

# The Role of Authentic Audiovisual Materials in Enhancing ESL Learning Outcomes: A Systematic Review (2016–2024)

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## ABSTRACT

This systematic review investigates the influence of authentic audiovisual materials (AAMs) on English as a Second Language (ESL) learning outcomes, synthesizing research published between 2016 and 2024. Drawing on 30 peer-reviewed empirical studies retrieved from Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar, and structured through the PRISMA framework, the review provides a comprehensive overview of how AAMs affect various dimensions of second language acquisition. The analysis reveals that AAMs play a pivotal role in enhancing learners' listening comprehension, primarily by immersing them in naturalistic language use, diverse accents, and spontaneous speech patterns. In addition to auditory gains, learners benefit from improved vocabulary acquisition as they engage with lexicon embedded in real-world contexts. Furthermore, the inclusion of culturally rich content contributes to the development of intercultural competence and fosters positive attitudes toward language learning. AAMs also support learner motivation by promoting engagement and autonomy, particularly when learners are given the agency to select content aligned with their interests. Despite these advantages, the review identifies persistent challenges such as inconsistent content quality, digital inequity, and a lack of pedagogical guidance in implementing AAMs effectively. Educators are encouraged to integrate AAMs with pre-, while-, and post-viewing tasks to maximize learning outcomes. The findings underscore the pedagogical potential of AAMs in modern ESL classrooms and advocate for longitudinal studies exploring their sustained impact. Future research should also examine the role of adaptive learning technologies and personalization strategies to optimize the integration of AAMs across varied instructional settings.

**Keywords:** authentic materials, audiovisual input, ESL learning, systematic review, technology-enhanced language learning

## INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by globalization and rapid technological advancement, English as a Second Language (ESL) education has increasingly shifted toward leveraging authentic materials to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-life communication. Traditional language teaching tools, such as textbook dialogues and scripted recordings, often lack the spontaneity, cultural richness, and linguistic diversity inherent in natural discourse (Richards, 2015). This limitation has catalyzed a growing interest in authentic audiovisual materials (AAMs) resources created for native speakers that include films, podcasts, news broadcasts, and social media videos. These materials expose learners to unscripted language, diverse regional accents, and rich sociocultural contexts, thus fostering critical skills for effective communication in multicultural settings (Sydorenko et al., 2019). Platforms such as YouTube and streaming services have further democratized access to such content, making it a cornerstone of modern ESL pedagogy. Learners engaging with AAMs demonstrate improved listening comprehension, vocabulary retention, and intercultural awareness compared to those relying on traditional resources (Kohnke, 2021).

AAMs are broadly defined as unedited, real-world resources created for purposes other than language teaching, such as entertainment, information sharing, or social interaction (Hafner, Chik, & Jones, 2015). Examples include films and TV shows that provide exposure to colloquial expressions, cultural norms, and idiomatic language; podcasts and interviews showcasing spontaneous speech and varied accents; and social media platforms offering engaging, learner-relevant short-form videos like TikToks or YouTube Shorts.

Unlike conventional scripted teaching materials, these resources reflect the dynamic and unpredictable nature of real-life communication, preparing learners for authentic interactions beyond the classroom (Sydorenko et al., 2019). Furthermore, their multimodal nature blending auditory, visual, and contextual cues aligns with the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer, 2024), which emphasizes the enhanced comprehension and retention that occur when information is presented through multiple modalities. New advancements such as AI-powered subtitle tools and personalized video recommendations may further enhance AAMs by adjusting content to suit learners' progress and interests.

The theoretical basis for using AAMs in ESL education is supported by two key frameworks. The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML) posits that learners can process and retain information more effectively when it is presented through dual coding, such as spoken language paired with visuals. Authentic videos reduce cognitive load by contextualizing language through accompanying gestures, scenes, and visual settings, allowing learners to decode meaning more effectively (Mayer, 2024). Similarly, Authentic Learning Theory underscores the importance of real-world resources and tasks in fostering meaningful learning experiences. AAMs simulate real-life communication scenarios, providing learners with opportunities to engage in context-rich language practice that mirrors the demands of genuine interactions (Herrington & Oliver, 2000).

Empirical evidence supports the multifaceted benefits of incorporating AAMs into ESL instruction. Studies have shown that these resources significantly enhance listening comprehension by exposing learners to natural speech patterns, rapid dialogue, and diverse accents, which improve their ability to decode unstructured language (Kohnke, 2021). They also aid vocabulary acquisition by embedding new words within visual and situational contexts, allowing learners to infer meanings and retain discipline-specific or colloquial terms more effectively (Sydorenko et al., 2019). Moreover, audiovisual materials foster cultural competence by portraying social norms, humor, and intercultural nuances, which are critical for effective communication in globalized contexts (Byram, 2021). Additionally, learners report higher motivation and autonomy when engaging with authentic content that aligns with their personal interests, such as TED Talks or YouTube tutorials ((Hafner, Chik, & Jones, 2015).

Despite these advantages, the integration of AAMs into ESL classrooms is not without challenges. Linguistic and content variability can make it difficult to align materials with learners' proficiency levels, potentially leading to frustration or cognitive overload (Richards, 2015). Limited access to technology and digital literacy in low-resource settings further complicates the equitable use of audiovisual materials in education (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). Additionally, the absence of adequate pedagogical scaffolding—such as previewing vocabulary lists, guided comprehension tasks, or post-viewing reflective discussions—can hinder learners from fully extracting linguistic and cultural insights from these resources (Sydorenko et al., 2019).

However, while the benefits of AAMs are well-documented, several limitations in existing research remain unaddressed. Many prior studies are short-term in scope, focusing on immediate learning outcomes without investigating the sustained impact of AAMs on long-term language development. This narrow temporal lens limits our understanding of whether such materials contribute to enduring gains in language proficiency. Additionally, while the proliferation of platforms like YouTube has been acknowledged, the role of algorithm-driven content exposure, personalized learning, and AI-enhanced features (e.g., adaptive subtitles) remains underexplored (Shadiev & Yu, 2022). Furthermore, most existing literature is centered on learners in urban or Western contexts, often overlooking how AAMs function in underrepresented, resource-constrained, or non-Western educational settings—contexts where technological access, cultural familiarity, and pedagogical practices may differ significantly (Byram, 2021).

This review seeks to fill these gaps by synthesizing recent empirical studies (2016–2024) and addressing three critical needs: (1) a more nuanced understanding of how AAMs impact key ESL outcomes like listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural competence; (2) an exploration of the pedagogical strategies that mediate these effects in diverse classroom contexts; and (3) a forward-looking analysis of how innovations in technology and equity-based considerations can shape future implementation.

To this end, this review aims to answer two key research questions:

How do AAMs impact listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural competence in ESL learning?

What challenges and pedagogical strategies are associated with integrating AAMs into ESL classrooms?

By consolidating fragmented findings and contextualizing them within evolving educational and technological landscapes, this study makes a unique contribution to the field. It not only offers practical insights for educators but also highlights emerging areas of inquiry, including AI-enhanced content delivery and equitable access to authentic resources in underserved contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) methodology was employed in this study to ensure a rigorous, transparent, and replicable review process. PRISMA comprises four sequential stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. These stages are visually represented in Figure 1. The PRISMA framework was selected for its comprehensiveness and adaptability, making it ideal for synthesizing empirical research on the role of authentic audiovisual materials (AAMs) in English as a Second Language (ESL) learning outcomes. The implementation of PRISMA in this study involved the following key phases, detailed below.

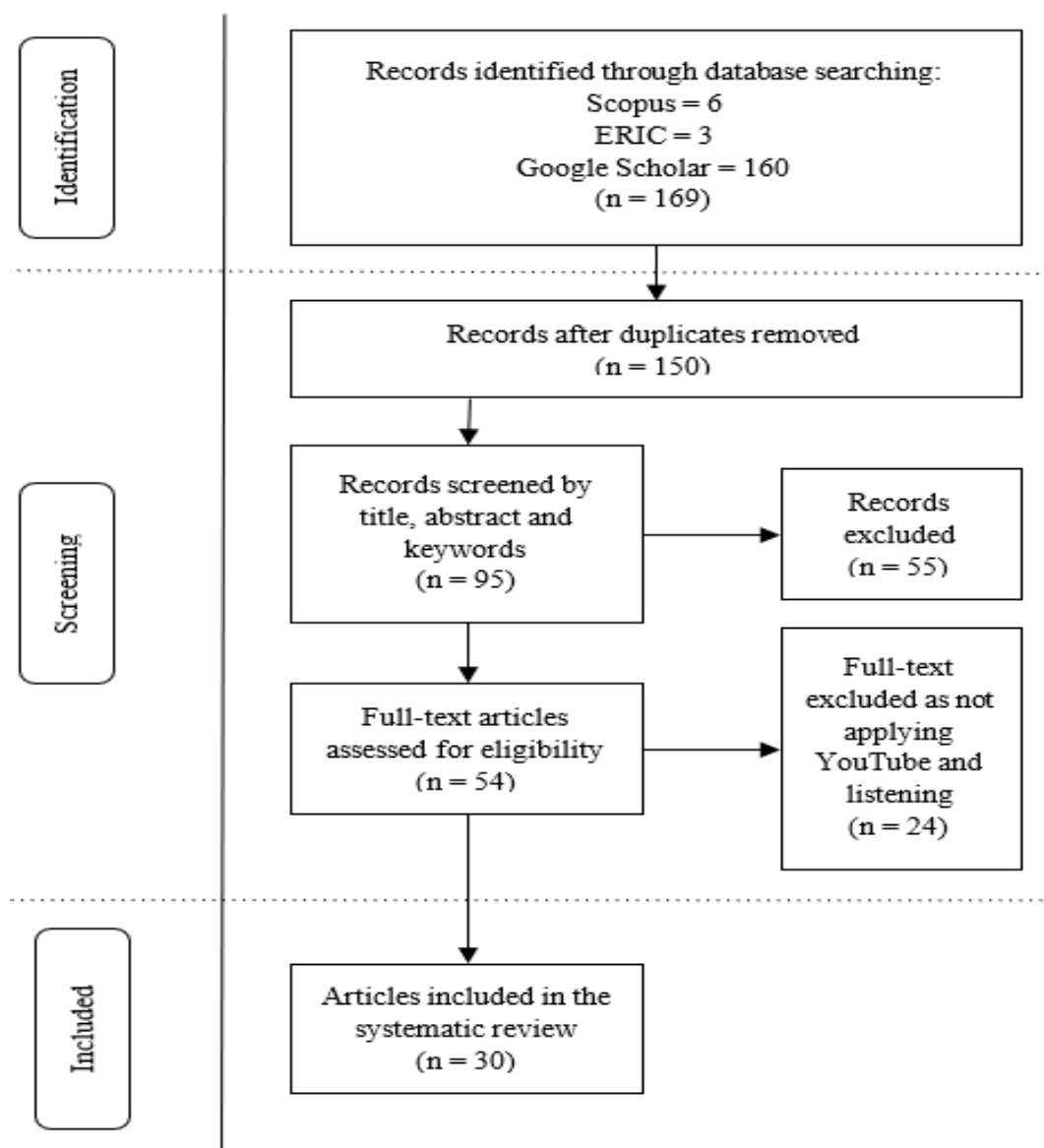


Figure 1. PRISMA systematic review adapted from The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews.

## Identification

To capture a wide range of relevant literature, a comprehensive search strategy was adopted using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators (e.g., AND, OR). The search targeted peer-reviewed studies focusing on "authentic audiovisual material," "listening comprehension," and "vocabulary retention" in ESL/EFL contexts.

Three major databases—Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar—were selected for this review. Scopus and ERIC were included due to their well-established indexing of high-quality education and language acquisition research. Google Scholar was also included despite its broad and less-filtered scope because it offers access to a wide range of academic literature, including studies from less mainstream journals and regional publications that may not be indexed in traditional databases. This inclusion helped ensure a more comprehensive and inclusive dataset, especially for emerging or underrepresented research areas such as ESL learning in non-Western or technologically constrained contexts.

To manage the breadth of Google Scholar and maintain quality, only the first 160 results sorted by relevance were reviewed, a standard cut-off in systematic reviews using this platform.

Database	Search String
Google Scholar 160 results	("authentic audiovisual material" OR "authentic multimedia resources" OR "real-world videos") AND ("ESL learning outcomes" OR "English language acquisition" OR "listening comprehension" OR "vocabulary retention")
ERIC 3 results	("authentic audiovisual material" OR "authentic multimedia resources" OR "real-world videos") AND ("ESL learning outcomes" OR "English language acquisition" OR "listening comprehension" OR "vocabulary retention")
Scopus 6 results	(TITLE-ABS-KEY("authentic audiovisual material*" OR "authentic multimedia resource*" OR "real-world video*") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY("ESL learning outcome*" OR "English language acquisition" OR "listening comprehension" OR "vocabulary retention"))

## Screening

The screening phase applied strict inclusion and exclusion criteria to filter relevant studies and ensure methodological robustness. Only peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2016 and 2024 were considered. Studies were included if they examined the impact of AAMs—such as films, podcasts, news broadcasts, or YouTube videos—on ESL or EFL learners, specifically focusing on skills such as listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation accuracy, or cultural competence.

To enhance reliability, each study was assessed for methodological quality. This included examining sample size adequacy, clarity of research design (e.g., experimental, quasi-experimental, mixed methods), and alignment between research objectives and findings. Studies lacking a clear methodological framework, or those with anecdotal evidence or poorly defined variables, were excluded during the screening process.

Criterion	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Publication Date	Between 2016-2024	Before 2016 and after 2024
Focus	Research on AAMs (e.g., films, podcasts, news broadcasts, YouTube videos) used in ESL learning	Studies focusing on non-authentic or generalized multimedia use unrelated to ESL
Language skills	Listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation accuracy, or cultural competence	Other language skills without linking to audiovisual materials
Sources	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Excludes unpublished manuscripts,

		conference proceedings, or non-peer-reviewed materials
Language	Papers written in English	Papers written in languages other than English
Context	ESL/EFL learners of any age group or proficiency level	Studies not involving ESL/EFL learners
Relevance	Directly addresses ESL/EFL learning outcomes and authentic audiovisual resources	Papers unrelated to ESL/EFL or do not focus on AAMs

## Inclusion

After applying the above criteria, 30 studies were ultimately selected for inclusion. The final pool consisted of articles derived from 160 results in Google Scholar, 3 from ERIC, and 6 from Scopus.

The majority of the selected studies examined the impact of YouTube and other AAMs on enhancing ESL learners' listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. A smaller subset addressed pronunciation and cultural competence. Most studies used experimental or mixed-method designs and primarily involved secondary or tertiary-level ESL/EFL learners, reflecting a growing pedagogical interest in integrating real-world multimedia into language education. The selected studies represent a diverse range of geographical contexts, contributing to the generalizability of the findings.

Study	Database	Aim	Samples	Findings
Danilina et al. (2020)	ERIC	To compare intentional and incidental vocabulary acquisition using AAMs in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context, focusing on political science students.	20 pupils of third-year political science students.	The study found that intentional vocabulary learning, supported by structured activities, was over 20% more effective in retention and usage compared to incidental learning through AAMs. This highlights the value of guided strategies over self-directed approaches.
Hussain, Khan, Yousafzai (2022)	Google Scholar	To examine how authentic materials enhance listening and speaking skills among ESL secondary-level learners in the Access Program, targeting underprivileged communities in Karachi, Pakistan.	25 students aged between 13 to 16 years with a very low level of English language proficiency and four teachers.	The study found that authentic materials significantly improved ESL learners' listening and speaking skills, as evidenced by higher post-test scores in both areas. While students felt more motivated and prepared for real-world communication, challenges such as cultural sensitivity and suitability for different proficiency levels were highlighted.
Karjo, Winiharti & Arsyad (2022)	Google Scholar	To compare the effectiveness of video-based and audio-based listening tests in English language teaching contexts.	100 students of the English Department of Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta.	The study confirms that multimodal presentations, such as video-based listening tests, significantly enhance EFL students' listening comprehension compared to audio-only tests, as they provide both visual and auditory inputs.
Chamba	Google	The study aimed to	22 students at the	It found that the experimental group,

& Gavilanes (2019)	Scholar	assess the impact of AAMs on oral fluency in university-level intermediate English students.	third English level (CEFR-A2).	which used authentic resources, showed significant improvements in oral fluency compared to the control group that used textbook-based materials, with advancements measured through word count, pauses, and accuracy in post-tests.
Lewis & Datzman (2020)	Google Scholar, ERIC	The study aimed to examine the effectiveness of mobile-based AAMs (AAM) in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among Japanese university EFL students. It focused on evaluating the impact of such materials on learners with varying levels of prior vocabulary knowledge.	66 non-English major students from the Engineering and Environmental Studies departments at a university in southwestern Japan.	The study found that mobile-based AAM had a significant positive effect on vocabulary acquisition, as demonstrated by the treatment group's superior test performance compared to the control group. Notably, the intervention was equally effective for both high and low achievers, with prior vocabulary knowledge not being predictive of outcomes.
Abbas (2018)	Google Scholar	To explore the role of video materials in EFL classrooms, focusing on understanding why teachers and students incorporate these materials and how they perceive their benefits for English language teaching and learning.	Four teachers who teach various language courses (Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, and Grammar) at a tertiary institution in Oman and four undergraduate students majoring in English as a foreign language.	The analysis revealed that both teachers and students highly value the use of video materials in EFL classrooms. Teachers found them effective in enhancing students' engagement, while students felt they supported better comprehension and learning.
Öztürk, Karayığit & Artuk (2022)	Google Scholar	The study aimed to investigate the impact of using authentic BBC cartoons ("Bing") on the listening and speaking proficiency of primary school EFL students. It also explored students' perceptions of integrating AAMs into their language learning process.	3rd and 4th-grade students in EFL classrooms	The findings highlight the effectiveness of integrating authentic videos in improving listening and speaking skills, as well as fostering positive perceptions of using such materials.
Suárez & Gesa (2019)	Google Scholar	The study aimed to explore how sustained exposure to captioned video impacts	117 participants: 57 learners (28 males and 29 females), aged	The study highlights how the experimental group, exposed to captioned videos aligned with textbook vocabulary, showed

		vocabulary learning in EFL learners. It specifically investigated the roles of proficiency and language aptitude in mediating vocabulary acquisition.	15–16, enrolled in their last year of compulsory secondary education, and 60 first-year university students (21 males, 39 females) aged 18–26	notable improvement in vocabulary recall and meaning recognition compared to the control group. Notably, proficiency levels influenced learning outcomes, while aptitude predominantly affected comprehension of vocabulary meanings. This underscores the effectiveness of captioned video as a learning tool, fostering inclusivity across different learner profiles.
Chamba & Gavilanes (2019)	Google Scholar	To evaluate how AAMs, such as videos and films, influence the oral fluency of intermediate-level university EFL students.	22 university students at the CEFR-A2 level	The experimental group showed significant improvements in oral fluency, measured by the number of words spoken, reduced pauses, and fewer vocal fillers. Authentic materials were found to foster better vocabulary usage and accuracy compared to traditional resources.
Zarei & Parhizkari (2017)	Google Scholar	To explore whether media literacy skills correlate with improved listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate EFL learners.	84 Iranian EFL learners at intermediate proficiency levels.	These materials significantly improved students' listening comprehension, helping them grasp spoken language with greater accuracy. The study emphasizes the role of subtitles in enhancing learners' ability to connect spoken words with their textual representations, enriching both vocabulary acquisition and overall understanding of the language. These results highlight the effectiveness of incorporating AAMs into EFL classrooms for developing listening proficiency.
Kyaw & Hlaing (2020)	Google Scholar	To explore how new technologies can enhance English listening skills in ESL learners and replace traditional methods.	Fourth-year students at the University of Information Technology, Yangon.	The study analyzes how technology enhances English teaching through tools like online platforms, mobile applications, and immersive technologies such as VR and AR. It highlights the transformative role of these resources in democratizing language learning, offering personalization, interactive experiences, and cultural immersion. Notable advancements include adaptive learning systems, gamified exercises, and digital portfolios that boost engagement and track progress. Challenges such as equitable access and teacher training are addressed, emphasizing the need for ethical implementation and continuous innovation to ensure

				inclusive, effective language education.
Gesa & Miralpeix (2022)	Google Scholar	To evaluate whether sustained exposure to subtitled TV series enhances vocabulary learning among EFL learners at different proficiency levels.	158 Catalan/Spanish EFL learners split across beginner (Grade 6), intermediate (Grade 10), and upper-intermediate (university) levels.	Notable benefits were observed at the intermediate level, where learners demonstrated significant improvements in recalling both forms and meanings of target words compared to control groups engaged in unrelated activities. The findings also reveal that vocabulary learning outcomes are influenced by proficiency levels, with more advanced learners achieving superior results.
Fujita (2019)	Google Scholar	To examine the impact of American TV drama-based materials on the listening comprehension abilities and attitudes of EFL learners at different proficiency levels, specifically within a Japanese university	31 students in the upper-level class and 28 students in the lower-level class.	The study highlights that American TV drama-based materials can positively influence EFL learners' listening comprehension and attitudes, irrespective of proficiency level. Students were motivated by the drama-based approach and valued its cultural insights, emphasizing its potential as an engaging teaching material for diverse proficiency levels.
Gesa & Miralpeix (2023)	Google Scholar, Scopus	To investigate the effects of extensive captioned TV viewing as additional input on vocabulary acquisition and retention among secondary school EFL learners.	64 Grade 10 EFL learners	The study demonstrated that vocabulary acquisition occurred primarily through intentional learning activities, but additional captioned TV viewing significantly enhanced lexical gains at various testing intervals. Both groups showed similar vocabulary retention rates in an eight-month delayed post-test. These findings underscore the role of extensive audiovisual input, particularly captioned TV series, as a valuable supplement to vocabulary learning in structured instructional settings.
Lo (2024)	Google Scholar	To explore the extent to which repeated viewings of dual-subtitled videos enhance vocabulary learning and retention in EFL learners.	60 Chinese-speaking university EFL learners at the lower-intermediate proficiency level.	The study found that watching dual-subtitled videos repeatedly helps learners improve their vocabulary. Immediate repetition works better than spaced repetition, and both are more effective than no repetition. This shows that repeated viewings with subtitles can significantly boost vocabulary learning for language students.
Utari & Nurviyani	Google	To investigate the effectiveness of using	Second-grade senior high school	The use of video in teaching listening significantly improved



(2019)	Scholar	video as a teaching tool to improve listening skills among second-grade senior high school students, focusing on its implementation through classroom action research.	students	students' listening skills. In cycle 1, the mean scores rose from 53.06 (pre-test) to 57.83 (post-test). In cycle 2, scores increased further, from 71.94 (pre-test) to 75.81 (post-test). Students reported that videos helped them understand content more easily, and observations showed that videos created a fun and engaging learning environment.
Nguyen & Boers (2019)	Google Scholar	To explore how retelling the content of TED Talks impacts incidental vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners, focusing on the input–output–input sequence of activities.	64 lower-intermediate EFL learners	The experimental group demonstrated significantly better vocabulary recall, as posttests showed that attempting to use new words during the oral summaries increased the chances of retaining them. This supports theories like Swain's output hypothesis and illustrates TED Talks' effectiveness as authentic audiovisual resources for vocabulary development in EFL classrooms.
Promsing, Chumpav an & Chaya (2017)	Google Scholar	The study investigated the effectiveness of using English movie clips to improve the listening abilities of Thai university students and their attitudes toward English lessons.	60 first-year students enrolled in the "English for Everyday Use" course at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep.	The results showed significant improvements in both listening skills and attitudes among students who were taught using English movie clips compared to those in the control group. The study demonstrated that integrating movie clips into lessons is an effective method for enhancing listening ability and fostering positive engagement.
Ghalimbe rti & Miralpeix (2018)	Google Scholar, Scopus	To explore how different subtitling modes (L1, L2, or none) influence vocabulary acquisition and comprehension among beginner-level Italian EFL learners watching undubbed TV series.	52 sixth-grade beginner EFL learners	All groups showed improvements in vocabulary recall (form and meaning) from pre-test to post-test. However, the L2 subtitling group exhibited significantly higher vocabulary recall gains compared to the L1 and no-subtitle groups. This advantage was not observed for episode comprehension, suggesting that L2 subtitling specifically supports vocabulary learning.
Majuddin, Siyanova-Chanturia & Boers (2021)	Google Scholar	To investigate how captioned L2 television supports incidental acquisition of multiword expressions (MWEs), while analyzing the effects of typographic	122 L2 learners	Repetition significantly improved both content comprehension and the acquisition of MWEs. Normal captions boosted MWE recall compared to no captions, but typographic enhancement reduced the effectiveness of captions for content comprehension. These

		enhancement and repetition.		results suggest that captioned television can be a powerful tool for learning MWEs, particularly with repeated exposure.
Talaván, Lertola & Moreno (2022)	Google Scholar	To assess the potential of audio description (AD) and subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH) as tools to enhance foreign language learning, particularly focusing on written production, oral production, and translation skills in an online collaborative setting.	25 undergraduates of English Studies at a Spanish university.	Quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed improvements in written production and general translation skills through the use of AD and SDH. The pedagogical application of these media accessibility modes proved effective in fostering language learning outcomes. The study also emphasized the potential for a systematic approach to utilizing AD and SDH in foreign language education.
Vanderplank & Teng (2024)	Google Scholar, Scopus	To compare Vanderplank's cognitive-affective model with Gesa and Miralpeix's empirical findings, focusing on how captioned media enhances intentional vocabulary learning.	Two groups of beginner learners (children) and intermediate learners (adolescents).	This study highlights that captioned audiovisual content is a powerful tool for intentional vocabulary learning. Regularly watching videos with captions improves speech segmentation, decoding skills, and vocabulary recall while reducing cognitive effort. It emphasizes the importance of engaging learners through both detailed language elements (bottom-up) and broader concepts (top-down). The use of captions creates dynamic learning opportunities, making vocabulary acquisition more effective and interactive.
Díaz, Aristega, Moreno & Chong (2024)	Google Scholar	To evaluate how bottom-up listening strategies combined with social media can improve listening comprehension among A2-level EFL university students in online classes.	200 university students, aged 19 to 21 years old.	The study found that implementing bottom-up listening strategies through social media platforms like Nearpod significantly improved listening skills among university-level EFL students. The experimental group showed a notable increase in post-test scores compared to the control group, highlighting the effectiveness of combining targeted listening exercises with modern digital tools. Social media integration also aligned well with students' preferences, making the learning process more engaging and productive.
Widodo & Rozak	Google Scholar	To explore how online video-assisted extensive	24 student teachers from an	The study found that while participants initially struggled with

(2016)		listening (EL), combined with reflective and collaborative practices, can enhance listening skills and foster autonomy in intermediate-level English student teachers in Indonesia.	Indonesian Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program.	language-related difficulties, they developed positive attitudes towards the online video-assisted EL approach. They reported improvements in learning to listen for meaning, as well as becoming more autonomous and reflective language learners. The process encouraged moving beyond teacher-led instruction, with the teacher acting as a facilitator and collaborator, which further engaged participants.
Elejalde (2024)	Google Scholar	To enhance oral abilities and pronunciation of 1st-year Bachillerato students in the Basque Country by incorporating didactic dubbing of vertical videos into the learning process.	Students with Spanish and Basque as their L1 and English as their L2.	The study found that creating vertical videos with didactic dubbing helped students improve their oral abilities and pronunciation while engaging with modern, mobile-friendly content formats. Through project-based learning and group activities, learners developed practical communication skills and addressed transversal elements like social media use and interpersonal relationships, making the process interactive and relevant to their interests.
del Mar Suárez & Gesa (2020)	Google Scholar	To integrate experimental tests on vocabulary acquisition into regular curricular activities without being intrusive, using the episodes of I Love Lucy as a central teaching tool.	University students enrolled in an English language subject within the Media Studies degree.	While the students demonstrated vocabulary learning, watching the episodes alone did not lead to greater vocabulary gains. However, the inclusion of reflective practices in their e-portfolios was effective in helping students understand their language learning progress, providing insight into their viewing habits and in-class experiences.
Aisyah Mustofa & Setiawan (2022)	Google Scholar	To investigate how watching Netflix series, as AAMs, impacts the language skill maintenance of English teachers, including their language proficiency, cultural awareness, and attitudes toward teaching.	20 English teachers	The study found that watching Netflix series significantly enhanced English teachers' language proficiency, cultural awareness, and positive attitudes toward teaching. The use of AAMs like Netflix helped teachers maintain their language skills and provided valuable tools for professional and educational growth, highlighting the benefits of integrating popular media platforms into language learning routines.
Alghonaim (2019)	Google Scholar	To investigate how consistent exposure to	A child from Buraidah city,	The study found that consistent exposure to English TV cartoons

		TV English cartoons impacts language acquisition in an EFL environment, focusing on the development of linguistic skills in a young Arabic child over a seven-year period.	Saudi Arabia, who watched English TV cartoons for at least 3 hours a day from the age of 3 to 10.	significantly enhanced a child's language acquisition, even in a non-English-speaking environment. The child progressed through developmental interlanguage phases similar to native speakers and developed a native-like accent despite limited active use of English. This highlights the effectiveness of long-term, purposeful exposure to AAMs in fostering language learning and pronunciation skills. The study also offers recommendations for educators and parents to consider similar approaches for language development in children.
Van der Kolk & Feijóo Antolín (2024)	Google Scholar	To evaluate how brief exposure to L1 subtitled, L2 captioned, and reverse subtitled audiovisual inputs affects three aspects of vocabulary learning: meaning, form, and pronunciation in an EFL context.	10 L1 Spanish participants who watched three video clips in different viewing modes.	The study found that brief exposure to reverse subtitled and L2 captioned videos significantly improved participants' ability to produce accurate written forms of vocabulary, while L1 subtitled videos were more effective in enhancing pronunciation. The results highlighted the varying impacts of different viewing modes on vocabulary learning, with mixed outcomes observed for meaning recognition.
Erazo, Cuello, Jiménez & Pérez (2024)	Google Scholar	To evaluate the effectiveness of artificial intelligence applications, specifically Lyricstraining, in improving listening skills among EFL learners.	16 first-year students from the Instituto 'Universitario 17 de julio'.	The study concluded that using Lyricstraining significantly improved students' listening skills within three weeks. The personalized practice through songs positively impacted learners' attitudes toward English language acquisition, highlighting the potential of AI tools in making language learning engaging and effective.

## RESULTS

The systematic review of 30 peer-reviewed studies revealed that authentic audiovisual materials (AAMs) have a multifaceted and predominantly positive impact on ESL learning, particularly in the areas of listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural competence.

Listening comprehension emerged as the most consistently enhanced skill. Multimodal inputs—where audio and visual cues work in tandem were repeatedly shown to support understanding by reducing cognitive load and aiding speech segmentation. For instance, Karjo, Winiharti, and Arsyad (2022) found that learners performed better on video-based listening tests compared to audio-only formats. Other studies (e.g., Lo, 2024; Vanderplank & Teng, 2024) demonstrated that the use of captioned and dual-subtitled videos enhanced

learners' ability to process and comprehend spoken language, particularly when materials were viewed repeatedly. Technological innovations like VR and AI-based platforms (e.g., Lyricstraining, as discussed by Erazo et al., 2024) further extended access to immersive and engaging listening experiences.

In terms of vocabulary acquisition, the results highlighted the effectiveness of AAMs in reinforcing word retention and contextual usage. Captioned and subtitled videos consistently supported vocabulary development by visually linking spoken and written forms. Suárez and Gesa (2019) reported a 20% improvement in vocabulary retention when learners used captioned videos aligned with textbook content. Other studies emphasized the benefit of repetition and context-rich materials, such as TED Talks (Nguyen & Boers, 2019) and mobile video clips (Lewis & Datzman, 2020), in promoting long-term lexical retention. Subtitling mode was also found to influence outcomes: L2 subtitles improved word recognition and retention (Galimberti & Miralpeix, 2018), while reverse subtitling helped learners with pronunciation (Van der Kolk & Feijóo Antolin, 2024).

With regard to cultural competence, AAMs offered learners valuable exposure to real-life sociolinguistic contexts. Studies such as Fujita (2019) and Aisyah Mustofa & Setiawan (2022) demonstrated that TV dramas and Netflix series increased learners' familiarity with idiomatic expressions, cultural practices, and native-like pronunciation. Longitudinal findings from Alghonaim (2019) revealed that long-term exposure to English-language cartoons contributed to near-native accent development. Moreover, project-based tasks like dubbing or analyzing vertical videos (Elejalde, 2024) were found to actively engage students in cultural narratives, fostering both linguistic and intercultural fluency.

## DISCUSSION

The analysis of findings across the 30 studies confirms that AAMs, particularly YouTube and other video-based materials, significantly support the development of listening comprehension and vocabulary in ESL learners. The immersive, authentic nature of AAMs allows learners to engage with real-world speech patterns, accents, and cultural references that traditional classroom materials often lack. For example, learners in multiple studies (Abdulrahman, Basalama, & Widodo, 2018; Asiri, 2022; Kim, 2015) consistently outperformed peers on listening tasks when exposed to authentic video content.

Vocabulary development similarly benefitted from exposure to rich, contextualized language. Learners acquired new vocabulary incidentally, particularly when content included repeated or thematically consistent language, as shown in the works of Arndt & Woore (2018) and Bensalem (2020). Captioning played a critical role in reinforcing vocabulary knowledge and promoting recognition of written word forms, especially when paired with intentional instructional support (Lin & Lin, 2019; Ongoro & Fanjiang, 2023). Though less emphasized in the literature, cultural awareness also improved when learners interacted with media reflecting diverse perspectives and authentic societal contexts (Danyang, Hafner and Miller, 2021; Pasaribu, Salmiah, Sulistyaningrum, & Napitupulu, 2023).

However, the review also identified mixed results and key challenges. Some studies (e.g., Galimberti & Miralpeix, 2018; Van der Kolk & Feijóo, 2024) noted that the effectiveness of subtitles varied depending on learners' proficiency levels and the type of subtitle used. L2 subtitles, while beneficial for vocabulary, did not always improve comprehension. L1 subtitles sometimes confuse learners by distracting from target language input. Similarly, cultural content, although generally beneficial, could be problematic in conservative or unfamiliar educational contexts. Hussain, Khan, and Yousafzai (2022) reported that certain audiovisual materials were culturally inappropriate or difficult to relate to for learners in underprivileged regions of Karachi.

Other practical barriers included technological limitations such as inconsistent internet access and lack of devices in resource-poor settings (Kyaw & Hlaing, 2020). Teachers also faced challenges in selecting age-appropriate, level-suitable content and integrating media into time-constrained curricula (Putri, Affini & Wahyuni, 2023). Limited teacher training in media literacy and instructional design further hindered effective use of AAMs (Ali & Razali, 2019).

To address the aforementioned challenges, the reviewed studies advanced several pedagogical strategies,

though their effectiveness appeared contingent on context-specific implementation and learner variables. Structured lesson planning using pre-, while-, and post-viewing activities was a common approach (Shi, Chan, Wu, & Cheung, 2024) yet their success depended largely on the clarity of learning objectives and the cognitive demands of the tasks. While such structuring can enhance focus and retention, it risks becoming formulaic or superficial if not thoughtfully aligned with learners' developmental needs. Similarly, flipped classroom models were praised for optimizing classroom time by shifting content engagement to the home environment (Danyang, Hafner and Miller, 2021); however, these strategies presuppose reliable access to technology and a degree of learner autonomy that may not be present in all educational contexts.

The practice of tailoring subtitles and audiovisual content to learner proficiency levels (e.g., Gesa & Miralpeix, 2022) was generally effective in improving comprehension and lexical uptake. Yet, the diversity within proficiency bands raises questions about the scalability of such approaches, particularly in mixed-ability classrooms. Moreover, while subtitled content may scaffold input, over-reliance on visual or written cues could inhibit the development of bottom-up listening skills if not complemented by form-focused activities.

Collaborative and project-based learning methods—such as dubbing videos or providing peer feedback (Elejalde, 2024; Talaván et al., 2022)—were shown to foster engagement, intercultural competence, and learner agency. However, these methods also demand significant planning, classroom management skills, and a supportive learning culture to function effectively. Without careful facilitation, such activities may result in uneven participation or superficial engagement with the language content. Thus, while these strategies hold strong pedagogical promise, their success depends on teachers' ability to adapt them meaningfully to learners' needs, technological contexts, and instructional constraints.

From a practical standpoint, educators are encouraged to curate AAMs carefully to ensure cultural appropriateness and level suitability. Not all audiovisual content is equally relevant or appropriate for every learner demographic. Teachers must critically evaluate materials for themes, language complexity, pacing, and sociocultural references that align with learners' linguistic proficiency and cultural sensitivities. For example, content that includes idiomatic expressions, humor, or culturally loaded imagery may confuse or alienate learners if not properly introduced. Thoughtful selection ensures that learners can both relate to and benefit from the material, maximizing engagement and comprehension.

Another key recommendation is to integrate subtitles strategically, choosing between L2 (target language), L1 (native language), or no subtitles based on instructional goals and student needs. Research indicates that L2 subtitles enhance word recognition and spelling, while reverse subtitles can aid in pronunciation and form-meaning mapping. However, L1 subtitles may hinder listening development by diverting attention from spoken input. Therefore, educators must assess learners' proficiency levels and adjust subtitle modes accordingly, perhaps even scaffolding from L1 to L2 subtitles over time to gradually increase exposure and learner independence.

Teachers should also embed AAMs within structured lesson plans that incorporate pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing activities. These structured approaches can guide learner focus, activate prior knowledge, and reinforce comprehension through tasks such as prediction, note-taking, vocabulary mapping, and discussion. Scaffolding techniques such as glossaries, guiding questions, and summary tasks enable learners to build understanding incrementally. Reflection activities, like learner journals or peer discussions, further consolidate knowledge and promote metacognitive awareness of language learning processes.

In addition to training and planning support, it would be highly beneficial to develop explicit guidelines or frameworks that help educators evaluate and choose high-quality AAMs. Such guidelines could include criteria for assessing cultural relevance, language level, audio-visual clarity, and appropriateness for specific learning goals.

Furthermore, to bridge the digital divide, technical solutions tailored for low-technology classrooms should be explored. These may include downloadable video content, mobile applications with offline capabilities, or low-cost projectors with preloaded materials. Addressing these two areas material selection guidance and digital access solutions would enhance the practical implementation of AAMs, especially in underserved or

under-resourced educational contexts.

The use of accessible and user-friendly platforms like YouTube, Nearpod, and Lyricstraining can support both synchronous and asynchronous learning environments. These tools offer personalized, interactive experiences that cater to diverse learning styles. Platforms that allow content sharing, progress tracking, and customization empower learners to explore language at their own pace. In contexts with limited access to traditional classroom resources, such technologies help democratize language education and provide continuity in blended or remote learning models.

Although tools like Lyricstraining show how AI can support language learning, more research is needed to understand how personalized features like adaptive subtitles or content that changes based on progress affect learning outcomes over time. These tools can adjust to each learner's needs but haven't been fully explored in ESL settings.

At the same time, issues of limited access to technology should be addressed more directly. Using solutions like offline learning platforms, mobile apps that work without the internet, or low-cost devices could help learners in areas where technology is not always reliable. These options should be part of future studies to ensure that AAMs can benefit all students, not just those in urban or well-equipped schools.

Another gap found in this review is the lack of practical teaching support. While many researchers recommend pre-, while-, and post-viewing tasks, few provide step-by-step materials that teachers can use right away. To improve classroom practice, there should be more focus on creating simple and adaptable lesson guides that help teachers of different experience levels bring AAMs into their classrooms effectively.

Finally, to maximize the effectiveness of AAMs, there is a pressing need to offer professional development for teachers in the areas of digital media integration and culturally responsive pedagogy. Many educators lack formal training in how to incorporate AAMs meaningfully into their instruction. Workshops, collaborative planning sessions, and peer-sharing platforms can provide teachers with the tools and confidence to select appropriate materials, design effective activities, and respond to learners' cultural and linguistic needs. Teacher empowerment in this domain ensures sustainable and innovative use of AAMs in the long term. To further support educators, especially those new to technology-enhanced instruction, there is a clear need for step-by-step pedagogical manuals and scaffolding toolkits. These guides should provide structured examples of pre-, while-, and post-viewing activities that are easy to adapt across various learner levels. By offering concrete lesson templates, vocabulary planners, comprehension tasks, and reflection prompts, such resources would empower novice teachers to use AAMs with greater confidence and effectiveness.

In summary, while the majority of studies reviewed affirm the substantial benefits of AAMs in enhancing ESL learners' listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural competence, their true value lies in how they are implemented. AAMs are not a one-size-fits-all solution; their impact depends on careful alignment with learner profiles, thoughtful instructional design, and ongoing teacher support. When leveraged strategically, AAMs transform passive language exposure into dynamic, culturally rich learning experiences. As global classrooms grow increasingly diverse and digitally connected, AAMs stand out not merely as supplementary tools, but as essential components of modern, equitable, and engaging language education.

## CONCLUSION

This review highlights the wide-ranging benefits of authentic audiovisual materials (AAMs) in supporting ESL learning, especially in areas like listening, vocabulary, and cultural understanding. These materials offer learners exposure to real-life language use and promote motivation through content that feels relevant and engaging. When paired with effective teaching methods such as planned viewing activities, appropriate subtitling, and collaborative classroom projects, AAMs can turn passive watching into meaningful learning.

Beyond summarizing the advantages, this review also brings attention to real-world challenges, including the lack of access to digital tools, difficulties in finding suitable content, and limited teacher training. To address these gaps, future research should focus on long-term studies to better understand how AAMs impact language

skills over time.

More studies should also explore the use of artificial intelligence in language learning such as personalized subtitles and smart content suggestions to better match materials with learners' needs. Additionally, including research from rural, underserved, or underrepresented regions would give a more complete picture of how AAMs work in different settings.

There is also a need to develop clear guidelines to help teachers choose quality AAMs that match their learners' language level and cultural context. Improving access for schools with limited technology through offline apps, downloadable videos, or portable media can help bridge the digital divide. Finally, providing teachers with simple teaching guides and ready-made lesson plans that include scaffolding activities will help new educators apply AAMs with more confidence and success.

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