

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WATCHING ENGLISH MOVIES AND TV SERIES IN EXPANDING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY

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**Annotation.** This article discusses the effectiveness of watching English movies and TV series in expanding students' vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of the most important components of foreign language competence, and students often need rich, meaningful and repeated exposure to new words in order to remember and use them correctly. Movies and TV series provide learners with authentic language input, natural pronunciation, contextualized vocabulary, cultural information and emotional engagement. The article analyzes the linguistic and methodological advantages of audiovisual materials in English vocabulary learning, including incidental vocabulary acquisition, contextual guessing, repetition, subtitle use, listening support and motivation. Special attention is paid to the role of English subtitles, genre selection, teacher-guided viewing and post-viewing vocabulary activities. The study concludes that watching English movies and TV series can be highly effective for vocabulary development when it is organized purposefully and combined with active learning tasks.

**Keywords:** vocabulary learning, English movies, TV series, audiovisual materials, subtitles, incidental learning, authentic input, vocabulary competence, language teaching methodology.

Vocabulary plays a central role in learning English as a foreign language. A student may know grammar rules, but without enough vocabulary it is difficult to understand texts, express ideas, participate in conversations or write meaningful sentences. Vocabulary is the building material of language. Every communicative skill speaking, writing, reading and listening depends on lexical knowledge. For this reason, vocabulary expansion is one of the most important goals in English language education.

Traditional vocabulary teaching often relies on word lists, translation, memorization and written exercises. These methods can be useful, especially at the beginning stage of language learning. However, they are not always enough for long-term vocabulary development. Many students memorize words for a test, but later forget them because they do not meet those words in real communication. In order to remember vocabulary effectively, students need repeated exposure, meaningful context and opportunities to use new words.

In recent years, English movies and TV series have become popular tools for language learning. Students watch films, sitcoms, documentaries, cartoons and online series not only for entertainment, but also for improving listening skills, pronunciation and vocabulary. Unlike isolated vocabulary lists, movies and TV series present words in real situations. Learners can see who uses a word, in what situation it is used, what emotion it carries and how it is pronounced. This makes vocabulary learning more natural and memorable.

The relevance of this topic is connected with the growing role of audiovisual materials in modern education. Today students have easy access to English-language content through



television, streaming platforms, YouTube and social media. If this content is used correctly, it can become an effective supplementary resource for English vocabulary learning. However, watching movies without any learning purpose may not always bring strong results. Therefore, teachers and students need to understand how to use movies and TV series methodologically.

The aim of this article is to analyze the effectiveness of watching English movies and TV series in expanding students' vocabulary. The article discusses the theoretical foundations of audiovisual vocabulary learning, the role of subtitles, the advantages and limitations of movies and TV series, and practical methods of using them in English lessons.

Vocabulary acquisition has been widely studied in applied linguistics and language teaching methodology. Researchers emphasize that vocabulary knowledge includes not only knowing the translation of a word, but also understanding its pronunciation, spelling, grammatical behavior, collocations, meaning, register and use in context. I.S.P. Nation states that knowing a word involves knowledge of its form, meaning and use, which means that vocabulary learning is a gradual and multidimensional process<sup>1</sup>. This idea is important because movies and TV series help learners observe words in pronunciation, context, emotion and social use.

Stephen Krashen's input hypothesis is also relevant to the topic. According to Krashen, language acquisition takes place when learners receive comprehensible input that is slightly above their current level<sup>2</sup>. Movies and TV series can provide such input if they are selected according to students' language level and supported with subtitles, pre-teaching activities or teacher explanation. When students understand the general meaning of a scene, they can guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from context.

Research on audiovisual materials has shown that television programs and films may support vocabulary learning by exposing learners to frequent and repeated lexical items. Webb and Rodgers investigated vocabulary demands of television programs and showed that TV content can provide learners with repeated encounters with vocabulary across different genres<sup>3</sup>. This is significant because repeated exposure is one of the key conditions for vocabulary retention.

Robert Vanderplank's work on captioned media also highlights the educational value of subtitles and captions in foreign language learning. He argues that captioned viewing can support learners who find natural speech difficult to follow and can help connect spoken and written forms of language<sup>4</sup>. In vocabulary learning, this connection is especially useful because students hear the word, see its written form and understand its meaning through the visual context at the same time. Thus, previous studies show that movies and TV series can support vocabulary acquisition if learners engage with them actively. The effectiveness of such materials depends on the level of students, the type of content, subtitle use, repetition and follow-up activities.

<sup>1</sup> Nation I.S.P. *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. – P. 23–30.

<sup>2</sup> Krashen S.D. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. – Oxford; New York: Pergamon Press, 1982. – P. 20–30.

<sup>3</sup> Webb S., Rodgers M.P.H. *Vocabulary Demands of Television Programs // Language Learning*. – 2009. – Vol. 59, No. 2. – P. 335–366.

<sup>4</sup> Vanderplank R. *Captioned Media in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching: Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing as Tools for Language Learning*. – London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. – 269 p.



This article is based on descriptive, analytical and methodological research methods. The descriptive method is used to explain the role of English movies and TV series in vocabulary learning. The analytical method is used to examine the advantages and possible limitations of audiovisual materials. The methodological method is applied to suggest practical classroom activities for teachers.

The article also uses elements of comparative observation. Traditional vocabulary learning methods are compared with audiovisual vocabulary learning. Special attention is paid to how students can learn vocabulary incidentally and intentionally through movies and TV series. Examples are provided to show how vocabulary items may be introduced, practiced and remembered through viewing activities.

Vocabulary is one of the main indicators of language competence. A learner with rich vocabulary can understand more texts, communicate more freely and express ideas more accurately. On the other hand, limited vocabulary often prevents students from speaking confidently. Even if a student knows grammar, lack of vocabulary may stop communication.

Vocabulary knowledge can be divided into receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary refers to words that students can recognize when they hear or read them. Productive vocabulary refers to words that students can actively use in speaking and writing. Watching movies and TV series mainly develops receptive vocabulary at first. Students hear words many times in different situations and begin to recognize them. Later, with practice, some of these words may become part of their active vocabulary.

Another important aspect of vocabulary learning is contextual understanding. A word does not exist alone. It is used in phrases, sentences and situations. For example, the word *charge* may mean “to ask for money,” “to attack,” “to accuse,” or “electrical energy,” depending on the context. If students learn this word only from a dictionary, they may not understand its different uses. But if they meet it in different movie scenes, they can gradually understand its meanings through context.

Movies and TV series are especially useful because they show vocabulary in action. Learners do not only read or hear a word; they also see the situation where it is used. Facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, background events and relationships between characters help students guess the meaning of unknown vocabulary. This multimodal input makes learning more memorable.

One of the strongest advantages of movies and TV series is that they provide authentic language input. Authentic input means language that is created for real communication, not only for language teaching. In textbooks, dialogues are often simplified and controlled. In movies and series, however, learners hear natural speech, everyday expressions, idioms, slang, phrasal verbs and cultural references.

For example, students may learn textbook phrases such as:

*How are you?*

*I am fine, thank you.*

But in movies and TV series they may hear more natural expressions:

*What's up?*

*How's it going?*

*I'm good.*

*Not bad.*

*Could be better.*

Such expressions are important for real communication. They help learners understand how English is actually used by native and fluent speakers.

TV series are especially effective because they contain repeated characters, repeated situations and repeated vocabulary. For example, a medical series often repeats words connected with health, symptoms, treatment and hospital communication. A legal drama repeats words related to law, crime, investigation and court procedures. A sitcom repeats everyday conversational vocabulary. This repetition helps students meet the same words several times in meaningful contexts.

Movies, on the other hand, often provide richer cultural and emotional contexts. They can introduce vocabulary related to relationships, family, education, travel, work, conflict and personal feelings. Since films usually have strong storylines, students may remember words better because they associate them with emotional scenes.

One of the most important benefits of watching English movies and TV series is incidental vocabulary learning. Incidental learning happens when students learn something without directly focusing on it. For example, while watching a series for understanding the story, students may notice new words and remember them naturally.

This type of learning is important because language acquisition often happens through exposure. Students may not learn every word intentionally, but repeated contact with words helps them become familiar with pronunciation, meaning and usage. For instance, after watching several episodes of a school-based TV series, students may naturally learn words such as *assignment*, *deadline*, *grades*, *principal*, *classmate*, *project*, *exam*, and *permission*.

However, incidental learning does not mean passive watching. If students only watch without attention, the result may be limited. Incidental vocabulary learning becomes stronger when learners are interested, understand the general context and notice repeated words. Teachers can support this process by giving students simple tasks, such as writing down five new words from each episode or guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from context.

Movies and TV series also help learners understand collocations. Collocations are words that often go together. For example:

*make a decision*

*take a chance*

*pay attention*

*break the rules*

*keep a promise*

Students may memorize individual words, but they often have difficulty combining them naturally. Audiovisual materials show such combinations in real speech. When students hear *pay attention* several times, they learn it as a natural phrase rather than two separate words.

Subtitles play an important role in learning vocabulary through movies and TV series. They can help students connect spoken and written forms of words. Many learners find natural English speech difficult because native speakers speak fast, reduce sounds and use connected speech. Subtitles make the input more understandable.

There are different types of subtitles: native-language subtitles, English subtitles and no subtitles. Each type has advantages and disadvantages.

Native-language subtitles help beginners understand the content. They reduce anxiety and allow students to enjoy the story. However, if students focus only on translation, they may ignore English speech. As a result, vocabulary learning may be weaker.



English subtitles are often more effective for vocabulary learning because students hear and read the same words at the same time. For example, when a character says *I can't believe you did that*, students can see the structure and pronunciation together. This supports listening, spelling and vocabulary recognition.

Watching without subtitles is useful for advanced learners because it trains listening comprehension. However, for many students, watching without subtitles may be too difficult. They may understand very little and become discouraged. Therefore, subtitle choice should depend on students' level.

A useful method is gradual subtitle use. At the beginning, students may watch with Uzbek subtitles to understand the story. Then they can watch the same scene with English subtitles. Finally, they can watch it without subtitles. This three-step method helps students move from comprehension to language noticing.

Watching English movies and TV series has several important advantages for vocabulary learning.

First, they provide contextualized vocabulary. Students see how words are used in real situations. This helps them understand not only dictionary meaning but also emotional and social meaning.

Second, they support pronunciation learning. When students hear words spoken by actors, they learn stress, intonation and natural rhythm. This is especially useful for words that are difficult to pronounce.

Third, movies and TV series increase motivation. Many students enjoy watching films more than memorizing word lists. Enjoyment makes learning more sustainable. If students are emotionally engaged, they are more likely to continue learning.

Fourth, audiovisual materials develop cultural awareness. Language and culture are closely connected. Through movies and series, students learn greetings, politeness strategies, humor, social behavior and everyday communication patterns.

Fifth, they expose students to different registers and styles. Students can hear formal speech, informal speech, slang, academic language, workplace communication and family conversation. This helps them understand that vocabulary use depends on situation.

Sixth, repeated viewing is possible. Students can pause, rewind and watch scenes again. This is very helpful for vocabulary learning because repetition strengthens memory.

Seventh, TV series create long-term exposure. Since series have many episodes, students can spend many hours listening to English. Long-term exposure is important for vocabulary growth.

Although movies and TV series are useful, they also have some limitations. One problem is difficulty level. Many films contain fast speech, slang, idioms and cultural references. If the material is too difficult, students may not understand enough and may lose motivation.

Another problem is passive watching. Some students think that simply watching many movies will automatically make them fluent. However, without attention, repetition and practice, vocabulary growth may be limited. Students need active strategies such as note-taking, repetition, word review and using new vocabulary in sentences.

A third problem is subtitle dependence. If students always use native-language subtitles, they may focus more on translation than English. This can reduce listening and vocabulary benefits. Teachers should guide students toward English subtitles when they are ready.

Another limitation is inappropriate content. Some movies may include violence, offensive language or culturally unsuitable themes. Teachers should carefully select materials according to students' age, level and educational goals.

Time is also a practical issue. Watching a full movie in class may take too much time. Therefore, teachers can use short clips instead of full films. A five-minute scene can be enough for vocabulary teaching if it is selected well.

To make movies and TV series effective for vocabulary learning, teachers should organize viewing activities in three stages: pre-viewing, while-viewing and post-viewing.

### Pre-viewing activities

Before watching, the teacher prepares students for the topic and vocabulary. This may include introducing key words, discussing the theme, showing pictures or asking prediction questions. For example, before watching a scene from a travel movie, the teacher may introduce words such as:

*airport, luggage, passport, ticket, delay, boarding pass, destination.*

Students can match words with definitions or pictures. This helps them understand the scene more easily.

### While-viewing activities

During watching, students should have a clear task. For example:

- ✓ write down five new words;
- ✓ identify words connected with emotions;
- ✓ complete missing words from subtitles;
- ✓ choose the correct meaning of expressions;
- ✓ notice how characters use certain phrases.

These tasks help students watch actively rather than passively.

### Post-viewing activities

After watching, students should practice the vocabulary. They may make sentences, discuss the scene, role-play the dialogue, write a summary or create a vocabulary table. For example:

New word	Meaning	Example from the scene	My own sentence
delay	kechikish	The flight was delayed.	Our lesson was delayed yesterday.

This type of activity helps move vocabulary from recognition to active use.

There are many useful activities that teachers can use.

One effective activity is **word prediction**. Before watching a scene, students predict what words they may hear based on the title or picture. After watching, they check their predictions.

Another activity is **subtitle gap-filling**. The teacher removes some words from the subtitles and students complete them while watching. This develops listening and vocabulary recognition.

A third activity is **phrase collection**. Students collect useful expressions from a movie or episode. For example:

*No way!*

*I have no idea.*

*That makes sense.*

*Are you kidding me?*

*Let me think.*

Then they practice using these phrases in short dialogues.



Another useful activity is **vocabulary grouping**. Students classify new words according to themes such as emotions, school, family, work, travel or food. This helps organize vocabulary in memory.

Teachers can also use **role-play**. After watching a scene, students act out a similar situation using new vocabulary. This makes vocabulary active and communicative.

**Scene summary** is another effective task. Students watch a short clip and write a summary using at least five new words. This connects vocabulary with writing skills.

For independent learning, students can keep a **movie vocabulary notebook**. In this notebook, they write the title of the film or episode, new words, meanings, example sentences and their own sentences.

The genre of a movie or TV series influences the type of vocabulary students learn. Different genres contain different lexical fields.

Sitcoms are useful for everyday conversational English. They include informal expressions, humor, phrasal verbs and social language. For example, students may learn expressions such as *hang out*, *calm down*, *figure out*, and *come on*.

Documentaries are useful for academic and subject-specific vocabulary. Nature documentaries may teach words related to animals, environment and science. Historical documentaries may introduce political, cultural and historical vocabulary.

Dramas are useful for emotional and social vocabulary. Students can learn words related to feelings, relationships and personal problems.

Medical series teach health-related vocabulary, such as *symptom*, *patient*, *treatment*, *surgery*, and *emergency*.

Crime and detective series introduce words related to law, investigation and evidence, such as *suspect*, *witness*, *crime scene*, *clue*, and *arrest*.

Therefore, teachers should select genres according to lesson goals. If the aim is everyday communication, sitcoms may be suitable. If the aim is academic vocabulary, documentaries may be more useful. If the aim is professional vocabulary, specialized series may be selected carefully.

Movies and TV series are not only useful in class; they are also effective for independent learning. Students can create their own viewing routine. For example, they may watch one episode per week and record new vocabulary.

A simple independent learning plan may include the following steps:

1. Choose a suitable movie or episode.
2. Watch the first time for general understanding.
3. Watch the second time with English subtitles.
4. Write down 10 useful words or phrases.
5. Check meanings in a dictionary.
6. Make personal sentences.
7. Review the words after two or three days.
8. Try to use some expressions in speaking or writing.

This method helps students become autonomous learners. It also makes vocabulary learning more enjoyable and regular.

Students should not try to learn every unknown word from a movie. This may be tiring and ineffective. It is better to choose useful, repeated and interesting words. For example, if a word appears many times or is important for communication, it is worth learning.



The analysis shows that watching English movies and TV series can be an effective way to expand students' vocabulary. Audiovisual materials provide authentic input, meaningful context, repeated exposure and emotional engagement. These factors help students remember words better than isolated memorization.

The effectiveness of movies and TV series depends on how they are used. Passive watching may bring some benefits, but active viewing brings stronger results. When students write down new words, use subtitles wisely, repeat scenes, discuss content and practice vocabulary, they learn more effectively.

The use of English subtitles is especially helpful for intermediate learners because it connects sound and spelling. For beginners, native-language subtitles may be useful at first, but they should gradually move toward English subtitles. Advanced learners can practice watching without subtitles.

The analysis also shows that teachers play an important role. They should choose suitable materials, prepare vocabulary tasks, guide students during watching and organize post-viewing practice. Without methodological support, movies may remain only entertainment. With proper guidance, they become a powerful educational tool.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, watching English movies and TV series is an effective method for expanding students' vocabulary when it is used purposefully and systematically. Movies and TV series provide learners with authentic language, natural pronunciation, contextualized vocabulary and cultural information. They help students understand how words are used in real-life situations and support both receptive and productive vocabulary development.

The article has shown that audiovisual materials are especially valuable because they combine sound, image, context and emotion. This combination helps learners guess meanings, remember words and understand expressions more naturally. TV series are particularly useful because they provide repeated exposure to vocabulary over many episodes, while movies offer rich cultural and emotional contexts.

However, the effectiveness of movies and TV series depends on several factors: students' language level, subtitle use, genre selection, viewing purpose and follow-up activities. If students watch passively, vocabulary learning may be limited. If they watch actively, take notes, review words and use new vocabulary in speaking or writing, the results can be much stronger.

Therefore, English teachers should use movies and TV series as supplementary materials in vocabulary teaching. Short clips, guided tasks, subtitle exercises, vocabulary notebooks, role-plays and scene summaries can make viewing more educational. Students should also be encouraged to use movies and TV series for independent learning.

Overall, English movies and TV series can make vocabulary learning more meaningful, motivating and effective. They connect language with real communication and help students move from memorizing words to understanding and using them naturally.

<sup>1</sup> Nation I.S.P. Learning Vocabulary in Another Language. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. – P. 23–30.



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