

Students' Habits On Watching Movies With English Subtitles: Opportunities and Challenges for Indonesian College Students

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Abstract : The habit of watching movies using English subtitles among students has an impact on students' English skills. This study aims to report the students' views towards the opportunities of watching English-subtitled movies and the challenges they experienced. Using a qualitative method, the data of this study were garnered through semi-structured interviews with five college students at an Indonesian university. The findings reveal that a number of opportunities were gained by the college students through watching English-subtitled movies including having entertainment in students' free time, promoting exciting English learning media, and enriching English vocabulary. Meanwhile, the students found challenges in watching English-subtitled movies including unfamiliar vocabulary, new English idioms, and various slang languages. Thus, this study promotes the need for efforts among students to overcome these challenges by gaining insight through a lot of sources like books, the internet, articles, and so on.

Keywords : *English-subtitled movies, Students' habits, Challenges, Opportunities, Indonesian University*

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1. Introduction

In this globalization era, the role of English cannot be inevitably neglected. It plays an essential role in building communication with people around the world. For instance, by using English, people can share ideas and thoughts with others, not only at home but with people in different parts of the world from different countries. In this regard, we need a better English understanding in some ways. For adolescents, the English language is very familiar to them. They used English in academic activities as well as for entertainment, as they watched English films or movies with subtitles.

In a film or movie, people usually find footage or a trailer. A trailer is a brief overview of a movie. It can also arouse viewers' curiosity (Karray & Debernitz, 2017). It contains some interesting parts and some other parts hidden, for example by hiding whether the character is good or evil or by hiding potential threats. The omissions may make the audiences more anxious to see the film and create a positive word of mouth after the trailer release that can bring more attention to the film.

In Indonesia, English falls under the category of a foreign language. As a foreign language, the English language is somehow considered a difficult subject to learn since it is different from the student's mother tongue including pronunciation, accent, vocabulary, and others. In responding to it, some alternatives to improve students' motivation in learning English are badly needed. Watching English-subtitled movies could be one of the alternatives for students to learn English outside the school and avoid boredom (Panjaitan & Hasibuan, 2022). In addition, an important aspect of a film is the dialogue between players or characters. To help viewers understand what the speakers are saying, a film usually provides subtitles. Therefore, movies provide an excellent feature for education (Bywood, 2019).

Watching English movies with subtitles becomes one of the most effective ways to enhance the ability to understand the intent of the most watched conversations. In fact, it helps students to know the meaning of the conversation and the story included in the movie. Besides, another aspect to consider when watching English movies is having knowledge of pragmatics. In this matter, pragmatic knowledge has several benefits including students can discuss the meaning of the meaning, assumptions, goals, and types of actions performed when people speak (Yule & Widdowson, 2014).

In more detail, pragmatics is the study of baseless meanings. This focused on the meaning of the speaker's words rather than on the meaning of words or sentences (Wijayanti and Yulianti 2020). Pragmatics also describes the use of language, meaning, and speech of both the speaker and the listener in communication. Some of them, use body language to get the point of a pragmatic dialogue. In the context of an English-subtitled movie, subtitle in the same movie is possibly different from each other. Ranzato & Zanotti (2020) pinpoint that in the case of retranslating the vote, a translator can take one of two forms creating a new subtitle (or exchange of new voice-over dialogue) for the same film, or creating a dubbing version and a subheading for one original text.

Referring to it, the translators, in audiovisual, should be responsible. They should pay attention to the meaning and quality of the meaning itself (Modarresi & Khakshour Forutan, 2018). Before translating, the translator checks and analyzes the text comprehensively, so that the reader can understand the text later. In translation from one language to another, of course, there is a grammatical change called transposition (Fitria, 2020). The translation of

the film, through genres or aesthetic features, becomes a major role in the perception of the final product, especially for dubbing translation (Cronin, 2009). Translators usually retranslate by concluding what they hear and then copying them into subtitles.

Some previous studies in line with the use of movies have been conducted by previous scholars. Karray & Debernitz (2017) discussed the effectiveness of film trailers in achieving advertising objectives. Panjaitan & Hasibuan (2022) in their study investigated the effect of film on student participation. Ranzato & Zanotti (2020) investigate the process of subtitling in an English movie. Hoinbala (2022) utilized a movie as media of providing authentic input containing conversation naturally for Indonesian students. Likewise, Elgort (2018) asserts that ICT including movies could be used as a medium to teach vocabulary, especially for English foreign learners. Unlike the previous studies investigating the use of ICT and digital media in English learning in EFL classrooms, the present study more focuses on exploring college students' habit of watching English-subtitled movies viewed from the opportunities and challenges.

2. Method

This study aims to explore the opportunities and challenges of students' habits in watching English-subtitled movies. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the data were gathered through semi-structured interviews involving five students at an Indonesian university. The five students come from different study programs. Three of them are students of the English language education study program, one student is from the Accountancy study program, and one student is from the Sharia Business Management study program. The participants are selected based on their availability and openness to providing information. In this case, participants use pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. The participants were student 1, student 2, student 3, student 4, and student 5. Each of these students has been willing to participate in this research. Data collection was carried out from 25 to 26 December 2022.

In the data collection process, the writers conducted interviews with students via WhatsApp chat by sending questions related to the topic. The interview via WhatsApp chat was felt to be more effective and efficient because considering the limited time and the less supportive situation. During the interview and data collection process, we ensure the confidentiality of participants' identities by anonymous the participants' names. The results of the interview were then transcribed and analyzed. After analysis, the results are then copied and interpreted into data according to what the participants said and experienced.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Opportunities of Students' habits in watching English-subtitled

Based on interviews with participants, they have conveyed various opportunities from watching English-subtitled movies, especially for their language skills. These include:

Having entertainment in students' free time

Being busy with work, study, and tasks are tiring. Some students often take advantage of their spare time to go on vacation. However, those with limited access and financial aspect prefer to find other entertainment that is much cheaper. One of them is by watching movies. Watching a film is believed to keep them entertained and forget the busyness that makes them so stressed and even depressed. There is in line with the psychological research on the effects of media including the assumption that certain media have a direct influence on

individual attitudes, emotions, and behaviors (Rentfrow et al., 2011). Some excerpts from the interview are presented below.

Student 1:

“I usually watch movie in my free time and weekends. This was done to get relaxed and as a media to have an entertainment after having a lot of task and assignment during my study”

Student 2 :

“When I'm in the good mood, I spend my time watching English-subtitled movie. It helps me to get an entertainment after having a lot works and tasks in my study. Therefore, watching English-subtitled movie could be an alternative”.

Student 3 :

“I commonly watch English-subtitled movie in weekend. This is helpful for me to reduce stress. By watching movie, I get a cheaper entertainment”

The excerpts above show that participants take advantage of watching movies, especially those with English subtitles when they have leisure time between their busy schedules or during holidays such as weekends. This finding is in line with what has been conveyed by Rentfrow (2011) that watching movies can affect a person's mood or emotionality.

Promoting exciting English learning media

Learning English for some students is considered difficult. There are many alternatives that can be done to support English language skills, one of which is through English-subtitled films. Arshad et al., (2021) stated that there was a significant improvement in the competence and performance of participants in English. In this study, the participants learned words and language features that were different from before through the presentation of the Harry Potter part I film and the English-subtitled part III. Video or English-subtitled movies are considered more effective and efficient for viewers, where they can learn without feeling bored and be able to understand clips from the film video. The following was the transcript of the interview results.

Student 1:

“Besides learning English in the class, I tried to improve my English language skill outside the classroom by watching English-subtitled movie. It has opportunities including as media to learn improve English vocabulary. By watching English video, I can gain new English vocabulary”.

Student 2 :

“I think it's important to have a better English skill. I try to develop my English skill through watching English movie. In addition, it belongs to my hobby watching a movie. Thus, it becomes an interesting media to learn English outside the classroom”.

The statement above shows that watching movies using subtitles can hone English skills with pleasure. This is in line with what was conveyed by Arshad et al., (2021) in their research that learning in the most effective way can significantly improve students' abilities.

Enriching English vocabulary

Vocabulary is a list of word terms used to communicate, express feelings, express opinions, and criticism. Vocabulary is a fundamental element in learning English that needs to be mastered (Hestiana & Anita, 2022). Without vocabulary, nothing can be obtained. The more vocabulary we have, the easier it will be to express something or communicate with native speakers. Being able to speak English fluently means mastering vocabulary. By possessing and mastering vocabulary, students will know the meaning of the word in context. This helps avoid mistakes in understanding written or spoken text.

English is becoming the most significant and dominant language these days. Learning a new language is quite complex because it takes a long process and effort (Albiladi et al., 2018; Wahyuningsih, 2021; Wahyuningsih & Novita, 2021). Second language educators, try to apply how to learn as effectively as possible so that it is easily absorbed by learners. One way to improve students' competence in learning English is through movies. In addition to enriching vocabulary, they can learn how to pronounce the vocabulary correctly directly from native speakers through the film. Below are the reports from the students.

Student 2:

“By watching English-subtitled movies, I can find out the pronunciation with different accents of each actor, and the match between the pronunciation and the sentence in the subtitle. Besides, I learn many new English vocabularies.”

Student 4:

“If it is used with the aim of improving English skills, I think it is effective because not all students have good listening, if they use subtitle they will know what the actor is saying, and may also be able to make a personal note of vocabulary in watching movies. For Indonesian-language films, applying English subtitles is also effective because we can hear the meaning directly from the actor.”

Student 5:

“It helps me understand the dialogue spoken in the film if the film is in English, but if the movie is Indonesian and I watch with English subtitles, it's because I want to supplement my English skills with the English vocabulary.”

Understanding spoken language may not be easy for some people (Shepherd et al., 2017; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020, 2022). The accent of speakers in a film is considered foreign if it is watched by Indonesian students, who are not familiar with English since it is not their native language. The use of subtitles in English is considered to be able to help their comprehension process. Subtitles display translations from audiovisual to other languages. In this matter, students can also read the transcript text which is found in the box description if viewing it through a laptop or smartphone.

3.2 Challenges faced by College Students in watching English-subtitled movie

Unfamiliar Vocabulary

Competency development through watching movies, especially English-language films, is quite a challenge for students. Even though subtitles are also provided in English, they sometimes still find it difficult to understand the dialogue spoken in the film because some

vocabulary sounds foreign to them. The native speakers in English movies use their colloquial language which tends to be informal so sometimes it is difficult to find the meaning of the word even though they have tried to translate it with a translator.

Student 4:

“There are so many new unfamiliar words, and so complicated if always open dictionary during watching film.”

Based on student difficulties and the explanation above, the only way to gain more vocabulary is by trying to use the uncommon word itself as often as possible. Make it a habit and they will have vocabulary much more. Even though they use subtitles, some students still have enough difficulty understanding the meaning of what they watch because some lines are using pragmatics words (Yule & Widdowson, 2014) stated that pragmatics is a study which is focused on the meaning communicated by the speaker being interpreted by the hearer (or reader).

The Use of idioms

Idioms are figurative expressions that have no literal meaning. Idioms are nonliteral languages that include metaphors, parables, and proverbs (Cooper, 1998). Idioms are often found in both oral and written forms. Learning idioms can be categorized as difficult for beginners. The meaning of the idiom that cannot be translated directly literally makes the reader or listener observe the context of the sentence itself. Idioms are like metaphors, parables, and proverbs. It cannot be translated directly based on the text, but must also pay attention to the context (situation and condition).

Student 4:

“I have difficulties when watching English movie even with subtitle if there are so many idiom like in Harry Potter movie”

Here are examples of idiom sentences:

(I haven't got enough sleep! **I'm going to hit the sack as soon as I get home.** It doesn't mean she will hit the sack but she will take a rest directly when she gets home)

I thought she was certain to lose, but her partner **pulled a rabbit out of his hat** and they finally won the competition! It doesn't mean magic show but the meaning of this idiom is to do something unexpected or look impossible.

I won't go anywhere. **I feel quite under the weather.** It doesn't mean that he is under the weather (rain), but it means he is getting sick or in unwell condition.

The Use of Slang

Slang in English comes from the development and growth of every dialect, race, and time span (Whitman, 1885). Slang developed every time and it is quite present among students. The slang used is not only slang that is based on American slang. American slang is an agreed slang language, while the slang that exists in Indonesia today is slang that was created due to the adaptation of the times. The younger generation wants to look cooler by using this slang when communicating daily. In movies, there is usually slang in the form of abbreviations and others. They are sometimes elusive. When the students try to apply

Indonesian subtitles to translate, sometimes they are still confused about the meaning in question using slang language.

Student 5:

“One of my obstacles during understanding film is there are so many slangs which are uncommon so that I have to try to guess the meaning of the story in the movie.”

Examples of common slang include Ass out (have no money), Bomb (very expensive), Chill (relax), Don't have kittens (just enjoy and relax), and TBH (to be honest).

4. Conclusion

The study concluded that most college students at an Indonesian University take advantage of their leisure time to watch English-subtitled movies. Besides getting entertainment, they can also enrich their English knowledge such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and terms in English. However, they find challenges during watching English-subtitled movies including the use of unfamiliar words, the use of idioms, and slang. One of the ways to get the meaning of the language used in the movie, students use a translator application or switch the subtitles from English to Indonesian. More effort is needed to understand the intention of the conversation being watched by trying thousand times to make it easier to understand the content of the film. The finding of the study promotes the need for students to have much more ways in learning English outside the class using various methods and media to update their spoken and written English skills.

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