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# The Habit of Watching English Movies in Improving Vocabulary: What do the students say?

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# ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

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This study investigates students' perceptions of how watching English movies influences vocabulary development. A mixed-method method was used, involving a questionnaire completed by 50 students and semistructured interviews with eight purposefully selected students from the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) at the Faculty of Education, Universitas Jambi. Findings reveal that students perceive a positive impact from the habit of watching English movies, indicating it as beneficial for vocabulary enhancement. The selected participants met two criteria: regular experience watching English movies and completion of core courses in Listening, Speaking, Reading, Grammar, and Vocabulary. The study highlights improvement primarily in receptive and productive vocabulary, especially in informal language, idioms, and slang. It is recommended that lecturers integrate English movie watching into classroom activities or suggest it as a supplementary tool to foster vocabulary growth and overall language proficiency.

#### 1. Introduction

The use of English movies in EFL teaching has become increasingly popular (Ismaili, 2013), offering significant benefits for enhancing students' English skills across areas such as vocabulary, listening, speaking, and grammar. Many words students do not typically encounter in formal learning environments are frequently presented in movies, providing exposure to language that EFL learners may find challenging due to its novelty and the lack of classroom instruction (Ghalebi et al., 2020). These words are often unfamiliar and sophisticated, making them difficult for students to recognize and understand initially. However, repeated exposure and a willingness to engage with movies

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allow learners to pick up new words, aiding them in both understanding and expression. This process makes it easier for students to identify word meanings and spellings when they later encounter them in reading or listening exercises in class. Webb (2010) highlights that watching movies is a relevant and effective medium for improving students' vocabulary.

Vocabulary insufficiency remains a significant challenge for EFL students, both in classroom settings and in their daily interactions. Limited vocabulary can hinder learners from using all four language skills effectively (Gorjian, 2014), often resulting in codeswitching to Bahasa Indonesia or using alternative expressions to convey their ideas. As Zhihong (2018) emphasizes, vocabulary forms the foundation of sentence construction and meaning-making in language learning.

The growing use of classroom discussions, particularly through Project-based Learning (PjBL) and Case-based Learning (CBL), further underscores the need for students to develop both communicative and critical thinking skills. However, a lack of vocabulary often results in reluctance to participate, with students remaining silent due to nervousness or discomfort with their limited language proficiency.

This study examines students' perceptions of how watching English movies contributes to their vocabulary acquisition and explores the types of vocabulary they find most beneficial from movie exposure. The findings are intended to inform students and lecturers, especially within the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) at Universitas Jambi, about ways to make English language teaching and learning more effective and enjoyable through the integration of movies in the classroom. The research addresses the question: "How do students perceive the habit of watching English movies in increasing their vocabulary, and what types of words do they find most useful from this exposure?"

#### 2. Theoretical Framework

# Perception

Perception is one of basic characters of human beings. The concept of perception generally refers to a process of observing, assessing, and responding to information coming from the surrounding environment. It includes an expressing of what someone feels about something and an evaluation of what people see and experience. Perception is a aunique representation of someone thinking and belief and may be subject to personal behaviour

and character. It maybe different from one to another. According to Alizamar and Couto (2016), perception consists of the stages of combining, recognizing, and interpreting sensory information to provide an understanding of the environment. In other words, perception is the result of a person's impression or response after he receives information about an object through his five senses. In simple terms, perception can be defined as the process of knowing or recognizing objects and events with the help of the senses. Perception can affect a person's behavior, and that behavior reflects his perception (Akbar & Aldrich, 2015).

According to Ahen (2009), perception is the basis for thinking, asking for certain judgments or beliefs that influence human actions. Zirmansyah (2013) further explains that perception is a person's point of view on something that will lead to a response to how and with what a person will act. In other words, a view is a process of a person's activities in giving impressions, assessments, opinions, feelings, and interpreting something based on information displayed from other sources. Perception can occur at any time and the resulting response can be a positive or negative view. Therefore, it can be concluded that perception does not appear suddenly, but is influenced by individual background information which then triggers a reaction. Individual attitudes, past and current experiences, interests and levels of interpretation can also influence perception (Adediwura and Tayo, 2007). Jacobs (2004) also emphasizes that perception plays an important role in supporting effective learning. Learning occurs after receiving stimuli, and each individual receives different types of stimuli that affect the senses in daily life.

Several factors influence perception. Walgito (2010) identifies three key elements: the absorption of external stimuli, the individual's attention and understanding of the object, and the personal evaluation of the object. These factors can vary greatly depending on external stimuli, cognitive processing, individual experiences, and psychological state (Hamka, 2002). Thus, perception is highly individualized, with personal assessments differing even when the object remains the same (Robbins, 2003).

#### Habits

The term habit is basically defined as something that someone likes doing regularly in daily life. According to Evans and Stanovich (2013), a habit is something that is activated independently or automatically in memory and does not require executive control. Habits are shaped since they are practiced continuously and repeatedly every time so that they become automatic or habitual in the brain and become familiar (Faliyanti &

Arlin, 2018). Habits are reflected through patterns of behavior that are often repeated and sometimes occur unconsciously. Chettri and Rout (2013) claim that habits can be deterimed through the number of activities or actions performed and the length and the frequency of time required to do the actions. According to Chen et al. (2020), habits are formed by creative and interest-based activities carried out as daily learning routines.

Rueda-Orozo and Robbe (2015) classifies habits into three types: motor or physical, cognitive or intellectual, and character. The first refers to physical activities such as watching, walking, reading, swimming, while the second type can be represented through mental process such as observation, perception, making judgment or evaluation, thinking, and reasoning. The last refers to habits that express certain character traits that are present in humans (Peterson, Van Slyke, Spezio, Reimer, & Tsakiridis, 2017).

# Vocabulary and the Teaching of Vocabulary

The mastery of vocabulary is central in learning and using a language. It enables the speaker to express meanings and ideas in both speaking and writing. It also helps learners understand the texts and sounds in reading or listening. Vocabulary is generally defined as a collection of words or terms used in a particular language, field or context. According to Makhmudovna (2022), vocabulary means understanding the use of words and their relationship to meaning. While Alqahtani (2015), argues that vocabulary is the number of words needed to convey thoughts and express the intention of the speaker. Thus, vocabulary can be defined as all the words that a person can understand or all the words that a person can use to form new sentences. Vocabulary includes words used in everyday conversation, formal language or specialized language related to a particular field such as science, business or law. Vocabulary can also consist of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions.

Vocabulary mastery is a person's ability to master the vocabulary of a language. Nation (2013) explains that vocabulary mastery is a person's ability to master and use vocabulary correctly and appropriately in the appropriate context. Nation also emphasizes the importance of vocabulary mastery in language learning, because the ability to master vocabulary will greatly affect one's ability to speak, write, read, and understand the language being studied.

Vocabulary development has a complex nature that includes understanding not only the meaning of words, but also how to pronounce them, spelling, grammar, connotations, morphological choices, and semantic relationships between words (Ghalebi et al., 2020).

This means that to master vocabulary one must be able to use these words in the right context, to improve the ability to communicate in the language. Vocabulary mastery is usually obtained through active and continuous learning, such as reading, writing, and speaking in the language being studied. In addition, with today's technology, vocabulary acquisition can also be improved by using electronic media such as video, audio, and language learning applications. However, what students need during the vocabulary expansion process is to be directed and guided by the teacher to manage learning time to maximize learning both inside and outside the classroom (Rogers, 2018).

Vocabulary is a very important element in learning English. Because without vocabulary, a person will experience difficulties when using a language. This is supported by Rao's (as cited by Bostanci, 2022) statement, that vocabulary is a pillar in the English language, where vocabulary is a dominant part of the English learning process. Learning vocabulary is important because before we can speak, write, or listen effectively, we must learn vocabulary first.

Learning vocabulary is not only related to mastering a certain number of words or phrases but also includes the skills to use vocabulary correctly (Bai, 2018). Each word of a foreign language learned enables one to use those words in daily sentences and communication. It can also help one to understand what they are about to learn more easily. As pointed out by Schmitt (2007), vocabulary as part of language input contributes significantly to the process of language acquisition and learning. The more aspects of word knowledge that are known (language input), the more likely the users or the learners are to be able to use them in the correct context in the correct way (language output).

Vocabulary is very important in English language teaching. As stated by Richards et al (2010), vocabulary teaching is an important part of language learning in general. Vocabulary lessons are a great way to develop students' vocabulary and enrich students vocabulary. Without adequate vocabulary, students will struggle to understand others or convey their ideas. Many students experience difficulties in understanding and learning vocabulary (Lengkoan et al., 2019). Language learners are often unable to acquire new words through reading or listening due to their limited vocabulary. Therefore, to increase vocabulary when teaching, teachers can add various teaching techniques when teaching in class.

Brown and Payne as quoted by Setiawan (2010), stated that there are five important steps in learning vocabulary which represent what the learner must do. First, have a source to find new words. These sources can be from print or non-print media. Second, get a clear

picture, either visually or auditory or both, for the form of words or a sentence. Third, learn the meaning of words. Learners can learn the meaning of unknown words from various sources, thereby expanding their knowledge and vocabulary. Fourth, make a strong memory connection between the form and meaning of the word. Then the last, use the words. Furthermore, Ruth and Stuart (2003), explain that there are many vocabulary teaching techniques, namely visual aids, verbal descriptions, and contextualized charades. Visual aids are teaching techniques where teachers use paper, movies, short stories, pictures, sounds, slides, or whiteboards to teach vocabulary. So that these aids or media can improve and enrich vocabulary. An oral description is a teaching method that allows the teacher to explain the meaning of words. The teacher should choose and give words based on the ability of the students. In this way, unfamiliar words can be explained efficiently. The last one is contextual guessing, which is a teaching technique in which students learn vocabulary from a text. By using this technique, students will learn to understand the meaning of the words in the text.

# Movie

Movies are a type of visual image that captures human expression and conveys a sense of reality (Dadabhoy, 2012). According to Barsam and Monahan (As cited by Abdullah & Rahman, 2017: 99), movies are defined as stories captured and projected on a screen at a certain speed to give the impression of movement. Movies usually tell about everyday life in the past or present. Where the story in the movie is a series of cinematographic images that are interconnected and projected on a screen.

In the movie there are several interesting aspects that can be observed. These include action, audio, visual, location, scenario, and technology (Aoudah, 2016). In addition, films also have the magical power to create impact because films combine visuals, movement, theater, and music into one (Baiju, 2018). Movies have been created digitally to make it easier for people to access and watch them anywhere and anytime.

# English movies as instructional media

As a learning media, movies have an important role in determining its effectiveness. Movies are able to provide an accurate picture of the use of a foreign language in a real cultural context and authentic situation (Kusumarasdyati, 2004). Movies present authentic and diverse language varieties. English language films also provide experiences to students as they learn English and provide meaningful education (Yuliastuti, Purnama, & Tirtanawati, 2021). When students are not in an English-speaking environment, movies

can provide learning experiences and communicate directly in the language. This is because English movies present examples of using English in real situations outside the classroom, especially in interactive language or daily conversations. Melvin and Stout (as cited by Aliyev and Albay, 2016: 14) recommend the use of films in the language learning process because students have a better opportunity to practice language skills.

Movies can be used as visual aids in the teaching-learning process (Harmer 2001: 282). This is because movies provide a visual context where the visual of the movie makes movies an invaluable language teaching tool, thus allowing students to better understand by interpreting the language in a complete visual context. Movies aid students' comprehension by allowing them to listen to language exchanges and see visual supports such as facial expressions and gestures simultaneously.

Watching movies is not only interesting and fun, but learning by watching movies has many advantages, especially in language learning. What's more, watching movies doesn't always have to be done in a movie theater. Any learner can do it anywhere. They can watch movies from their laptops via the internet or CDs, or they can watch them from their smartphones. These online movies can help students to learn English more easily anytime and anywhere (Ayu, 2020).

# Vocabulary learning through English movies

Second language teachers have used various types of teaching resources to find the most interesting and effective ways of teaching language. One way that has been used effectively to encourage students to develop their language competence is through English movies. Movies can be considered an effective and versatile teaching material, especially in a society where technology is rapidly developing (Zahmatkesh & Fakhri Alamdari, 2021). Watching English movies is also one way that has been used effectively to develop language competence. Movies are useful for learning some new words and improving students' vocabulary learning (Fauzi, Muljanto & Lestari, 2021). When watching a movie, each new word is associated with a sound that helps students know how to pronounce the word. Sometimes words are also associated with feelings. Thus, students can easily make more connections to their brain to be able to memorize vocabulary better and faster.

According to Khoshniyat and Dowlatabadi (2014), utilizing English movies can help students enrich their vocabulary, syntax, and other language skills to a great extent, thus improving their English proficiency. When watching an English movie, students can catch and imitate the pronunciation. With this, students can improve their overall

understanding of the language. This can be applied to real-life situations when using the language to communicate. In addition, by using movies, students are expected to enjoy learning English vocabulary, clarify messages, save teachers' energy, motivate students to learn, and improve the quality of teaching and learning (Kusumarajni, 2022).

To use movies in learning, teachers should choose movies that are suitable or in accordance with the learning objectives and materials (Hestiana & Anita, 2022). In addition, the chosen movie must also be educational, which means it has a good moral message, has a duration that is not too long, also the character's pronunciation is not too fast and the vocabulary is not too difficult or can be used in everyday conversation. Students who are new to watching movies for learning should not watch movies that are too long or too difficult to understand, choose a movie with a short duration. Cooper and Dancyger (in Hutapea and Suwastini, 2019: 34), A short film must be short in order to convey meaning by providing basic ideas or ideas that are easily understood to the audience. in addition, short films can be replayed and make students focus more on certain topics in the film (Kadabayi, 2012). Examples of movies for beginners include the popular sitcoms Friends, How I met your mother, Modern Family etc. But, for students who are used to watching movies in English, they can choose movies with subtitles to enrich their vocabulary. For example, when they want to improve their vocabulary about the sea, they can watch finding nemo or seas-piracy. If students encounter new or unfamiliar vocabulary, they can write it down on a book or cell phone for review. This will contribute to help memorize vocabulary on an ongoing basis. Students also need movie sites for recommendations to watch English movies such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc. There are also many movie genres that they can choose from and can also be applied in learning such as action movies, drama, comedy, romantic, horror, science fiction, suspense or thriller, documentary, nonfiction, etc.

#### 3. Method

In this research, researchers used a mixed-method research design. This is both a method and methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research in a single study (Creswell, 2009). The selection of this method is considered relevant as the study focuses on examining the students' perception on their habit of watching English movies in increasing their vocabulary as a strategy for learning.

Fifty students studying in various semesters, and Eight participants from ELESP, Universitas Jambi who were studying in various semesters were involved in the study. They were selected purposively and must fulfil a few criteria such as having access to English movies and are keen on watching them in their leisure time at home or elsewhere to increase the vocabulary. Also, they must have undertaken a few subjects such as Listening, Speaking, Reading to enable them to watch and understand English movies. The participants were given consent forms and sign their willingness to share their perception only for research purpose as their responses were treated confidential.

The data were collected by distributing a set of questionnaires to the selected participants through their WA in a google form format. They were requested to fill out and complete the questionnaires and return to the researchers as soon as possible within a maximum period of two weeks. To confirm the validity, the questionnaires were tried out to a few students and analyzed the results accordingly.

Additionally, a semi-structured interview was conducted to the participants. As suggested by Ritchie et al (2018), this data collection technique is used to obtain more detailed information from the participants as well as to conform and consolidate data with those obtained through questionnaires. It is also intended to understand the thoughts and reactions of the respondents towards the study focus. Due the time constraints and the participants' availability, the interviews were conducted via Zoom, WhatsApp, and face-to-face mechanisms. All data collected either through questionnaires or interviews were analyzed following procedures described by Cresswell (2009). These include organizing, categorizing, tabulating, coding, analyzing, interpreting, and displaying.

# 4. Findings

# **Questionnaires**

Data obtained through questionnaires reveal three important findings. The data were displayed in tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 below. The details can be seen in the tables 1-4.

# 1. The Students' Perception on Habit of Watching English Movies in Increasing their Vocabulary

The data reveals that the students' perception on habits of using watching English movies was positive. This can be seen in Table 1, where more than 50 percent of the

participants perceived that the habit of watching English movies was very useful. See Table 1 below for details.

Table 1. The Students' Perception on Habit of Watching English Movies in Increasing their Vocabulary

Perception Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Very useful	28	56 %
Useful	22	44 %
Not useful	0	0 %

As shown in the above table, the trend of the students' perception the usefulness of the habit of watching English movies in increasing their vocabulary looks very convincing with 56 percent falls into Very Useful category and 22 percent were given to Useful category. This confirms the fact that the students had a very strong belief that watching English movies have been very useful and have increased their vocabulary.

# 2. Frequency of the Habit of Watching English Movies.

The questionnaire data demonstrates the frequency of the students' habit of watching English movies. It is apparent in Table 2 below that the distribution looks flat with Often category was the highest in rate (36 %) while Seldom category was the lowest in rate (24 %). Very Often category was right in the middle (36 %). See Table 2 below for details.

**Table 2. The Frequency of Watching English Movies** 

Perception Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	18	36 %
Often	20	40 %
Seldom	12	24 %

It is obvious that Table 2 shows an interesting trend. Again, it shows a positive result, in which the Seldom category was not high in rate and in contrast, the categories of Very Often and Often were highly dominant in the students' choice.

# 3. Types of Vocabulary Improved

Table 3 demonstrates types of vocabulary increased through watching English movies. It is obvious that informal vocabulary was perceived as the highest type increase with a total of 38 percent, followed by Idioms (34 %), and slang words (28 %). There were only 10 percent of the students who gave the option to others category. Table 3 below describes the distribution in detail.

Table 3. The Students' Perception on the Types of Vocabulary Improved

Perception Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Informal vocabulary	19	38 %
Idioms	17	34 %
Slang words	14	28 %
Others	10	10 %

# 4. The Level of the Vocabulary Increase

It is likely that the level of the vocabulary increase shows a positive trend. More than 90 percent of the choices were addressed to Very High and High categories. Only 6 percent were given to Low category. See the details below.

Table 4. The Students' Perception on Vocabulary Increase

Perception Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	27	54 %
High	20	40 %
Low	3	6 %
Very low	0	0 %

# Interview

The interview data shows something interesting. The students' responses to interview questions are displayed in Table 5 below. The responses have been summarized and tabulated for practical reasons. The interview questions focus on the students' perceptions on six aspects: 1) the benefits of watching or using English movies in increasing their vocabulary; 2) the vocabulary improvement; 3) the type of vocabulary increased; 4) the effectiveness of watching English movies; 5) the problems or difficulties the students have in understanding the movies; and 6) the progress of the vocabulary increase. See the details below.

**Table 5. The results of interviews** 

No.	Interview Questions (Focuses)	Summary of Respondents' Answers
1	Opinion about the benefits of watching or using English movies in increasing vocabulary.	Improve understanding the key words and contexts of usage. Have better pronunciation and spellings. It can be a good medium for practicing the use of new words.
2	Vocabulary Improvement	Increase a lot but it takes time to be able to understand and use the words.  Some words are easy to understand but some are difficult. We need to watch and listen several times.
3	Types of vocabulary increased	Common words increase a lot and are relatively easy to understand.  Informal words are generally easy to understand  Idioms and slang words are relatively difficult to grasp.  Receptive vocabulary increases more than productive.
4	The effectiveness of watching English movies in increasing vocabulary	It is very effective and sometimes it is more effective than formal learning in the classroom because they come along with pronunciation and context of usage. They can also learn grammar, pronunciations, speaking and listening skills.  It depends on the type of movies.
5	Problems and difficulties the students have.	The movies are very fast and hard to understand for the first time.  Some words are not familiar, especially slang words and idioms.  It takes a long time to watch and listen to understand the words. We need to watch several times.  The access to suitable movies.  We do not have anyone to help when we have problems in understanding the words.

6	Progress of the Increase	Very high because the students watch the
		movies again and again.
		It becomes a hobby to watch the movies.

In general, the responses match the data obtained through questionnaires. First, the students perceive that the habit of watching English movies is useful and brings benefits for increasing their vocabulary. Three main benefits were revealed by the students. These include improvement of understanding of the key words and contexts of their usage, getting better pronunciation and spellings of the new words, and a good medium for practicing the use of new words in their communication.

In terms of the improvement of the vocabulary the students learned through the movies, the students reveal that their vocabulary increases a lot even though they find it hard to understand the new words and they take a long time to be able to use the words in their expressions. Also, some words are perceived to be easy to understand and some are difficult to understand and use. The students need to watch and listen to the movies several times to understand the words.

Regarding the type of vocabulary increased, the students perceive that there were a few words that they learnt through the movies. These are common words, informal words, idioms, and slangs. Common words and informal words were highly increased as they might have heard and seen in formal learning in the classrooms. However, some idioms and slang words were not increased a lot as they were not familiar to the students, and they have never seen and learnt the words in the classrooms from the lecturers. Also, the students found that receptive vocabulary were increased more than productive ones.

With regard to the effectiveness of watching the movies, the students found that in general it is very effective in increasing their vocabulary. With the movies students learnt not only new words but also other aspects such as grammar, pronunciation, listening skills, and speaking skills. However, the effectiveness depends on the type of the movies. Some movies can be more effective than others, depending on the topics and the themes they bring.

The students also pointed out that there were a few common problems that they faced in their attempts to learn new words through English movies. These include unfamiliarity of the words, the access to the movies, the speed of the pronunciation of the words, and the context in which the words were used. In the movies the speaker often pronounces the words very fast and combines words into one, making it hard to understand them. Another potential problem was that the students did not have anyone to help when they had problems in understanding the movies.

Finally, students found that their vocabulary has been highly increased by watching the English movies. The movies were useful not only to improve their vocabulary, but also other skills such as speaking and listening. They also learnt much about the English word pronunciation and grammar. Sometimes that is more effective than learning formally in the classrooms.

#### 5. Discussion

The results indicate that all research participants "agreed" that watching English movies helped them deepen their English vocabulary. In examining students' perceptions of vocabulary learning through English movies, findings reveal a positive impact on vocabulary development, supporting the use of movies as effective learning media. Zahmatkesh and Alamdari (2021) state that movies can serve as versatile and effective teaching materials, especially in a rapidly advancing technological society. Interviews with participants further showed that English movies broadened students' vocabulary knowledge. Nearly all participants mentioned encountering unfamiliar words in movies, along with informal vocabulary, idioms, slang, and phrases useful for everyday communication—vocabulary rarely covered in traditional English classes. This aligns with Fauzi et al. (2021), who emphasize that movies enhance vocabulary acquisition and learning. Additionally, watching movies allows students to learn correct pronunciation from native speakers, fostering a more natural and authentic speaking style, which is beneficial in learning accurate English vocabulary.

The research also demonstrates that English movies contribute to students' acquisition of both receptive and productive vocabulary. For receptive vocabulary, movies aid students in recognizing and understanding words or sentences they encounter in films, which enhances their reading comprehension and listening skills. This aligns with Stuart Webb's (2008) definition of receptive vocabulary as words students recognize when reading or listening, though they may not use them actively in speaking or writing. In terms of productive vocabulary, movies further support students in expanding vocabulary they can actively use. Movies provide exposure to diverse vocabulary, grammar structures, and pronunciation, making the language more familiar and accessible. Interview results indicate that students believe movies help expand their vocabulary for both speaking and writing, aligning with Webb's (2005) description of

productive vocabulary as an active process of using words to express ideas. Thus, movies are beneficial in helping students build both receptive and productive vocabulary.

Moreover, watching movies supports the development of English language skills, particularly in speaking and listening. Almost all participants agreed that movies are valuable resources for enhancing oral skills, which aligns with Kabooha's (2016) assertion that movies help improve students' listening and speaking abilities. Additionally, movies increase students' confidence in using English, enhancing their overall language competencies in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This improved confidence benefits students not only in academic tasks and classroom activities but also in real-life communication.

# 6. Conclusion

The researcher has identified the students' perceptions of the use of English moviesin improving vocabulary mastery. The findings from the interviews show that according to students' perceptions, movies have a positive impact on their vocabulary development. Therefore, movies can be considered as effective and versatile teaching materials. Students stated that English movies can increase knowledge and develop vocabulary, including informal vocabulary, idioms, slang words, and phrases. Through watching movies, students not only improve their learning of new vocabulary but also gain knowledge about the proper pronunciation of English vocabulary.

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