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Beyond Entertainment: Moroccan EFL Learners' Perceptions of Film-Based Language Learning in the Digital Streaming Era

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Abstract

The educational landscape has witnessed many changes in the 21st century. Learners and teachers have incrementally relied on various digital resources rather than traditional ones. Films have been significantly used to enhance the teaching practices and learning processes of both teachers and learners. However, studies are still limited in this area of research, as they are proposed by many scholars. This study aims to investigate the learners' perceptions of using films as an English language learning tool. A quantitative research design was chosen, and data were collected through a five-point Likert scale questionnaire from 107 students of the École Normale Supérieure (ENS), Moulay Ismail University. The instrument consisted of two parts: demographic information and learners' perceptions of film-based learning. Descriptive statistics were conducted on the learners' responses using SPSS (version 27). The findings show that films are considered by learners as a vital tool that improves language skills, facilitates vocabulary acquisition, sparks motivation, increases interest, and helps reduce anxiety. Based on these findings, pedagogical implications are drawn to direct the effective use of films in English language learning. Additionally, the study implies that films could be useful in educational contexts due to their authenticity, motivational value, and salient role in boosting the learners' self-confidence.

Keywords: English language learning, films, Moroccan higher education, learners' perceptions

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1. Introduction

Media have revolutionized the educational field and made many contributions to the development of English as a foreign language. With the rise of the film industry, non-native speakers were exposed to this new form of learning. It is of importance to note that it has offered new digital aids that help learners communicate, interact, and explore foreign cultures. This iconic model has enabled learners to use it the way they wish. Platforms such as Netflix, HBO, YouTube, and Disney + allowed their users to choose whatever movies they liked and even "binge-watch" them (Merikivi et al., 2019, pp.3-6), which meant they could continue watching them for a long period. However, in recent decades, movies have gained considerable scholarly attention in the field of English language teaching due to their potential to offer authentic linguistic and cultural input. Within the framework of communicative language teaching and Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), authentic audiovisual materials are considered effective tools for exposing learners to meaningful language use in realistic contexts. Unlike traditional teaching materials, movies combine visual, auditory, and contextual elements that facilitate language comprehension and increase learners' engagement and motivation.

Movies have not just triggered the learners' motivation but also contributed to enhancing the learning process. They can be integrated into the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Several studies have highlighted the pedagogical value of movies in developing learners' listening, speaking, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Ismaili (2013) stressed the role of movies as they reflected real-life situations. They could provide learners with authentic situations that immerse them in living an interesting listening experience as well as being exposed to authentic sources for native daily talks (Goçțu, 2017). Besides, Khan (2015) stated that pictures, sounds, and voices gave plenty of vivid experiences, which contributed to stimulating the learners' grasp of the foreign language. In the same vein, Aliyev and Albay (2016) asserted the contextual role of movies in associating words and phrases. This can help with the understanding and interpretation of the foreign language. Similarly, previous research has shown that movies can reduce learners' anxiety, increase classroom interaction, and create meaningful communicative environments that encourage language acquisition and learner autonomy. Sánchez-Auñón and Férez-Mora (2021) highlighted the advantages of integrating films into English classes, emphasizing their linguistic, intercultural, and motivational contributions. Films provide students with opportunities to improve multiple language skills, including listening, reading, writing, and speaking, as well as to strengthen their understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatic language use (Kabooha, 2016; Liu, 2019; Vyushkina, 2016).

Currently, learners are struggling to seek authentic materials that leverage their motivation and support their language development. Krashen (1985) argues that a person can acquire language naturally through authentic input. Therefore, learners need to be involved in the learning process, which provides new learning methods that stimulate their motivation and autonomy, as well as mitigate their tension and spark their learning engagement.

Despite the increased availability of streaming platforms and digital media, there is a lack of research on how learners perceive these platforms and digital resources, such as movies, in the context of the development of English as a foreign language. Thus, this study aimed to investigate movie learners' perceptions and experiences of using movies as an English language learning tool. More specifically, the study sought to examine the level of motivation, interest, and language development based on the learners' perception of what English movies provide in the Moroccan EFL context. This study will attempt to fill this gap by examining the use of authentic audiovisual materials, particularly movies, in foreign language learning.

1.1. Research Questions

The main research question frames this investigation:

- **RQ1.** How do learners perceive the use of movies in English language learning?

1.2. Research Hypothesis

Based on these outcomes, we can hypothesize the following:

- **H1.** Students have positive perceptions of the use of movies in English language learning.

2. Literature review

2.1. The Impact of Movies on Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary was recognized as a pillar in the English learning process. Researchers have highly emphasized its importance in language learning. In this vein, Wilkins (1972) stated that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p. 111). In this way, movies can provide learners with authentic language input, which enables them to acquire vocabulary and chunks. By being exposed to more often used words and expressions, repeated exposure will allow lexical items to be internalized contextually. This manner can be meaningful rather than mechanical learning. According to previous studies, learners acquired vocabulary more naturally while watching movies when some words were

repeated during the film (Ismaili, 2013). According to Adriano (2019), videos can support students in improving their learning and acquisition of vocabulary.

Furthermore, movies were rich in audiovisual clues that aid learners in picking up vocabulary (Curtis, 2003). Besides, Bellalem et al. (2018) found that subtitled movies significantly enhanced vocabulary learning, with the treatment group outperforming the control group in vocabulary acquisition. In his study, Suparman (2019) investigated whether the use of movies could improve students' vocabulary achievement through a one-group pretest–posttest design involving first-grade students. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery after the treatment. This suggested that movies can effectively support vocabulary development.

Importantly, movies offered an innovative method that conflates amusement and learning. Learners can pick up lexical chunks and real idiomatic phrases in a contextualized manner. Besides, the aesthetically cinematic scenes in numerous movies could ignite learners' curiosity to acquire more vocabulary spontaneously, akin to the mother-tongue daily conversations.

2.2. Movies and the Development of Oral Communication Skills

Developing language skills among EFL learners was considered the bedrock of the language learning process. Hence, incorporating novel methods, such as movies, into the EFL classroom can contribute to enhancing oral skills. According to Ismaili (2013), the visual input offered the learner the opportunity to form mental images, which can enhance listening and speaking skills through meaningful audiovisual input. Additionally, Seferoğlu (2008) asserted that films offer authentic language input and create an engaging context that encourages classroom discussion. In addition to contributing to establishing a comfortable learning environment, films used in EFL classrooms can function as supplementary resources that foster further practice of speaking, reading, and writing skills (Sánchez-Auñón et al., 2023). Therefore, watching movies can provide the learner with real-life exposure to language, as well as different patterns of pronunciation and intonation. Besides, they can help learners learn about the pauses and overlaps in conversation, which were not available in standard coursebooks or traditional materials. Ismaili (2013) stated that a film is a visual bridge for learners who may find it difficult to read long texts, as it supports them in seeing the characters, setting, and plot development. According to Khan (2015), the visual nature of movies facilitated the learners' comprehension by providing an ideal visual context, making them an effective tool in language teaching. Also, she noted that movies offer various resources that maintain the development of students' communication and listening skills.

2.3. Learner Motivation and Interest through Movies

Motivation is a determinant in the language acquisition process. Krashen asserted that the acquisition process is influenced by variables such as learners' motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Krashen, 1982). In this respect, movies have been accepted as a motivating instructional resource that can make the learning environment enjoyable and stimulating. Previous studies have indicated that English-language movies positively influence language learners' motivation (Hsieh et al., 2010). In this regard, Awg Baderulhisam and Zulkiply (2023) found that learners' motivation was strongly and positively related to their perceptions of movies as a learning platform. Similarly, Tognozzi (2010) noted that movies can attract students' attention to the target language and enhance their motivation to learn the language. Cinema has been identified as a highly motivating instructional tool for EFL learners for several reasons, including the fact that films present engaging narratives that students prefer to follow rather than memorize abstract theoretical content (Iranmanesh & Darani, 2018). These previous studies have underscored the salient role of movies in increasing learners' interest and sustaining their motivation.

2.4. Movies and Anxiety Reduction

Movies have played a crucial role in the EFL classroom due to their affective benefits. Compared to the traditional materials used in the classroom, movies supported learners to boost their motivation, self-confidence, and reduce their anxiety by creating a relaxed and less-threatening atmosphere (Zolkapli et al., 2024). Ismaili (2013) similarly stated that movies can help mitigate learners' tension by replacing redundant instructional practices with amusing material. This anxiety reduction can make the learners more confident in participating in classroom activities. Therefore, aiding in creating a stress-free environment of learning. According to Kalra (2017) and Sakić (2022), the use of films in teaching contributes to cultivating a pleasant learning environment that stimulates students' engagement and motivation.

Based on the prior studies, it could be recognized that the positive impact of movies on the learners' learning process was apparent. Within the Moroccan context, watching English movies has emerged as a rampant form, with limited studies on their role in EFL classrooms. Therefore, the present study draws attention to the use of English movies to enrich the existing research in the Moroccan EFL context, particularly in higher education institutions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

A quantitative research design was employed to address the research questions of the study. Quantitative methods are appropriate for investigating learners' perceptions in a structured and measurable manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2. Participants

A total of 107 students were enrolled at the École Normale Supérieure (ENS), Moulay Ismail University. Additionally, all participants in this study were undergraduate students enrolled in the French Department. They were selected using convenience sampling based on their willingness to participate in the study. The participants comprised 65% male students and 35% female students.

3.3. Instruments

The study used a questionnaire comprising a five-point Likert scale to investigate the learners' perceptions about the use of movies for learning the English language. The questionnaire was adopted from the study conducted by Roslim et al. (2021). The six perception items were retained from the previous research without modifications. The perception scale was tested in the original study and demonstrated an acceptable internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .766, while its value, considering only standardized items, reached a higher value of .794. To ensure the quality of the obtained results, a pilot study was performed to test the reliability of this instrument. Additionally, the complete questionnaire version is attached in the Appendix.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The data were gathered using Google Forms. The questionnaire contained students' demographic information, learners' frequency of watching films, and the most popular film-watching platforms. Furthermore, learners' perceptions of using movies as a method of language learning. To analyze quantitative data, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 software program was employed. A descriptive statistical analysis was used to interpret the students' responses, including percentages and frequencies.

4. Results

The results of the study were obtained from responses provided by 107 participants and were presented in the form of tables and graphical representations.

4.1. Reliability Results

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Table 1 shows that the Cronbach's alpha value for the perception scale exceeded 0.8, which indicates good reliability. These values confirm that the instrument is reliable for measuring learners' perceptions of the use of movies in English language learning (George & Mallery, 2019).

Table 1. *Reliability Results for the Pilot Study*

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	**Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items**	**N of Items**
,802	,795	6

4.2. Respondents' Demographic Profile

Figure 1 displays the gender distribution of participants. The results show that females constituted the majority (71.96%), while male participants represented 28.04%. This indicates a higher level of female participation.

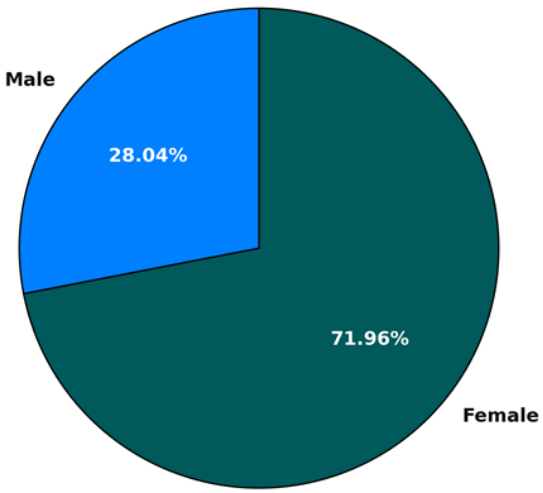

Figure 1. *Gender Distribution*

Figure 2 represents the age distribution of participants. It can be seen that most participants fall within the 18 –20-year age range (52.34%). Those aged 21–23 years constitute 45.79%, whereas participants aged 24 –26 years account for only 1.87%.

Figure 3 shows the participants' years of learning English. The majority (45.79%) have been learning English for 1–3 years. Participants who have learned English for 4–6 years amounted to 26.17%, whilst only 16.82% have studied English for 10 years or more. The remaining participants (11.21%) have 7–9 years of English learning experience.

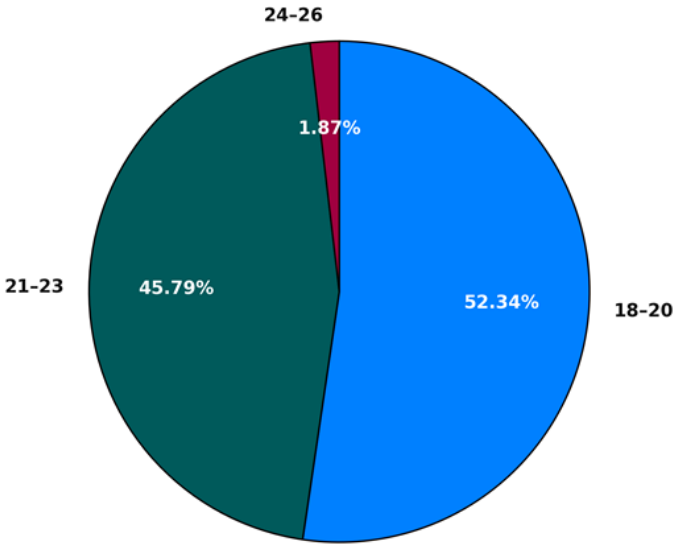

Figure 2. *Age Distribution*

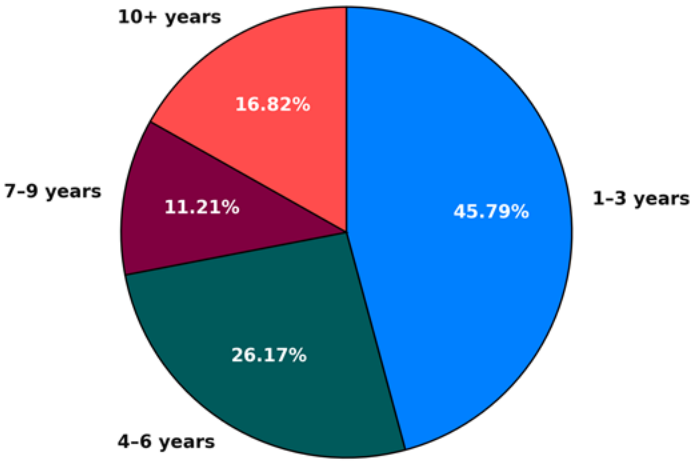

Figure 3. *Learners' Years of Learning English*

Figure 4 demonstrates how often the participants watch English movies. It turns out that most of them (52.34%) watch English films from time to time. Those who watched English movies rarely accounted for 16.82%, while those who watched them often and always represented 11.21% of all participants each. The last 8.41% of participants noted that they watched English films very often.

Figure 5 shows the proportion of respondents using various streaming platforms to watch films. The results indicate that the largest and equal numbers of respondents utilized Netflix (30.84%) and YouTube (30.84%) to stream movies. Those who depended on other unspecified platforms made up 16.82% of the participants, followed by those relying on television and downloaded movies, which represented 7.48% respectively. Disney+ was utilized by 2.80% of the

participants, while the rest, including HBO and Apple TV, accounted for the lowest proportion at 1.87% each.

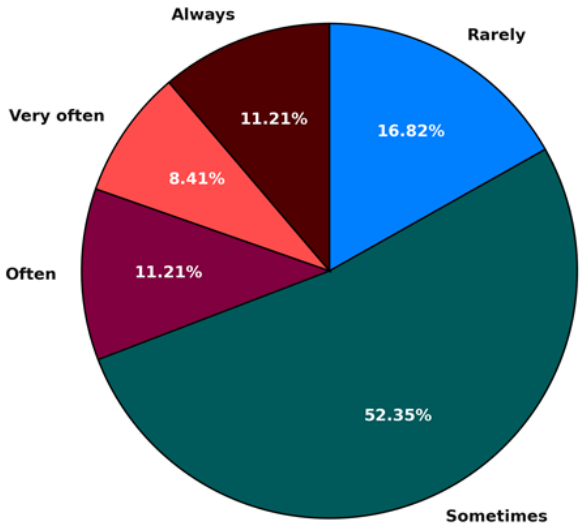

Figure 4. *Frequency of Watching English Movies*

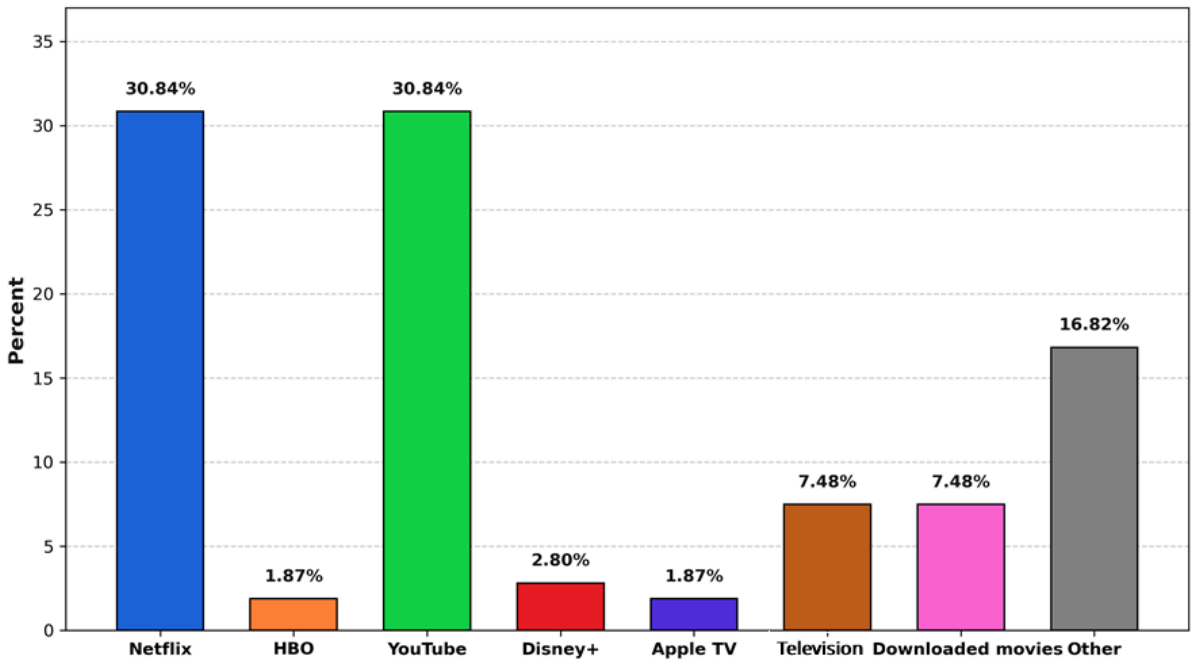

Figure 5. *Platforms Used to Watch Movies*

4.3. Students' Perceptions of Using Films for Language Learning

4.3.1. *Descriptive Statistics on Students' Perceptions*

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics on students' perceptions of using films to learn English. The mean scores range from 3.38 to 3.86 on the five-point scale, with the item on improving oral skills receiving the highest agreement. As shown in Table 2, the findings reveal that students generally

had quite good perceptions of integrating movies into English language learning, as the mean scores range from 3.38 to 3.86. Among the six items, "Watching movies in English improves my English oral skills" received the highest mean score (M= 3.86, SD= 0.99). This shows that students generally consider watching movies helpful for improving their speaking skills in English. Similarly, the statement "Movies help me acquire vocabulary" got a high mean score (M = 3.84, SD = 1.08). This reveals that learners realized the usefulness of using movies in enhancing vocabulary acquisition. In addition, participants agreed that films facilitate classroom learning ("Watching movies facilitates my learning English in the classroom" M = 3.54, SD = 0.94). However, "The online class presentation of movies reduces my anxiety in language learning" got the lowest mean score (M = 3.38, SD = 0.98), which indicates a relatively moderate agreement. In other words, films might help reduce anxiety, but less than in promoting the students' language skills, vocabulary, motivations, and interests. Finally, these results demonstrate that students saw films as positive resources for learning English.

Table 2. *Participants' Responses to the Questionnaire*

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Q1. Watching movies in English improves my English oral skills	107	1,00	5,00	3,8598	,98526
Q2. I find it interesting to learn English using movies.	107	1,00	5,00	3,7383	1,01253
Q3. Watching movies facilitates learning English for me in the classroom	107	1,00	5,00	3,5421	,94450
Q4. Watching movies motivates me to learn English.	107	1,00	5,00	3,7103	1,12442
Q5. The online class presentation of movies reduces my anxiety in language learning	107	1,00	5,00	3,3832	,97753
Q6. Movies improve my vocabulary acquisition.	107	1,00	5,00	3,8411	1,08288
Valid N (listwise)	107				

4.3.2. *Overall Perceptions of Films in Learning*

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for students' overall perception of using films as a learning resource. Results indicate that the mean score of students' overall perception was 3.68 (SD=0.76), which was based on 107 responses. The scores varied between 1.00 and 4.83. As the overall mean score is higher than the middle point of the five-point Likert scale, we can conclude that most students have positive views about film usage for English language learning. Also, the low standard deviation (SD=0.76) shows that most students agree to use films in their learning. Overall, films can be recognized as an effective tool for learning English, which highly contributes to improving language skills, encourages learners, and makes the learning process more enjoyable.

Table 3. *The Overall Students' Perceptions*

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Mean-score-perceptions	107	1,00	4,83	3,6791	,75538
Valid N (listwise)	107				

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the students' perceptions of films as tools for English language learning. This section interprets the main findings of the study in relation to the research questions and the existing literature on movie-based language learning. It was hypothesized that (H1) students had a positive view of movie-based language learning.

The Findings confirmed H1, which pointed out that students have positive perceptions toward the use of movies in English language learning. Students affirmed the significant role of movies in addressing oral skills, classroom facilitation, and vocabulary acquisition. These perceptions emphasize the importance of movies as authentic input in exposing learners to real-life language use (Ismaili, 2013; Ferdinez & Del Rosario, 2025).

Furthermore, students expressed their interest and motivation regarding the motivational value of movies and considered that movie-based presentations help in lowering their language anxiety. In this vein, motivation correlates with positive perception regarding movies as learning tools (Awg Baderulhisam & Zulkiply, 2023). Thus, movie-based instruction raises learner engagement levels by making the classroom a more stimulating and fun place for learning.

Students remain convinced that using English movies in EFL classes is a potential way to help them strengthen their language skills. Films provide the opportunity to learn about the English language, its linguistic input, and communication flow. Students' views on the use of movies in the classroom indicate that they not only boost students' motivation but also support the development of language skills. Similarly, this result is in line with the findings of Chaya (2022), who found that the use of films can effectively motivate learners, enhance their engagement, and stimulate greater participation in speaking activities. In the same vein, Ban et al. (2023) found that pupils who watch English movies regularly have more speaking confidence than those who use the traditional learning method. Additionally, they displayed great enthusiasm, enhanced communication skills, and better comprehension of spoken language.

Therefore, integrating film-based instruction is significantly effective in a language learning environment since it reconsiders the importance of motivation in teaching practices. According

to Tomalin (1986), movies "help bring the outside world into the classroom" (p. 9), boost students' motivation, and encourage them to interact with one another. In this vein, motivation is recognized as a fundamental pillar in the learning process. Ball (1995, as cited in Chambers, 1999) also asserts that by making a clear claim that ‘‘there are only three things of importance to successful learning: motivation, motivation, and motivation. […] any fool can teach students who want to learn" (p. 5). Similarly, Mackey and Ho's (2008) findings indicated that students accepted film-based learning resources favorably. The authors stressed that because movies offer a variety of real-world language applications, they are a useful substitute teaching tool. Films can improve learners' motivation with meaningful language input and enrich English language teaching materials by exposing them to genuine communication and contextualized interactions.

Additionally, the results of this study corroborate Miller's (2016) claim about the educational benefits of movies for language acquisition. Movies can encourage self-directed learning by giving students access to linguistic information outside of the classroom. Moreover, movies could offer a less stressful learning atmosphere, especially for introverted students who are more at ease learning on their own. The findings also show that exposing students to real-world audiovisual content improves their familiarity with pronunciation, colloquial idioms, and different English dialects, which helps them become more proficient communicators. Interestingly, Film clips can stimulate a dynamic and cheerful learning context for learners that helps build a constructive learning setting and boost their motivation. Likewise, previous research has highlighted the role of digital platforms as genuine resources for promoting language and intercultural learning (Elhabchi & Zeriouh, 2026). Interestingly, Films as digital resources can stimulate a dynamic and cheerful learning context for learners that helps build a constructive learning setting and boost their motivation.

Furthermore, students reported their agreement that movies lower their anxiety, which is congruent with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). By reducing anxiety, the learning environment can appear more engaging and less threatening. Hence, movies seem to encourage risk-taking and communicative experimentation, which is essential for language development. This emotional comfort may account for students' increased participation and willingness to use newly acquired linguistic forms.

These positive perceptions of the use of film-based learning might relate to certain aspects of the Moroccan educational environment. For instance, since English is regarded as a foreign language, using English films can offer learners access to more authentic experiences compared

to other traditional materials such as textbooks, teacher-prepared materials, and handouts. In fact, such experience allowed students to learn about the English language, its various sociolinguistic contexts, and its different forms (pronunciations and accents). Moreover, watching these movies can familiarize students with different cultural norms, values, and practices. Films can act as bridges between different cultures by offering learners some meaningful vocabulary, expressions, and intercultural encounters that promote their further development of both their language skills and cultural understandings.

6. Conclusion

The technological advancements have shaped and reshaped the educational landscape. Learners have benefited from this global technological tendency and were supported by those innovative tools in picking up the English language spontaneously. Films were one of those breakthroughs that adorned the learning journey and leveraged the learners' learning process. Importantly, many students do not see films as an adjunct material, but as a useful tool for learning that sparks their motivation, interest, and emotional comfort. Additionally, English films can bring major learning benefits by developing the learners' language skills, particularly vocabulary, speaking, and listening skills. It is an effective teaching method that makes studying enjoyable while also enhancing language learning.

Overall, this study offers invaluable findings regarding using films in an educational environment. Additionally, it paves the way for more research studies that seek to explore the potential benefits of film-based learning.

6.1. Limitations

Despite the invaluable findings of this study, a few limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research should not neglect investigating the teachers' perceptions to identify the commonalities and the differences between the two stances of learners and teachers. Besides, the study partly used a quantitative design, which could not provide a holistic view of the phenomenon. So, a comprehensive understanding could have been captured through the inclusion of qualitative methods such as interviews or open-ended discussions. Secondly, the integration of a quasi-experimental intervention could present an opportunity to determine whether exposure to English movies has long-term effects on the learners' learning process.

6.2. Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study suggests that movies are effective pedagogical tools that can support linguistic, affective, and motivational dimensions of English language learning.

Additionally, movies can be effective in maximizing learner interaction, reflection, and language production. Having students rate their perceptions of movies implies that movie-based learning, if employed strategically and didactically, can enhance oral skills, acquisition of vocabulary, motivation, and classroom participation. Therefore, a strategic deployment of movie-based learning can increase oral performance, vocabulary, motivation, and student engagement in EFL classrooms.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. No financial, personal, or professional relationships have influenced the research, analysis, or conclusions presented in this work.

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Appendix

The Likert Scale was used to gather information on participants' perspectives regarding the use of films in language learning.

Students were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statements in Section B using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Section A: Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. How often do you watch English films?

☐ Always

☐ Very Frequently

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

Section B: Perceptions of Using Films

Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Q1	Watching movies in English improves my English oral skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q2	I find it interesting to learn English using movies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q3	Watching movies facilitates learning English for me in the classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q4	Watching movies motivates me to learn English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q5	The online class presentation of movies reduces my anxiety in language learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q6	Movies improve my vocabulary acquisition.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐