabling students to better understand grammar and subsequently apply it in their writing. Donaghy (2014) supports that films help to provide actual language and visual context which corroborates understanding at the same time motivates learners. Similarly, exposure to real-life dialogues in movies improves listening, vocabulary and pronunciation including confidence and engagement (Fidelia & Rohmah, 2023). This implies that, films can support both language accuracy and confidence.

Nevertheless, confidence in speaking displayed mixed results, which probably due to a portion of students who were very confident while others need more practice. Donaghy (2014) claims that films can motivate learners. However, it is unable to fully remove speaking anxiety especially without practice. In summary, this study supports Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory which indicates that people learn better from words and pictures together than words alone (Mayer, 2009). Hence, incorporating audio, visuals and text in films or movies helps learners to process language via auditory and visual means, at the same time improving understanding and retention.



ILEIID 2025 | International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) ISSN: 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS

Special Issue | Volume IX Issue XXIV October 2025



Implications

The findings of this study highlight the importance of integrating films with subtitles into vocabulary instruction in a structured and purposeful strategy. To operationalize this approach, educators should embed films within lesson plans by selecting titles that match learning goals and vocabulary acquisition in order to create meaningful connections between audiovisual input and vocabulary learning. Selecting films that align with curriculum goals and introducing essential lexical items in advance can prepare students for effective engagement. Subtitles should be utilized strategically to strengthen the link between spoken and written forms. Gradually removing subtitles may help in improving listening and inferencing skills. Educators should incorporate post-viewing activities such as discussions, role-plays and writing tasks which will provide opportunities for active language use, supporting deeper retention and communicative competence. Therefore, the approaches may ensure that films serve as an integral part of language teaching, promoting sustained vocabulary growth and authentic learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of English films and subtitles on vocabulary acquisition among non-English major students. The results suggest that films, when combined with subtitles, can enhance comprehension, pronunciation and sentence formation, although improvements in speaking confidence were less consistent. Quantitative self-reports provide perceptual insights but are limited by bias and lack of causal measures like pre/post-tests. Qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could uncover factors influencing motivation and engagement that quantitative data alone may not reveal. From a pedagogical perspective, films should be integrated systematically into language instruction through structured lesson plans that include previewing vocabulary activities, strategic use of subtitles and post-viewing tasks. This approach transforms films from supplementary resources into essential tools for vocabulary growth, fostering authentic communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the results of this study, a few suggestions can be made to help students acquire vocabulary through the use of English films. The significant differences between the groups who watch films with and without subtitles indicated that by including subtitles may have an evident effect on vocabulary learning. Hence, the following strategies are recommended to maximise vocabulary learning in educational environments.

Future researchers should look into other components of language learning, such as pronunciation, rather than solely focusing on vocabulary acquisition. The frequent imitation of consumed media by language learners suggests that examining their pronunciation could yield useful insights into media's influence on language development. In other words, more thorough findings and the possibility of discovering a wider and variety results can be achieved.

Future researchers should also consider specifying the types of films that are shown to students. By varying the genres, the findings may be broader and more diverse compared to being exposed to one particular genre.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors express their gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback which has contributed to improving the overall quality of this paper.

REFERENCES

1. Albiladi, W. S., Abdeen, F. H., & Lincoln, F. (2018). Learning English through movies: Adult English language learners' perceptions. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 8(12),1567-1574.https://doi.org/10.17507/ tpls.0812.01



${\bf ILEIID~2025~|~International~Journal~of~Research~and~Innovation~in~Social~Science~(IJRISS)}\\$

ISSN: 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS



Special Issue | Volume IX Issue XXIV October 2025

- 2. Alenizi, A., & Adawi, R. (2024). Investigating the effectiveness of using corpus-based developed materials in vocabulary learning for Saudi EFL students. Forum for Linguistics Studies, 6(3), 6551. https://doi.org/10.30564/ fls.v6i3.6551
- 3. Baranowska, K. (2020). Learning most with least effort: Subtitles and cognitive load. ELT Journal, 74(2), 105-115. https://doi.org/ 10.1093/elt/ccz060
- 4. Birulès-Muntanè, J., & Soto-Faraco, S. (2016). Watching subtitled films can help learning foreign languages. PLOS ONE, 11(6), e0158409. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0158409
- 5. Donaghy, K. (2014). Film in action: Teaching language using moving images. DELTA Publishing.
- 6. Feng, Y., & Webb, S. (2020). Learning vocabulary through reading, listening, and viewing: Which mode of input is most effective? Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 42(3), 499-523. https://doi.org/10.1017/ S0272263119000494
- 7. Fidelia, V. D., & Rohmah, Z. (2023). Using English movies to improve students' listening skills. NOBEL: Journal of Literature and Language Teaching, 14(2), 206-225. https://doi.org/10.15642/NOBEL.2023.14.2.206-225
- 8. Gao, J., Borras, D. D., & Caiga, B. T. (2024). The practice of SPSS-based correlation analysis in English teaching research. Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences, 9(1). https://doi.org/10.2478/amns-2024-1445
- 9. Hasumia, T., & Chiu, M. (2024). Technology-enhanced language learning in English language education: Performance analysis, core publications, and emerging trends. Cogent Education, 11(1), 2346044. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2346044
- 10. Kalra, R. (2017). The effectiveness of using films in the EFL classroom: A case study conducted at an international university in Thailand. Arab World English Journal, 8(3), 289-301. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol8no3.19
- 11. Kessler, M., & Cekmegeli, K. (2025). Quantitative designs in data-driven learning research. In The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Computer Assisted Language Learning. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-51447-0 91-1
- 12. Li, H., & Gan, Z. (2022). Reading motivation, self-regulated reading strategies and English vocabulary knowledge: Which most predicted students' English reading comprehension? Frontiers in Psychology, 13, 1041870. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1041870
- 13. Mayer, R. E. (2005). Cognitive theory of multimedia learning. In R. E. Mayer (Ed.), The Cambridge handbook of multimedia learning (pp. 31-48). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511816819.004
- 14. Mayer, R. E. (2009). Multimedia learning (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- 15. Nation, I. S. P. (2008). Learning vocabulary in another language. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524759
- 16. OECD. (2021). OECD digital education outlook 2021: Pushing the frontiers with artificial intelligence, blockchain and robots. https://www.oecd.org/ en/publications/oecd-digital-education-outlook-2021 589b283f-en.html
- 17. Patesan, M., Balagiu, A., & Zechia, D. (2019). Vocabulary acquisition. Knowledge-Based Organization, 25(2). https://doi.org/10.2478/kbo-2019-0098
- 18. Read, J., & Dang, T. N. Y. (2022). Measuring depth of academic vocabulary knowledge. Language Teaching Research. https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221105913
- 19. Reynolds, B. L., Cui, Y., Kao, C. W., & Thomas, N. (2022). Vocabulary acquisition through viewing captioned and subtitled video: A scoping review and meta-analysis. Systems, 10(5), 133. https://doi.org/10.3390/systems10050133
- 20. Roslim, N., Azizul, A. F., Nimehchisalem, V., & Abdullah, M. H. T. (2021). Exploring movies for language teaching and learning at the tertiary level. Asian Journal of University Education, 17(3), 271-280. https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v17i3.1452
- 21. Shadiev, R., & Wang, X. (2022). A review of research on technology-supported language learning and 21st century skills. Frontiers in Psychology, 13, 897689. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.897689/full
- 22. Stirling, J. (2003). Vocabulary acquisition: Implications for teaching and learning. Retrieved from https://www.uefap.com/articles/vocab.htm



ISSN: 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS



Special Issue | Volume IX Issue XXIV October 2025

- 23. Sukying, A. (2023). The role of vocabulary size and depth in predicting postgraduate students' second language writing performance. LEARN Journal, 16(1), 575-603. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1381135.pdf
- 24. Teng, M. F. (2024), Incidental vocabulary learning from listening, reading, and viewing captioned videos: frequency and prior vocabulary knowledge. Applied Linguistics Review. 1-31. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2023-0106
- 25. Webb, S. (2007). The effects of repetition on vocabulary knowledge. Applied Linguistics, 28(1), 46-65. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/aml048
- 26. Wilkins, D. A. (1972). Linguistics in language teaching. London: Edward Arnold.
- 27. Zimmerman, C. B. (1997). Historical trends in second language vocabulary instruction. In J. Coady & T. Huckin (Eds.), Second language vocabulary acquisition (pp. 5-19). Cambridge University Press.