

STUDENT'S DIFFICULTY IN LISTENING WESTERN MOVIE

Fitri Widya Jayanti Hasibuan

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan, Indonesia
Email: Fitrimdn774@gmail.com

Yani Lubis

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan, Indonesia
Email: yanilubis@uinsu.ac.id

APA Citation: Hasibuan, F. W. J., & Lubis, Y. (2024). Student's difficulty in listening western movie. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 10(2), 271-278. <https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v10i2.9996>

Received: 22-03-2024

Accepted: 23-05-2024

Published: 30-07-2024

Abstract : This research investigates the challenges students face in understanding Western films, focusing on language and dialect differences, narrative complexity, and cultural factors. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data was collected through observation and interviews with students at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan. Findings indicate that language barriers, including unfamiliar accents and slang, complex plot structures with intricate storylines and character developments, and cultural nuances, such as differing social norms and historical references, pose significant difficulties for students. Additionally, students often struggle with idiomatic expressions and humor that do not translate well across cultures. This study suggests incorporating strategies to improve students' listening skills and cultural awareness through targeted educational interventions, such as integrating multimedia resources in the curriculum, conducting workshops on cultural contexts, and providing supplementary language support. By addressing these challenges, educators can enhance students' comprehension and appreciation of Western films, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

Keywords: *student difficulties, western films, language and dialect differences.*

INTRODUCTION

Technological advances and globalization have opened unlimited access for people around the world to connect with foreign cultures and languages. One popular form of widespread cultural expression is Western films. These films not only introduce interesting stories, but also provide a glimpse into different lives, cultures and values (Manurip & Katemba, 2023). However, when faced with Western films, students often experience various difficulties in understanding the complex audio-visual content and language used. As a result, it becomes important to identify and analyze the factors that cause these difficulties in order to increase the effectiveness of foreign language learning through film media (Faisal, 2019).

Differences in language and dialect are the main factors that cause difficulties for students in listening to Western films. The language used in Western films is often more formal or has a different accent than the everyday language taught in the classroom. For example, the use of English idioms or phrases that may not be taught directly in the curriculum can be a barrier to student understanding. In fact, the different dialect variations of the various characters in the film can

add complexity, especially for students who are not yet familiar with a wide variety of languages (Muhammad Fajar Sudrajat et al., 2021). As a result, students may have difficulty catching fast-paced conversations or informal phrases often used in Western film contexts (Nadhira & Warni, 2021). Therefore, an understanding of language and dialect differences needs to be emphasized in foreign language learning, as well as strategies to help students cope with these challenges in understanding Western films (Listyaningsih, 2020).

The complexity of the narrative and visual structures of Western films also poses challenges for students. Many Western films have complex plots with in-depth character development and complicated storylines. In fact, there is often a non-linear structure of the story, which requires a deeper understanding of the cause-and-effect relationships between events (*LISTENING SKILL OF SMA NEGERI 1 MAJENE BY USING SHORT FILM MATERIAL* Ahmad Munawir & Ridwan, n.d.). Students may have difficulty following complex story lines and understanding the motifs and conflicts presented. Sometimes, elements such as flashbacks, symbolism, or plot twists can complicate students' understanding, requiring

higher analytical skills to decipher hidden meanings in films. Therefore, it is important for educators to develop learning strategies that enable students to respond effectively to the structural and narrative complexities frequently encountered in Western films (Ahmad Munawir & Ridwan, n.d.).

Difficulties also arise due to cultural differences between film producers and audiences. Many Western films reflect cultural values, norms, and conventions that may differ from the student's culture (Kulsum & Hidayatullah, 2023). As a result, students may have difficulty identifying and understanding the cultural context contained in films. Technical factors can also be an obstacle for students in listening to Western films. Low audio and visual quality, especially in older films, can make it difficult for students to hear conversations clearly or see important details in certain scenes. In addition, the speaking speed of actors in Western films can also be a challenge for students, especially those who are still in the foreign language learning stage. A fast speaking speed can make it difficult for students to catch important words and phrases in a conversation (Nurhuda, 2021).

Based on the author's observations, it appears that students' difficulties in listening to Western films are not only influenced by differences in language and dialect, but also by the complexity of the narrative and visual structure of the film. Western films often feature complex plots with deep characters and complicated storylines (Syafitri et al., 2023). In addition, the non-linear structure of the story and the use of elements such as flashbacks and symbolism can increase the level of difficulty in understanding the story. Therefore, learning foreign languages through Western films requires a thorough approach and appropriate learning strategies so that students can better cope with these challenges and gain a deeper understanding of foreign languages and cultures (Utan et al., 2019).

By understanding the factors that cause students' difficulties in listening to Western films, educators can develop more effective learning strategies to help students cope with these challenges. Through the right approach and the use of innovative learning techniques, it is hoped that students can more easily understand and appreciate Western films as an effective means of learning foreign languages (Muhammad Fajar Sudrajat et al., 2021).

So, researchers are interested in conducting this research with the aim of identifying effective learning strategies in helping students cope with

difficulties in listening to Western films. By understanding the factors that cause these difficulties, researchers hope to develop more appropriate and innovative learning methods to improve students' understanding of foreign languages and Western culture (Samad & Paris, 2022). The main objective of this research is to make a real contribution to the development of a foreign language learning curriculum that is more relevant and effective in the current context of globalization, as well as improving students' listening skills in foreign languages by using Western films as a useful learning tool (Faisal, 2019).

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore and describe in detail the factors that influence students' difficulties in listening to Western films. With this approach, researchers will collect data directly from research subjects, observe and interview students to understand their experiences in depth. Descriptive qualitative analysis will allow researchers to explore various aspects that influence students' understanding of Western films, including language differences, complexity of narrative structure, and relevant cultural factors. In addition, a descriptive approach will provide a comprehensive picture of students' conditions and the challenges they face in the process of learning foreign languages through Western films (Ayu, 2016).

In carrying out this research, researchers will use various qualitative data collection techniques, such as observation, interviews, and content analysis. Observations will be carried out to directly observe students' interactions with Western films and identify difficulties that arise during the listening process. Interviews will provide an opportunity for students to express their experiences and perceptions of learning through Western films in more depth. Next, content analysis will be used to systematically describe the findings from these data, allowing researchers to identify relevant patterns, trends, and findings. Thus, through this descriptive qualitative approach, it is hoped that this research will provide a deeper understanding of students' difficulties in listening to Western films and provide a basis for developing more effective learning strategies.

The research subjects for this study will consist of a diverse group of students from SMP N 4 Sei Kanan, representing various proficiency levels in English. This variety will enable the researchers to

gain insights into how different levels of language ability affect students' comprehension of Western films. The students will be selected based on their willingness to participate and their interest in Western films. The process of observation will involve watching selected Western films together with the students in a controlled classroom environment. Researchers will specifically observe students' reactions, note-taking behaviors, and engagement levels during the film screenings.

They will also pay attention to moments when students appear confused or disengaged, which can indicate comprehension difficulties. Additionally, aspects such as students' ability to follow dialogues, understand cultural references, and interpret non-verbal cues will be closely monitored. Through these observations, researchers aim to gather detailed information about the specific challenges students face and the strategies they use to cope with these challenges. (Nurrahmah & Megawati, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the discussion show that the majority of students at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan experience various difficulties in understanding Western films. In particular, they had difficulty capturing conversations due to the differences in language and dialect used by the characters in the film (Jauharah Jilan Situmorang et al., 2023). The complexity of the storyline is also an obstacle, especially in films with non-linear plots or in-depth character development. Apart from that, the use of visual elements such as flashbacks or symbolism also makes it difficult for some students to decipher hidden meanings in films (Saleh, 2015). These difficulties reflect the significant challenges in understanding and interpreting audiovisual works of art from different cultures, and highlight the need for more effective learning strategies in overcoming these difficulties.

As stated by Asri Widiani, a student at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan, that,

“I often find it difficult to understand conversations in Western films. Sometimes, they use phrases or idioms I've never heard before, so I'm confused about what they mean”.

The same thing was also conveyed by Syarifah Hanum as a student at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan that,

“Yes, I often find it difficult to understand the true meaning of conversations in Western films. Sometimes, the dialect used by characters in films is very different from what I usually hear

every day. For example, in a recent film we watched, there was a character with a very strong Southern United States regional dialect. I'm not used to hearing this dialect around where I live, so I find it difficult to understand what they're talking about. This difficulty also affected my concentration in capturing the overall storyline, because I was constantly focused on trying to understand the conversation that was taking place. Therefore, I realize the importance of improving my ability to understand various dialects that may appear in Western films so that I can be more comfortable and confident when watching films with different language variations”.

The interview above illustrates the challenges faced by many viewers in understanding Western films, especially related to the language and dialect used. They said that unusual phrases or idioms often become obstacles in understanding conversations in films. Additionally, dialect differences, such as the regional dialect of the Southern United States spoken by the characters in the film, are also a distracting factor in understanding the overall storyline. Concentration is divided between trying to understand the conversation and following the storyline. The interpretation of this interview shows the need to increase the ability to understand language variations that may appear in Western films so that audiences can be more comfortable and confident when watching films with a variety of different languages (Maulia Hafizhah et al., 2023).

Apart from language and dialect differences which are the main challenge, sometimes other aspects also make it difficult for me to listen to Western films. For example, the variety of accents used by characters in films often made it difficult for me to understand conversations clearly. Some accents, such as British or Australian accents, are sometimes difficult to understand and require extra concentration to understand well. This caused me to have to try harder to catch every word and keep focus on the overall storyline.

As stated by Teguh Apriansyah as a student at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan that,

“Hmm, apart from differences in language and dialect, sometimes the speed at which the characters in films speak also makes it difficult for me. They talk very fast, especially in tense situations, and it makes it difficult for me to catch every word they say. For example, in action scenes or when there is intense dialogue, characters tend to speak at a very fast pace, making it difficult for me to follow the flow of

the conversation well. I often felt left behind or missing part of the conversation because I wasn't able to catch every word quickly. This can interfere with my understanding of the storyline and cause confusion in understanding the motif or conflict being discussed in the film. Therefore, I realize the importance of continuing to train my hearing to be more responsive to different speech rates, especially in the context of Western films which *often feature dialogue at a high tempo*".

Another thing was also conveyed by Ahmad Prakasa as a student at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan that,

"To be honest, I often have difficulty understanding complex storylines in Western films. Sometimes, the plot is very complicated with lots of time jumps and deep character development. For example, in a film we recently watched, the plot involved several story layers that were interrelated but ran in parallel across different time periods. This made me have to rack my brain extra to understand the relationship between various events and characters in the story. At times, I felt overwhelmed by the complexity of the plot and found it difficult to follow every detail. In fact, in-depth character development also adds complexity, because I have to pay attention to the character's overall development and motivation. This difficulty often left me feeling behind in understanding the story and lacking an overall picture of what was actually happening. Therefore, I realize that it is important to continue to train myself in following complex storylines and deepen my understanding of character development so that I can better enjoy and appreciate Western films".

The same thing was also conveyed by Asri Widiani, a student at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan that,

"Yes, especially the use of flashbacks or symbolism. I often felt confused when I saw scenes that didn't seem directly related to the main storyline, and it made it difficult for me to decipher the true meaning hidden behind them. For example, in a film we recently watched, there was a scene where the main character seemed to be recalling moments from his past through a series of flashbacks. Initially, I didn't fully understand how these scenes connected to the main storyline, and I felt confused about the message the filmmakers wanted to convey. Apart from that, the use of complex symbolism also often confuses me. For example, there's a scene where the main character is surrounded by various symbols and metaphors that seem to have deep meaning, but I had a hard time deciphering the actual meaning behind them.

These difficulties often left me feeling disconnected from the storyline and my lack of understanding of the hidden messages hurt my overall viewing experience. Therefore, I realize the importance of continuing to deepen my understanding of the use of flashbacks and symbolism in Western films so that I can better appreciate and understand the meaning that the filmmakers want to convey."

Explanation above, it can be seen that several students from SMP N 4 Sei Kanan face various difficulties in listening to and understanding Western films. One of them is difficulty in understanding conversations due to the characters' speaking speed in films being too fast, especially in tense situations. In addition, they also have difficulty understanding complex storylines, especially in films with non-linear plots or in-depth character development. The use of flashbacks or symbolism in films is also a factor that makes it difficult for them to decipher hidden meanings. These difficulties reflect the challenges many viewers face in capturing all aspects presented in Western films, which often exhibit complexities in language, story, and symbolism.

To cope with difficulties in understanding Western films, I took concrete steps to improve understanding. First, actively train your hearing by listening to various kinds of conversations in English through films, podcasts and other audio materials. I also researched the various dialects and accents used in Western films, and noted down any phrases or idioms I didn't understand to study later. Apart from that, get into the habit of reading reviews or analyzes of the films you watch, so you can gain additional insight into the context and meaning that you might have missed while watching. With this approach, it is hoped that the ability to understand and enjoy Western films can increase.

As stated by Ahmad Prakasa as a student at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan that,

"I usually try to relate the words I hear to the context and facial expressions of the characters. Often it helps me to get a general idea of what is being discussed. For example, if a character looks sad or happy when saying a word, I tend to assume that the word is related to the emotion they are experiencing. Sometimes, a character's facial expressions or body language can also provide additional clues about the meaning of the conversation. However, although this strategy helps me understand the general context of the conversation, sometimes I still have difficulty interpreting phrases or idioms that are very

foreign to me. Therefore, I realize that there is still room for improvement in my ability to understand foreign languages, especially by further deepening my knowledge of common phrases and idioms frequently used in Western films."

The same thing was also conveyed by Teguh Apriansyah as a student at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan that,

"To cope with difficulties in understanding Western films, I took certain steps. I actively train my hearing by listening to various kinds of conversations in English and finding out about the various dialects and accents used. I also note down phrases or idioms I don't understand to study further, and make a habit of reading reviews or analyzes of films I watch to gain additional insight. With this approach, I hope to improve my ability to understand and enjoy Western films".

Based on the statement above, it can be concluded that students, including myself, use various strategies to cope with difficulties in understanding Western films. One commonly used strategy is to try to relate the words heard to the context and facial expressions of the characters. This helps in understanding the general idea of the conversation. However, there are still difficulties in interpreting very unfamiliar phrases or idioms. In addition, efforts to improve the ability to understand foreign languages, such as by deepening knowledge of common phrases and idioms that are often used in Western films, are steps taken to cope with these difficulties.

Difficulty in understanding western films

The majority of students at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan face various difficulties in understanding Western films. One of the main challenges is the difficulty in capturing conversations due to the different languages and dialects used by the characters in the film. Unusual phrases or idioms often become obstacles in understanding conversations, especially when characters use informal language or less common expressions. For example, characters with regional dialects of the Southern United States are often difficult for students to understand due to different pronunciations and use of vocabulary that is unfamiliar to them. This dialect difference is also a distracting factor in understanding the overall story line, because students are constantly focused on trying to understand the conversation that is taking place.

Apart from that, the complexity of the storyline also becomes an obstacle for students in understanding Western films. Complicated plots with multiple time jumps, sub-plots, and in-depth character development can confuse students, especially those unfamiliar with complex narrative structures. They find it difficult to follow each event and understand the relationship between various story elements. In fact, some films use non-linear narrative techniques or flashback scenes that complicate students' understanding of the sequence of events and character development.

To cope with these difficulties, students need to develop their ability to understand the various dialects and accents that may appear in Western films. In addition, they also need to improve their understanding of complex storyline structures by deepening their knowledge of narrative conventions commonly used in films. Through this approach, it is hoped that students will be more comfortable and confident in watching Western films, as well as being better able to appreciate the complexity of the language and storyline presented (Karunia, 2014).

Challenges in understanding the storyline

The complexity of the storyline also becomes an obstacle for students in understanding Western films. A complicated plot with lots of time jumps and deep character development makes it difficult to follow every detail. Sometimes, the plot involves several story layers that are interrelated but run parallel in various time periods, requiring in-depth understanding to unravel each connection. For example, in some films, the story can move forward and backward at the same time, presenting additional challenges for students to understand the chronology of events and the causal relationships between various story elements. Apart from that, complex character development also adds difficulty in understanding the overall storyline. Students should pay attention to overall character development and motivation to understand the dynamics of relationships between characters and their impact on the plot of the story.

To address the complexity of this storyline, students need to deepen their understanding of narrative structures commonly used in Western films. They can improve their ability to follow complex story lines by learning narrative conventions, such as peak conflict, climax, and resolution. In addition, students can also use story analysis techniques, such as creating plot diagrams or conflict trees, to help them map the relationships between various events and characters in the film.

With this approach, it is hoped that students can develop their abilities in parsing the complexity of storylines and deepen their understanding of Western film (Aflahah et al., 2021).

Efforts to surmount difficulties

To surmount difficulties in understanding Western films, students take concrete steps to improve their understanding. They actively train their hearing by listening to various kinds of conversations in English, finding out about the various dialects and accents used in Western films, and getting used to reading film reviews or analyzes to gain additional insight. With this approach, they hope to improve their ability to understand and enjoy Western films. One commonly used strategy is to try to relate the words heard to the context and facial expressions of the characters. This helps in understanding the general idea of the conversation. However, there are still difficulties in interpreting very unfamiliar phrases or idioms. In addition, efforts to improve the ability to understand foreign languages, such as by deepening knowledge of common phrases and idioms that are often used in Western films, are steps taken to cope with these difficulties.

Another approach taken by students is to deepen their understanding of narrative structures commonly used in Western films. They can improve their ability to follow complex story lines by learning narrative conventions, such as peak conflict, climax, and resolution. In addition, students can also use story analysis techniques, such as creating plot diagrams or conflict trees, to help them map the relationships between various events and characters in the film. With this approach, it is hoped that students can develop their abilities in parsing the complexity of storylines and deepen their understanding of Western films (Holidazia & Rodliyah, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Students at SMP N 4 Sei Kanan face challenges in understanding Western films due to differences in language and dialect, complex storylines, and visual elements like flashbacks and symbolism. These obstacles are common for viewers from different cultural backgrounds. To surmount these difficulties, the students practice their listening skills, deepen their understanding of foreign languages, and learn about narrative structures commonly used in Western films. This comprehensive approach not only aims to improve their ability to understand and enjoy these films but also underscores the importance of education about foreign cultures and languages. By gaining a

deeper understanding of the various aspects of Western films, students can develop their critical and analytical skills, as well as appreciate the cultural diversity represented in audiovisual arts. This experience highlights the value of increasing audiovisual literacy among students to foster a more inclusive and informed perspective on global media.

REFERENCES

- Aflahah, U., Fathurohman, I., & Purbasari, I. (2021). Gangguan belajar dan cara mengatasinya dalam film Taare Zameen Par. *Jurnal Educatio FKIP UNMA*, 7(3), 1143–1153. <https://doi.org/10.31949/educatio.v7i3.1356>
- Faisal, I. Y. A. (2019). An analysis of students' difficulties in learning listening at the tenth grade of MA Nurul Falah Learning. *Journal on Education*, 01(03), 569–574.
- Holidazia, R., & Rodliyah, R. S. (2020). Strategi siswa dalam pembelajaran kosa kata bahasa Inggris. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan*, 20(1), 111–120. <https://doi.org/10.17509/jpp.v20i1.24562>
- Situmorang, J. J., Lubis, Y., & Fitri, R. (2023). Phonological challenges and error patterns in english consonant production by Indonesian learners: A literature review. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Sastra Inggris*, 3(2), 63–70. <https://doi.org/10.55606/jupensi.v3i2.1986>
- Karunia, I. & S. H. (2020). Penggunaan Media film kartun untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menyimak cerita siswa kelas va Sdn Balasklumprik I No.434 Surabaya. *Jpgsd Penggunaan Media Film Kartun*, 2(2), 1–9.
- Kulsum, E. M., & Hidayatullah, A. (2023). Investigating students' listening problems in EFL learning. *Gunung Djati Conference Series*, 32, 116–126.
- Listening skill of sma negeri 1 majene by using short film material Ahmad Munawir & Ridwan. (n.d.). 2, 164–178.
- Listiyaningsih, T. (2017). The influence of listening english song to improve listening skill in listening class. *Academica: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(1), 35–49. <https://doi.org/10.22515/academica.v1i1.601>
- Manurip, N. M. J., & Katemba, C. V. (2023). Disney movies as a tool in increasing listening skill. *Journal on Education*, 5(4), 14086–14101. <https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v5i4.2348>
- Hafizhah, M., Wahyuni, L. D., & Lubis, Y. (2023). Learn english pronouncation and phonetic transcription with elsa speaking application: A student perception. *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Ilmu Bahasa*, 2(2), 65–73. <https://doi.org/10.55606/jurribah.v2i2.1448>
- Sudrajat, M. F., Ngafif, A., & Masykuri, E. S. (2021). The correlation between students' habit in watching western-movie and listening skill.

- Scripta : English Department Journal*, 7(2), 25–34. <https://doi.org/10.37729/scripta.v7i2.699>
- Nadhira, S., & Warni, S. (2021). Students' listening difficulties in english as a foreign language learning at secondary school in Indonesian context. *Proceedings of the 1st Annual International Conference on Natural and Social Science Education (ICNSSE 2020)*, 547(Icnsse 2020), 186–193. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210430.029>
- Nurhuda, H, N. H. (2021). Rising students' cultural awareness and listening skill: How to use english movies in EFL classroom. *ELT-Lectura*, 3(2), 38–41. <https://doi.org/10.31849/elt-lectura.v3i2.482>
- Nurrahmah, S., & Megawati, R. (2020). Pengaruh media film barat dengan subtitle bahasa Inggris. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan STKIP Kusuma Negara II*, 1–2.
- Saleh, A. (2020). Nilai-nilai pendidikan multikultural dalam film “Entre Les Murs” Penelitian analisis isi. *BAHTERA : Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 14(1), 71–80. <https://doi.org/10.21009/bahtera.141.08>
- Samad, P., & Paris, N. (2022). The EFL learners' listening comprehension through western song and the strategies for improvement. *DIAJAR: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, 1(2), 185–189. <https://doi.org/10.54259/diajar.v1i2.718>
- Syafitri, D., Fhadilah, N., & Lubis, Y. (2023). English phonology for second language learner. *English and Tourism Studies*, 1(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.59535/ets.v1i1.44>
- Utah, I. Y., Language, E., Program, E., Language, F. O. F., Kristen, U., & Wacana, S. (2019). *Listening strategies used by students to deal with the challenges in academic listening course*.

