

# The Impact of English Movies with Standard Subtitles on Enhancing the Writing Skills of EFL Students at Cihan University – Duhok

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## Abstract

*This research paper aims to comprehensively investigate the effects of English movies accompanied by standard English subtitles on the writing skills of English as a second language (ESL) learners. Writing, considered a particularly challenging language skill, presents unique difficulties for ESL learners. Moreover, understanding English movies without subtitles poses further challenges. To address these issues, integrating media and movies into language learning practices has been recognized as highly effective. This study employs a meticulously designed questionnaire as the primary research instrument to collect data from a sample size of 30 participants aged 19-24 enrolled at Cihan University- Duhok. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies is utilized to thoroughly examine the impact of watching English movies with English subtitles on the development of writing skills. Participants provide valuable insights into the effects they experience when utilizing subtitles, including improvements in expressive abilities, as well as the formation of more coherent and sophisticated sentences and phrases. The findings unequivocally demonstrate that a significant majority of participants attribute their enhanced writing skills to the use of English movies with subtitles as a powerful learning tool.*

**Keywords—** EFL students, writing skills, English movies, standard subtitles, language learning

## I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as a foundation for the research by providing a concise background on the topic of English movies with standard subtitles and their potential impact on enhancing the writing skills of EFL students at Cihan University- Duhok. It highlights the significance of the study, emphasizing the importance of effective writing skills in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. The objectives of the research are outlined, along with the identification of the research problem to be addressed. The scope and limitations of the study are also discussed, followed by an overview of the data and methodology employed. Lastly, the chapter outlines the structure of the research, indicating how the subsequent chapters will be organized to address the research objectives.

## Background

ESL students often encounter difficulties in developing their writing skills due to various factors, including limited exposure to English-language materials, insufficient vocabulary, and challenges in comprehending complex sentence structures. Writing is widely recognized as one of the most challenging language skills to acquire, necessitating extensive practice to enhance proficiency.

In recent years, the utilization of multimedia resources, such as movies, has emerged as a promising method for language learning and instruction. Movies offer a rich source of linguistic input that can contribute to the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities in learners. Additionally, movies provide learners with opportunities to immerse themselves in authentic, real-world contexts, fostering cultural awareness and understanding.

Among the various approaches explored, the use of movies with standard subtitles has gained attention as a potential tool for facilitating writing skill development. Standard subtitles, appearing in the same language as the audio, aid viewers in comprehending dialogue. Previous research suggests that English movies with standard subtitles can assist learners in enhancing their writing skills by exposing them to natural, authentic English input, which promotes vocabulary acquisition, grammar proficiency, and overall language development.

However, limited research has specifically investigated the effects of English movies with standard subtitles on writing skills, particularly among EFL learners. Consequently, this study aims to examine the impact of utilizing English movies with standard subtitles on the writing abilities of ESL students. By identifying potential benefits and challenges associated with this approach, the study seeks to contribute to the understanding of effective language learning strategies for writing proficiency enhancement.

#### **Research Questions:**

The current study aims to address the following research questions:

**RQ1.** How does watching movies with English standard subtitles contribute to the development of students' writing skills?

**RQ2.** To what extent do students improve their writing abilities through the utilization of movies with standard subtitles?

#### **The significance of the study:**

This study holds significant importance in the field of EFL education as it delves into the potential benefits of utilizing subtitles as a means for university EFL learners to enhance their writing skills. The research explores a cutting-edge topic that directly relates to university-level students studying English as a foreign language. By investigating the impact of subtitles on writing proficiency, the study aims to contribute valuable insights to language educators, curriculum designers, and researchers in the field.

Additionally, the findings may inform instructional practices, providing evidence-based strategies for effectively incorporating movies with subtitles in language learning contexts. Ultimately, the study's significance lies in its potential to enhance language instruction and empower EFL learners to develop their writing abilities more effectively.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Writing Skills and Standard Subtitles**

Writing is a fundamental skill in language learning that requires practice, dedication, and commitment. Proficiency in writing is essential for effective communication in English as a foreign language (EFL). However, many EFL learners face challenges in expressing ideas, organizing thoughts, and applying proper grammar and syntax. To address these difficulties, educators in the field of language instruction have explored various pedagogical approaches to enhance EFL learners' writing abilities. One notable approach that has gained attention is the integration of media and movies with standard subtitles. Writing skill encompasses the ability to produce written communication that is clear, concise, coherent, and achieves its intended purpose (Fazeli, Mirzaee, & Zende-Ghahramani, 2015). It involves mastering various components such as grammar, vocabulary, syntax, organization, and style. Proficient writing skills are crucial for academic success, professional development, personal expression, and effective communication.

Standard subtitles refer to synchronized subtitles that adhere to established conventions and guidelines regarding font type, size, color, and timing (Salam & Hamid, 2015). They accurately represent the spoken language in written form and are commonly used in commercial movies and television programs for viewers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or prefer watching movies in a language other than the original one. Vadivel, B. (2021)

#### **Theoretical Framework:**

There are several theoretical frameworks that may be relevant to the topic of using movies with standard subtitles to develop writing skills, including:

**Input Hypothesis:** Proposed by Krashen (1985), this theory suggests that language acquisition takes place through exposure to comprehensible input. The use of movies with standard subtitles can provide EFL learners with a rich source of input that facilitates the development of their writing skills.

**Social Cognitive Theory:** Proposed by Bandura (1986), this theory posits that learning occurs through observation and modeling of others' behaviors. By watching movies with standard subtitles, EFL learners can observe models of written language use, which can assist them in developing their own writing skills.

**Dual Coding Theory:** Introduced by Paivio (1986), this theory suggests that incorporating visual and verbal information enhances learning and memory. English movies with standard subtitles offer EFL learners a dual

coding of information by simultaneously presenting visual and verbal cues, thereby aiding their retention and application of learned material.

**Sociocultural Theory:** Developed by Vygotsky (1978), this theory highlights the role of social interaction and collaboration in learning. Utilizing standard subtitles in English movies provides English as a foreign language learner with opportunities to engage and collaborate with others in meaningful contexts, fostering the development of their writing skills.

### **Previous Studies:**

Looking at the related literature, there have been several notable papers and books that have addressed the topic of using movies with subtitles to enhance writing skills. This paper has selected some of the most prominent works in this field.

Fazeli, Mirzaee, and Zende-Ghahramani (2015) conducted a study exploring the effectiveness of using movies with English subtitles to improve the writing skills of Iranian EFL learners. The findings indicated that incorporating subtitles in movie watching significantly enhanced the students' writing abilities. This study offers valuable insights into the potential benefits of using movies with subtitles as a tool for language learning.

Abdul Salam and Hamid (2017) examined the impact of movies with subtitles on the writing performance of Malaysian undergraduate students. The results demonstrated a positive influence on the students' writing skills when utilizing English movies and their subtitles as a method. This paper emphasizes the potential of using movies with subtitles as an engaging approach to enhance language learning outcomes.

Alshumaimeri (2017) highlighted the use of English subtitles while watching movies as a means of improving the writing skills of Saudi EFL students. Through a quasi-experimental study, the author found a significant improvement in the students' writing ability by incorporating subtitles in movie viewing. Vadivel, B (2019) This study provides valuable insights into the benefits of using subtitles in EFL contexts.

Soltanpour, Pishghadam, and Riazi (2018) investigated the impact of English standard subtitles on the writing performance of Iranian EFL learners. Their study revealed a significant enhancement in the students' writing skills when exposed to movies with subtitles. The paper emphasizes the potential of using movies with subtitles to create an enjoyable and effective language-learning experience.

Bahrani, Fazilatfar, and Hashemi (2018) explored how Iranian EFL learners improved their writing skills in

English through the use of subtitles while watching movies. Their study demonstrated a significant improvement in the student's writing ability when incorporating subtitles. This paper offers valuable insights into the benefits of using subtitles in EFL contexts.

Akbari, Ghaemi, and Yousefi (2020) investigated the extent to which standard subtitles affect the writing skills of Iranian EFL learners. Their study revealed a significant improvement in the students' writing ability when exposed to movies with subtitles. The paper underscores the importance of selecting appropriate movies and subtitles for language-learning purposes and provides valuable insights into the benefits of using subtitles in EFL contexts.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the research methods employed in the study, focusing on investigating the effect of using standard English subtitles while watching English movies. Specific research instruments, designs, and procedures are described to carry out the study effectively.

### **Research Approach and Methodology**

In this study, the research approach follows the methodology presented by Fowler (2013). Survey research is identified as the quantitative research method used to collect data from a sample of individuals through standardized questionnaires. Surveys are commonly utilized to measure attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or demographic characteristics of a population or subpopulation. Various modes of data collection, such as telephone, mail, face-to-face, and online surveys, can be employed in survey research.

The study design encompasses several steps, including identifying the population of interest, selecting a sample, developing a survey instrument, pretesting the instrument, administering the survey, and analyzing the data. Survey results can be utilized to describe or compare population characteristics, as well as test hypotheses or research questions.

### **Population of Interest and Setting**

The participants in this study are students from the Department of English Language at Cihan University-Duhok, Kurdistan Region, Iraq. A total of 30 students participated, with 10 students each from the second, third, and fourth years. The gender distribution was equal, with an age range of 20 to 29 years. All participants expressed an interest in watching English movies.

**The Research Instrument**

To collect data for this study, a questionnaire was employed as the research instrument. The questionnaire, provided in the appendix, consists of questions regarding the participants' use of captions and subtitles to enhance their writing skills in English. The survey utilizes a Likert scale format, as defined by DeVellis (2017), which asks participants to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements on a 5 or 7-point scale. The Likert scale is a widely used method for measuring attitudes and opinions in social science research. The questionnaire comprises 10 questions specifically related to students' efforts to improve their writing skills through reading captions in movies.

**Data Collection Procedure**

Once the target group was selected, the researchers distributed the questionnaires and provided an explanation of the study objectives and methodology. A short presentation was given to the group, obtaining their consent to participate. The participants were then given a questionnaire to complete. The collected data will be kept confidential and solely used for the analysis of this study, adhering to ethical considerations.

**IV. DATA ANALYSIS**

The data analysis section of this study aims to explore the effects of English standard subtitles on students' writing skills. The data is analyzed using descriptive statistics, which involves summarizing and describing the main characteristics of the dataset. The questionnaire used in this study consists of 10 variables or questions. The first question asks participants if they watch English movies frequently.

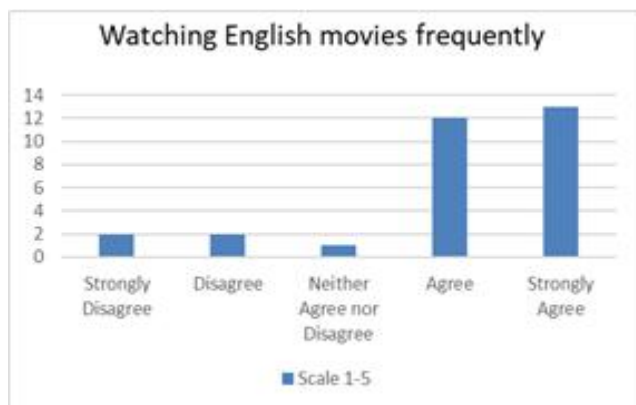


Fig.1: Watching English movies frequently.

The data collected indicates that the majority of participants (43.3%) strongly agree with this statement, followed by 40% who agree, 6.6% who disagree, 6.6%

who strongly disagree, and 3.3% who neither agree nor disagree. Overall, this analysis suggests that most participants watch English movies frequently, with 83.3% responding with an agreement. See Figure 1 for the data visualization of question 1.

Concerning Question 2, the participants were asked if they use subtitles when they watch movies in English. The data collected from 30 students aimed to determine whether they use standard subtitles. The participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "Strongly Disagree" and 5 representing "Strongly Agree". The results show that the majority of the participants (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that they watch English movies with English subtitles. Specifically, 50% of the participants agreed that they watch English movies with English subtitles, while 40% strongly agreed with this statement. Only 6.6% of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed, and 6.6% disagreed with the statement.

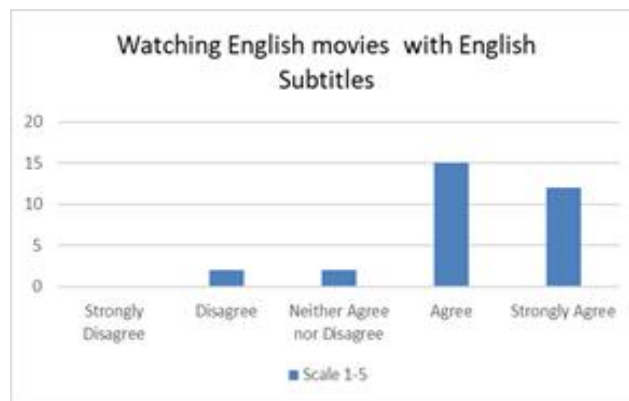


Fig.2: Using English subtitles with English movies.

As for question 3, based on the data collected, we can see that a majority of the respondents (50%) strongly agree that watching movies with English subtitles helps them understand the movie better, while 36.6% of the respondents agree with this statement. A small minority of respondents (3.3%) strongly disagree with the statement, while none of the respondents disagree with it. Additionally, 10% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement. The figure below represents the given results:

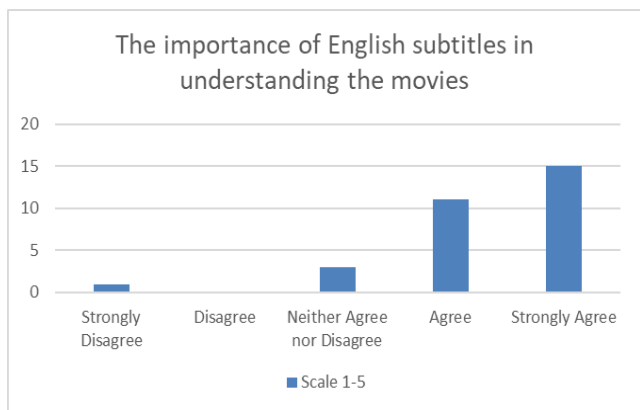


Fig.3: The importance of English subtitles in understanding the movies.

When participants were asked whether watching movies assists them in enhancing their ability to write in English, the responses indicate that a significant portion of respondents (33.3%) strongly agree that watching movies with English subtitles helps them improve their writing skills in English. Another 36.6% of respondents agree with this statement, indicating that a majority of the respondents see a positive impact on their writing skills through this practice. On the other hand, 6.6% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement, and an equal percentage disagree with it. One-fifth of the respondents (20%) neither agree nor disagree with the statement, as shown in the following figure:

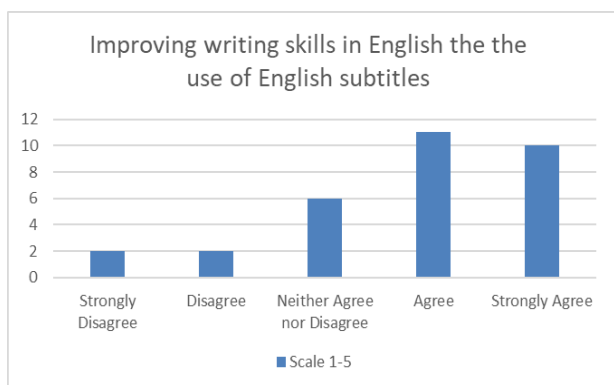


Fig.4: Improving writing skills in English the use of English subtitles

The data collected for Question 5 suggests that the English subtitles of English movies do not have a significant influence on improving sentence construction skills in English. A small minority of respondents (16.6%) strongly agree that this practice helps them improve their sentences in English, while 30% of respondents agree with this statement. However, 10% of respondents disagree, indicating that they do not believe that this practice leads to better sentence construction. A larger proportion of

respondents (40%) neither agree nor disagree with the statement. It should be noted that while a portion of respondents sees value in using English subtitles to enhance their sentence construction skills, a considerable number of participants remain uncertain or unconvinced about the impact of this practice.

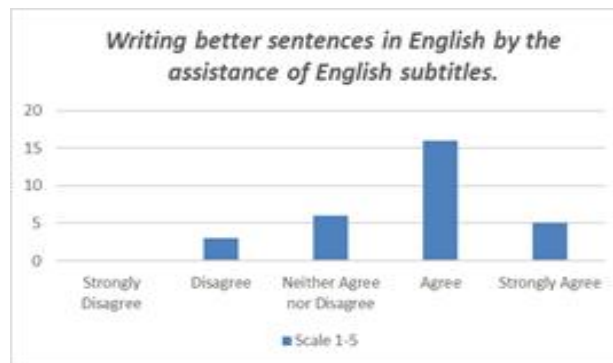


Fig.5: Writing better sentences in English by the assistance of English subtitles

Moreover, when the students were asked about the correlation between watching movies and understanding sentence structure, the data collected suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents (26.6%) strongly agree that watching movies with English subtitles helps them have a better understanding of sentence structure in English.

Another 30% of respondents agree with this statement, indicating that a majority of respondents see a positive impact on their understanding of sentence structure through this practice. In contrast, only 3.3% of respondents disagree with the statement, and none of the respondents strongly disagree. A larger proportion of respondents (40%) neither agree nor disagree with the statement, suggesting a lack of a clear consensus on this issue.

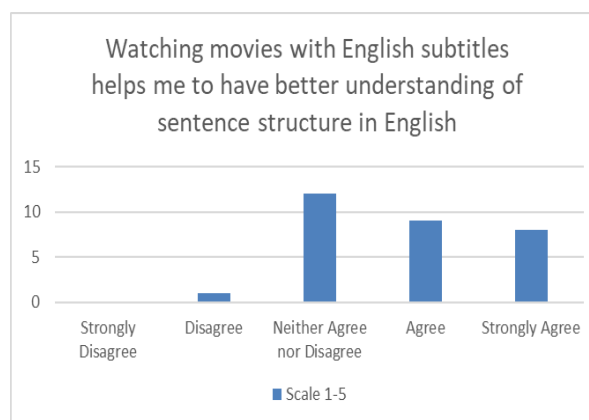


Fig.6: Watching movies with English subtitles helps me to have a better understanding of sentence structure in English.

For assessing the effect of watching movies on learning grammatical tenses, the participants were asked whether they learn grammatical tenses from English movies. Based on the given data, using English subtitles while watching movies does not appear to be a widely held belief as a means to learn grammatical tenses for sentence writing. A relatively small proportion of the respondents (10%) strongly disagree with the statement, and the same percentage disagrees with it. Additionally, 46.6% of respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement, indicating a lack of a clear consensus.

However, there are still some respondents (23.3%) who agree with the statement, suggesting that for some individuals, watching movies with English subtitles can be a helpful tool to learn grammatical tenses for sentence writing. Furthermore, 10% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement, indicating that there is some positive correlation between watching English-subtitled movies and learning grammatical tenses for sentence writing, as shown in this figure: The data suggests that using English subtitles while watching movies is not widely seen as an effective method for learning grammatical tenses for sentence writing. A small proportion strongly disagrees (10%) or disagrees (10%), while a larger proportion neither agrees nor disagrees (46.6%). However, there are still some who agree (23.3%) and strongly agree (10%) that watching English-subtitled movies can help in learning grammatical tenses for sentence writing.

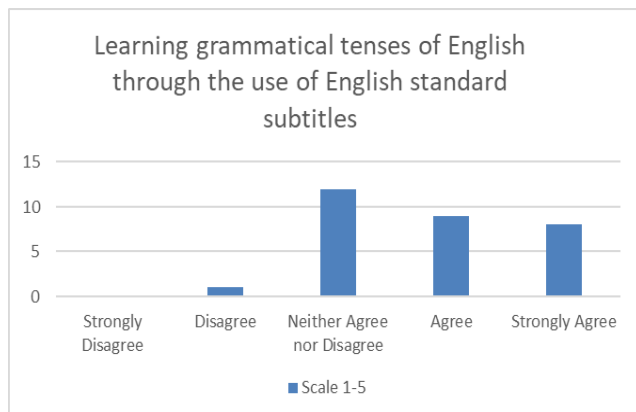


Fig.7: Learning grammatical tenses of English through the use of English standard subtitles

The data collected for Question 8 suggests that using English subtitles while watching movies can have a positive impact on expressing and writing thoughts in English. More than half of the respondents (53.3%) agree with this statement. However, a notable proportion (23.3%) neither agreed nor disagreed, indicating a lack of consensus.

The majority of participants (33.3%) agreed that using English subtitles while watching movies is an effective technique for enhancing their English writing and expression abilities. Furthermore, 20% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, showing a higher level of endorsement. In contrast, a small minority (6.6%) strongly disagreed, and a slightly larger proportion (16.6%) disagreed with the statement.

The data collected regarding the impact of watching English movies with English subtitles on building English vocabulary suggests that a significant majority of the respondents agree or strongly agree with this practice, with a combined percentage of 86.6%. Only 13.3% of the respondents selected the option of neither agreeing nor disagreeing, indicating that the majority of participants hold an opinion on the matter. None of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, indicating that the majority of participants find that their vocabulary can be enhanced by using English standard subtitles while watching movies.

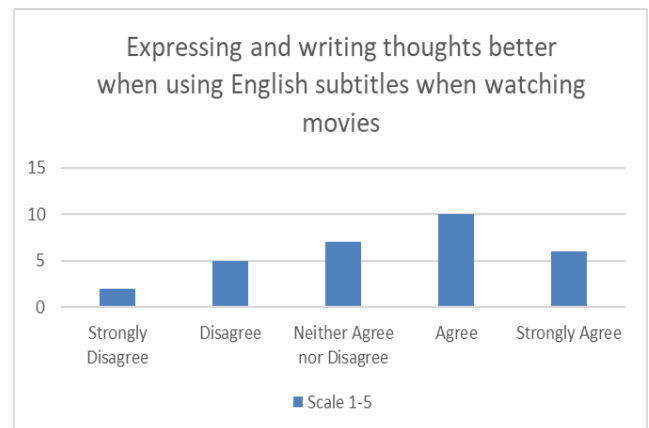


Fig.8: Expressing and writing thoughts better when using English subtitles when watching movies

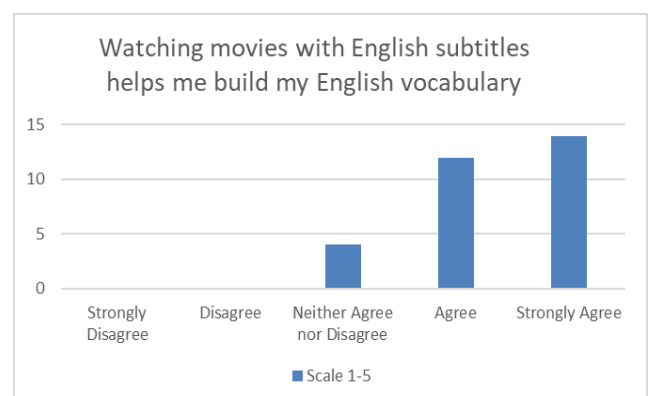


Fig.9: Watching movies with English subtitles helps me build my English vocabulary.

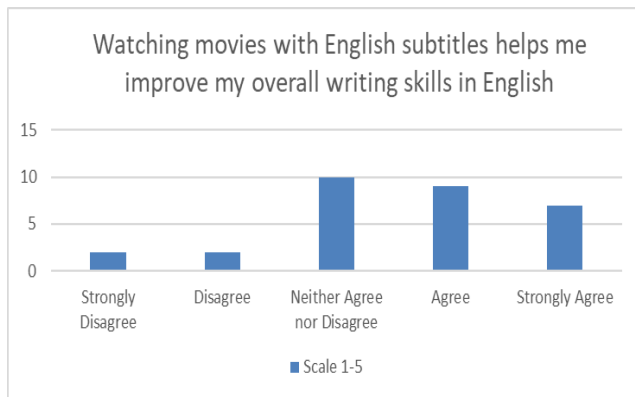


Fig. 10: Watching movies with English subtitles helps me improve my overall writing skills in English

The final question in the questionnaire focused on whether participants felt their writing skills improved after watching English movies with English subtitles. The majority of respondents, approximately 53.3%, either agreed or strongly agreed that this practice helps enhance their writing skills in English. Conversely, only 13.2% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. A significant proportion of respondents (33.3%) neither agreed nor disagreed, suggesting a lack of clarity or certainty on the topic.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the questionnaire indicates that a significant number of participants believe that English subtitles have a positive impact on language learning. The majority of respondents in the study agreed or strongly agreed that watching movies with English subtitles helped them understand the movie better, improve their writing skills, and build their English vocabulary. Additionally, a substantial number of respondents agreed that this practice can enhance their understanding of sentence structure and their ability to express and write thoughts in English. These findings align with previous research highlighting the potential benefits of using movies as a language-learning tool. Watching movies provides learners with exposure to authentic language use, aiding in the development of listening comprehension skills and familiarity with spoken English nuances. Subtitles provide visual and textual support, facilitating the understanding and retention of vocabulary and grammar structures.

The results of this study are particularly relevant for learners of English as a foreign language who may have limited opportunities for authentic language use outside the classroom. By incorporating movies into their language learning routine, learners can complement

classroom instruction and continue to develop their language skills in an engaging and enjoyable manner. It is important to note, however, that the effectiveness of using movies as a language-learning tool may vary depending on individual learner characteristics, such as language proficiency, motivation, and learning style. Some learners may find it challenging to keep up with the fast pace of spoken English in movies or may struggle with understanding the cultural context. Therefore, language teachers should consider the diverse needs and preferences of their students when integrating movies into the language curriculum. In conclusion, the findings of this study support the use of English movies with English subtitles as a supplementary tool for language learning. By providing exposure to authentic language use and offering visual and textual aids, movies can assist learners in developing listening comprehension, vocabulary, writing skills, understanding of sentence structure, and expressive abilities in English. Nonetheless, teachers should be mindful of individual learner characteristics and preferences when incorporating movies into the language curriculum.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The findings from the current research lead to several important conclusions. Firstly, it is evident from the questionnaire results that watching English movies with English subtitles can have a positive impact on language learning, particularly for individuals learning English as a foreign language. The majority of respondents expressed agreement with the benefits associated with this practice, including improved movie comprehension, enhanced writing skills, and expanded English vocabulary. These conclusions align with previous research, which has consistently highlighted the potential advantages of using movies as a language-learning tool. By engaging with movies, learners are exposed to authentic language use and can benefit from the visual and textual aids provided by subtitles. This exposure helps develop listening comprehension skills and fosters familiarity with the nuances of spoken English. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the effectiveness of this tool may vary depending on individual learner characteristics. Factors such as language proficiency level, motivation, and learning style can influence the extent to which learners benefit from watching movies with subtitles. Language teachers should be mindful of these diverse needs and preferences when incorporating movies into their curriculum, ensuring they cater to the specific requirements of their students.

In summary, incorporating movies into language learning can serve as a valuable supplementary tool for learners looking to improve various language skills. It

facilitates the development of listening comprehension, vocabulary, writing abilities, understanding of sentence structure, and overall expression in English. However, it is crucial for language teachers to consider individual learner characteristics and preferences to maximize the effectiveness of this approach.

### Scope for the Further Research

Further research could explore the following aspects related to the use of English movies with standard subtitles to enhance the writing skills of EFL students:

- i. Long-term effects: Investigate the long-term impact of using English movies with subtitles on the writing skills of EFL students. Conduct a longitudinal study to assess whether the observed benefits are sustained over time or if additional interventions are necessary to maintain progress.
- ii. Different proficiency levels: Examine the effectiveness of using movies with subtitles for EFL students at different proficiency levels. Compare the impact on beginner, intermediate, and advanced learners to identify potential variations in the benefits gained and adapt instructional strategies accordingly.
- iii. Genre preferences: Investigate whether certain genres of movies are more effective than others in improving writing skills. Explore whether genres with specific linguistic features, such as dialogue-heavy films or films with complex narratives, have a greater impact on writing proficiency.
- iv. Subtitle variations: Compare the effects of different subtitle options, such as English subtitles versus subtitles in the learners' native language. Investigate whether different subtitle styles, such as standard subtitles versus simplified subtitles, influence writing skill development differently.
- v. Writing tasks and genres: Assess the specific types of writing tasks and genres that are most effectively enhanced through the use of English movies with subtitles. Determine whether certain writing skills, such as narrative writing, descriptive writing, or argumentative writing, are particularly well-suited to be developed through this approach.

By further exploring these aspects, researchers can deepen their understanding of how to effectively utilize English movies with subtitles as a tool for enhancing EFL students' writing skills, leading to more informed pedagogical practices in language learning contexts.

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