



Investigating the Impact of American Movies on Undergraduate Students' Vocabulary Development at RMUTL Tak

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Received September 3, 2025; Revised: January 11, 2026 : Accepted: January 12, 2026

Abstract

The purposes of this study were to investigate the methods of vocabulary acquisition and the ability to identify parts of speech among second- and third-year students in the English for International Communication (EIC) program at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Tak. The participants consisted of 30 undergraduate students enrolled in the first semester of the 2024 academic year. A questionnaire was employed as the research instrument, and the data were analyzed using percentages, means, and standard deviations with Microsoft Excel. The findings revealed that most EIC students acquired English vocabulary through American movies, particularly by inferring meaning from context, subtitles, and visual cues, with the highest mean score ($M = 3.53$). Regarding the analysis of parts of speech, the students' ability was generally at a medium level. Among the categories, interjections were the most successfully identified, with the highest mean score ($M = 3.40$). These results highlight the potential of American movies as an effective supplementary tool for vocabulary acquisition and grammatical awareness. They suggest that integrating authentic multimedia materials into English language instruction can enhance learners' ability to acquire vocabulary and analyze linguistic features in a more engaging and meaningful way. The findings can serve as a guide for students who want to learn how to acquire vocabulary through movies, as well as for teachers who aim to improve their instructional methods in related courses. Additionally, the study provides insights for future researchers interested in this area. Future research could address existing gaps by increasing the sample size for more reliable results, selecting movies in different formats, and incorporating a wider variety of methods for vocabulary acquisition.

Keywords: vocabulary acquisition, parts of speech, American movies, English for International Communication, undergraduate students

Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in learning English as a Second Language (ESL). "Words are the basic building blocks of language, the units of meaning from which larger structures such as sentences, paragraphs, and entire texts are formed." This statement highlights



the importance of vocabulary in expressing thoughts and conveying meaning and suggests that communication may be poorly understood without a sufficient vocabulary.

Learners are often not explicitly taught the importance of acquiring efficient vocabulary knowledge to produce meaningful sentences. Language learners should be introduced to Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) to help them determine the meanings of new words and retain them effectively. The use of strategies makes learning more efficient and allows learners to become more proficient in a second language (L2). Moreover, learners who aim to acquire vocabulary in an L2 require a strong understanding of VLSs.

Thornbury (2005) stated that good language learners are those who are able to develop their own VLSs and, therefore, do not need explicit instruction on how to learn vocabulary. Many learners spend significant time memorizing words but often struggle to use them effectively in communication. In contrast, good language learners use efficient VLSs to control their vocabulary learning. This involves selecting the most appropriate strategy from a variety of known strategies, knowing how to implement it, and deciding when to switch to another strategy for optimal learning outcomes.

American movies (cinema of the United States), also known as Hollywood movies, are considered to have a major impact on the global film industry. Since the early 1920s, American cinema has developed a distinctive style, particularly with the rise of classic Hollywood movies produced between 1917 and 1960, which gave birth to many unique films of that era. While the Lumière brothers from France are credited as the originators of modern cinema, American movies quickly became prominent and were clearly a driving force in the industry from the start. Since the 1920s, the U.S. film industry has generated higher annual revenues than any other country, producing a large number of movies. Today, more than 800 English-language films are released in the United States each year, compared with 299 in the UK, 206 in Canada, and a smaller number in Australia and New Zealand. Although these countries also produce English-language films, they are not considered part of the Hollywood system. Still, Hollywood movies are often regarded as “United Films.” Classic Hollywood movies have also been adapted into different languages, most commonly Spanish and French.

According to Sharjeel and Dadabhoy (2013), movies provide a powerful visual expression and create an effect of reality. Through this sense of realism, movies can offer students natural and authentic English exposure. As a result, students are able to acquire a wide range of vocabulary that they might not encounter in traditional classroom settings. Furthermore, watching movies enhances students’ listening comprehension, as it helps them develop sensitivity to spoken English. By observing scenes and actors’ expressions in an audiovisual format, students can better grasp the meaning of spoken language. For many learners, movies are not only educational but also entertaining and motivating. They enjoy the experience while simultaneously expanding their vocabulary and improving their listening skills. Lestari (2018) also found that using movies to increase students’ vocabulary is an enjoyable and effective learning activity, as students learn through their favorite pastime—watching movies. This makes the learning process more interesting, fun, and engaging.



Therefore, this study aims to explore students' opinions on learning English vocabulary through American movies. Vocabulary is a crucial aspect of mastering English, as it supports effective communication in both academic and everyday contexts. The purpose of this research is to examine the vocabulary students acquire by watching American movies, as well as the techniques they use to analyze movie vocabulary. The findings of this study will be beneficial not only for students but also for teachers and anyone interested in the study of American movie vocabulary. Ultimately, the results will demonstrate how students learn vocabulary, analyze parts of speech, and apply their knowledge while watching movies. These outcomes will support students' studies, professional development, classroom communication, and everyday life.

Literature Review and concepts

Importance of English vocabulary

When it comes to vocabulary, every country has its own specific set of words and expressions. Vocabulary is essential for forming language and constructing sentences used in communication among people worldwide. Knowledge of vocabulary is fundamental to language learning and use. According to Schmitt (2000), "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language." Nation (2000) further emphasizes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use, stating that they are complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use, and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge.

The importance of vocabulary is evident both inside and outside the classroom. In academic settings, high-achieving students tend to possess the most extensive vocabulary. Marion and Nation (2011) and other researchers have recognized that vocabulary is essential for successful second language use and plays a critical role in forming complete spoken and written texts. In English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, vocabulary is crucial for developing all language skills.

English vocabulary has become increasingly important in today's globalized world, where English is widely used as a medium of communication. It allows people from different nationalities to interact effectively, making English vocabulary a vital tool for both daily communication and professional purposes.

Vocabulary in American movies

Vocabulary can be encountered at any time and in any place, and people around the world can observe and learn it in various contexts. Traditionally, most vocabulary was acquired through books. However, as Pratiwi & Ayu (2020) note, relying solely on written materials may not be sufficient for modern learners. With the availability of diverse media, such as movies, learners now have additional opportunities to study and expand their vocabulary. Movies, in particular, provide abundant vocabulary, including both formal and informal language, depending on the genre.

One of the most engaging media for vocabulary learning is film. Simamora and Oktaviani (2020) suggest that movies can bring real-life environments into the classroom, inspiring students



to learn English through the new vocabulary presented on screen. Sabouri & Zohrabi (2015) further argue that movies can address learning challenges, such as limited vocabulary, slow reading, poor grammar, and low conversational skills. Watching movies is not only entertaining but also an effective method for learning English, offering numerous advantages.

Moreover, students are not restricted to theaters to watch films. They can access movies anywhere, using laptops, smartphones, CDs, or the internet. This flexibility allows learners to study English at their convenience (Sabouri & Zohrabi 2015). Watching movies can enhance English skills in multiple ways. Harmer (2007) identifies several benefits of using movies for language learning: movies are engaging, provide authentic language input, demonstrate pronunciation and facial expressions, convey meaning through body language, explain processes visually, and combine sound and images to facilitate learning. Additionally, watching English movies with subtitles can significantly improve both vocabulary and speaking skills (Pratiwi & Ayu, 2020).

Acquiring vocabulary

Acquiring a vocabulary bank, whether by students or individuals seeking to expand their vocabulary, often involves different processes, as each person may use a unique approach, such as listening, reading, writing, or even speaking. Acquiring vocabulary can, therefore be considered a fundamental method of language learning. According to Sari, F.M. (2017) and R. F., & Stanovich, K. E. (1991), reading is important for first language development and is assumed to be equally important for second language development.

Further supporting this, Brown, R., Waring, R., & Donkaewbua, S. (2008) conducted a study using a pretest-posttest-delayed posttest design at one-week intervals to determine the extent to which written, audio, and audiovisual L2 input contributed to incidental vocabulary learning. Seventy-six university students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in China were randomly assigned to four groups. Each group was exposed to the same television documentary through different modes: reading the printed transcript, listening to the documentary, viewing the documentary, or a no-treatment control condition. Checklists and multiple-choice tests were used to measure knowledge of the target words.

The results indicated that incidental L2 vocabulary learning occurred through reading, listening, and viewing, and that vocabulary gains were retained across all modes of input one week after exposure. However, no significant differences were found between the three modes on the posttests, suggesting that each mode of input yielded similar amounts of vocabulary gain and retention.

Previous research studies

The use of movies as a tool for second language learning has received considerable attention from researchers in recent years. Kanellopoulou (2019) emphasized that subtitles—whether in the learner’s first language (L1), second language (L2), or both—provide authentic language input that supports vocabulary acquisition. The mode of subtitles and the amount of repetition in movies can influence how well learners acquire new words. Similarly, Roslim et al.



(2021) found that undergraduate students viewed movies as helpful for improving vocabulary, listening comprehension, and motivation. These findings suggest that careful selection of movie materials and proper instructional support are important in higher education contexts.

Beyond studies on learners' perceptions, empirical research has examined the actual effectiveness of subtitles and captioned input. Sinyashina (2020) compared incidental vocabulary learning through captioned authentic videos with intentional vocabulary learning and found that while intentional learning produced stronger immediate gains, extensive exposure to captioned input also contributed to gradual vocabulary acquisition. Xie and Zhou (2022) reviewed research on on-screen text and concluded that subtitles and captions generally improve vocabulary learning. However, their effectiveness depends on factors such as the learner's proficiency level, the type of text, and how the instructional activities are designed.

Recent studies have provided more detailed insights into subtitle strategies. Lo (2024) showed that repeated viewing of videos with dual subtitles led to significant vocabulary gains, with immediate repetition being more effective than spaced repetition. Similarly, Aziz et al. (2024) found that both L1 and English subtitles supported vocabulary retention, but English subtitles helped learners retain mid-frequency words more effectively, suggesting that L2 subtitles may promote deeper processing of language.

Overall, these studies indicate that movies—especially those with subtitles—can be effective tools for developing vocabulary among undergraduate learners. They also highlight the importance of careful instructional design, repetition, and the choice of subtitle type in maximizing the educational benefits of movies in language learning.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a questionnaire-based research design to investigate how undergraduate students acquire English vocabulary through American movies. The study aimed to examine two primary aspects: (1) the methods and strategies students use to learn vocabulary from American movies, and (2) their ability to analyze and identify the parts of speech of English vocabulary encountered in these films.

Participants

The participants were 2nd- and 3rd-year students enrolled in the English for International Communication (EIC) program at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Tak Campus (RMUTL TAK). These students were selected because they regularly engage with English-language media and have sufficient language proficiency to comprehend and analyze vocabulary in American movies.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire designed specifically for this study. The questionnaire consisted of two main sections

1. Methods for Vocabulary Acquisition: This section explored the strategies



students employ to learn English vocabulary through American movies, including listening, reading subtitles, repeating phrases, and other self-directed learning techniques.

2. Vocabulary Analysis Skills: This section assessed students' ability to identify and analyze the parts of speech of English words encountered in American movies, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

The questionnaire was intended to provide insights into both the approaches students use to acquire vocabulary and their understanding of vocabulary structure in context.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected by distributing the questionnaire to the participants and gathering their responses. The collected data were then analyzed to determine common strategies used by students for vocabulary acquisition, as well as their proficiency in analyzing parts of speech. The results were used to evaluate the effectiveness of using American movies as a tool for learning English vocabulary.

Research Results

The analysis and results of the study are presented in two parts:

Part 1: Analysis of undergraduate students' methods for acquiring English vocabulary through American movies at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Tak Campus. The results are presented using mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D.).

Part 2: Analysis of undergraduate students' abilities to identify and analyze the parts of speech of English vocabulary encountered in American movies at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Tak Campus. The results are presented using mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D.).

Cronbach criteria (1990) referred to in Dalmon, Baga and Kasetchai and Hem, 2005) By dividing the range of mid-number values.

Part 1: The results of the analysis of investigation of undergraduate students' acquiring vocabulary through American movies of RMUTL TAK with standard deviation (S.D.) and mean (\bar{X}). The researchers investigated the methods used by 2nd- and 3rd-year students majoring in English for International Communication (EIC) at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Tak Campus, to acquire English vocabulary through American movies. The results regarding students' methods of vocabulary acquisition were analyzed using arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The overall findings are summarized in Table 1.



Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of the methods used by students to acquire English vocabulary through American movies. The table is divided into the following sections:

| Methods to acquire English vocabulary through American movies. | \bar{X} | S.D. | Level |
|--|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. I can learn English vocabulary by guessing context from the movies and subtitles. | 3.53 | 0.629 | High |
| 2. I can learn English vocabulary by guessing from affixes and roots from the movies and subtitles. | 3.13 | 0.629 | Medium |
| 3. I can learn English vocabulary by guessing available pictures or gestures from the movies and subtitles. | 3.30 | 0.651 | Medium |
| 4. I can learn English vocabulary by taking notes during watching the movies and subtitles. | 3.37 | 0.765 | Medium |
| 5. I can learn English vocabulary by imaging word’s meaning during watching the movies and subtitles. | 3.53 | 0.776 | High |
| 6. I can learn English vocabulary by asking the teacher after watching the movies and subtitles. | 3.17 | 0.791 | Medium |
| 7. I can learn English vocabulary by studying word meanings with friends after watching the movies and subtitles. | 3.23 | 0.817 | Medium |
| 8. I can learn English vocabulary by keeping vocabulary in notebook during watching the movies and subtitles. | 3.17 | 0.747 | Medium |
| 9. I can learn English vocabulary by connecting word to a personal experience during watching the movies and subtitles. | 3.30 | 0.651 | Medium |
| 10. I can learn English vocabulary by connecting word to its synonyms and antonyms during watching the movies and subtitles. | 3.27 | 0.640 | Medium |
| Total | 3.30 | 0.710 | Medium |

From Table 1, it was found that the methods used by 2nd- and 3rd-year English for International Communication students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Tak Campus, to acquire English vocabulary through American movies were generally at a medium level. When considering each item individually, 2 items were rated at a high level, while 8 items were rated at a medium level.

The top five items with the highest mean scores were as follows:

1. “I can learn English vocabulary by guessing the meaning from the context of the movies” and “I can learn English vocabulary by imagining the meaning of words while watching the movies and using subtitles” (mean = 3.53).



2. “I can learn English vocabulary by taking notes while watching the movies and using subtitles” (mean = 3.37).

3. “I can learn English vocabulary by guessing the meaning from available pictures or gestures in the movies and subtitles” and “I can learn English vocabulary by connecting words to personal experiences while watching the movies and using subtitles” (mean = 3.30).

4. “I can learn English vocabulary by connecting words to their synonyms and antonyms while watching the movies and using subtitles” (mean = 3.27).

5. “I can learn English vocabulary by studying word meanings with friends after watching the movies and using subtitles” (mean = 3.23).

These results indicate that students use a variety of strategies to acquire vocabulary through movies, with context clues, visualization, and active engagement being the most effective method.

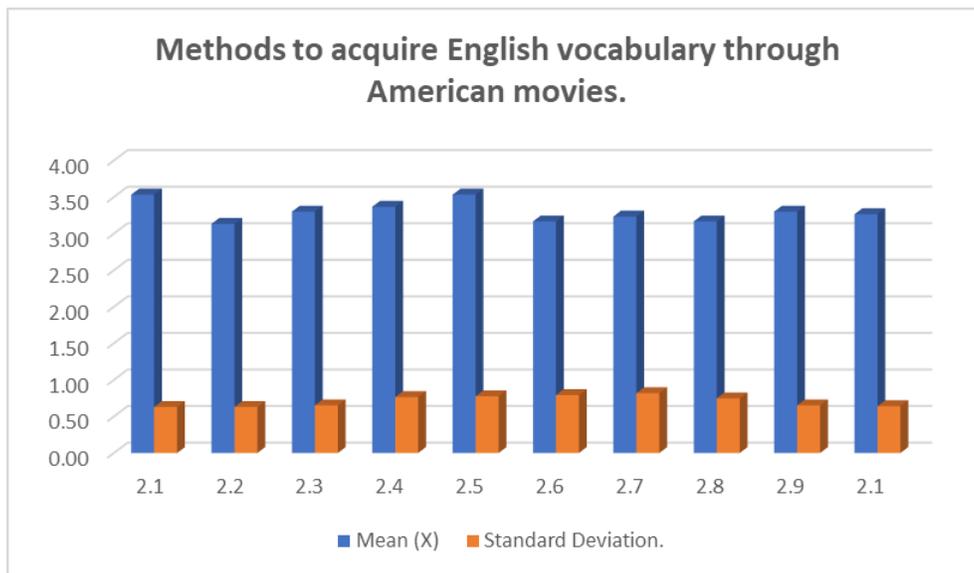


Figure 1: Mean and standard deviation on methods to acquire English vocabulary through American movies

Part 2: Analysis of Undergraduate Students’ Ability to Analyze Parts of Speech of English Vocabulary through American Movies

The researchers investigated the abilities of 2nd- and 3rd-year English for International Communication students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Tak Campus, to analyze the parts of speech of English vocabulary encountered in American movies. The results were analyzed using the arithmetic mean and standard deviation to provide insights into students’ proficiency in identifying and understanding vocabulary structure.



The findings regarding students’ abilities to analyze parts of speech are summarized in Table 2. This table presents the mean and standard deviation for each item, as well as the overall average.

Table 2: displays the mean and standard deviation of students’ abilities to analyze parts of speech of English vocabulary through American movies. The table is divided into the following sections:

| Abilities to analyze Parts of Speech of English vocabulary through American movies. | \bar{X} | S.D. | Level |
|---|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. I can analyze vocabulary’s part of speech from movies and subtitles. | 3.40 | 0.563 | Medium |
| 2. I can analyze English vocabulary’s parts of speech by analyzing affixes and roots from the movies and subtitles. | 3.13 | 0.507 | Medium |
| 3. I can identify and remember English vocabulary’s part of speech from the movies and subtitles. | 3.23 | 0.626 | Medium |
| 4. I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as <u>Noun</u> from the movies and subtitles. | 3.00 | 0.643 | Medium |
| 5. I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as <u>Pronoun</u> from the movies and subtitles. | 3.13 | 0.819 | Medium |
| 6. I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as <u>Verb</u> from the movies and subtitles. | 3.27 | 0.740 | Medium |
| 7. I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as <u>Adverb</u> from the movies and subtitles. | 3.00 | 0.587 | Medium |
| 8. I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as <u>Adjective</u> from the movies and subtitles. | 2.93 | 0.450 | Medium |
| 9. I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as <u>Preposition</u> from the movies and subtitles. | 3.13 | 0.571 | Medium |
| 10. I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as <u>Conjunction</u> from the movies and subtitles. | 3.07 | 0.583 | Medium |
| 11. I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as <u>Interjection</u> from the movies and subtitles. | 3.40 | 0.770 | Medium |
| Total | 3.15 | 0.624 | Medium |

From Table 2, it was found that the ability of 2nd- and 3rd-year English for International Communication students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Tak Campus, to analyze the parts of speech of English vocabulary through American movies was generally at a medium level. When examining each item individually, 11 items were rated at a medium level.



The top five items with the highest mean scores were as follows:

1. “I can analyze vocabulary parts of speech from movies and subtitles” and “I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as an interjection from movies and subtitles” (mean = 3.40).
2. “I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as a verb from movies and subtitles” (mean = 3.27).
3. “I can identify and remember English vocabulary parts of speech from movies and subtitles” (mean = 3.23).
4. “I can analyze English vocabulary parts of speech by examining affixes and roots from movies and subtitles,” “I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as a preposition from movies and subtitles,” and “I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as a pronoun from movies and subtitles” (mean = 3.13).
5. “I can analyze and identify English vocabulary as a conjunction from movies and subtitles” (mean = 3.07).

These results indicate that students are moderately skilled at analyzing the parts of speech of English vocabulary encountered in American movies, with the strongest abilities observed in recognizing interjections, verbs, and general parts of speech.

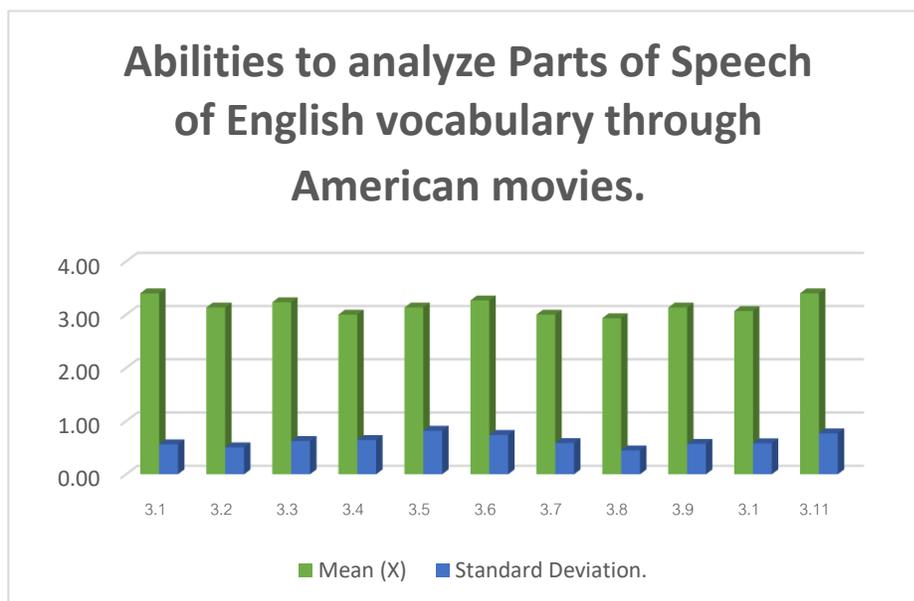


Figure 2: Mean and standard deviation on abilities to analyze parts of speech of English vocabulary through American movies

Research Discussion

In conclusion, the analysis of the questionnaire on undergraduate students’ acquisition of vocabulary through American movies at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Tak Campus revealed the following findings. Regarding the methods used to acquire English



vocabulary, most students preferred strategies such as guessing the meaning from context and visualizing word meanings while watching movies and using subtitles, which had the highest mean score a mean S.D. ($\bar{X} = 3.53$). These results indicate that these strategies were the most commonly used and effective methods for vocabulary acquisition. This finding aligns with Hulstijn (2003), who proposed that an effective listening course should include tasks that promote both top-down processing, such as guessing words from context, and bottom-up processing, such as analyzing scripts. Similarly, Latifi, Youhanaee, and Mohammadi (2012) suggested that guessing new words from context while avoiding overload of unfamiliar words and structures helps learners manage information more effectively. The method with the lowest mean was “learning English vocabulary by guessing from affixes and roots while watching movies and using subtitles” ($\bar{X} = 3.13$).

Regarding students’ abilities to analyze parts of speech of English vocabulary through American movies, the results showed that most students performed at a moderate level. The part of speech that students were most able to analyze and identify was interjection, which had the highest mean score. This is likely because interjections are typically short words that are easily observed, allowing students to classify them more readily. This finding is consistent with Cuenca (2000), who noted that interjections are often short or unique segments and may undergo phonetic reduction or morphological processes such as truncation or word synthesis. Conversely, the part of speech that students were least able to analyze was adjectives, which had the lowest mean score ($\bar{X} = 2.93$). This indicates that students found it more challenging to analyze and identify adjectives from movies and subtitles compared to other parts of speech.

Suggestions for future research

The results of this study will benefit both students and English teachers, particularly those who teach vocabulary and parts of speech. The findings can serve as a guide for students who want to learn how to acquire vocabulary through movies, as well as for teachers who aim to improve their instructional methods in related courses. Additionally, the study provides insights for future researchers interested in this area. Future research could address existing gaps by increasing the sample size for more reliable results, selecting movies in different formats, and incorporating a wider variety of methods for vocabulary acquisition.

Recommendations Based on the Research

1. More activities should be included to practice and learn vocabulary through various techniques and methods, helping to enhance students’ English vocabulary knowledge.



2. Teachers should provide more instruction on parts of speech across multiple courses, ensuring continuity and reinforcement. This will enable students to analyze and identify English vocabulary parts of speech more accurately.

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