

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Mastering vocabulary is essential to learning English. It plays a fundamental role in language learning and is essential for developing other language skills. Mastering vocabulary supports the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Nation, 2001). Learners with limited vocabulary struggle to express ideas, understand academic texts, follow conversations with native speakers, and complete English tasks. According to vocabulary learning theory, vocabulary knowledge encompasses more than just knowing the meanings of words. It also involves recognizing, understanding, and using words appropriately in context. Therefore, vocabulary knowledge is a multidimensional construct that reflects students' overall language competence.

Indonesian students learning English as a foreign language are exposed to English only in limited contexts, primarily formal ones such as schools and universities. Unlike students in countries where English is a second language, Indonesian students often lack opportunities to engage in authentic English communication. This situation indicates that students require alternative input sources that can provide natural, contextual, and sustained language exposure. According to Second Language Acquisition theory, the quantity and quality of input significantly influence language learning (Krashen, 1985). Without sufficient exposure to meaningful and comprehensible input, vocabulary development may be limited.

English movies with English subtitles are widely recognized as an effective, informal way to learn vocabulary because they present language in authentic situations. From the perspective of the Input Hypothesis, movies provide learners with a rich source of comprehensible input, and subtitles help them to understand spoken language. This method of learning aligns with the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer, 2009) and Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1986), which propose that information is processed

and stored more efficiently when presented through multiple sensory channels. Movies combine spoken dialogue, visual scenes, and written subtitles, enabling learners to process vocabulary more effectively.

Over the past decade, digital technology and widespread internet access have fundamentally changed how students access entertainment and information. Subscription streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime Video, as well as free video-sharing platforms such as YouTube, are now easily accessible. This ease of access has given rise to a new phenomenon among students: watching movies and TV shows from various countries, including English-speaking nations, has become a common recreational activity. In his BBC News report, Youngs (2021) noted that the 18–25 age group prefers watching movies with subtitles compared to previous generations. Subtitles allow viewers to understand dialogue more accurately, facilitating comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

Various studies have consistently demonstrated that watching English movies with subtitles can enhance vocabulary acquisition. In her experimental study at a private university in Bandung, Rizkiani (2015) demonstrated that using authentic videos with subtitles enhances students' vocabulary mastery. Habibah et al. (2025) found that this activity boosts self-directed learning motivation and self-confidence, as it aligns with students' interests and provides an authentic context for understanding and using vocabulary. Maulida and Warni (2024) also reported that students benefited from watching movies, both vocabulary enrichment and contextual understanding. Wahyuningsih and Fitriah (2023) found that students actively used movies with English subtitles in their free time and reported an improvement in their vocabulary proficiency.

Although the impact of subtitled movies on vocabulary has been widely researched, the perception of vocabulary knowledge among English majors in Bandung, including its form, meaning, use, growth, and retention, in relation to watching English movies with English subtitles, has not yet been extensively explored. Previous research in Bandung has focused on

experimental interventions or used small qualitative samples, as in the studies conducted by Rizkiani (2015) and Habibah et al. (2025). Therefore, a descriptive survey study is required to capture the perceptions of vocabulary knowledge of a larger population of students across various theoretical dimensions.

Perceptions of vocabulary knowledge are defined as learners' subjective assessment of their ability to recognize, understand, and use words in different contexts (Schmitt, 2000). This concept is important because it is closely related to motivation and willingness to communicate. Students who perceive themselves as having an adequate vocabulary tend to participate more actively in speaking, writing, and listening activities. Understanding how students view their vocabulary knowledge across five dimensions: form, meaning, use, growth, and retention can provide educators, curriculum designers, and students with meaningful insights.

Bandung, one of West Java's main educational centers, has a large student population. According to PDDikti data accessed on 8 April 2026, accessed on 8 April 2026, approximately 5,280 students are enrolled in accredited English language programs in Bandung: 2,143 in the English Education Department programs and 3,137 in the English Literature Department programs. This makes Bandung an ideal and representative location for this study.

This study aims to describe the patterns of watching English movies with English subtitles among students in the English Education Department and the English Literature Department in Bandung, and to evaluate perceptions of vocabulary knowledge from a taxonomic perspective encompassing form, meaning, use, growth, and retention. A quantitative descriptive survey design was employed as the most appropriate methodology to address these objectives and answer the research questions.

B. Research Question

1. How are the watching patterns of English major students in Bandung when watching English movies with English subtitles?
2. How are students' perceptions of their vocabulary knowledge in terms of form, meaning, use, growth, and retention?
3. How is the overall level of perceptions of vocabulary knowledge among English major students in Bandung?

C. Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the watching patterns of English major students in Bandung when watching English movies with English subtitles.
2. To describe students' perceptions of their vocabulary knowledge in terms of form, meaning, use, growth, and retention.
3. To determine the overall level of perceptions of vocabulary knowledge among English major students in Bandung.

D. Significance of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This study makes a contribution to the fields of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and vocabulary learning theory by presenting descriptive evidence on how English majors in Bandung perceive their own vocabulary knowledge, as assessed across five dimensions: form, meaning, use, growth, and retention. It demonstrates the relevance of Nation's (2001) vocabulary framework and Schmitt's (2000) retention construct as tools for evaluating perceptions of vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, it emphasizes the significance of audiovisual input, particularly watching English movies with English subtitles, in shaping vocabulary knowledge perceptions.

2. Practical Significance

a) For Students

These findings give English majors in Bandung and English Foreign Learners with a better understanding of how they view their vocabulary knowledge while watching English movies with English subtitles. This helps them to identify their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to adjust their watching patterns more strategically.

b) For Educational Institutions

This study provides valuable insights for institutions considering incorporating English movies with English subtitles into self-directed or supplementary learning programs. It informs the development of guidelines that promote the use of media as a supplement to formal vocabulary instruction.

c) For Researchers and Academics

This study provides a descriptive reference for researchers interested in informal vocabulary learning and students' perceptions. It presents empirical data on perceptions of vocabulary knowledge among English majors in Bandung, which can be used as a foundation for future correlational, experimental, or mixed-methods research.