



## The Effectiveness of American Films Without Subtitles in Improving Students' English Listening Skills

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**Abstract:** *The use of film as a learning medium in the classroom is often seen as less relevant and meaningful in teaching listening comprehension. This perception arises because film is an authentic material that is considered not fully in accordance with pedagogical goals, so its use in learning is still limited. This article aims to examine the effectiveness of film as an alternative medium in teaching listening comprehension. The discussion included common problems faced by students during film screening activities, techniques for applying film in learning, and listening activities that can be done in class. The results of the study show that the use of film in teaching listening comprehension is able to increase student motivation, engagement, and interest in learning.*

**Keywords:** *Film, Learning, Listening Comprehension*

## INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is widely recognized as one of the fundamental language skills that plays a crucial role in the process of communication, particularly in the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Alongside speaking, reading, and writing, listening forms the foundation upon which effective language acquisition is built. Through listening, learners are exposed to authentic language input, allowing them to internalize vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation patterns, and discourse features. Despite its importance, listening is frequently regarded as one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners to master. Many students experience difficulties when attempting to comprehend spoken English, especially when it is delivered in natural speed and authentic contexts.

One of the primary reasons listening is considered difficult lies in the nature of spoken language itself. Unlike written texts, spoken language occurs in real time and cannot always be revisited or reviewed unless it is recorded. Learners are required to process sounds, identify words, interpret meaning, and understand context almost simultaneously. This rapid processing often overwhelms EFL learners, particularly those who are still developing their linguistic competence. As a result, students may feel frustrated, anxious, or unmotivated when engaging in listening activities, which can negatively affect their overall learning outcomes.

Numerous studies have identified several factors that contribute to the low listening proficiency of EFL students. One major factor is limited vocabulary knowledge. When learners lack sufficient vocabulary, they struggle to recognize words in spoken input, even

if those words are familiar to them in written form. This issue is compounded by the phenomenon of connected speech, where words are pronounced differently in natural conversation due to processes such as reduction, assimilation, and elision. Consequently, students often fail to match the sounds they hear with the words they know, leading to misunderstandings and incomplete comprehension.

Another significant challenge faced by EFL learners is the speed of speech used by native speakers. Authentic spoken English is typically delivered at a pace that is difficult for learners to follow, particularly those at beginner or intermediate levels. Native speakers tend to speak fluently, with minimal pauses, making it difficult for students to segment speech into meaningful units. Additionally, variations in accent, intonation, and pronunciation further complicate the listening process. Learners who are not accustomed to these variations may find it difficult to understand even simple conversations.

The lack of engaging and contextualized learning media also plays a critical role in students' listening difficulties. In many EFL classrooms, listening instruction continues to rely heavily on traditional audio materials, such as textbook recordings or scripted dialogues. While these materials may serve certain instructional purposes, they often fail to reflect authentic language use in real-life situations. Moreover, such audio-based activities are frequently repetitive and monotonous, which can lead to decreased student motivation and participation. When students are not actively engaged, their ability to focus and comprehend listening input diminishes significantly.

In practice, listening instruction is often treated as a passive activity, where students are expected to listen to an audio recording and answer comprehension questions without sufficient pre-listening preparation or post-listening reflection. This approach limits opportunities for learners to develop effective listening strategies, such as predicting content, identifying key information, or inferring meaning from context. As a result, listening becomes a test of comprehension rather than a skill that is systematically taught and developed.

In contrast, rapid advancements in technology have created new opportunities for enhancing listening instruction through the integration of audiovisual media. One such medium that has gained increasing attention in EFL contexts is English-language films. Films present language in a rich, authentic, and meaningful context, combining auditory input with visual elements that support comprehension. Unlike traditional audio recordings, films provide learners with visual cues such as facial expressions, body language, settings, and situational contexts, all of which contribute to a deeper understanding of spoken language.

English-language films expose students to natural dialogues produced by native speakers in realistic situations. Through films, learners can observe how language is used in everyday interactions, including informal conversations, expressions of emotion, and pragmatic functions such as making requests, giving opinions, or expressing disagreement. This exposure allows students to develop not only their listening comprehension but also their sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence.

Furthermore, films offer a multisensory learning experience that can significantly enhance student engagement and motivation. Visual storytelling captures learners' attention and makes the learning process more enjoyable. When students are emotionally and cognitively involved in the content, they are more likely to focus on the language

used and make meaningful connections between form and meaning. As a result, films can transform listening activities from passive tasks into interactive and stimulating learning experiences.

Several empirical studies have confirmed the positive impact of using English-language films in listening instruction. Research findings indicate that films can increase students' interest and motivation to participate in listening activities. Learners often perceive film-based lessons as more enjoyable and less stressful compared to conventional listening exercises. This positive attitude contributes to a more supportive learning environment, where students feel more confident and willing to engage with authentic language input.

In addition to enhancing motivation, films play a significant role in improving students' pronunciation awareness and intonation patterns. By repeatedly listening to native speakers in films, learners become more familiar with natural speech rhythms, stress patterns, and pronunciation features. This exposure helps students develop better listening discrimination skills, enabling them to recognize sounds and words more accurately. Over time, this familiarity can also positively influence students' speaking skills, as listening and speaking are closely interconnected.

Another important benefit of using films in listening instruction is vocabulary enrichment. Films present vocabulary in meaningful contexts, making it easier for students to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words. Instead of memorizing isolated word lists, learners encounter new vocabulary as part of a narrative, supported by visual cues and situational context. This contextualized exposure enhances vocabulary retention and promotes deeper understanding of word usage in real-life communication.

Moreover, films contribute to the development of learners' understanding of everyday conversational English. Many traditional listening materials focus on formal or scripted language, which may not accurately represent how English is used in daily interactions. Films, on the other hand, include a wide range of conversational expressions, idiomatic language, and cultural references. Through films, students gain insight into how language is used naturally, which helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication.

Given these advantages, the use of English-language films is increasingly viewed as an effective and relevant alternative for addressing the listening difficulties experienced by EFL learners. However, the effectiveness of film-based instruction depends largely on careful planning and appropriate implementation. Teachers must select films that are suitable for students' proficiency levels, learning objectives, and cultural backgrounds. Films that are too complex or linguistically demanding may overwhelm learners and hinder comprehension rather than facilitate it.

Proper instructional design is essential to maximize the pedagogical value of films in listening instruction. This includes the use of pre-listening activities to activate background knowledge, while-listening tasks to guide students' attention, and post-listening activities to reinforce comprehension and encourage reflection. When films are integrated thoughtfully into the curriculum, they function not merely as entertainment but as meaningful learning resources that support the development of listening comprehension skills.

Despite the growing body of research supporting the use of films in EFL listening instruction, there remains a need for further investigation into how this medium can be systematically applied in classroom settings. Specifically, more studies are required to explore effective teaching strategies, task designs, and assessment methods related to film-based listening instruction. Understanding how teachers can integrate films into their lessons in a structured and pedagogically sound manner is essential for ensuring consistent learning outcomes.

In addition, students' perceptions and experiences regarding the use of films in listening learning warrant closer examination. Learners' attitudes toward instructional media play a crucial role in determining the success of any teaching approach. By examining students' responses, preferences, and perceived challenges, educators can gain valuable insights into how film-based instruction influences motivation, engagement, and listening development. Such insights can inform future teaching practices and contribute to the refinement of instructional strategies.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the use of English-language films as a medium for teaching listening comprehension in EFL contexts. It seeks to explore how films are implemented in listening instruction and how students respond to this learning approach. By focusing on students' experiences and perceptions, the study endeavors to provide a deeper understanding of the potential of films as an instructional tool for improving listening skills. Ultimately, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more effective, engaging, and contextually meaningful listening instruction for EFL learners.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study examined respondents' perceptions of watching foreign-language films as a way to improve listening skills using a quantitative method with a descriptive design. This method was selected because it enables the researcher to methodically gather information from participants in the form of written responses, allowing for the objective analysis of patterns in respondents' attitudes and viewpoints. A questionnaire based on indices of vocabulary comprehension, pronunciation, the frequency of watching foreign-language films, and the capacity to comprehend spoken conversations in context was used in the study. A five-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire, which was given to seventeen respondents. In order to characterise response patterns without drawing sweeping conclusions, the gathered data were then examined using descriptive statistical methods.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the questionnaire that 17 respondents filled out on their opinions of watching foreign-language films as a learning exercise are shown in this section. Overall, the findings show that respondents are aware of and frequently watch foreign-language films. A significant percentage of respondents gave affirmative answers to queries about how frequently they watch foreign-language films, indicating that the participants engage in this activity frequently.

Regarding listening-related elements, the findings reveal that a large number of respondents agreed with claims that watching foreign-language films improves their comprehension of spoken language. Positive answers were especially noticeable for questions about word recognition, pronunciation awareness, and the capacity to understand dialogue in movie settings. Although neutral answers were also found in certain assertions, the distribution of responses reveals that "agree" and "strongly agree" alternatives predominate across a number of issues.

The results also show that respondents regularly watch foreign-language films with subtitles. Many participants said that subtitles help them comprehend the movies' content, particularly when they come across vocabulary they don't know or dialogue that moves quickly. On several topics, however, a proportion of participants chose neutral answers, indicating some diversity among responders.

Overall, the results of the questionnaire show a generally favourable response pattern regarding the use of foreign-language films in connection with listening exercises, but they also reveal variations in each questionnaire item's individual responses.

According to the study's findings, most respondents believe that watching foreign-language films is a good way to improve listening comprehension. This implies that films can serve as a helpful educational tool that exposes students to real-world language use in addition to being a source of amusement. Films featuring natural dialogue, a variety of dialects, and contextualised interactions seem to encourage learners to interact with spoken language. As a result, films can be regarded as an important medium that fosters language growth and intercultural competency, enabling pupils to utilise English with assurance in everyday situations. (sabrina & sam et al, 2025)

Positive answers on word recognition and pronunciation awareness support the idea that exposing students to relevant and contextualised information enhances their listening comprehension. Learners may acquire more used to popular idioms, pronunciation patterns, and intonation used in ordinary communication through regular exposure to spoken language in films.

Additionally, many respondents thought that the usage of subtitles was beneficial. This result lends credence to the notion that subtitles might operate as scaffolding during listening exercises, especially for students who are still honing their listening skills. Without totally eliminating listening difficulties, subtitles may help comprehension by assisting students in making the connection between spoken and written forms. (Sayit & Diva et al, 2024) stated in their journal, You can also learn how to pronounce people whose first language is English by watching films. This film shows how native speakers' pronunciations differ from ours, allowing you to correct any errors you may have made. in how we say things. In addition, the language employed in films is more contemporary in ordinary speech. As a result, words have evolved significantly in the modern era, and it's important to stay current with both the times and the usage of words in addition to consulting literature. EFL students will pick up a lot of unfamiliar vocabulary in addition to pronunciation and usage. As a result, it is advised that students take notes while watching an English-language film in order to learn the definitions and proper usage of new vocabulary. The results of this study support the ongoing investigation of film-based training as a cutting-edge teaching method that can greatly enhance language learning. Teachers must adopt approaches that increase student engagement and accommodate a

range of learning styles as the educational landscape changes. (Aya et al, 2025) This study provides an important starting point for future investigations into the long-term effects of employing films in language instruction. In order to help create a more comprehensive and successful approach to teaching English that equips students for communication in the real world, it promotes the creation of hybrid teaching strategies that blend conventional approaches with contemporary multimedia resources.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the significance of the experiences I had when learning to speak and listen in English using real materials, as well as how these experiences shaped my current level of speaking and listening competency. (Faridah & Sri, 2025) The study has demonstrated that using real resources, like movies, is crucial for the researcher's speaking and listening abilities since it enhances her competence. Her current proficiency has evolved from that of an unaware witness to that of a proficient user over the course of two decades of self-learning using real resources. The researcher's oral proficiency is greatly impacted by language, phrases, and discussion in the authentic materials.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, listening comprehension remains a fundamental yet challenging skill for learners of English as a Foreign Language. As a core component of effective communication, listening plays a vital role in enabling learners to understand spoken input, develop accurate pronunciation, expand vocabulary knowledge, and engage meaningfully in real-life interactions. Despite its importance, many EFL learners continue to experience significant difficulties in listening due to factors such as limited vocabulary mastery, rapid speech delivery by native speakers, variations in pronunciation and intonation, and the continued reliance on conventional and less engaging instructional media.

Traditional listening instruction, which is often dominated by the use of audio recordings and textbook-based materials, tends to provide limited contextual support and insufficient learner engagement. As a result, listening activities may become monotonous and demotivating, reducing students' interest and hindering the development of effective listening strategies. These challenges highlight the need for more innovative, contextual, and learner-centered approaches to listening instruction that can better support students' comprehension and motivation.

The integration of English-language films as a listening learning medium offers a promising solution to these challenges. Films provide authentic language input presented in meaningful and realistic contexts, allowing learners to observe how English is naturally used in everyday situations. The combination of auditory and visual elements, such as facial expressions, body language, setting, and situational context, significantly supports learners' comprehension and helps them construct meaning more effectively. Through exposure to films, students not only improve their listening skills but also gain deeper insights into pronunciation patterns, intonation, vocabulary usage, and cultural aspects of the target language.

Moreover, the use of films has been shown to enhance students' motivation, interest, and active involvement in listening activities. When learners perceive listening tasks as enjoyable and relevant, they are more likely to participate actively and develop

positive attitudes toward learning English. Films also encourage repeated exposure to authentic spoken language, which gradually improves learners' ability to process speech at natural speed and increases their confidence in understanding spoken English. In this sense, films function not merely as entertainment, but as powerful pedagogical tools that enrich the learning experience.

However, the effectiveness of film-based listening instruction depends greatly on careful planning, appropriate film selection, and well-structured learning activities. Teachers play a crucial role in designing listening tasks that align with students' proficiency levels and learning objectives, ensuring that films are used purposefully rather than passively. With proper instructional strategies, films can serve as meaningful learning resources that foster both linguistic development and learner engagement.

Despite the growing recognition of the benefits of using films in EFL listening instruction, further research is still needed to explore systematic implementation strategies and to examine students' perceptions and experiences more deeply. Understanding how learners respond to film-based instruction and how it influences their listening development is essential for refining teaching practices and maximizing learning outcomes.

Overall, the use of English-language films represents an effective, relevant, and innovative approach to improving listening comprehension among EFL learners. By integrating authentic audiovisual media into listening instruction, educators can create more engaging, contextual, and meaningful learning environments that better address students' listening difficulties and support the development of essential communication skills.

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