



Sriwijaya University Students' Perceptions of Using English Subtitles in Multimedia Tools for Vocabulary Enhancement

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: 2025-03-11 Revised: 2025-04-27 Published: 2025-05-01 Keywords: <i>Perception;</i> <i>Vocabulary Enhancement</i> <i>Multimedia;</i> <i>English Subtitles.</i>	<p>This study was conducted to find out students' perceptions of using English subtitles in multimedia tools for vocabulary enhancement, as well as the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to overcome them. A descriptive qualitative research method was used, with 10 students from English and 10 from Indonesian Language Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University as the participants. The data of this study were collected through semi-structured interviews. The data analysis process included data reduction, data display, verification, conclusion drawing, and triangulation through member checking to ensure the credibility of the findings. The findings revealed that students had positive perceptions of using English subtitles, recognizing the significant benefits for vocabulary enhancement. They reported that subtitles helped them connecting spoken and written words, understanding context more easily, identifying new vocabulary in an engaging way, and improving pronunciation. However, students also encountered several challenges when using English subtitles in multimedia tools, such as fast-paced subtitles, unfamiliar or advanced words, mismatched dialogue, and some distractions from subtitles. Furthermore, students also faced technical difficulties, such as unstable internet connections. To overcome these challenges, students employed various strategies, including pausing and replaying videos, slowing down playback speed, and using online dictionaries to look up unfamiliar words.</p>
Artikel Info	Abstrak
Sejarah Artikel Diterima: 2025-03-11 Direvisi: 2025-04-27 Dipublikasi: 2025-05-01 Kata kunci: <i>Persepsi;</i> <i>Peningkatan Kosakata</i> <i>Multimedia;</i> <i>Subtitel Bahasa Inggris.</i>	<p>Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui persepsi mahasiswa tentang penggunaan subtitle bahasa Inggris dalam alat multimedia untuk meningkatkan kosakata, serta tantangan yang mereka hadapi dan strategi yang mereka terapkan untuk mengatasinya. Metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif digunakan, dengan 10 mahasiswa dari Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris dan 10 dari Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia di Universitas Sriwijaya sebagai partisipan. Data penelitian ini dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur. Proses analisis data melibatkan reduksi data, penyajian data, verifikasi, penarikan kesimpulan, dan triangulasi melalui <i>member checking</i> untuk memastikan kredibilitas temuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para mahasiswa umumnya memiliki persepsi positif terhadap penggunaan subtitle bahasa Inggris, dan mengakui manfaat yang signifikan untuk peningkatan kosakata. Mereka melaporkan bahwa subtitle membantu mereka menghubungkan kata-kata yang diucapkan dan ditulis, memahami konteks dengan lebih mudah, mengidentifikasi kosakata baru dengan cara yang menarik, dan meningkatkan pelafalan. Namun, para siswa juga menghadapi beberapa kesulitan saat menggunakan teks bahasa Inggris dalam alat multimedia seperti, subtitle yang bergerak cepat, kata-kata yang tidak dikenal atau kata-kata tingkat lanjut, dialog yang tidak sesuai, dan beberapa gangguan dari subtitle. Selain itu, para siswa juga menghadapi kesulitan teknis, seperti koneksi internet yang tidak stabil. Untuk mengatasi kesulitan tersebut, para siswa menggunakan berbagai strategi, termasuk menunda dan memutar ulang video, memperlambat kecepatan pemutaran, dan menggunakan kamus online untuk mencari kata-kata yang sulit dimengerti.</p>

I. INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant language of communication since it is spoken by approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide. It plays a crucial role in nearly all global sectors, including education. In higher education, English serves as the primary language used in scientific

research publications, international conferences, and student exchange programs. As a result, it is undeniable that proficiency in English is one of the most essential skills for learners because they need strong English language proficiency to effectively engage with subjects and learning materials available. Furthermore, being

proficient in English also allows learners to have greater access to worldwide resources, including academic journals, the most recent research, and bigger educational opportunities (Abduganieva & Abduraxmanova, 2023; Haryadi & Aminuddin, 2023).

In relation to English language proficiency, various skills such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing contribute in improving overall English language proficiency of learners. However, learners can greatly enhance those four skills in the language by developing a broad and varied vocabulary (Salawazo et al., 2020; Somathasan, 2021). According to Al Talib (2022), vocabulary is the words in a language that concludes individual words, phrases, or groups of words which also indicates one of the essential skills for second language learners. Another definition of vocabulary refers to the complete set of words that individuals are familiar with and employ in their language activities. It comprises a collection of words and their meanings essential for effective communication, serving as a fundamental component of language (Hestiana & Anita, 2022).

Enhancing learners' vocabulary is an important thing that aims to expand learners' knowledge of words while deepening their understanding of word meaning, usage, pronunciation, and context. A wide vocabulary enables learners to read texts more easily, converse fluently, and express ideas correctly, all of which contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the English language (Nurfauziah et al., (2023). By expanding their vocabulary, learners not only understand the meaning of words in different contexts but also strengthen their ability to communicate more effectively (Rustan & Resyadi, 2023). However, despite the importance of vocabulary, there are still many learners who face some difficulties in learning new English words. Hasan (2024) revealed that some learners continue to struggle with acquiring new English vocabulary and frequently encounter challenges in the process. Among the reasons mentioned were because of the spelling, pronunciation, and a tendency to difficulty in grasping the meaning of new vocabulary.

Therefore, one of effective methods utilized for enhancing vocabulary learning is the use of multimedia tools. Multimedia tools are digital platforms or applications that combine these various forms of media such as text, audio, video, images, and interactive content to convey

information or facilitate communication. Inside the classroom, multimedia can be utilized through educational videos, digital presentations, interactive quizzes, and language learning applications. Studies by Teng (2023) and Bunmak (2021) highlighted that the significance of incorporating video into vocabulary learning successfully boosts learners' engagement, retention, and understanding, and enhances word recognition and production. Similarly, Metiab and Alquraishy (2021) claimed that the use of multimedia such as YouTube videos can motivate learners to engage with vocabulary content, make them more involved, and help them automatically remember and retrieve information. The audio components provide learners with an auditory experience, and the subtitles provide a visual context that significantly facilitates learners in understanding the meaning and application of words in real life. Within multimedia tools, English subtitles have become an alternative tool for learners aiming to enhance their comprehension of information and sentences presented in videos or movies (Ebrahimi & Bazae, 2016; Faeq, 2017). Subtitles can be engaging for English language learners, particularly when they accompany videos and movies aligned with their interests (Hamer, 2007).

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in conducting research about the perception of language learners from different majors (English language education study program & Indonesian language study program) at Sriwijaya University to provide an opportunity for the researcher to explore in more detail information from a larger group of language learners. Additionally, this study will examine the challenges and strategies the learners use when using multimedia tools for their vocabulary enhancement.

Considering the information provided in the study's background, the research has framed the following questions:

1. How do learners perceive the use of English subtitles in multimedia tools for vocabulary enhancement?
2. What challenges do the learners encounter when using English subtitles in multimedia tools, and how do learners overcome those challenges?

II. METHOD

In conducting this study, a qualitative descriptive design was employed as the research

method. According to Creswell (2017), qualitative research is a process of gaining understanding through specific methods, such as interviews or surveys, to explore social or human issues. The qualitative descriptive method was applied as it was considered suitable for the purpose of this study, which aimed to provide a detailed description of Sriwijaya University students' perceptions of using English subtitles for vocabulary enhancement.

Considering a huge number of the population, the sample only consisted of fifth-semester students from both study programs, with a total of 20 participants, 10 from the English Language Education Study Program and 10 from the Indonesian Language Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University. According to Creswell (2016), 3 to 10 participants were recommended by some researchers for in-depth studies.

For the data collection, 10 students from both majors were chosen to be interviewed. Interview is a verbal exchange conducted by two people which is guided by an interviewer with primary goal is to obtain the necessary information for the research. This definition emphasizes that interviews are structured conversations designed to elicit specific information relevant to research goals (Cohen, 2000). The interview method was chosen by the researcher because it allowed for gaining deep insights into the participants' experiences, opinions, and behaviors. The selection of these 10 participants was based on: First, based on their study programs which from English Language Education and Indonesian Language Education Study Program. In order to guarantee a balanced representation, the researcher chose an equal number of participants from each major. Second, participants were selected based on their Universitas Sriwijaya English Proficiency Test (USEPT) scores from the highest score to the lowest to ensure a range of English proficiency levels. Third, the participants willingness also be considered in the selection criteria.

For the data analysis, this study adopted procedure from Miles and Huberman (1994) which consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display, verification and conclusion.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

1. Students' Preferences of Using English Subtitles

Some students strongly preferred using English subtitles in multimedia tools over not using them because subtitles make it easier to see and understand the dialogue from the context, especially if the speaker speaks too quickly and they struggle to grasp the entire content.

"I feel fine. I even prefer watching something with English subtitles because with it, I can exactly know what the actors or actresses are talking about in the movie and it also helps me add new vocabularies." (ES1).

"Watching movies or videos with English subtitles is much more helpful, especially for understanding the dialogue and learning new vocabulary." (IS2).

On the other hand, they stated that watching videos or movies without subtitles frequently caused them to struggle with new words or accents, miss important details, and have difficulty understanding dialogue. Furthermore, one of the students stated that it is difficult because their educational background has not provided them much exposure to the English language itself.

"Without subtitles, I sometimes miss important details and find it harder to keep up with the dialogue." (ES4).

"Without text, there is a risk of missing important details if the speech is too fast or unclear." (IS3).

"However, watching without subtitles is less effective because, as a student of Indonesian Language Education, I find it hard to understand the meaning without subtitles." (IS5).

2. Students' Experiences of Vocabulary Enhancement

Some students reported how using English subtitles can help them improve their vocabulary, including pronunciation, spelling, and meaning, by allowing them to hear how words are pronounced while seeing how they are written. Subtitles also provide context, which allow them to understand the meaning of new words by looking at the dialogue or narrative text.

"Subtitles let me hear how words are spoken when seeing them written. Seeing it written helped me learn the correct form. For the multimedia that I usually use is, of course, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube." (ES3).

The most mentioned multimedia tools used for vocabulary learning included YouTube, Instagram, Netflix, and TikTok. Furthermore, some students learned vocabulary through interesting platforms like video games since it contains supporting features.

"When playing an RPG game, dialogue between characters with subtitles often introduces new vocabulary that is relevant to a certain context." (IS3).

3. Specific Features of Multimedia Tools

There were several features that are most commonly used and regarded as highly useful in supporting students in enhancing their vocabulary. These features include subtitles, speed up/slow down, pause, rewind, and language settings.

"I often use the subtitle feature in video games because the audio in the video game sometimes is too low and small." (ES2).

"So sometimes when I use the X applications, I use the speed adjustments tool to slow down the video so I can follow the subtitles better." (ES4).

"The features that I usually use are the pause and rewind feature on YouTube so that I can repeat parts that are difficult to understand." (IS1).

4. Students Challenges in Using English Subtitles

The main challenge students faced was subtitle speed, making it difficult to read and listen simultaneously, which affected their comprehension. Some students also struggled with unfamiliar vocabulary and advanced words. Additionally, accents, poor internet connection, and unclear context were reported as obstacles to understanding the subtitles.

"One challenge I face is when the subtitles move too quickly so which makes it hard to read and listen at the same time. Another issue is when the words in the subtitles are really advanced or unfamiliar for me." (ES4).

"I think accent, because accent or fast speech can make it hard for me to connect the words I hear with the subtitle." (ES3).

"The main challenges are poor internet connectivity when using multimedia tools and difficulty understanding the meaning of certain words when the context is unclear." (IS5).

5. Students Moments of Confusion and Distraction When Using Subtitles

Many students got confused when subtitles did not match spoken dialogue, particularly in auto-generated captions. Other things that contributed to confusion were technical words, idioms, and advanced vocabulary. Some students had difficulty understanding diverse dialects.

"Yes, I've had moments when the subtitles confused me, especially when the spoken words don't match the subtitles." (ES2).

"Sometimes I get confused when watching a series with English subtitles and then the subtitles appear randomly." (IS4).

"Yes, I have. This often happens in films or videos with specific accents that differ from standard English." (IS2).

Furthermore, some students also reported that focusing too much on reading subtitles distracted them from the visuals and storyline. However, some English Language Education students, stated that subtitles were more beneficial than distracting because it can help them to understand content and improve their vocabulary.

"There are times when I'm too immersed looking at the subtitle like checking each word like that and the scenes on the movie or show that I watch, it just blurs in my brain." (ES1).

"Sometimes I get confused when watching a series with English subtitles and then the subtitles appear randomly." (IS4).

"Yes, I sometimes feel confused, especially when the subtitles do not match the dialogue or when the visuals in the video do not support understanding the content." (IS5).

"For me, English subtitles have very rarely distracted me. Maybe even never, I think. In most cases, this actually helps me understand the video better." (ES3).

"So far, I haven't faced any major difficulties or distraction with subtitles." (ES5).

B. Discussion

This study aimed to explore how Sriwijaya University students perceive the use of English subtitles in multimedia tools for vocabulary enhancement, the challenges they face, and the strategies they applied. Students from both English and Indonesian Language Education programs strongly preferred using English subtitles when watching videos or movies. They said subtitles helped them interpret spoken dialogue, match pronunciation with spelling, and improve vocabulary retention. Without subtitles, they frequently missed important elements. These findings are consistent with previous research by Kurniawan et al. (2023) which found that subtitles greatly improve vocabulary learning and comprehension. Multimedia tools such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram helped students learn new vocabulary. These tools introduced them to slang, idioms, and everyday language in entertaining ways. Mamudi et al. (2022) and Mokodompit et al. (2021) discovered that social media improves vocabulary learning by offering easily available and engaging information.

Students used a variety of strategies when using subtitles, including pausing, replaying, slowing down speaking, and taking notes. Some chose to write down new words, while others captured screenshots for reference. These experiences exhibit active involvement with multimedia content, which aids with vocabulary retention.

A main problem students faced when using English subtitles was the speed, which often made it difficult to read and listen at the same time (Hsieh, 2022). Unfamiliar or advanced vocabulary also hindered students' comprehension, especially among Indonesian Language Education students who had limited exposure to English. Mismatched subtitles, imprecise context, and varied accents caused some students to get confused and distracted. To overcome these challenges, students employed the pause, replay, and speed control features in multimedia tools, which allowed them to acquire new vocabulary at their own rate. They also used online dictionaries and context clues to understand new words. These strategies are aligned with the findings of Rama et al. (2023), who show how digital tools can help students learn languages based on their needs.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

This study revealed students' positive perceptions of English subtitles in multimedia tools for vocabulary enhancement. Subtitles help them connect spoken and written words, understand context, and improve pronunciation. However, challenges such as fast subtitles, unfamiliar words, and distractions were noted by students. To overcome these, students used pause, replay, speed control, and dictionaries.

These findings highlight the importance of integrating multimedia tools with English subtitles more effectively in teaching and learning courses to support students' vocabulary enhancement. By incorporating multimedia tools that align with students' need and interest, lectures can create more engaging and supportive learning environment which in this context is to improve English vocabulary of students. Additionally, the results also suggest encouraging the students to use multimedia or digital tools like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Netflix as additional learning sources outside the classroom. The use of English subtitles in multimedia tool in their everyday life also plays a critical role in strengthening vocabulary retention and comprehension, since students regularly interact with multimedia tools and contents as a part of their daily life.

B. Suggestion

Several limitations were identified from this study. Future research could explore other multimedia tools to get a better understanding of their potential for vocabulary enhancement. Additionally, this study used only one instrument, interviews, or self-reports and only included students from two majors (English and Indonesian Language Education majors) which is limiting the findings' generalization. Future research could include more participants to provide more diverse perceptions.

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