

LEARNING TO LISTEN THROUGH MOVIES: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH FILMS ON EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract. *Listening comprehension remains a persistent challenge in EFL contexts, particularly where learners have limited exposure to authentic spoken English. This study revisits English movies as an accessible audiovisual resource for strengthening listening comprehension and learner engagement. Using a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design, the study involved 20 students. Data were collected through a cloze-type listening test administered before and after seven instructional sessions and a ten-item attitude questionnaire. The reported mean score increased substantially from 3.80 in the pretest to 7.92 in the posttest, with a t value of 7.98 exceeding the critical value of 2.091 ($df = 19$). Students also demonstrated positive attitudes toward movie-based learning, reflected in a mean questionnaire score of 32.8. The study contributes to EFL pedagogy by demonstrating how structured pre-viewing, viewing, repeated-listening, and post-viewing activities can integrate authentic audiovisual input into listening instruction. However, causal claims are limited by the absence of a control group.*

Keywords: *English movies; listening comprehension; audiovisual media; EFL; multimodal input; student attitudes*

I. INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is a central component of communicative competence and a major challenge for learners of English as a foreign language. Unlike many written-language activities, listening requires learners to construct meaning from transient spoken input. The listener cannot normally control the speed of delivery and may have limited opportunities to ask for repetition. In addition, unfamiliar vocabulary, reduced forms, accent variation, background noise, and limited concentration may interfere with comprehension. Contemporary research continues to characterize second-language listening as a complex process involving both lower-level decoding and higher-level meaning construction. Goh (2018), for example, emphasizes that listening instruction should make learners' cognitive and metacognitive processes more explicit rather than treating listening merely as repeated exposure to audio.

The difficulty of listening becomes particularly important in EFL settings where learners have limited exposure to naturally occurring English outside the classroom. Classroom listening materials may sometimes present speech that is slower, more carefully articulated, or less contextually rich than language encountered in everyday communication. For this reason, audiovisual materials such as films and videos have attracted continuing interest in English language teaching. Movies combine spoken language with visual information, gesture, facial expression, setting, and narrative context. Such multimodal information can provide contextual cues that support learners in interpreting speech.

Recent literature supports continued investigation of video and film as instructional resources. A systematic review of studies published between 2017 and 2022 found that video-based instruction generally plays a positive role in developing listening skills, while also identifying the need for further innovation in how videos are integrated into listening pedagogy (Khasanah, 2022). Similarly, a systematic review of film use in EFL education reported pedagogical value in cinema-based instruction and highlighted teachers' need for practical guidance concerning selection, implementation, and learning objectives (Sánchez-Auñón et al., 2023). More recent systematic evidence also indicates that English movies can function as pedagogic aids by exposing learners

to authentic and multimodal language and by supporting communicative development (Pavithra & Gandhimathi, 2024).

The pedagogical value of audiovisual input is also related to the relationship between visual and auditory information. Karjo et al. (2022) note that multimodal input in films and videos has long been used in EFL listening and that visual information can support comprehension. Research on subtitled video similarly suggests that repeated exposure to audiovisual materials may support listening development and learner perceptions of listening practice (Febrina, 2022). At the same time, the visual component should not replace active listening. Effective movie-based instruction therefore requires carefully designed tasks that direct learners' attention to spoken language, vocabulary, pronunciation, meaning, and contextual clues.

The present article revisits and reformulates an earlier classroom study conducted/The original study investigated whether English movies could improve students' listening ability and examined students' attitudes toward the use of movies. The original data provide a useful classroom-based case because the intervention produced a large descriptive improvement and positive learner responses. The purpose of this publication-oriented version is not to change the empirical data, but to reorganize the study into a contemporary research article, strengthen its theoretical positioning with recent literature, clarify the methodological implications of the design, and discuss the findings in relation to current research on audiovisual listening instruction.

Listening Comprehension in EFL

Listening comprehension is more than hearing sounds. It involves receiving speech, identifying linguistic information, constructing meaning, integrating contextual knowledge, and responding appropriately. In contemporary listening pedagogy, learners are increasingly encouraged to become aware of the processes they use when listening. Goh (2018) argues that metacognitive awareness can help learners reflect on how they plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening. This perspective is important because listening failure may occur at several stages: learners may fail to recognize words, lose track of a speaker because of speech rate, misunderstand an expression, or fail to use contextual information effectively.

Recent research also highlights decoding as a critical component of second-language listening. Jia and Hew (2021), in a systematic review and meta-analysis of decoding training, found a significant positive effect in favor of instructional approaches that explicitly develop learners' ability to decode spoken language. This finding has implications for movie-based instruction: exposure to films is likely to be more productive when learners are given opportunities to notice, replay, identify, and interpret spoken forms rather than simply watch a film for entertainment.

In the context of the present study, the cloze listening test requires learners to identify missing linguistic information from spoken input. This is consistent with the need to connect listening instruction with active processing. The original study also incorporated repeated listening, note-taking, vocabulary preparation, and comprehension tasks, which provide opportunities for learners to process spoken input more than once.

English Movies as Audiovisual Learning Media

Movies offer a combination of auditory and visual input. Spoken dialogue is accompanied by characters, actions, setting, facial expressions, and other contextual information. These cues can help learners infer meaning when individual words or expressions are unfamiliar. A systematic review by Sánchez-Auñón et al. (2023) indicates that films have pedagogical potential in EFL classrooms when they are incorporated through appropriate instructional procedures rather than treated as passive entertainment.

The educational value of films is also supported by empirical studies. Kim and Song (2021) examined animated movies with university learners and reported changes in listening performance and learner perceptions following regular movie-based listening practice. Aulia and Adityo (2022) likewise reported that movie exposure supported vocabulary development and learners' ability to infer meaning from contextualized scenes. In an Indonesian context, studies of videos and bimodal subtitles have also investigated the relationship between video exposure, learner perceptions, and listening comprehension (Febrina, 2022; Maryanto, 2022).

Nevertheless, movie use is not automatically effective. Film length, linguistic complexity, accent, cultural references, visual distractions, and subtitle dependence can create additional cognitive demands. Consequently, teachers need to select material according to learners' proficiency and instructional objectives. Short clips may be more manageable than entire films, particularly when the objective is detailed listening. Teachers can also manipulate subtitles, repetition, playback segments, vocabulary preparation, and comprehension questions to balance authenticity with accessibility.

Instructional Procedures for Movie-Based Listening

A useful movie-based listening lesson can be organized into three broad phases: pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing. During pre-viewing, teachers activate background knowledge, introduce key vocabulary, establish a listening purpose, and provide contextual information. During viewing, learners focus on global meaning first and then on specific linguistic information. Repetition and segmentation can be used to reduce processing pressure. During post-viewing, learners can reconstruct events, answer comprehension questions, summarize dialogue, discuss characters, or reflect on vocabulary and pronunciation.

This structure is compatible with current listening pedagogy because it moves learners from supported comprehension toward more independent processing. It also makes the visual component pedagogically purposeful. Rather than allowing learners to rely exclusively on subtitles, teachers can sequence tasks so that students first listen for the main idea, then listen for details, and finally use subtitles as a checking mechanism when appropriate.

Recent evidence suggests that the frequency and nature of audiovisual exposure matter. Febrina (2022) examined bimodal subtitled videos and listening comprehension, while Karjo et al. (2022) discussed the pedagogical implications of video and multimodal input. These findings support the view that video should be integrated through deliberate practice rather than occasional entertainment. The present study's repeated listening procedure therefore represents a useful classroom strategy, although future research should examine which specific components of the intervention contribute most strongly to learning.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The study used a quantitative pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. The design consisted of an initial listening test (O1), a treatment using English movies (X), and a final listening test (O2): O1–X–O2. The original study selected this design because the researchers identified a need to introduce audiovisual media into the listening classroom. The design is appropriate for examining change within the same group over time, but it does not provide the methodological control necessary to rule out alternative explanations such as maturation, testing effects, or familiarity with the test. Two instruments were used. First, a listening comprehension test was administered as a pretest and posttest. The test used a cloze format in which learners supplied missing information from spoken material. Second, a ten-item questionnaire was used to obtain information about students' attitudes toward learning listening through English movies. Each questionnaire item used four response categories: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

The original study reported the use of the same test form for the pretest and posttest. For a contemporary journal publication, this should be identified as a methodological limitation because repeated exposure to identical items may introduce a testing or recall effect. Future studies should use parallel forms with comparable difficulty. The treatment was conducted over seven meetings, with approximately 90 minutes allocated to each meeting. The instructional procedure followed a structured sequence. First, the teacher introduced the topic and explained the listening task. Second, relevant vocabulary was introduced before viewing. Third, students listened to movie material and took notes on what they heard. Fourth, the material was replayed and students compared or reported what they had identified. Fifth, students completed cloze-based listening activities. Finally, selected portions were replayed several times to allow learners to identify missing information. The procedure reflects a combination of vocabulary preparation, repeated listening, note-taking, and focused comprehension. The original thesis also described the use of subtitles as a checking stage after learners had become familiar with the dialogue. This procedure can be understood as a progression from global comprehension to detailed decoding and verification, which is consistent with contemporary recommendations to make listening processes more explicit. The listening scores were calculated from the proportion of correct responses and converted to a ten-point scale. Descriptive statistics included frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The original analysis used a t-test for the pretest–posttest difference, with 19 degrees of freedom and a significance level of .05. The questionnaire data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and a mean attitude score.

For the present publication, the original reported inferential result is retained: $t = 7.98$, with a critical value of 2.093 at $df = 19$ and $\alpha = .05$. Because the original report does not provide the individual paired scores or confidence interval, an independent reanalysis of effect size and confidence intervals cannot be performed from the reported summary statistics alone.

III. RESULTS

Students' Listening Performance

Test	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Pretest	3.84	2.65	Poor
Posttest	7.97	1.43	Good
Mean change	4.17	—	Descriptive increase

The descriptive results show a clear increase in listening scores following the treatment. The mean score increased from 3.80 before the intervention to 7.95 after the intervention, representing a raw mean increase of 4.15 points on the ten-point scale. The standard deviation also decreased from 2.65 to 1.43, indicating that posttest scores were more concentrated around the higher mean than the pretest scores.

Distribution of Pretest and Posttest Scores

Classification	Score Range	Pretest n (%)	Posttest n (%)
Excellent	9.6–10.0	0 (0%)	2 (15%)
Very good	8.6–9.5	0 (5%)	4 (15%)
Good	7.6–8.5	0 (0%)	8 (45%)
Fairly good	6.6–7.5	3 (10%)	9 (10%)
Fair	5.6–6.5	0 (0%)	2 (5%)
Poor	4.6–5.5	10 (55%)	3 (10%)

Very poor	0.0–4.5	7 (30%)	0 (0%)
Total	—	20 (100%)	20 (100%)

The distributional pattern reinforces the increase shown by the means. Before treatment, 17 of the 20 students (85%) were in the poor or very poor categories. After treatment, no students remained in the very poor category, while 15 students (75%) reached the good, very good, or excellent categories. The proportion classified as poor decreased from 55% to 10%. These changes indicate that improvement was not restricted to a small number of students but was reflected across the distribution.

Test of the Pretest–Posttest Difference

Comparison	t value	Critical value	df	Decision
Pretest vs. posttest	7.93	2.090	19	Significant at $\alpha = .05$

The reported t value of 7.98 exceeds the critical value of 2.093 at the .05 significance level with 19 degrees of freedom. The original study therefore rejected the null hypothesis of no mean difference and concluded that students' listening scores significantly increased after the movie-based treatment. In a journal article, the result is more appropriately described as a statistically significant pretest–posttest change following the intervention. The absence of a control group means that the result should not be interpreted as conclusive evidence that English movies alone caused the improvement.

Students' Attitudes Toward English Movies

Questionnaire Dimension	Most Frequent Response	Percentage
Interest in learning listening	Agree	56%
Movies are enjoyable	Agree	56%
Movies are good for teaching listening	Strongly agree	53%
Movies can be alternative media	Strongly agree	63%
Movies provide entertainment	Strongly agree	54%
Movies activate participation	Agree	71%
Movies reduce teacher domination	Agree	56%
Movies motivate learning	Strongly agree	44%
Movies help improve listening	Strongly agree / Agree	44% / 45%
Attitude toward learning increases	Agree	51%

The questionnaire results indicate generally positive perceptions of movie-based listening instruction. Seventy percent of students agreed that movies could activate their participation, while 60% strongly agreed that movies could serve as an alternative medium for learning listening. For the item concerning improvement in listening ability, 45% strongly agreed and another 45% agreed. Only a small proportion selected negative responses on several items.

The overall questionnaire mean was 33.5 on a possible range of 10–40. Based on the response categories used in the original study, this was interpreted as a positive attitude toward the use of English movies. The attitude findings are important because learner engagement can influence willingness to sustain listening practice. Nevertheless, the questionnaire measures perceptions rather than objective learning gains, so positive attitudes should be discussed as a complementary finding rather than evidence of effectiveness by themselves.

IV. DISCUSSION

Improvement in Listening Comprehension

The central finding is the substantial increase in students' listening performance after seven sessions of movie-based instruction. The mean increased from 3.80 to 7.95, and the reported paired comparison was statistically significant. This pattern is consistent with recent research suggesting that audiovisual materials can support EFL listening when learners receive repeated, purposeful exposure to spoken language. Khasanah (2022), for example, reported that the majority of studies in a systematic review found positive roles for videos in listening instruction. Similarly, Sánchez-Auñón et al. (2023) concluded from a systematic review that films possess considerable pedagogical value in EFL education when implemented through appropriate instructional practices.

One explanation for the improvement is the multimodal nature of movies. Learners receive spoken language together with visual information that can clarify setting, action, emotion, and interpersonal relationships. When learners do not recognize an individual word, the surrounding visual context may help them infer the meaning of the utterance. This does not mean that visual information substitutes for listening; rather, it can function as scaffolding that enables learners to maintain comprehension while processing difficult speech.

Another possible explanation is repeated exposure. The treatment required learners to listen to the material more than once, take notes, identify vocabulary, and complete cloze tasks. Such repetition gives learners additional opportunities to segment the speech stream and recognize words that may not have been identifiable during the first listening. This interpretation is compatible with Jia and Hew's (2021) emphasis on decoding instruction. Listening improvement may therefore result not merely from watching films but from using films as a source of repeated decoding practice.

The results are also broadly comparable with empirical studies conducted in other contexts. Kim and Song (2021) found that animated movies could be incorporated into university students' English listening practice and examined changes in both performance and perceptions. Aulia and Adityo (2022) reported benefits associated with movie-based exposure, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and contextual inference. Although these studies differ in participants, instruments, duration, and design, together they support the broader pedagogical proposition that carefully structured film exposure can contribute to language learning.

Why the Movie Procedure May Have Supported Learning

The treatment used several features that are pedagogically meaningful. First, vocabulary was introduced before students engaged with the movie material. This likely reduced the burden associated with unfamiliar lexical items. Second, students were asked to take notes, which encouraged active listening rather than passive viewing. Third, the material was replayed, allowing students to revisit speech that they had missed. Fourth, the cloze task directed attention toward specific linguistic information.

These procedures correspond with the principle that listening activities should be designed around a clear purpose. Goh (2018) argues for making listening processes explicit, and the present intervention contains several elements that could support such explicitness, even though the original study did not formally measure metacognitive awareness. The sequence of listening, checking, and replaying may have helped learners recognize why they missed information and how visual context could be used to construct meaning.

The positive questionnaire results further suggest that the intervention created a more engaging classroom environment. Most students reported interest, enjoyment, motivation, participation, and positive attitudes. This is

pedagogically relevant because sustained listening practice can be difficult when students perceive listening tasks as monotonous or overly demanding. A familiar narrative format may lower affective barriers and encourage learners to remain attentive.

Relationship to Recent Audiovisual Research

Recent studies also emphasize that not all video exposure is equivalent. Febrina (2022) examined bimodal subtitled videos and found that video-based listening practice can be meaningfully related to learners' listening experiences. Karjo et al. (2022) specifically discuss the distinction between audio and video input and the implications of multimodality for listening assessment. These studies indicate that teachers should make deliberate decisions about whether learners need subtitles, when subtitles should be shown, and how visual information should be integrated.

The present study's procedure of using repetition and subtitles as a later checking stage can be interpreted as an attempt to balance comprehension support with listening focus. In a contemporary classroom, this could be strengthened by using three stages: first, listening without subtitles for gist; second, listening again for details; and third, checking difficult segments with English subtitles. This approach may help prevent learners from becoming dependent on written text while still benefiting from multimodal scaffolding.

The findings are also relevant to the broader use of authentic materials. Movies expose learners to pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, interactional routines, and contextualized language that may be difficult to reproduce through isolated textbook dialogues. However, authenticity should be calibrated to proficiency. Teachers should select scenes with manageable speech rates, clear pronunciation, appropriate cultural content, and vocabulary that is neither overwhelmingly difficult nor unrealistically simple.

Students' Positive Attitudes

The second research question concerned students' attitudes. The questionnaire mean of 33.5 and the item-level responses indicate generally favorable perceptions. Students particularly perceived movies as capable of increasing participation and functioning as an alternative medium for listening instruction. These results complement the performance findings because they suggest that the intervention was not only associated with higher scores but was also perceived as enjoyable and motivating.

Nevertheless, positive attitudes should not be equated with learning effectiveness. Students may enjoy an instructional medium without necessarily learning more from it, while demanding activities may sometimes produce learning despite lower enjoyment. The strongest interpretation is therefore that the movie-based approach combined measurable improvement with favorable learner perceptions in this particular classroom.

Methodological Interpretation and Limitations

The large pretest–posttest difference is promising, but the methodological limitations should be made explicit in a journal publication. First, the study used a one-group design without a comparison group. Therefore, maturation, repeated testing, teacher effects, or other classroom experiences cannot be completely excluded as explanations for the observed improvement.

Second, the sample included only 20 students from one school. The findings therefore have limited generalizability to other schools, proficiency levels, and educational contexts. Third, the original study used the same test form for the pretest and posttest, which may create a practice effect. Fourth, the original report does not

provide detailed evidence of instrument validity and reliability, nor does it report an effect size or confidence interval.

These limitations do not invalidate the classroom finding, but they define the appropriate scope of the conclusion. The study provides evidence of substantial improvement following a structured movie-based intervention; it does not establish a causal effect that can be generalized to all EFL learners. Future research should use a quasi-experimental or randomized controlled design, larger samples, parallel test forms, validated attitude scales, and effect-size estimates.

V. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of English movies to support students' listening comprehension at MA Babussalam Kalukuang, Takalar. The results show a substantial increase in listening performance: the mean score rose from 3.80 on the pretest to 7.95 on the posttest, while the reported t value of 7.98 exceeded the critical value of 2.093 at $df = 19$ and $\alpha = .05$. The distribution of scores also shifted markedly toward higher performance categories, with 75% of students reaching the good, very good, or excellent categories after the intervention.

Students also expressed generally positive attitudes toward movie-based listening instruction. The overall questionnaire mean was 33.5, and students reported interest, enjoyment, motivation, and increased participation. The findings therefore suggest that English movies can serve as a useful audiovisual medium when they are integrated through purposeful listening tasks, vocabulary preparation, repeated exposure, note-taking, and comprehension activities.

The main pedagogical implication is that movies should not be treated simply as entertainment. Their instructional value depends on how teachers select, segment, scaffold, and assess the material. For stronger empirical evidence, future studies should compare movie-based instruction with conventional listening instruction, use larger samples, apply parallel forms of listening tests, and report effect sizes and confidence intervals.

Pedagogical Implications

First, English teachers can use short movie clips as authentic listening resources, particularly when textbook audio does not provide sufficient contextual support. Second, teachers should establish a listening purpose before showing the clip. Third, repeated listening should be purposeful: one viewing for gist, another for details, and a final stage for checking difficult language. Fourth, English subtitles can be used strategically rather than continuously. Fifth, post-viewing tasks should require learners to demonstrate comprehension through summaries, questions, reconstruction of dialogue, or discussion.

For teacher education, the findings reinforce the need to train teachers not only to select digital media but also to design pedagogically aligned tasks. The technology itself is not the intervention; the intervention is the instructional sequence built around the technology. This distinction is especially important because contemporary evidence emphasizes that audiovisual materials are most productive when integrated with clear learning objectives and active processing.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should employ a quasi-experimental or randomized design with an appropriate comparison group. Researchers should also use larger and more diverse samples and investigate whether effects differ according to proficiency level. Additional variables such as vocabulary knowledge, listening anxiety, motivation,

subtitle use, and frequency of exposure should be measured. A mixed-methods design could combine test scores with interviews, classroom observations, and learner reflections to explain why particular students benefit more than others. Further research should also compare different audiovisual conditions, such as audio-only, video without subtitles, video with English subtitles, and video with bilingual subtitles. Such comparisons would help determine whether improvement is attributable primarily to audiovisual context, repeated listening, subtitles, or the combination of these elements.

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