Independent Project with Specialization in English Studies and Education
15 Credits, First Cycle

The effectiveness of using English language film in vocabulary teaching for primary school students especially for those with dyslexia

Effektiviteten av att använda engelskspråkig film i ordförrådsundervisning för lågstadieelever med dyslexi

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Master of Arts in Primary Education, Pre-School and School Years F-3 240 credits
English Studies and Education
2023-02-24

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Abstract

This study investigates the advantages and disadvantages of using English film as an educational tool to increase ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom vocabulary acquisition. In particular what are the effects of English Language Learners (ELL) with dyslexia or reading difficulties, when using films as a tool within English Education. According to Donaghy (2014), the use of films in education is an effective tool as most students watch films. Conversely every student is different and has their own difficulties, as Indrarathne (2019) states that 10% of the world is diagnosed with dyslexia. While Specialpedagogiska Skolmyndigheten (Special education school authority) believes that dyslexia is hereditary and occurs in around 5-8 percent of the Swedish population. In this situation in every classroom you will find at least one with dyslexia or reading difficulties. Furthermore, the focus of the study lies as well on what are the effects on students with dyslexia when they can watch a film with subtitles? There are different opinions about this. A few studies show that there are advantages to using film, and some studies show there are some disadvantages. In this current study, I explore and provide an overview for both the negative and positive effects of using films in education and investigate the advantages and disadvantages for children with dyslexia.

Key Words: Dyslexia, English as a Second Language, English Language Learners, Films, Reading Difficulties, Vocabulary
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1. Introduction

There is no doubt that the presence of the English language has developed among our young learners since the 1990s, as English has become more widely used. Salö (2010) points out that the English language in Swedish society is strong as English influences us as an everyday language of communication. One of the reasons is the development of the internet, where English is always highly present. Lindgren and Muñoz (2012) propose that Sweden has one of the highest percentages of internet users in Europe. This gives us the opportunity to get access to and encounter the English language through streaming films and television.

Such encounters are experienced by many of the children in our society every day, and this helps increase their vocabulary. The Swedish National Curriculum declares that pupils in grades 1-3 should receive some of their information and facts through films and dramatized stories for children (Skolverket, 2022). NE (2022), a digital knowledge company, highlights the positive effect of using films as a tool in English language learners’ (ELL) education. They point out that films are a dominant media that young people use today, and that the use of films is an effective way to capture the students’ attention as they find the medium familiar and an everyday activity. The use of films in English teaching, according to NE, also works effectively for students who have reading difficulties. These reading difficulties can be based on the fact that the student has dyslexia. The Svenska Dyslexiföreningen (Swedish Dyslexia Association, [n.d.]) does state that it is difficult to diagnose dyslexia at a young age. But while language is still in the process of development for students in the 1st to 3rd grades, dyslexia is frequently diagnosed for students in the 3rd grade. However, NE (2022) points out that an English as second language (ESL) student with reading difficulties who has problems getting the knowledge that comes from reading loses a lot of important information. That is why being able to offer the opportunity to watch a film instead of letting the student read a text potentially increases the opportunity for students to get knowledge that they missed in the text.

The English language for students with reading difficulties or dyslexia requires a lot of special education to get a successful education (Lindsay, 2007). The policy, as indicated in the National Curriculum (2022), stipulates that everyone should receive the same education, even if it means that a student’s school day must be adjusted to incorporate additional work. Everyone is different, everyone learns in different ways. 10% of the world's population has been officially diagnosed with dyslexia or a related learning difficulty, making it critical for teachers to
influence their teaching and use the appropriate method to educate a child with learning
difficulties (Indrarathne, 2019). The English language presents a number of difficulties that the
teacher must consider. As Ahmad et al. (2018) claim, children with dyslexia or difficulty in
learning do experience a lack of concern about learning things, which makes it harder for them
to learn. According to Uzzaman and Roy (2015), this not only affects ESL students' vocabulary
learning but also their accent. When ESL students are reviewing literature from a paper, the
effect of watching an English film with the same topic as in the literature increases their
vocabulary. Memorization and learning new words from watching an English film is easier
(Uzzaman & Roy, 2015).

This supports the potential for films to help ELLs with dyslexia increase their vocabulary in
English. As it is, image support is already proving effective for children with disabilities to
facilitate students' visualization of how words are spelled and look (Edfelt, 2019). As the
internet is such a dominant everyday activity, students are familiar with visuality, and therefore
it should be, as Vygotskij (1978) points out, a priority for the student to learn in a way that the
students already know. That is to say, working in a way that the students are already familiar
with and are currently mostly doing at home can be helpful to them. An educator has a big task
to find an equal balance in education to create a lesson that is both "familiar and recurring,"
especially to facilitate those with disabilities (Edfelt, 2019). In this situation, the use of films in
their education is motivating, and at the same time enjoyable. Donaghy (2014) believes that
films and TV shows are an integral part of students’ lives, so in Donaghy’s opinion, bringing
films into the language classroom makes perfect sense. He adds that films motivate and "make
[…] the language learning process more entertaining" for the students. At the same time, films
based on literature provide the students with a full visual context of what is happening and what
messages the literary text is trying to relay.
2. Aim and Research Questions

This study investigates the potential benefit of using films for vocabulary acquisition in ESL classrooms and how this might manifest itself in the 1st to 3rd grades. The research is going to be based on first exploring how having students watch a film in education can affect their vocabulary acquisition. This is followed by an exploration of the benefits of using film as a method in English teaching for an ESL student with difficulty learning or dyslexia. I will explore if using films in a classroom is a good idea for ESL students with learning difficulties.

My specific research questions are thus as follows:

- What are the advantages to watching an English language film in an English language primary class that is just starting to learn English vocabulary?
- What are the effects for English language learners with reading difficulties or dyslexia, to have film as an educational tool?

3. Method

In this research, I have used different methods to collect primary research based on the use of films in education. My primary method has been searching educational databases. In addition, I reviewed textbooks from a previous course, about how to teach students with disabilities in a classroom and find appropriate material.

3.1 Search Delimitations

To begin with, I began my research by looking through the MAH Library database, the Education Research Complete (ERC), and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) via EBSCO. Apart from using ERC and ERIC, I also did some research on the Google platform and chose the primary research-based articles from peer reviewed journals. I did this along with getting articles from ResearchGate, Taylor & Francis Online, and more. I researched MAH Library databases by using the different terms I had in different combinations: "ESL” “films” “Vocabulary” “Dyslexia". Initially, I got over 100 different articles, with one to two of the terms I was looking for in each article. I quickly found out that many articles do not use acronyms. I
would often find that instead of using ESL, they would write the whole word "English as a Second Language" or prefer to use the acronym ELLs. Based on MAH's advice, I separated the words with quotation marks and wrote in the search bar that I was looking for an article that either had "ESL" or "ELLs" in the text. The same applied to films, as many used the term "movie" or "video" instead. While for dyslexia, many used the terms "dyslexic", "reading disability" or "learning disability".

However, there were not many articles on MAH Library about the use of films for a student with a reading disability, or for that matter, an article about the use of a movie for ELLs in primary school. As a result, the result section is based on researched articles and aims for a higher grade. I went on to Google as well to find more articles for my targeted age group and found the same result, not many articles for my age group. The same goes for studies on ELLs with dyslexia. My research had to take place on the Google platform, finding articles that came from professional sources that worked with either dyslexia or in the school district.

In all of my research I used the following terms: “ESL” or “ELLs”. “Dyslexia”, “dyslexic”, “reading disability” or “learning disability”. “Movies” or “Video” or “Film”. “Vocabulary”, “primary school”.

### 3.2 Inclusion Criteria

I used articles that were written by academic researchers. I got up to 300 articles, and the articles that I used were mostly researched between 2014 to 2022. Adding on to that, I use a few articles from the 80’s that focus on learning disabilities, reading difficulties, the effects of using film in education and more. In this case, it made them have more developed information about my subject and research on my subject that works for today's society. Every result I got was based on a method that could work for young learners. In addition, I included results on English language teaching, as my research is based on knowledge of how an ELL with dyslexia works in a classroom and how films can help to increase their English vocabulary.

### 3.3 Exclusion Criteria

Furthermore, even though I used articles that focused on how subtitles in a film can be advantageous for ESL students. I excluded some articles, and used only a few, as I find using
subtitles at this grade level to be advanced for students. Especially for students with reading difficulties, even though it can be advantage for students with no difficulties. The point of using films in the classroom is not based on what the students should read but on what is being said.

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<td>V.Katemba &amp; Ning (2018)</td>
<td>Indonesien</td>
<td>Subtitled English Movies, Student’ Responses, Vocabular</td>
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<td>England</td>
<td>Primary, Elementary, Early Years Education, Language, learning, the curriculum</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>Captions, Films, Learning Disabilities, Reading Difficulties, Secondary Education, Sight Vocabulary, Word Recognition</td>
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<td>Hong Kong</td>
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<td>Vocabulary AND “ESL” or “ELLs” AND “Dyslexia” or “dyslexic”</td>
<td>Springer Link</td>
<td>Sparks, Ganschow &amp; Pohlman (1989)</td>
<td>USA</td>
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4. Result

In this segment, I will present the different perspectives regarding my area of interest. The segment directly addresses my research questions. The report has the following structure: advantages of using films, disadvantages of using films, and the effectiveness of using films for an English language learner with dyslexia.

4.1 Advantages of Using films

What are the advantages of watching a film in English in a preschool class which is just starting to learn English Vocabulary?

According to Wells (1982), letting your students watch an English film improves the learners listening and vocabulary. By listening to a native speaker through English movies, students develop the ability to correct pronunciation, speech sound, word syllable structure, word stress, and intonation. The students learn how to choose the right word in a particular context while watching the film. While watching them, they learn how to use words in a particular context and how to put the words into phrases and sentences. In Wells' study, using films helped students to focus on the contest and build the whole picture. ELLs develop a strategy that makes the student feel more comfortable, even if they are misunderstood or struggle to express their ideas in English. The method of using films in education taught the students listening and speaking, which in this case makes it effective. When ESL students watch a film, they tend to focus on the speakers, as well as their expression and body language. According to Wells' research, gestures can be as much of a language as communication, which in this case allows students to focus on the context in the film and easily guess the meaning of a new word they hear, as well as get an idea of the complete sentence. Wells points out that watching English films can provide a development opportunity for students' active and passive memory. Uzzaman and Roy (2015) bring this up as well in their study. Having ESL students watch English language films impacts students four skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

Watching films makes it easier for students to memorize and learn new words. Another way to increase students' vocabulary is through the use of subtitles. According to Sze (2006), it is an excellent method for developing a classroom relationship with students of varying English...
levels. The use of your mother tongue as a subtitle allows students to discuss what they understood or did not understand and provides a discussion even if they are unable to understand English. In Indonesia, a study has shown that vocabulary increases when watching English films with subtitles (V. Katemba and Ning, 2018). This study supports Putra's (2014) theory that video technology with subtitles is an effective tool for improving ELS student vocabulary. According to Putra, films, media, and the whole perspective of technology are powerful tools. This is especially true for students with a foreign language, their vocabulary plays an important role, and having students watch films is an effective tool for learning new words and increasing their vocabulary. Even King (2002) states that when students are exposed to films, they can learn some new words and phrases that are used in the film. The result is that the use of subtitles can help students learn how to pronounce words, as well as help them acquire new vocabulary.

In Indonesia, the study carried out by V. Katemba and Ning (2018) is based on research carried out by asking questions to the students. To begin with, it was found that 82% of students agreed that they learned many new words by watching subtitled English films. In addition, 74% of students agreed that they could understand more of the film when they watched subtitled English movies. Furthermore, 72% of the students also agreed that they learned vocabulary from using subtitles when they watched English films. While Only 1% of the students disagreed. In this case, it meant most students learned vocabulary from subtitles when they watched English films and increased their vocabulary. Furthermore, 58% of students agreed that they learned vocabulary by watching movies and then remembering the words later. Finally, the study showed that 59% of the students agreed that using films in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is a method that should be used more. Furthermore, 76% of the students agreed that films are a useful resource for learning the English language, while nobody disagreed and found films to be a useful resource (V. Katemba & Ning, 2018).

4.2 Disadvantages of Using films

What are the disadvantages of watching a film in English in a preschool class which is just starting to learn English Vocabulary?

Even though Wells (1982) reported in his study that using films as a method to learn English is an advantage, he also points out that there are some issues. First, when teaching languages
through films with subtitles, teachers have an important task in choosing the right films. A film must have the right vocabulary and transparent speech so that the students can understand the context. In addition, another problem that affects systematization is the lack of effective teaching material. The brain needs time to adapt, it is a regular and systematic learning process, which means that the student's brain needs time to adapt to learning the English language because not all students are the same. There are situations when some ESL students can get stuck on one single word because they do not understand it. That results in them staying focused on that particular word and not understanding a whole sentence or even the meaning of the film.

Katemba and Ning’s (2018) study showed a high percent of students who agreed on the advantage of using English films in a classroom. Another percent, on the other hand, disagrees and sees using films as a method as a disadvantage. To begin with, 18% of the students disagreed that they learned many new words by watching subtitled English films. In addition, 27% disagreed that they could understand more of the film when they watched subtitled English movies. Although the pie chart showed a high percentage of students seeing the advantage of film when it comes to learning new English vocabulary. Only 12% of the students in that study agreed and didn't remember what was said in class. Bringing up the fact that V. Katemba and Ning conducted a separate study to determine whether or not their students understood the instructions given to them by their teacher, they found that 33% of the students didn’t understand the instructions, so the teacher told them. In addition, 15% of the students couldn’t understand every word their teacher said in English. As a result, the study added that only 28% agreed that they could understand all vocabulary in the English test prior to the study of the benefit of using film. While 72% of the students didn’t have the knowledge to understand all the vocabulary in their English tests. This raises the question of how much of the films the students understood, as 14% did not believe the meaning of the film was important knowledge to add on while watching the film. In addition, 44% of the students couldn’t see the slight difference between different words. For example, the words "big" and "huge" (V. Katemba & Ning, 2018).

4.3 The Effectiveness of Using films with English Language Learners with Dyslexia
According to Ganschow, Pohlman, and Sparks (1989), dyslexic students have difficulty in foreign language learning (FLL), which is likely because of their difficulties in their native language. A study in Hong Kong by Ho and Kong (2005) aimed to see the difference between the students with dyslexia in Chinese and English. However, that is not my focus. The focus was on the result of the test they gave the students; picture vocabulary and rapid picture naming are two of the binges. In the picture vocabulary section, the students received the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test made by Dunn and Dunn (1981). In each picture, an English word was read to the children, and they were asked to choose a picture that matched the presented word among the four options provided. During the rapid naming of pictures. The children were presented with 40 pictures of familiar objects and were required to name the images in English from left to right and top to bottom as fast as they could. They were asked to name the images twice, and the average naming time for the two trials was taken as the score for this task. The result was that the dyslexic group scored a 9.08 (3.40) in picture vocabulary. While they scored 76.26 (21.46) at rapid picture naming. Even though this result does not show the advantage of using films to help ELLs with dyslexia, there are still pictures. The only difference is that this isn't a moving picture, like in films. However, overall Ho and Kong found that the dyslexia group performed significantly worse than the other group and showed that Chinese dyslexic children performed poorly in their vocabulary, reading, and phonological awareness.

Only one study, by Reilly and Barber-Smith (1982), showed the advantage of using films with students with learning difficulties. It was based on research on the effectiveness of using multichannel media, like a captioned film. The study was carried out at the primary reading level. Students were given 25 words that they had to find in the movie. They divided the study into four classes. The first time they watched the film, the teacher assisted them by pointing out the word; the second time, the teacher did not. The second class read the script of the film twice, and the teacher stopped at the end of every sentence that contained one of the 25 words and explained the word. The third grade got to both read the script and see the film. And in this study, the students got to say the word aloud, listen, and define the word, every time one of the 25 words contained in the script appeared. While watching the film, the teacher pointed to each target word when it appeared in the subtitles. While the fourth class, one of the controls once, was given a lesson that was based on normal reading lessons. The result was that the third class showed the greatest increase from the starting point of a score of 43.4% to an increase of 84.0% in word recognition. While the first class had 58.3% in the beginning and increased it to 77.1%, the second class had 20.7% and increased to 50.40%. The fourth class remained at 34.3%.
5. Discussion

These results show that there are advantages and disadvantages to using films in education. However, the studies do not justify that this is the right educational tool to use for ELLs from 1st to 3rd grades. However, it does show that there are both advantages and disadvantages to using films in an English educational classroom. To begin with, the Wells (1982) study demonstrates that watching English films improves students' listening and vocabulary. In addition, V. Katemba and Ning (2018) showed that a high percentage of students agreed that they learn vocabulary through watching films with subtitles. Both of these studies showed as well that there were some disadvantages to using film in education, which in this case we can connect to the Swedish Curriculum (2022) for 1st to 3rd grades. It is stated in the central content that students should learn with the abilities, attitudes, and teaching approaches that allow them to develop their English vocabulary by listening to and reading through film and dramatized stories for children. As a teacher, you should be given the opportunity to develop versatile communication skills. Wells mentions this as one of the disadvantages, implying that you cannot give a single opportunity. Instead, it takes more than one opportunity to use this method to get a result. Since the curriculum points out that the teaching of the subject of English should aim for the students to be able to develop knowledge of the English language as well as gain knowledge of areas. The aim of the study is to provide students with conditions for the development of multilingualism and confidence in their ability to use the language in different situations and for different purposes. (Skolverket, 2022)

In addition, V. Katemba and Ning’s (2018) study with ESL students found watching films to be an advantage to using it to learn English. While some students disagree and do not find that watching films helps with their English vocabulary. In this case, it could be because the students have other methods that work for them or because they do not find the interest that everyone else finds in watching movies, even though nobody who participated found films to be a detrimental resource, instead they saw it as a good method. Still, there can be a reason, as every student is different and learns in a different way. The Swedish curriculum also states that when exposed to the English language and to texts, students should be given the opportunity to
develop the ability to relate the content to their own experiences, life circumstances, and interests. In this case, it is possible that the students are uninterested in watching movies. Instead, they learn in other ways, using other methods that work better for them.

Another reason could be that they are struggling with learning disabilities. As mentioned above, Indrarthne (2019) indicates that it is estimated that 10% of the world's population is diagnosed with dyslexia. The question then is: how many of the students that participated in the study may have some kind of diagnosis, and how many of them haven't been diagnosed and have gotten the right method in their education to give them the same opportunity as everyone else? The task of Swedish education is to ensure that all children and students have the same high-level education and activities in a safe environment. It is up to the school to make adaptations and ensure that possibilities to use alternative means are made available in collaboration with the students. Whether learning is beneficial for one of the students with dyslexia must be decided on a case-by-case basis. Trainers should be able to provide different versions of the same text, or in this case, different methods to learn (Hildén, 2013). This is why it is important for teachers to influence their teaching and use the right method in education to make sure a child with learning difficulties gets the right help (Indrarthne, 2019).

Furthermore, in the Reilly and Barber-Smith (1982) study, we can see the results of the use of film in education when it comes to students with learning difficulties. Even though this study is based on students aged 13 to 15 with a reading level like a primary student. The study showed that the use of film increased their vocabulary a lot. The group that had both read the script and watched the film, had increased their vocabulary the highest. In this case, it is obvious to say that the use of films is not just the effect the students need to increase their vocabulary, but the use of subtitles as well is a real advantage to have while watching a film. Subtitles, as discovered by Sze (2006), Edge (1993), and Putras (2014), are a powerful tool for helping ESL students learn vocabulary. In this case, it can be from using a student's mother tongue as the subtitle or English. However, in primary school, the use of Swedish subtitles is more useful as they have not learned how to read English. This school year focuses heavily on developing students' communication skills, which include speaking, writing, and conversing. In addition to listening and reading, reception

Lastly, the National Curriculum is designed to be able to use different strategies to facilitate communication when language skills are insufficient. Furthermore, the students must have the opportunity to develop their knowledge based on various sources. Conditions should also be
created for students to use a variety of learning, understanding, creation, and communication methods. The goal of the study is to pique students' interest in languages and cultures while also emphasizing the benefits of language skills (Lgr22, 2022). This may not work for every student, but having multiple sources and the opportunity to use different methods is beneficial. However, the use of films was not entirely positive, as the Ho and Kong study revealed that the use of pictures with words did not increase the vocabulary of students with dyslexia as effectively as they had hoped. Instead, they became the lowest-scoring group, and their theory is that it already showed major problems in their native language. In the other groups, everyone who speaks the same mother tongue scored higher, and their vocabulary had increased more. In this case, we can connect film to these classroom studies because, when we watch a film, we see moving pictures. And when they used only one picture with words, the result was that it did not improve the reading ability of an ELL with dyslexia. In this case, we can debate whether film is a good educational tool for students. However, it doesn’t show the result if they had taken more than one picture. What would have happened if they could have instead shown a film through photos that showed picture after picture, which would create a story? Would that effect the students' English vocabulary more and increase it?

6. Conclusion

The aim of my research was to explore the advantages and disadvantages of using English language films in an English Language Learner’s classroom and how effective it is to use film as a tool for students who are diagnosed with dyslexia. Did I find what I was looking for? Not really. I found that my investigation couldn’t be studied, as there were no articles that explored the use of film as an educational tool for ESL students from 1st to 3rd grade. Or, for that matter, students with dyslexia, which in this case is understandable. According to Svenska Dyslexiföreningen (Swedish Dyslexia Association, n.d.), in my case, my entire investigation is aimed at students. As Svenska Dyslexiföreningen states, the chances of diagnosing a student with visible signs of having dyslexia from 1st to 3rd grade is difficult at such a young age as language is still in a process of development during this time.

However, even though there were no studies on my age group. The use of film as a method has been shown to be a good one, as much research has found it to be an advantage and a good
educational tool for ELLs. After my research, I can state that using subtitles while watching a film increases the student’s vocabulary. Reilly and Barber-Smith (1982) showed that students’ vocabulary develops, and even develops more than the vocabulary of students who only watch the movie or just read the script. At the same time, they developed more than the students who were in the group that had "regular" lessons, who did not develop anything at all during the study.

Finally, I wish there were more research efforts in this field. Not many have done research about ELLs with dyslexia, and there is not much research on the effect of film on vocabulary acquisition for an ELL with dyslexia, especially at the primary school level. I believe it is because first through third grade students are in the early stages of learning a second language. The students are still in the process of learning the official language of their country. Therefore, it is a process for students with reading difficulties or learning, who already find the official language a difficult learning process. In addition, many teachers today appear to not consider films to be a good method to use in teaching, and this may have an influence on the number of studies that examine the effect of using films in teaching. Therefore, research on the use of films for vocabulary acquisition for all students presents interesting possibilities, and even more so for English language students with dyslexia. And this is something I am interested in finding out. As an ESL person with dyslexia, I found watching films and videos in English to be a great educational tool for learning the English language, and it help a lot with my English vocabulary. I can see myself as a teacher using this method as an educational tool for my students in primary school. In this case, can give me the opportunity to investigate this research question as well and find out what the effects are of using film as an educational tool for an ELL in primary school and how it increases their English vocabulary?

Reference:


https://web-p-ebscohost-com.proxy.mau.se/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=5095ad05-7fc2-41ec-ac62-5b906b408100%40redis


