EFL LEARNERS' EXPERIENCE OF USING MOVIES TO DEVELOP LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

(A Case Study of English as a Foreign Language Learners)

A THESIS

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PONTIANAK

2026

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Submitted to fulfill one of the requirements for thesis examination in English Language Education

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I hereby sincerely state that the thesis entitled "EFL Learners' Experience of Using Movies to Develop Listening and Speaking Skills (A Case Study of English as a Foreign Language Learners)" is my own work. All sources used in this thesis have been properly cited and referenced.

I take full responsibility by the content of this thesis. If, in the future, it is proven that I have committed plagiarism or any form of academic dishonesty, I am ready to accept all consequences in accordance with academic regulations. This declaration is written and signed in good faith.

Pontianak, 2026

The Researcher

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported me throughout the completion of this research. First, all praise and gratitude are expressed to Allah SWT for the blessings, mercy, and guidance, which have given the writer ease, health, strength, and peace of mind throughout the process of completing this thesis entitled, EFL Learners' Experience of Using Movies to Develop Listening and Speaking Skills (A Case Study of English as a Foreign Language Learners) This thesis was written to fulfil one of the academic requirements for obtaining a Bachelor's degree in the English Language Education Study Program, Language and Art Education Department, Universitas Tanjungpura.

In the process of writing this thesis, the writer has faced various challenges and gained many meaningful experiences. However, the successful completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the help, support, and encouragement from all parties. Therefore, the writer provided support, guidance, and assistance during the preparation of this thesis. The writer's deepest gratitude is dedicated to the writer's beloved parents. Those who have never set foot in a classroom, yet are capable of and always give their best through their sacrifices and sincere love. Their prayers, care, and support that have strengthened the writer to complete this study.

The writer also wishes to express sincere gratitude to the supervisors, Urai Salam, M.CALL., Ph. D, as the first supervisor, and Dr. Dewi Novita, S.Pd., M.AppLing, as the second supervisor, for all the valuable time, guidance, patience, and constructive feedback throughout the thesis writing process. The writer would also like to extend sincere gratitude to the examiners, Prof. Eusabinus Bunau, Ph.D, as the first examiner, and Dr. Eni Rosnija, M.Hum, as the second examiner, for their valuable insight, evaluation, and suggestions, all of which greatly contributed to the improvement and completion of this thesis.

Furthermore, the writer would also like to extend gratitude and appreciation to:

1. Prof. Ahmad Yani T., M.Pd., the dean of the Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Tanjungpura.
2. Dr. Agus Wartiningsih, M.Pd., the head of the language and Art Education Department, Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Tanjungpura.
3. Yanti Sri Rezeki, M.Ed., Ph.D., the head of the English Language Education Study Program, Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Tanjungpura.
4. All lecturers of the English Language Education Study Program, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, who have provided knowledge, guidance, insight, and support during this study.
5. All administrative staff of the Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Tanjungpura that have been provided assistances and services.
6. All participants who took the time to participate and cooperated fully in this study, so that the data collection process went smoothly.
7. The writer's big family, especially *Nyai* who has always supported and been there for the writer from beginning of college until now.
8. The writer's friends that too many to named individually, who have always been there through ups and downs and always provided encouragement and motivation to keep moving forward.

The writer realizes that this thesis is far from perfect and still has several limitations. Therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions are genuinely welcomed for future improvements. Hopefully, this thesis can provide benefits for the readers, serve as a useful reference for future research, and contribute positively to the field of English language teaching and education.

Pontianak, 2026

The Writer

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how self-directed engagement with the Harry Potter movie series helps EFL learners from non-English majors improve their listening skills and speaking confidence. Purposive sampling was used to choose two Indonesian EFL learners for a qualitative case study design. Semi-structured interviews and written reflections were used to gather data, which was then treated with thematic analysis. The findings demonstrated that a three-stage subtitle progression, continuous repetition, and familiarity with the story all contributed to the consistent development of listening skills. Subtitle progression, repeated watching, characters' imitation, note-taking vocabulary, usage of visual cues, and interaction with online communities were found to be six learning strategies. Additionally, the findings show that rather than direct speaking practice, speaking confidence increased as listening comprehension improved. The study emphasizes the importance of learner autonomy, authentic media, and continuous exposure in promoting language development.

Keywords: *EFL learners, listening skills, speaking confidence, movie-based learning, self-directed learning*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill in second language acquisition because it provides the primary input for language development (Rost, 2011). While speaking is often seen as the main goal of learning a language, it strongly depends on having good listening skills. Many learners experience difficulty understanding the spoken language due to limited exposure outside the classroom (Chand, 2021). Traditional classroom instruction often emphasizes grammar and reading, while opportunities for authentic listening practice remain limited. As a result, learners may spend years studying English but still find it difficult to understand real-life spoken English or speak with confidence.

Because of this gap between classroom learning and real communication, some learners begin looking for alternative ways to improve their English outside formal education. One potential solution is the use of English movies as authentic audiovisual materials (Russo et al., 2021). Movies provide exposure to natural pronunciation, intonation, make it more interesting and easier to understand in real-life situations (Ismaili, 2013). The combination of visuals and storyline also help learners understand meaning, making it easier to connect classroom activities with how the language is actually used in daily life (Ali Mansoor et al., 2023).

The use of movies in language learning is strongly supported by Krashen (1982) who states that people learn a language best when they are exposed to content that is slightly above their current level. Movies fit this idea perfectly because they show language in everyday situations that is slightly above learners' current level but still understandable, supported by visuals and storylines, which helps learners understand new words and expressions (Blasco et al., 2015). Movies show learners authentic language and cultural contexts, helping them understand vocabulary and idioms in a natural setting and connecting classroom lessons with everyday communication (Saraswati, 2024). This kind of exposure supports steady language development. As a result, learners can gradually improve their language skills without feeling overwhelmed.

Among many available movies, the famous Harry Potter movie series offers a unique solution that distinguishes it from other movies. They show how words are used in real situations, help learners hear how people naturally speak, and make learning less stressful because students can watch and listen without needing to speak right away (Md Zolkapli et al., 2024a). The series consists of eight movies released over several years, and the language becomes more complex as the story develops. The early films use simpler dialogue that is easier for beginners to follow, while later films include faster speech, wider range of accents, and more advanced vocabulary (McQuillan, 2020). This gradual change supports learners' natural development and aligns with Krashen's theory that learners do best when exposed to slightly more advanced language than they already know. Second, the strong storyline and familiar characters keep learners

engaged over time, which helps them stay motivated and willing to keep learning (Khalish & Hanami, 2025).

Despite these benefits, most previous studies focus on short movie clips or single movies used in teacher-controlled classroom settings rather than long movie series (S. Salsabila et al., 2024). Very few studies have explored how learners independently engage with a complete movie series over time, and how this sustained engagement influences listening development in informal learning contexts (Nguyen, 2020). Even fewer studies have examined learners from non-English departments, students who are not trained in language pedagogy but who discover on their own that long-term engagement with English movies can significantly improve their English skills (Paradita et al., 2025).

Against this background, an emerging but under-researched phenomenon can be seen among non-English department students who felt dissatisfied with their formal English education. Although they had studied English for years, they believed their skills had not improved significantly (Syaepul Uyun, 2022). They also had limited exposure to English outside the classroom and few opportunities to practice in real-life situations (Inawati et al., 2025). Searching for alternative to develop their listening skills and speaking readiness, both turned to the Harry Potter movie series through a self-directed and non-traditional method. Unlike formal classroom learning, these learners use the series independently as a structured yet informal learning resource. They apply strategies such as repeated viewing, gradual subtitle use, dialogue imitation, and reflective note-taking.

This case illustrates what can be described as a unique approach to language learning. Uniqueness refers to a form of learning that happens outside formal classroom settings, without direct teacher guidance, and through media that is usually seen as entertainment rather than educational material. Neither learner depended on formal classroom instruction or traditional learning methods. Both came from non-English departments and had no formal background in linguistics or teaching. Yet both experienced meaningful improvement in listening comprehension and increased speaking confidence. This is important because the approach aligns with ideas from informal learning and comprehensible input theory. However, it happened without any structured speaking practice while watching the movies. This kind of experience has not been widely explored in academic research.

Using a qualitative case study approach, this research focuses on learners' experiences, strategies, and perceived outcomes. This research aims to highlight the phenomenon of learners who independently engage with a complete movie series over time to develop both listening skills and speaking readiness, particularly among EFL learners who feel formal education has been insufficient. This method is a good choice because it allows the study to explore in detail how learners experience and improve with the series over time (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The findings of this study are expected to provide insights for both theory and practice, helping teachers who want to connect classroom learning with informal, interest-based language practice, and for learners who may discover that

meaningful language growth can happen in unexpected ways, through the world of Harry Potter.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How do EFL learners from non-English majors develop their listening skills by independently engaging with the Harry Potter movie series?
2. What specific strategies do learners use during watching the series?
3. How does watching the series over a long period of time influence their confidence and readiness to speak English?

1.3 Research Purpose

According to the research questions above, there are three purposes of this research:

1. To explore how learners from non-English majors develop their listening skills through independently watching the Harry Potter series.
2. To identify the strategies both planned and natural that learners use during watching the series.
3. To examine how watching the series over a long period influences their confidence and readiness to speak English.

1.4 Significance of The Study

1.4.1 Practical Significance

This study provides practical and research-based ideas that can directly improve how English is taught and learned in learning

environments where student motivation is low. It also explains how developing listening skills through authentic media can naturally prepare learners for speaking. By showing the connection between listening comprehension and speaking confidence, this study offers insight into how language skills develop gradually through independent learning. The practical significance of this research offers clear benefit to teachers and learners by showing how movie series can be used more effectively to improve listening skills.

a) For teachers

This study provides insight to take advantage of popular movie series like Harry Potter in a structured way rather than only for entertainment. Teachers can combine guided instruction with opportunities for students to explore English through meaningful and interesting context (Nguyen, 2024). The study also shows how subtitles can be used progressively, progressing from subtitles in the native language to English subtitles and finally without subtitles, to help students improve their listening skills without being overwhelmed (Alabsi, 2020). For example, P2 explained that subtitles were “important at the beginning” but later became “a distraction.” This suggests that teachers should encourage learners to use English subtitles continuously from the beginning. In addition, P2 stated that “on the third month” she forced herself to remove subtitles even though she did not feel fully confident yet. This finding suggests that teachers can expect subtitles removal to happen gradually

over several months while still encouraging learners to monitor their own readiness and challenge themselves slightly beyond their comfort zone.

b) For learners

The most important recommendation for learners is the exploration of fan communities as language learning resources. This finding appeared unexpectedly during the study and shows strong practical potential. If fan communities can be effectively used for language learning, they may provide authentic opportunities for speaking practice on a much larger scale. This study shows how movies can be used as active learning tools. It also offers practical listening strategies used by effective learners, including re-watching short scenes, focusing on key expressions, learning vocabulary from context, and using visual cues that learners can apply independently to improve listening skills and build speaking confidence (Askaraliyevna, 2025). Learners' emotional engagement shows that improvement can also happen naturally through consistent exposure, even when the main goal is entertainment (Harashchuk, 2025). By connecting learning with learners' personal interests, such as watching movies, the study encourages learners' independence and motivation (Dung, 2021). This can help reduce anxiety and build confidence, especially for learners who feel pressured by traditional learning methods.

1.4.2 Theoretical Significance

a) For other researchers

Beyond its practical applications, this study gives theoretical contributions and substantial support for academic research and second language acquisition by showing how the same authentic input can lead to different learning outcomes depending on how learners engage with it. Most SLA theories mainly describe language acquisition as a mental process. However, the finding that learners physically experience pain when producing unfamiliar sounds and that this pain gradually disappears as speaking becomes more automatic. This finding suggests that sensorimotor adaption is a fundamental part of language acquisition rather than a minor side effect. Furthermore, the findings of this study support the development of learning materials such as watching guides, vocabulary lists for particular scenes, and listening exercises based on the movie series (Alharthi, 2020). It demonstrates that investing in movie resources and streaming platforms might help meaningful learning objectives rather than simply providing entertainment (Nguyen, 2024). It highlights a relatively underexplored area which is non-English major students who independently improve their language skills through long-term engagement with a complete movie series. Other researchers should pay greater attention to the role of the body, not only the brain, in the learning process when applying theories of second language acquisition,

as well as create programs like blended learning courses that encourage self-directed learning while still offering academic direction and structure.

1.5 Research Scope and Limitation

1.5.1 Scope

The scope explains what the study focuses on, who the participants are, and the learning context being examined. First, this study focuses on improving listening comprehension through immersion in a movie series. Although language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing are closely related, watching films is considered to develop the most important skill: listening (Dung, 2021). This study examines how students develop their ability to distinguish voices and accents, understand core ideas and precise details, infer meaning from context and visual cues, and apply methods when they do not understand certain sections of the audio. Vocabulary learning is only included as a supporting component of listening development, not as a separate skill. In addition, the study briefly explores how improved listening skills and the strategies learners use can support speaking readiness, such as better sound awareness, more confidence in pronunciation, and a willingness to speak English. However, it does not measure actual speaking fluency or real-time speaking performance.

Second, the participants in this study will be intermediate-level English learners from Indonesia who purposefully use the Harry Potter film series to practice English. All participants watched the entire series at least once,

so they had enough experience to reflect on their learning process. This specific focus enabled the study to look deeply into the strategies and experiences of motivated and independent learners.

Third, this study was conducted in the setting of informal and self-directed learning. This study did not look into the use of Harry Potter movies in a formal classroom environment or as part of a teacher-led course. Instead, this study looked at how students chose, watched, and learnt from the movie series outside of class without being guided.

1.5.2 Limitation

Despite its clear design, this study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the result. One limitation is the small number of participants, with only two participants. This is appropriate for qualitative case studies, which aim to look more deeply into experiences rather than draw broad conclusions. However, these findings do not apply to all EFL students or Harry Potter fans. Instead, these findings are intended to be relevant to readers in similar situations rather than universally applicable.

Another limitation is that the study relied on self-reported data, such as interviews and learning notebooks. Reliance on self-reported data may introduce recall bias, subjective interpretation, or the participants may also describe what they believe to be the researcher's expectations.

This study also cannot prove a clear causal connection between watching movie series and improving listening skills. Because this study did not include a control group, other factors such as English lessons, social media, or other English-language media could have influenced the learners' growth. Instead of making definitive causal claims, the research design aims to separate learners' experiences and strategies related to the series from their broader learning experiences.

Finally, this study focuses on a single movie series and genre. The Harry Potter movies use British English and have a fantasy plot that grows over time. As a result, the strategies and results presented in this study may not be applicable to other genres of films or languages. More research is needed to determine whether similar results would occur with different genres or media.

In addition to its limitations, the researcher set them on purpose, which is to keep the focuses of the study. While the small number of participants limits the generalizability of the findings, this is appropriate for a qualitative case study that focuses on depth rather than breadth (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The purpose of this study is not to produce statistically generalizable claims, but to provide rich and transferable insight that readers may connect with their own experiences and context. In addition, the detailed and consistent accounts from two independent participants strengthen confidence in the findings despite the small number of participants involved.

Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into how movie series can be used as a structured learning material to develop listening skills in informal EFL learning context, and it offers a strong foundation for future experimental and comparative research. While this study acknowledges that participants are exposed to other English sources, this study intentionally focuses on the role of the Harry Potter series. It highlights the unique strategic value without claiming that it is the only cause of learners' language development.

1.6 Terminology

1.6.1 Listening Skills

Listening skills refer to a combination of mental processes, awareness, and practical abilities that learners use to understand and respond to spoken language. In this study, listening skills are understood based on learners' self-reported experiences, not through formal listening tests. This includes recognizing sounds, understanding sentence structure, using context and visual cues, and applying strategies to overcome listening difficulties. Moreover, listening skills involve not only understanding the message but also about how learners actively process spoken language.

1.6.2 Harry Potter Movie Series

The Harry Potter movies are a series of eight fantasy films produced by Warner Bros. Pictures and released between 2001 and 2011 adapted from J.K. Rowling's best-selling fantasy novels. In this research, the series is not treated

simply as entertainment, but as an authentic source of audiovisual language input. The movies provide continuous exposure to natural British English, with language and storylines that gradually become more complex, moving from simpler dialogue in the early films, such as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, to more advanced language in the later movies, like *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

1.6.3 Active Watching

Active watching is different from passive viewing. In passive viewing, learners simply follow the story for enjoyment without intentionally focusing on language features. Active watching means watching movies with the clear intention of learning the language, not just following the story. It involves using learning strategies such as pausing to repeat phrases for better pronunciation, copying the dialogue, looking at how conversations work, like why a character uses sarcasm or speaks formally and writing down new words in context. This approach also used in self-directed learning where learners take main responsibility for planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own learning, without relying on formal teacher-led instruction. In this study, participants also independently choosing the Harry Potter movie series as a tool for learning English. Using active watching with the Harry Potter series helps learners really connect with the natural language used in the films.

1.6.4 Speaking Readiness

Speaking readiness refers to how prepared learners feel to speak English. It focuses on learners' confidence, level of anxiety, awareness of English sounds, and willingness to communicate. It develops through better listening skills and active engagement with authentic materials, and it acts as a bridge between understanding the language and actually using it in speech. This concept aligns with the input-to-output pathway proposed in this study. In this study, speaking readiness is measured through learners' self-reports rather than through formal tests of speaking performance.

1.6.5 Input-to-Output Pathway

The input-to-output pathway describes the process in which regular exposure to understandable spoken English helps learners build the knowledge and pronunciation awareness needed for speaking. Based on second language acquisition theory, this study explores how watching a movie series supports this process, especially when learners imitate sounds and expressions they hear.

1.6.6 EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Learner

An EFL learner is someone who learns English in a country where English is not commonly used in daily life. This study focuses on Indonesian EFL learners, who use the Harry Potter series for the purpose of learning English. The research design narrowed down this definition by selecting them based on criteria established to collect the data. Therefore, the way researcher ensured

the consistency of the case is by establishing the criteria as limits to the broad definition of EFL learners.

1.6.7 Authentic Materials

Authentic materials are resources made for real communication, not specifically for teaching a language. In this study, the Harry Potter movie series are considered authentic materials because they were made for native English-speaking audience. They expose learners to natural language use, including informal expressions, different accents, cultural references, and realistic communication.