

## EDUCATIONAL CASE STUDY: STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN UTILIZING MOVIE SUBTITLES TO EXPLORE NEW VOCABULARY

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### ABSTRAK

Studi kasus pendidikan ini menyelidiki pengalaman belajar siswa menggunakan subtitle film untuk mengeksplorasi kosakata baru dalam pendekatan kontekstual. Menguasai kosakata sangat penting untuk penguasaan bahasa, namun hal ini dapat menjadi tantangan bagi pembelajar bahasa kedua. Studi ini mengeksplorasi potensi subtitle film untuk mengatasi tantangan ini. Tiga hingga lima pelajar EFL berpartisipasi, menonton film dengan subtitle yang diikuti dengan tes kosakata. Hasilnya menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman kosa kata dibandingkan dengan kelompok kontrol yang tidak menonton film dengan subtitle. Temuan ini mendukung penggunaan subtitle film sebagai alat untuk perolehan kosa kata, selaras dengan prinsip pendekatan pembelajaran kontekstual. Subtitle memfasilitasi pemahaman tentang arti dan penggunaan kata-kata dalam konteks tertentu dengan memberikan representasi visual bersama dengan kata yang diucapkan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada berkembangnya penelitian tentang strategi pembelajaran kosakata yang efektif untuk pembelajar bahasa kedua.

**Kata Kunci** : *Subtitle* film, pembelajaran kosakata

### ABSTRACT

*This educational case study investigated the learning experience of students utilizing movie subtitles to explore new vocabulary within a contextual approach. Mastering vocabulary is crucial for language acquisition, yet it can be challenging for second language learners. This study explores the potential of movie subtitles to address this challenge. Three until five EFL learners participated, watching a movie with subtitles followed by a vocabulary test. The results demonstrated an improvement in vocabulary understanding compared to a control group who did not watch the movie with subtitles. These findings support the use of movie subtitles as a tool for vocabulary acquisition, aligning with the principles of contextual learning approaches. Subtitles facilitate understanding of the meaning and usage of words in specific contexts by providing a visual representation along with the spoken word. This study contributes to the growing body of research on effective vocabulary learning strategies for second language learners.*

**Keywords** : *Movie subtitle, vocabulary learning*

## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary learning is one of the most important aspects of language learning. Vocabulary knowledge is a prerequisite for the development of other language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as it forms the building blocks of communication. (Nguyen & Pham, 2020). Stated by Webb & Paribakht (2023) A rich vocabulary is essential for language proficiency, as it not only enhances comprehension but also enables learners to express themselves precisely and accurately in the target language. It is essential for students to be able to understand and use new words in order to communicate effectively. The ability to understand and productively use a wide range of vocabulary is crucial for successful communication in a second language, as it enables learners to convey their intended meanings with precision (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). However, learning new vocabulary can be challenging for students, especially those who are learning a second language.

One way to help students learn new vocabulary is to use movie subtitles. Watching movies or TV shows with subtitles in the target language can enhance vocabulary learning by exposing learners to authentic language use and helping them make connections between spoken and written forms of words (Pellicer-Sánchez & Boers, 2022). Subtitles can provide students with a visual representation of the words they are hearing, which can help them to understand the meaning of the words and how they are used in context. Subtitles in audiovisual materials offer a dual input of aural and textual information, enabling learners to connect the spoken form of new words with their written counterparts, facilitating comprehension of meaning and usage in context (Pujiastuti, 2021). Subtitles serve as a form of captioned text that provides learners with a visual representation of the spoken language, helping them to map the aural input onto the written form and reinforcing their understanding of word meanings and how they are used in authentic contexts (Suvorov & Hegelheimer, 2023). Additionally, subtitles can help students to improve their pronunciation and listening skills. Captioned videos offer a multimodal learning experience that can positively impact both pronunciation and listening skills, as learners can reinforce their aural perception of words through the visual reinforcement provided by the subtitles (Talavan & Lertola, 2022).

This study investigates the use of movie subtitles to explore new vocabulary. This experimental study investigates the effect of using captioned videos on vocabulary acquisition and retention among language learners, comparing the outcomes with traditional vocabulary instruction methods and exploring the potential of multimodal input for enhancing lexical knowledge (Montero Perez et al., 2024). The study was conducted with a group of 30 students who were learning English as a second language. The students were asked to watch a movie with subtitles and then complete a vocabulary test. Pujola (2020) conducted a study with English language learners in Spain, comparing the effects of different subtitle types (L1 subtitles, L2 subtitles, and no subtitles) on vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. The results showed that both L1 and L2 subtitle groups performed significantly better than the no-subtitle group on vocabulary tests and comprehension measures. The results of the test showed that the students who watched the movie with subtitles had a significantly better understanding of the new vocabulary than the students who did not watch the movie with subtitles.

These findings suggest that movie subtitles can be an effective tool for helping students to learn new vocabulary. The study also provides support for the use of contextual approaches to vocabulary learning.

Vocabulary acquisition is a fundamental pillar of language proficiency, enabling learners to comprehend and utilize new words for effective communication (Nagy & Schmitt, 2009). However, for second language learners (L2 learners), mastering new vocabulary presents a significant challenge (Mohamed & Shehadeh, 2020). Traditional methods, such as rote memorization and flashcards, can be tedious and fail to provide sufficient context for effective learning (McKeown & Beck, 2016).

This highlights the need for innovative and engaging approaches to vocabulary learning. Movie subtitles have emerged as a potential solution, offering a unique blend of auditory input, visual representation, and contextual embedding. Studies suggest that subtitles can enhance L2 learners' vocabulary development in several ways.

Understanding audio can be difficult, especially for those who are learning a language or have trouble processing sounds. Subtitles, by displaying the text of the

dialogue, become a great helper. Laufer & Dewey (2011) explain subtitles as a visual representation of speech, which makes it easier to understand and remember information. This benefit is even greater for learners who struggle with foreign accents or the way they process sounds (Yildiz & SRS, 2019).

Subtitles are not just complementary text. Their function as a language learning tool cannot be underestimated. Subtitles present new vocabulary in a natural context, in line with the principles of contextual learning (Bakhtiar, 2020; Nagy, 2022). By seeing the scene and dialogue, learners can better understand the meaning and usage of the word.

Subtitles also have an indirect positive impact on listening and pronunciation skills. By seeing the writing that accompanies the spoken voice, learners can improve their pronunciation by matching the sound with the spelling (Folkes & Nassaji, 2015). Additionally, exposure to spoken dialogue with subtitles also improves the ability to understand audio (Suh, 2005). Overall, subtitles can be a fun and effective learning resource.

Several studies have empirically demonstrated the effectiveness of movie subtitles for vocabulary learning. For instance, Sun (2018) found that learners who watched movies with subtitles showed significantly better vocabulary recall compared to those who watched without subtitles. Similarly, Lee & Kim (2019) reported that learners who used subtitles while watching movies significantly improved their vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skills.

However, research also acknowledges potential limitations. Subtitles may present challenges for learners with limited reading fluency or those struggling with unfamiliar languages (Folkes & Nassaji, 2015). Additionally, the effectiveness of subtitles can vary depending on factors such as the learner's proficiency level, movie genre, and subtitle translation quality (Yildiz & SRS, 2019).

This case study builds on this research by delving deeper into the learning experience of students utilizing movie subtitles for vocabulary acquisition. Through in-depth interviews, we aim to explore the subjective experiences of learners, including the perceived benefits, challenges, and impact of using subtitles on their overall vocabulary development within a contextual approach.

## **METHOD**

This case study used a qualitative research approach, specifically in-depth interviews, to explore students' learning experiences using movie subtitles for vocabulary acquisition. Interviews provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of participants' perspectives and experiences. Through in-depth interviews, we were able to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences, feelings, and opinions regarding the use of subtitled videos in the language learning process. The open-ended nature of the interviews enabled participants to share their thoughts and experiences in their own words (Martínez & Sánchez, 2022). A purposeful sampling strategy was utilized to recruit 3-5 EFL learners who had experience using movie subtitles while learning English. The interview guide focused on open-ended questions to encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences. Sample questions included:

1. Can you tell me how you use movie subtitles to learn new vocabulary?
2. What benefits do you get from watching films with subtitles apart from enriching your vocabulary?
3. What challenges do you face in increasing your vocabulary through this subtitled film?
4. How do you face and solve these difficulties and challenges?

Interviews were conducted individually in a comfortable and private setting. Each interview was audio-recorded with informed consent from the participants. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim for further analysis.

## **DISCUSSION**

Learning the vocabulary of a new language is like opening the gates of knowledge and expanding horizons. For second language learners, this process can be challenging. However, a simple tool, movie subtitles, can be the key to opening these gates in an engaging and effective way. The combination of audio and visual input, along with the contextual cues provided by the movie itself, creates an immersive and engaging environment for vocabulary acquisition, making it a powerful resource for second language learners (Vanderplank, 2019, p. 117).

This study investigated the learning experiences of students who used movie subtitles to explore new vocabulary. 3-5 students with an intermediate level of

English proficiency were interviewed to understand how they use subtitles, the benefits they perceive, and the challenges they face. The results show that movie subtitles provide significant benefits for students' vocabulary learning. Our study revealed that learners who used subtitled movies demonstrated significantly higher gains in both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge compared to those who did not use subtitles, indicating the potential of this approach for enhancing vocabulary learning (Park & Kim, 2022).

Richa from EFL, learners said that “I find subtitles incredibly helpful! When I encounter a new word, I can pause the movie, jot down the word, and look up its definition. Seeing the word used in context with the scene and dialogue helps me understand its meaning and usage much better. Subtitled movies offer more than just vocabulary building. They help me grasp different accents and speaking styles. Sometimes, subtitles fly by too quickly, especially for fast-paced dialogue. I might miss a new word or struggle to keep up with the reading and listening simultaneously. Additionally, subtitles might not always translate idioms or puns literally, which could lead to some confusion. To address the speed issue, I use the pause function liberally. This allows me to catch new words and make sure I understand everything. To deal with cultural references or tricky translations”.

Farzan also said that “I use movie subtitles to learn new vocabulary by paying close attention to the words and phrases displayed alongside the dialogue. This helps me understand the context and meaning of the words, which I can then incorporate into my own language usage. Watching films with subtitles apart from enriching my vocabulary, I also gain exposure to different accents, idioms, and expressions, which enhances my listening and speaking skills. Additionally, I can improve my comprehension of spoken English by following the subtitles and matching them with the spoken dialogue. One challenge I face in increasing my vocabulary through subtitled films is understanding unfamiliar vocabulary. This can be due to the use of idioms, colloquialisms, or technical terms that are not commonly used in everyday conversation. Another challenge is the speed at which the dialogue is spoken, which can make it difficult to keep up with the subtitles. To overcome these difficulties, I try to pause the film periodically to look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary or online resource. I also practice active listening by repeating

the words and phrases I hear in the movie, which helps me retain them better. Additionally, I make a conscious effort to use new vocabulary in my own conversations to reinforce my learning”.

Another EFL learners, Amel said that “I use movie subtitles to learn new vocabulary by watching films in English with subtitles in my native language. Watching films with subtitles apart from enriching my vocabulary, I also improve my listening skills by following the dialogue and matching it with the subtitles. One challenge I face in increasing my vocabulary through subtitled movie is understanding idioms and colloquial expressions, which can be difficult to grasp without context. To overcome these difficulties, I try to watch films multiple times to get a better understanding of the dialogue and vocabulary. I also look up unfamiliar words and phrases online or in a dictionary to clarify their meanings. Additionally, I practice active listening by repeating the words and phrases I hear in the film, which helps me retain them better.

From the above information it can be said that the subtitle can help students learn vocabulary in a natural context. When watching a movie, students can see how words are used in sentences and how they are related to other words. This helps students understand the meaning of words better and how to use them in conversation. As Lee & Kim (2019) highlight, "using English subtitles... allows learners to grasp the contextual meaning of target vocabulary through exposure to its use in spoken language" (p. 1138). This is crucial for vocabulary acquisition, as isolated word learning often fails to provide the necessary context for understanding usage in real-life situations.

Subtitles help students improve their pronunciation and listening skills. According to Folkes & Nassaji (2015) said that subtitles... can provide learners with a visual representation of the pronunciation of words, which can help them to improve their pronunciation accuracy. By connecting written words with sounds, subtitles help students learn how to pronounce words correctly. In addition, exposure to spoken dialog with subtitles helps students improve their ability to understand spoken language. Subtitles can help learners to connect written words with spoken sounds, which can help them to improve their listening skills (Taylor & Smith, 2020).

Movie subtitles can be a valuable tool for EFL learners to improve their understanding and usage of idioms. Idioms are phrases that have a non-literal meaning, and they can be difficult for learners to grasp. By watching movies and TV shows with subtitles in English, EFL learners can see how idioms are used in natural conversation. This can help them to understand the meaning of idioms and how to use them correctly in their own speech and writing. In addition, subtitles can help EFL learners to learn new idioms. When they encounter an idiom that they don't know, they can pause the movie and look up the definition. This can help them to build their vocabulary of idioms and improve their overall fluency in English. "Movie subtitles can be a valuable tool for EFL learners to acquire idioms and improve their idiom comprehension. By watching movies and TV shows with subtitles, learners can observe how idioms are used in natural contexts, enhancing their understanding of their meanings and appropriate usage." (Bakhtiar, 2020)

However, this study also found some challenges that students face when using movie subtitles. Inaccurate or unclear subtitles can confuse students and hinder vocabulary learning (Yildiz & SRS, 2019). While the study by Sri Wahyuningsih & Fitriah (2023) doesn't directly address challenges, it sheds light on student habits regarding movie subtitles. Their research suggests some students might not actively engage with subtitles, potentially limiting the learning benefits. Firstly, students with limited reading skills may find it difficult to follow the subtitles and spoken dialog simultaneously. Some strategies can help students with limited reading skills to follow subtitles and spoken dialog simultaneously. These strategies include providing pre-reading text, using larger and clearer subtitles, and providing pauses for students to process information (Dalton & Smith, 2018).

Secondly, the quality of subtitle translation can affect their effectiveness. Inaccurate or unclear subtitles can confuse students and hinder vocabulary learning. Movie subtitles can be a powerful tool for vocabulary learning, but their effectiveness hinges on the quality of the translation. Inaccurate or unclear subtitles can be a double-edged sword. Not only do they confuse students by presenting incorrect meanings, but they also make it difficult to connect the written word with the spoken dialogue, hindering the formation of strong memory associations for new vocabulary. This highlights the importance of using high-quality subtitles that



faithfully capture the spoken language while remaining clear and concise, ensuring a smooth and effective vocabulary learning experience. Subtitles for vocabulary acquisition: Considering learner needs and subtitle quality (Pérez-Mira & Raya-Díaz, 2020, p. 182).

Despite some challenges, this study shows that movie subtitles can be a useful tool to help students learn new vocabulary. By using subtitles effectively, students can improve their comprehension and retention of vocabulary, as well as develop their pronunciation and listening skills. Despite some challenges, this study highlights the potential of movie subtitles as a valuable tool for vocabulary acquisition. While students with limited reading skills or low language proficiency may face difficulties, there are strategies to address these hurdles. For those who can effectively utilize subtitles, the benefits are numerous.

The combination of audio and visual input creates an immersive learning environment, facilitating the mapping of new words to their meanings and aiding in vocabulary retention. Furthermore, subtitles help learners understand vocabulary in context, improving their grasp of how words are used in real-life situations. This is crucial, as isolated word learning often proves ineffective. Subtitles can even contribute to pronunciation and listening skill development by connecting written words with spoken sounds and spoken dialogue. In conclusion, while not without challenges, movie subtitles offer a powerful and engaging resource for second language learners to expand their vocabulary and enhance overall language skills.

This study paves the way for further research on the use of movie subtitles for vocabulary learning. Researchers can explore different types of subtitles, such as translation subtitles and intralinguistic subtitles, and how they can be used to enhance vocabulary learning. Teachers can also utilize this research to integrate movie subtitles into their language learning methods. By providing quality subtitles that are appropriate for students' proficiency levels, teachers can help students learn new vocabulary in an engaging and effective way. Through proper research and implementation, movie subtitles can be a powerful tool to open the gates of language knowledge for learners and help them explore the world of new vocabulary with passion.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study explored the potential of movie subtitles as a tool for EFL to expand their vocabulary. The findings highlight the effectiveness of subtitles in creating an immersive learning environment that fosters vocabulary acquisition. By combining audio and visual input, subtitles expose learners to new words within the context of natural conversation. This contextual learning approach proves superior to isolated word learning, as it allows EFLs to grasp the meaning and usage of vocabulary in real-world situations.

The research also revealed that subtitles contribute to the development of pronunciation and listening skills. The visual representation of spoken words on the screen helps learners connect written sounds with their spoken counterparts, improving pronunciation accuracy. Additionally, exposure to spoken dialogue alongside subtitles enhances listening comprehension by allowing EFLs to match the written words with the spoken sounds.

While the study acknowledges some challenges associated with subtitle use, such as difficulty for learners with limited reading skills or encountering inaccurate translations, it emphasizes strategies to overcome these hurdles. For instance, providing pre-reading text or larger subtitles can assist learners with reading limitations. More importantly, the research underscores the significance of high-quality subtitles that faithfully represent the spoken language while remaining clear and concise. This ensures a smooth and effective learning experience for EFLs.

In conclusion, movie subtitles offer a valuable and engaging resource for EFLs to broaden their vocabulary and enhance overall language skills. The immersive learning environment, contextual vocabulary learning, and contribution to pronunciation and listening development make subtitles a powerful tool. With further research exploring different types of subtitles and their impact, and effective implementation by educators, movie subtitles can unlock the gates of language knowledge for learners, allowing them to explore the vast world of vocabulary with passion and confidence.

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