

STUDENTS PERCEPTION IN IMPROVING ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS THROUGH SHORT MOVIES

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji persepsi siswa terhadap peningkatan keterampilan menyimak bahasa Inggris melalui penggunaan film pendek di sekolah menengah pertama. Desain penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif dengan pendekatan campuran dengan melibatkan 60 siswa kelas VIII sebagai partisipan. Instrumen yang digunakan berupa kuesioner dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa memiliki persepsi positif terhadap penggunaan film pendek. Siswa merasa lebih termotivasi, lebih mudah memahami kosakata dan konteks, serta lebih terlatih dalam menangkap ide utama maupun detail informasi. Namun, beberapa kendala juga teridentifikasi, seperti perbedaan aksen, kecepatan bicara penutur asli, dan keterbatasan kosakata. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan film pendek dapat meningkatkan keterampilan mendengar dan membangun motivasi belajar dan keterlibatan siswa secara aktif. Implikasi penelitian ini perlunya guru mengintegrasikan media audiovisual secara berkelanjutan dengan perencanaan kegiatan mendukung agar pembelajaran menyimak lebih efektif, autentik, dan bermakna.

Kata kunci: keterampilan menyimak, film pendek, persepsi siswa, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze students' perceptions of improving English listening skills through the use of short movies at junior high school. The research employed a descriptive mixed-methods design, involving 60 eighth-grade students as participants. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that most students held positive perceptions of using short movies. They reported feeling more motivated, better able to comprehend vocabulary and context, and more practiced in identifying both main ideas and detailed information. Nonetheless, challenges were also noted, including accent variations, native speakers' speech rate, and limited vocabulary. The discussion highlights that short movies enhance listening skills and foster student motivation and engagement. The study implies that teachers should continuously integrate audiovisual media with well-planned supporting activities to make listening practice more effective, authentic, and meaningful.

Keywords: listening skills, short movies, students' perception, English learning

Introduction

Listening is widely recognized as the backbone of second-language (L2) communication, yet it is also the skill learners most often judge as difficult to improve in formal classrooms. Unlike reading, which allows reinspection, or speaking, which affords immediate self-monitoring, listening unfolds in real time and taxes limited cognitive resources for decoding sound, segmenting speech, mapping form to meaning, and integrating discourse cues. Advances in digital media have opened new avenues for addressing these challenges, particularly through short, authentic video materials "short movies" that compress narrative arcs into manageable units and expose

learners to varied accents, speech rates, and multimodal cues. Grounded in contemporary multimedia learning theory and enriched by recent evidence on captioned video, this study positions short movies as promising stimuli for improving listening skills and examines how students perceive their value in L2 learning contexts.

Multimedia learning theory provides a principled rationale for using well-designed short videos. According to the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML), learning improves when words and pictures are integrated, essential processing is scaffolded, and extraneous load is minimized—conditions especially amenable to brief, segmented clips

rather than long, continuous films (segmenting, signaling, and coherence principles). Recent synthesis work on CTML emphasizes that design choices (e.g., pacing, signaling, modality, and pretraining) critically shape outcomes in complex, real-world media such as educational video. These insights suggest that shorter, carefully cued video segments can focus attention on core meaning and reduce overload during L2 listening practice (Mayer, 2024).

Empirical research increasingly shows that captioned and subtitled videos bolster comprehension and lexical uptake, two pillars that support listening development. A recent study found that captions enhanced listening comprehension across proficiency levels, and intriguingly, benefits held at slowed, normal, and even slightly accelerated playback speeds suggesting that well-calibrated speed and text support can co-exist without undermining processing (Mahalingappa et al., 2024). Parallel work indicates that repeated, captioned viewing and genre selection can amplify incidental vocabulary learning, which in turn eases online decoding during listening (Teng, 2023; Kurokawa et al., 2024). Beyond laboratory tasks, classroom and remote-learning studies also report that structured use of YouTube captions can raise listening test scores and support learner motivation when teachers layer pre-viewing guidance and post-viewing tasks (Boltiziar et al., 2024; Yassin, 2024).

Short movies distinct from full-length features offer additional pedagogical influence. Their compressed format naturally aligns with CTML's segmenting principle and supports iterative cycles of prediction, gist listening, and selective detail listening within a single lesson. In a quasi-experimental study integrating movies into Thai EFL classes, researchers reported gains in vocabulary and listening comprehension alongside positive student attitudes toward the video-enhanced lessons, highlighting a perception that authentic audiovisual input made English "feel real" and facilitated retention (Hongsa & Wathawatthana, 2024). When interactive features are added (e.g., in-video prompts, pausing at key discourse junctures), learners tend to rate the experience as engaging and helpful for strategy use, reporting greater perceived control over pacing and attention (Bakla, 2024).

Crucially, students' perceptions of efficacy, cognitive effort, and engagement mediate whether video-based listening becomes

sustained practice rather than a one-off novelty. Contemporary studies point to several recurring themes. First, learners frequently report that captions reduce anxiety and increase confidence in extracting gist and key details especially at lower proficiency levels although high-proficiency learners may prefer audio-first processing once comprehension stabilizes (Mahalingappa et al., 2024; Li, 2025). Second, adjustable speed and replay affordances common to short online videos are perceived as essential "control knobs" for managing difficulty and experimenting with listening strategies (e.g., replaying fast stretches after an initial captioned pass). Learners often attribute progress to this self-regulation, echoing principles of learner-controllable pacing in multimedia design (Mayer, 2024). Third, when video materials connect to students' interests or immediate tasks (e.g., narrative short films with relatable themes), learners report higher situational interest, a predictor of persistence and depth of processing (Bland et al., 2024).

At the same time, student perceptions also flag important caveats for instructional design. Some learners feel "tethered" to captions, which can suppress listening focus if not gradually faded; others report split attention when on-screen text competes with fast-paced speech and dense visuals classic symptoms of extraneous load (Li, 2025; Mayer, 2024). Content and genre matter as well: documentaries and educational shorts may scaffold comprehension through expository structure and visual signaling, whereas dialogue-heavy drama shorts can overwhelm unless tasks are staged and support is tuned (Teng, 2023; Kurokawa et al., 2024). Finally, equity issues arise when bandwidth or device constraints limit smooth playback an aspect students readily notice and negatively appraise in remote or bring-your-own-device settings (Boltiziar et al., 2024).

What emerges is a nuanced picture where students tend to value short movies for listening because they feel authentic, emotionally engaging, and strategy-friendly; yet those positive perceptions are conditional on design (captioning, speed, signaling), tasking (clear goals, staged repetition), and fit (clip length, genre relevance, assessment alignment). Accordingly, recent practitioner guidance in mainstream ELT encourages "guilt-free" use of subtitles at home and school, provided teachers articulate goals (language noticing vs. story immersion), vary support over time, and plan

transitions from captioned to audio-dominant listening (Baranowska, 2025).

Against this backdrop, short movies are well placed to target micro-skills students frequently mention in self-reports: parsing connected speech, following turn-taking and repair in conversations, tracking referents across scenes, and noticing colloquial formulae. Because short films package these features into compact narratives, they make it feasible to cycle through pre-, while-, and post-listening tasks in one sitting, and to revisit the same clip with systematically reduced support. From the learner perspective, such cycles often feel “doable,” which nurtures self-efficacy an affective driver of persistence in listening development. Yet despite growing evidence on captioning, playback speed, and video-based tasks, there remains a specific need to document students’ perceptions of short-movie based listening practice: Which design elements do learners themselves credit for improvement? How do they experience the trade-offs between captions and listening focus? Which genres and lengths feel optimal, and why?

This study responds to that need by investigating students’ perceptions of using short movies to improve L2 listening. Adopting a learner-centered lens, it examines perceived cognitive load, strategy use (e.g., replay, selective attention, note-taking), motivation and engagement, and perceived gains in gist and detail comprehension. Building on CTML and recent captioning research, we conceptualize short movies as a design space in which visual, textual, and auditory supports can be tuned to learners’ evolving profiles. By foregrounding students’ voices, the study aims to offer practical guidance for teachers on selecting and staging short movies that not only improve listening outcomes but also **feel** effective and sustainable from the learner’s point of view.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design with quantitative support, focusing on students’ perceptions of improving listening skills through short movies. A descriptive design was selected because the aim was not to test a specific intervention in controlled conditions, but rather to explore how students subjectively perceive the benefits, challenges, and effectiveness of short movies in listening comprehension. At the same time, simple quantitative data such as frequency counts and

percentages were incorporated to provide additional clarity on patterns in student responses. This combination was considered appropriate to capture both the richness of student perspectives and measurable trends within the group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study was conducted at a public junior high school located in Cibinong, Bogor Regency, Indonesia. The school has a diverse student body representing different social and cultural backgrounds, making it a suitable context for investigating English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Participants were selected from Grade VIII (eighth grade) students because they are at an intermediate stage of English learning, where listening comprehension becomes increasingly important to support speaking, reading, and writing skills.

A total of 60 students participated in the study. Purposive sampling was applied to select intact classes already receiving regular English instruction with integrated multimedia materials. This ensured that students had at least basic familiarity with audiovisual resources. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from the school, teachers, and students prior to data collection.

The questionnaire was designed to measure students’ perceptions of using short movies to improve listening skills. It consisted of 20 items using a 5-point Likert scale (from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”), focusing on aspects such as motivation, comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, strategy use, and overall perceived benefits. The questionnaire also included open-ended questions to allow students to express personal reflections. Content validity was ensured through expert review by two English teachers.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 selected students to gain deeper insights into individual experiences. Questions covered learners’ attitudes toward short movies, perceived difficulties, preferences for movie types, and suggestions for improvement. Interviews were conducted in a mixture of Bahasa Indonesia and English to ensure clarity and comfort.

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and mean scores, to identify general trends in student perceptions. Qualitative data from open-ended responses and interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically. Coding categories were

developed inductively from the data, focusing on recurring themes such as motivation, comprehension strategies, and perceived benefits. Triangulation of questionnaire and interview data enhanced the credibility of findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data were organized and analyzed based on the research questions. Both quantitative (from the questionnaire) and qualitative (from interviews) data are integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of improving listening skills through short movies.

Students' perceptions of the effectiveness of short movies in improving listening comprehension

Quantitative findings showed that the majority of students perceived short movies as effective

for improving listening comprehension. Out of 60 respondents, 82% either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that watching short movies helped them catch the main idea of spoken English. Similarly, 78% believed that short movies improved their ability to understand details in conversations.

Qualitative interview data supported these numbers. Several students mentioned that the visual context in short movies helped them "guess the meaning" even when they missed some words. One participant said:

"Sometimes I don't know the word, but I can see what the actor is doing, so I understand."

This shows that multimodal input (sound + image) facilitated comprehension. The brevity of short movies also reduced cognitive overload, as students reported being able to focus better compared to longer films.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions of Listening Comprehension Improvement through Short Movies

Aspect of Comprehension	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% Positive (Agree + Strongly Agree)
Understanding main ideas	28	21	8	2	1	82%
Understanding details	26	21	9	3	1	78%
Following storyline/dialogue	25	22	10	2	1	78%
Predicting outcomes	20	19	15	4	2	65%

How students perceive the role of short movies in enhancing vocabulary acquisition

Vocabulary development emerged as a strong perceived benefit. From the questionnaire, 85% of students reported that short movies introduced them to "new and useful words," and 80% believed that repeated exposure to these words in context improved retention.

Interview findings indicated that students valued contextualized vocabulary learning. A student remarked:

"I remember the word because I see the situation in the movie, not only the teacher explaining."

Another noted that subtitles or captions helped them connect spoken and written forms of words. However, a few students mentioned that too much reliance on captions sometimes distracted them from listening carefully.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Vocabulary Improvement through Short Movies

Vocabulary Aspect	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% Positive
Learning new words in context	30	21	6	2	1	85%
Remembering vocabulary	28	20	7	4	1	80%
Understanding pronunciation	27	19	10	3	1	77%
Linking spoken and written form	26	18	12	3	1	73%

Students' perceptions of motivation and engagement when using short movies for listening practice

Motivation and engagement were central to students' positive perceptions. Results revealed that 88% of students found short movies "interesting and enjoyable" compared to textbook-only listening exercises. Many students emphasized that movies reduced boredom and made learning "feel natural."

Interview data highlighted that storylines, humor, and cultural content boosted engagement. One student explained:

"When the movie is funny, I want to listen again, even if I don't understand everything."

This intrinsic motivation encouraged repeated exposure, which is critical for listening skill development.

Table 3. Students' Perceptions of Motivation and Engagement

Engagement Aspect	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% Positive
Enjoyment of short movies	32	21	6	1	0	88%
Increased motivation to learn	30	20	8	2	0	83%
Reduced boredom	29	21	7	2	1	83%
Willingness to repeat listening	27	22	8	2	1	82%

Challenges students perceive when learning listening skills through short movies

Despite overall positive perceptions, students reported several challenges. About 42% mentioned difficulty with "fast speech" in movies, while 38% struggled with unfamiliar accents. Some also found it difficult to balance listening and reading subtitles simultaneously. Interviews revealed that while captions supported comprehension, they sometimes

caused "split attention." One student commented:

"If I read the subtitle, I cannot focus on listening."

Another challenge was vocabulary density in some movies, which left students feeling overwhelmed. Teachers' role in selecting appropriate short movies was therefore critical.

Table 4. Students' Perceived Challenges in Using Short Movies

Challenge Aspect	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% Reporting Challenge
Difficulty with fast speech	15	10	20	12	3	42%
Unfamiliar accents	14	9	22	11	4	38%
Dependence on subtitles	12	10	25	10	3	37%
Too many new words	11	8	24	14	3	32%

The overall usefulness of short movies as a tool for listening skill development

When asked to evaluate the overall usefulness of short movies, 90% of students expressed positive perceptions. They emphasized that short movies made listening practice more authentic, memorable, and enjoyable. Many felt that the combination of audio and visual input

helped them "feel closer to real English" than classroom audio recordings.

Overall, short movies were perceived not just as supplementary materials, but as essential tools that could be integrated into regular lessons. The majority of students recommended that teachers continue using short movies and even expand their use in other language skills.

Table 5. Overall Perceptions of Short Movies as a Tool for Listening

Overall Aspect	Perception	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% Positive
Useful for improving listening		35	19	5	1	0	90%
Better than traditional audio		32	20	6	2	0	87%
Should be used regularly		31	21	7	1	0	87%
Recommended for other skills		28	22	8	2	0	83%

The findings suggest that students perceive short movies as highly effective for improving listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation. They reported greater engagement, reduced boredom, and higher confidence in understanding spoken English. However, challenges such as fast speech, unfamiliar accents, and over-reliance on subtitles were identified. Overall, students recommended integrating short movies regularly into classroom practice, indicating strong potential for their use in EFL contexts.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore students' perceptions of improving listening skills through short movies. Findings revealed that students generally perceived short movies as effective in enhancing comprehension, vocabulary, and motivation, although they also reported challenges such as fast speech, unfamiliar accents, and dependency on subtitles. These results align with and extend prior research on multimedia-assisted language learning.

Students' positive perceptions of improved comprehension resonate with the principles of multimedia learning, particularly the role of dual coding (visual + auditory input) in facilitating meaning-making. Mayer's (2024) updated cognitive theory of multimedia learning emphasizes that learners benefit when essential auditory and visual cues are aligned, reducing extraneous load and increasing coherence. Short movies, with their condensed narratives and visual context, appear to embody these principles. The finding that students could infer meaning even when vocabulary was unfamiliar echoes Hongsa and Wathawatthana's (2024) study, which showed that movies help students follow storylines by drawing on non-verbal cues.

Nevertheless, some students reported difficulty with fast-paced dialogue, reflecting ongoing challenges in authentic listening. This aligns with Mahalingappa et al. (2024), who found that speech rate and proficiency levels significantly influence learners' comprehension, even when captions are provided. Thus, while short movies scaffold comprehension, pacing and linguistic complexity remain critical considerations in selecting materials.

A strong perception of vocabulary growth emerged in this study, with students noting that contextualized input made words more memorable. This finding is consistent with Kurokawa et al. (2024), who demonstrated that captioned video viewing leads to incidental vocabulary learning, especially when learners encounter repeated exposure in context. Similarly, Teng (2023) emphasized that genre plays a role in vocabulary retention, as certain types of videos provide more accessible and repetitive language input.

Students' reliance on captions to connect spoken and written forms echoes Li's (2025) observation that learners often depend on visual text for lexical recognition, particularly at lower proficiency levels. While beneficial, this reliance can create split attention, highlighting the importance of gradually reducing caption dependency. Teachers may consider strategies such as alternating captioned and non-captioned viewings, a practice supported by Baranowska (2025), who advocated for intentional, staged use of subtitles to balance comprehension and listening focus.

The most significant perception reported by students was the motivational impact of short movies. They found the materials more enjoyable than textbook-based exercises, reducing boredom and encouraging repeated practice. This aligns with Bland et al. (2024), who argued that multimedia resources heighten

situational interest, which in turn fosters deeper cognitive engagement. Humor, relatable storylines, and emotional resonance were particularly motivating, suggesting that affective engagement is a key driver of persistence in listening practice.

Yassin (2024) also found that YouTube-based videos increased students' motivation and cultural awareness, highlighting how multimedia creates a more authentic and enjoyable learning experience. In the present study, students expressed willingness to engage in repeated listening, which is critical given that listening proficiency develops incrementally and requires sustained exposure (Boltiziar et al., 2024).

Despite these benefits, students identified notable challenges. Fast speech and unfamiliar accents were frequently mentioned, mirroring common difficulties in EFL listening (Mahalingappa et al., 2024; Jaelani & Holisah, 2021). Exposure to diverse accents is important for real-world communication, but teachers may need to scaffold by beginning with clearer, slower speech before gradually introducing more complex input.

Dependence on subtitles also emerged as a limitation. While captions aid comprehension, they can split attention and reduce listening focus (Li, 2025; Jaelani & Rizkatria Utami, 2020). Some students in this study admitted to reading subtitles rather than listening actively, which suggests the need for careful instructional planning. Teachers may guide students toward selective viewing strategies, such as initial captioned exposure followed by caption-free practice, to promote listening autonomy.

Finally, students noted that the density of unfamiliar vocabulary sometimes created overload. Mayer (2024) warned that excessive extraneous information can overwhelm working memory. Teachers must therefore curate short movies that balance linguistic challenge with comprehensibility, ensuring materials are level-appropriate.

CONCLUSION

Students perceived short movies as highly effective in improving listening skills, particularly in comprehension, vocabulary, and engagement. These perceptions are consistent with recent findings in multimedia learning research, which highlight the value of authentic, multimodal input for language development. However, challenges such as fast speech,

unfamiliar accents, and reliance on captions remind educators of the need for scaffolding and careful instructional design. Short movies are not a panacea, but when thoughtfully implemented, they represent a powerful, learner-approved resource for enhancing EFL listening.

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