

## The Effect of Watching English Movies on Fostering Students' Cultural Awareness and its Impact on Their Speaking Skill: A Study on English Students of Velayat University

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**Abstract:** This study examined the impact of integrating cultural elements into language instruction through English movies on the cultural awareness and speaking skill of Iranian intermediate English language learners. Conducted at Velayat University, the research involved twenty students who were randomly assigned to either an experimental group or a control group. The experimental group engaged with cultural content embedded in some selected English movies, whereas the control group continued with traditional language instruction without the use of movies. A mixed-methods approach was employed for data collection, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were gathered through pre- and post-tests, which measured the students' cultural awareness and speaking proficiency. These data were analyzed using paired t-tests to identify any significant differences between the two groups. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were analyzed using thematic analysis to gain deeper insights into the learners' experiences and perceptions of the instructional approach. The results of the study show that the experimental group demonstrated significant improvements in both cultural awareness and speaking skill compared to the control group. In addition, students in the experimental group reported increased motivation, higher levels of engagement, and a greater sense of confidence in their communicative abilities. The findings highlight the potential of incorporating cultural content into language learning, not only as a means to enhance linguistic skill but also to foster a deeper understanding of cultural contexts. The study emphasizes the role of movies as an effective pedagogical tool in addressing the challenges of globalization and enhancing students' cross-cultural communication abilities.

**Keywords:** Cultural awareness, English Movies, Iranian English language learners, Language Learners, Speaking skill

### Introduction

The integration of cultural elements into language learning has become a focal point of contemporary research, driven by the increasing recognition that language is more than just a system of grammar and vocabulary. It is a dynamic, culturally embedded tool for communication. As such, the ability to communicate effectively in a second language extends beyond proficiency in its syntax and semantics. It requires an understanding of the cultural contexts in which the language is used. Culture and language are inseparable, and the mastery of one cannot occur without the other. Language learners must not only acquire vocabulary and structures but also develop cultural awareness to engage in authentic and meaningful communication. In particular, effective language learners must recognize social norms, values, customs, and behaviors that influence both verbal and non-verbal communication. Consequently, traditional language instruction, which often focuses exclusively on linguistic competence, may not be enough to equip learners for the complexities of real-world, intercultural

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communication. Cultural awareness plays an indispensable role in language learning by facilitating students' understanding of the relationship between language and the culture it represents. A lack of cultural awareness can result in communication breakdowns, misunderstandings, and the inability to fully engage in meaningful interactions. For example, without an understanding of cultural norms related to politeness, students may inadvertently make offensive statements or fail to recognize cultural differences in speech patterns, leading to awkward or inappropriate exchanges. In contrast, learners with a deep understanding of culture are able to use language not just accurately, but appropriately, adjusting their tone, style, and content according to the social and cultural context.

The importance of integrating culture into language education is particularly evident when considering the growing emphasis on communicative competence as a key goal in second language acquisition (Canale & Swain, 1980). While linguistic competence—the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences—is certainly essential, communicative competence is even more crucial in real-world interactions. This concept includes not only the mastery of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to use language effectively in various contexts, taking into account social relationships, norms, and expectations. The integration of cultural elements into language teaching, therefore, not only helps students use language correctly but also empowers them to navigate the intricacies of communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. One of the more recent developments in language education has been the use of multimedia, particularly films, to introduce learners to authentic cultural experiences. Unlike textbooks or classroom discussions, films provide a vivid, immersive glimpse into real-world language use, showcasing everyday speech, body language, humor, and emotional expression. This allows students to experience the cultural context in which the language exists, providing them with a more holistic understanding of how language functions in different settings. Research has shown that films serve as a rich resource for learning cultural nuances, from social customs and family dynamics to humor and etiquette (Lee, 2019). Moreover, films present a valuable opportunity for learners to observe interactions in various social settings, helping them gain insight into how people from different cultures express themselves in both formal and informal contexts.

Films are often able to capture the subtleties of communication that traditional methods of teaching might miss, such as the use of idiomatic expressions, regional dialects, and non-verbal cues like gestures or facial expressions. By watching characters navigate their social world, students can develop an intuitive understanding of the language's pragmatic use—how it conveys not just information but also emotion, intention, and social relationships. These elements of communication, which are often culturally specific, are challenging to teach in a classroom setting without authentic exposure to real-world interactions. As a result, films are an ideal medium for integrating cultural learning with language learning, offering a context-rich environment where students can witness language use in action. The present study aims to explore the impact of integrating cultural elements through English-language films on Iranian students' cultural awareness and speaking skill. While the role of films in language learning has been examined in various contexts, there is a lack of research on their impact in countries like Iran, where access to Western media may be limited, and where the relationship between language and culture may be less intuitively grasped by learners. This gap in the literature warrants investigation, particularly because the incorporation of films could offer a valuable pedagogical tool for enhancing language education in such contexts. By exposing students to culturally rich content through English-language films, this study seeks to explore how such exposure affects both their understanding of the culture tied to the language and their ability to use the language effectively in conversation. This research investigates two key aspects of language learning: the development of cultural awareness and the improvement of speaking skill. Cultural awareness, as defined in this study, refers to the learners' understanding of the cultural context in which English is spoken, including social behaviors, attitudes, and values that influence communication. Speaking skill, on the other hand, encompasses not only the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences but also the capacity to speak fluently, with appropriate intonation and expression, in real-life situations. Previous studies have demonstrated that exposure to multimedia materials such as films can provide learners with authentic input, thereby improving both their cultural awareness and their speaking skill (Zeng, 2021).

This study is conducted at Velayat University, which offers a unique context for the research. Iranian learners, who are often immersed in a mono-cultural environment, may not have frequent exposure to English-language media or the cultural diversity that comes with it. As a result, students may struggle to understand the cultural references, idioms, and social cues embedded in English, making it difficult to engage in authentic communication. The research focuses on a sample of 20 English learners who were randomly assigned to either an experimental group or a control group. The experimental group was exposed to English-language films containing culturally relevant content as part of their lessons, while the control group continued with traditional language instruction. Both groups completed pre- and post-tests, and the experimental group's lessons included discussions on the cultural aspects of the films to facilitate understanding.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for language teaching in non-Western contexts, such as Iran. By investigating the impact of cultural content in language instruction, this research provides insights into how films can serve as an effective pedagogical tool for enhancing both linguistic and cultural competence. The results of this study may offer valuable recommendations for language educators looking to create more immersive and contextually relevant learning experiences for their students. Moreover, by examining the specific challenges faced by Iranian learners, this study contributes to the broader conversation about the role of culture in language acquisition, and the potential for multimedia resources to address these challenges.

### **Review of the Literature**

The integration of cultural elements in language learning has been the focus of numerous studies, reflecting the growing importance of cultural awareness in effective language acquisition. Understanding the relationship between culture and language proficiency is essential in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), especially in contexts where cultural competence is a significant component of communicative ability. This review explores the influence of cultural exposure on language learners' skill, with a particular focus on speaking and cultural awareness, two crucial aspects in the EFL classroom.

#### **Cultural Awareness in Language Learning**

Cultural awareness refers to the recognition of cultural differences and the understanding of how these differences impact communication. In the context of EFL, cultural awareness is not merely about knowledge of other cultures, but about recognizing how cultural elements shape the way language is used in various social contexts. Research has shown that learners who develop cultural awareness can better understand idiomatic expressions, humor, and non-verbal cues, all of which are essential in achieving fluency (Kramsch, 1993; Byram, 1997). Studies also emphasize that cultural awareness enhances learners' ability to participate in intercultural communication and facilitates the development of more nuanced speaking skill (Byram, 2000).

The integration of cultural content in language lessons has been associated with higher levels of cultural awareness among students. In particular, the use of authentic materials, such as films, has been shown to be an effective method for exposing learners to real-world language use, including cultural nuances that may be absent from textbook-based learning (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). This approach allows students to engage with various cultural contexts, enhancing their comprehension and expression in speaking tasks.

#### **The Role of Movies in Language Learning**

Movies have emerged as a popular tool in the EFL classroom, providing learners with exposure to authentic language use in diverse cultural contexts. The audiovisual nature of films allows learners to hear authentic dialogue while observing contextual cues, such as facial expressions, body language, and the socio-cultural backdrop, which are often crucial in understanding the language (Kasper, 1997).

Additionally, movies expose learners to a wide range of accents, dialects, and informal language use, which can be difficult to replicate through traditional classroom instruction.

Research has shown that movies not only support vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension but also help develop speaking skill by allowing learners to observe how native speakers use language in context (Meskill, 1996). Films can serve as a tool for practicing conversation, as they often provide scenarios that students can emulate in speaking exercises. Furthermore, movies serve as a rich source for discussions on cultural topics, making them particularly effective in raising cultural awareness.

### **Speaking Skill Development Through Cultural Exposure**

Speaking skill are a critical component of language proficiency, and cultural exposure plays a significant role in their development. Research has shown that language learners who are exposed to authentic cultural contexts are better equipped to communicate effectively in real-world situations. The ability to engage in spontaneous conversations, understand cultural references, and use appropriate registers is essential for successful communication (Stern, 1992). In this regard, integrating cultural elements into language instruction through movies offers a dual benefit: it improves both cultural awareness and speaking competence.

Studies have indicated that when students are exposed to cultural content alongside language instruction, they demonstrate improved fluency and accuracy in speaking tasks (Chavez, 2006). This improvement is attributed to the enhanced understanding of cultural norms, speech acts, and contextual appropriateness, which are integral to effective communication. The development of these speaking skill is particularly important for EFL learners who wish to use English in diverse global settings.

### **Cultural Competence and Its Impact on EFL Learners**

Cultural competence, defined as the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, is an essential skill for EFL learners. As global communication becomes more interconnected, the ability to navigate cross-cultural interactions has become increasingly important (Deardorff, 2006). The cultivation of cultural competence through language learning not only facilitates communication but also fosters greater empathy and understanding between speakers of different languages.

Recent studies have highlighted the role of cultural competence in shaping learners' attitudes toward foreign languages and cultures. Learners who develop cultural competence are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes toward the target language, leading to increased motivation and engagement in language learning (Sercu, 2005). Furthermore, cultural competence contributes to learners' overall linguistic and communicative ability, as it supports their understanding of how language functions within specific cultural contexts.

### **The Impact of Film-Based Learning on Cultural Awareness and Speaking Skill**

Empirical studies have demonstrated the positive effects of film-based learning on both cultural awareness and speaking proficiency. For example, research by Chik (2014) showed that learners who viewed films in the target language had greater success in acquiring cultural knowledge, as they could directly observe cultural practices and norms. Additionally, films were found to help learners practice speaking skill in an immersive environment, as students were able to model their speech patterns after those seen in films, improving both fluency and accuracy.

The integration of films into the language learning process offers a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between formal education and real-world language use. Films present language in its natural context, highlighting the cultural nuances that are often absent in textbooks. For language learners, this exposure helps to create a more authentic learning experience, one that is aligned with the dynamic and ever-changing nature of language and culture.

## Methodology

The current research utilizes a mixed-methods approach combining both quantitative, i.e. experimental research and qualitative data to offer a comprehensive analysis of the effects of film-based instruction on the learners' cultural awareness and speaking proficiency. The research questions which guide the study are as follows:

**Research Question One:** Does watching English-language films improve the Iranian English students' speaking skill?

**Research Question Two:** Does watching English-language films develop the Iranian English students' cultural awareness?

Based on the questions two hypotheses are formulated. The first hypothesis posits that watching English-language films increases the Iranian English learners' speaking skill. The second hypothesis proposes that watching such films enhances the learners' cultural awareness. The null hypothesis assumes that watching English-language films will have no significant effect on either cultural awareness or speaking proficiency. These hypotheses are grounded in the idea that language acquisition cannot be fully realized without an understanding of the cultural contexts in which the language operates. Films, as a medium that offers rich, authentic cultural content, provide a unique opportunity for learners to bridge the gap between language and culture.

### Participants

The participants of the study were 20 English language learners from Velayat University of Iranshahr, located in Iran. The students were selected according to their scores on the Oxford Placement Test and then they were assigned randomly to two equal groups. Hedges' *g* will be also calculated to investigate the effect size of the study. This random division ensures that each participant has an equal chance of being assigned to either group, reducing the risk of systematic bias that could affect the outcomes of the study. This approach can also increase the external validity of the study, as the sample can be considered representative of the larger population of English language learners at Velayat University.

The twenty students were randomly assigned to the experimental group and the control group. Each group consisted of 10 participants. The experimental group received lessons that included some cultural elements through playing English movies, while the control group continued with traditional language instruction methods that did not have any extra cultural content.

### Data Collection

To examine the impact of the intervention on the students' cultural awareness and speaking skill, multiple methods of data collection including pre- and post-tests for the experimental phase and interviews for the qualitative phase were employed. These methods were chosen to ensure that the research captured both the measurable improvements in learning speaking and culture (quantitative data) as well as the students' subjective experiences and reflections on the learning process (qualitative data). The combination of these two approaches allowed for a richer, more nuanced understanding of the research questions.

### *Pre- and Post-Tests*

The primary quantitative data were gathered through pre- and post-tests, which were administered to both the experimental and control groups. The tests adopted from an international proficiency test, i.e. IELTS (see appendix I) that were designed to measure the students' cultural awareness and speaking skill before and after the intervention. Each test included a set of questions and tasks that assessed the participants' ability to understand cultural concepts and their proficiency in speaking English.

The cultural awareness test involved questions that assessed the participants' knowledge of cultural elements such as customs, traditions, values, and social norms in English-speaking countries. This test was designed to gauge the students' ability to recognize and understand these cultural aspects, which are crucial for effective communication and cultural competence in the language learning process. The speaking test focused on the participants' ability to communicate in English, assessing aspects such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and the ability to engage in meaningful conversations. These assessments were aligned with the rubrics used in previous research on language proficiency, and each participant's speaking performance was scored based on a standardized scale from 1 to 10, with higher scores reflecting better performance (see appendix II).

The pre-tests were administered at the beginning of the study to establish baseline data for each participant's cultural awareness and speaking skill. The post-tests were conducted at the end of the intervention to measure any changes in the students' abilities and to assess the impact of the movie-watching intervention on their learning outcomes.

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

In addition to the pre-tests and post-tests, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data on the students' experiences and perceptions of the intervention. These interviews were aimed at gaining insights into how the students perceived the integration of cultural content through movies and whether they believed it helped improve their cultural awareness and speaking skill.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility in the questions, enabling the interviewer to explore relevant themes in greater depth. While there was a general framework of questions to follow, participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences and insights, allowing for a more conversational and open-ended interview style. The interview questions were designed to assess whether the students felt that the movies helped them better understand cultural differences, whether they believed watching movies influenced their speaking ability, and whether they enjoyed the process of learning through films. These interviews provided valuable qualitative data that complemented the quantitative results obtained from the tests. The interviews were conducted after the post-tests were completed to ensure that the students had experienced the full intervention and were able to reflect on it more thoroughly. Each interview was audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and the recordings were later transcribed for analysis.

### ***Intervention: Watching English Movies***

The intervention for the experimental group involved the incorporation of English movies into the language learning curriculum. This approach was chosen because movies are a widely recognized and accessible medium for introducing cultural content to language learners. By watching movies, students are exposed to authentic language use in real-world contexts, as well as cultural nuances that are often not addressed in traditional language teaching materials. For the experimental group, a selection of English-language films was chosen based on their cultural content and relevance to the learners. The movies depicted various aspects of life in English-speaking countries, including social norms, family dynamics, historical events, and contemporary issues. These films were carefully selected to ensure that they covered a broad range of cultural themes, providing students with a well-rounded understanding of the diverse cultures of English-speaking nations.

During the intervention, the students in the experimental group watched the movies having been selected in accordance with the content of each lesson, followed by group discussions and activities that focused on analyzing the cultural elements presented in the films. These activities were designed to encourage critical thinking and reflection, allowing students to explore the cultural themes of the movies and relate them to their own lives and experiences. In addition to improving cultural awareness, these activities aimed to enhance the students' speaking skill by providing opportunities for them to discuss the films in English and practice their language skill in a communicative setting.

The control group, on the other hand, continued with traditional language instruction, which primarily focused on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension of each unit followed by group discussions. No extra cultural content, other than those imbedded in the authentic materials of the

lessons, was integrated into the teaching process, so they did not watch any English-language movies in classes during the course of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected through the pre-tests, post-tests, and interviews were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

#### ***Quantitative Analysis***

For the quantitative data, the results of the pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the data and assess any general trends in the students' performance. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies were used to describe the baseline scores for both groups and the changes observed after the intervention.

To determine whether the intervention had a statistically significant impact on the students' cultural awareness and speaking skill, paired t-tests were conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores for each group. Paired t-tests were chosen because they allow for the comparison of two related groups (the same participants before and after the intervention), which is crucial for assessing the effect of the intervention on the individual students' scores. These tests helped determine whether there were any significant differences in the cultural awareness and speaking scores between the pre- and post-test measurements. In addition to paired t-tests, Mann-Whitney U tests were used to assess differences between the experimental and control groups. These tests are appropriate for comparing two independent groups when the data do not follow a normal distribution, and they helped identify any significant differences in the mean ranks of cultural awareness and speaking skill between the two groups.

#### ***Qualitative Analysis***

The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involves identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within the interview transcripts, which allows for a deeper understanding of the students' experiences and perceptions. Thematic analysis was chosen because it provides a flexible and detailed approach to understanding complex qualitative data, and it is widely used in educational research to analyze interview data.

The process of thematic analysis involved several steps. First, the interview transcripts were read and re-read to become familiar with the content. Then, initial codes were generated based on significant points in the data that related to the research questions. These codes were grouped into broader themes that reflected the main ideas expressed by the participants. Finally, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately captured the students' perspectives on the impact of the movie-watching intervention on their cultural awareness and speaking skill.

The thematic analysis provided valuable insights into the students' subjective experiences of the intervention, shedding light on the aspects of the movies and the activities that they found most engaging and helpful. This analysis also helped to explain the quantitative findings by providing a deeper understanding of why the intervention was effective in improving cultural awareness and speaking skill.

### **Findings**

This section outlines the key findings derived from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data collected during the study. The study aimed to explore how watching English movies could affect Iranian English learners' cultural awareness and speaking skill. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining statistical analyses and thematic analysis of interview data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the intervention. The findings reveal significant

improvements in the experimental group's speaking skill and cultural awareness, suggesting that the integration of cultural elements through English movies can enhance both language components.

### Descriptive Statistics for the Speaking Variable

The analysis of the speaking variable involved comparing the pre- and post-test scores for both the experimental and control groups. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each group to provide an overview of the data distribution and to assess the general performance trends (table 1).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Speaking Variable in Pre- and Post-tests across Control and Experimental Groups*

|              |                | Report            |                    |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Group        |                | speaking pre-test | speaking post-test |
| Control      | Mean           | 14.1000           | 14.4000            |
|              | Std. Deviation | 1.28668           | 1.42984            |
| Experimental | Mean           | 12.3000           | 17.1000            |
|              | Std. Deviation | 4.34741           | 2.42441            |

In the pre-test, the experimental group had a mean score of 12.30, while the control group had a higher mean score of 14.10. These initial scores suggested that, on average, the participants in the control group had slightly better speaking skill at the beginning of the study. However, it is important to note that the experimental group showed a higher variability, as evidenced by the higher standard deviation of 4.35, indicating a wider range of speaking abilities among the participants in this group. Following the intervention, which involved integrating cultural elements through English movies, the experimental group showed a marked improvement in their speaking skill. The mean post-test score for the experimental group increased to 17.10, reflecting a substantial gain of 4.80 points. In contrast, the control group's post-test mean score only increased slightly to 14.40, showing an improvement of just 0.30 points. This demonstrates that the experimental group experienced a far greater improvement in speaking skill compared to the control group, which received traditional instruction without the incorporation of cultural elements through movies.

Further analysis of the standard deviations revealed that the experimental group's post-test standard deviation decreased to 2.42, indicating a more consistent performance among the participants in this group. This reduction in variability suggests that the exposure to English movies helped the experimental group develop more uniform improvements in their speaking proficiency. On the other hand, the control group's standard deviation remained relatively stable, highlighting the less significant impact of traditional methods on their speaking skill.

### Descriptive Statistics for the Cultural Awareness Variable

The cultural awareness variable was similarly analyzed to determine the extent to which the integration of English movies affected the participants' understanding of cultural elements. In the pre-test, the experimental group scored a mean of 3.90, while the control group's mean score was 1.50. Both groups had low levels of cultural awareness at the outset, but the experimental group exhibited a higher baseline. This suggests that the participants in the experimental group might have had a greater interest or prior exposure to cultural content, which could explain their higher pre-test scores.

After the intervention, the experimental group showed a remarkable improvement in cultural awareness, with a mean post-test score of 16.10. This indicates an increase of 12.20 points from their pre-test score, reflecting a substantial gain in cultural knowledge. In contrast, the control group's post-test score decreased slightly to 1.20, showing a minor decline in cultural awareness over the course of the study. The substantial increase in the experimental group's score and the minimal decrease in the control group's score provide strong evidence that watching English movies significantly enhanced the

cultural awareness of the experimental group while the control group did not experience any similar improvements.

The variability in cultural awareness scores also provides additional insights. The experimental group’s post-test standard deviation was 3.10, which was notably lower than their pre-test standard deviation of 4.05. This reduction suggests that the exposure to movies helped to raise the overall level of cultural awareness in the experimental group, making the participants more consistent in their understanding of cultural concepts. Meanwhile, the control group’s post-test standard deviation remained relatively high, indicating more variation in their scores and suggesting that their cultural awareness did not improve in a uniform manner.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Cultural Variable in Pre- and Post-tests across Control and Experimental Groups*

| Group        |                | Report   |   |
|--------------|----------------|--|---|
|              |                | The effect of cultural awareness on students speaking skill pre-test | The effect of cultural awareness on students speaking skill post-test |
| Control      | Mean           | 1.5000   | 1.2000  |
|              | Std. Deviation | 1.43372  | 1.47573   |
| Experimental | Mean           | 3.9000   | 16.1000   |
|              | Std. Deviation | 2.28279  | 2.51440   |

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the cultural variable in both the pre-test and post-test conditions for the experimental and control groups. The results show that both the mean and standard deviation in the post-test are higher than in the pre-test for both the experimental and control groups. Specifically, the mean in the post-test is significantly higher in the experimental group than in the control group. These results are also evident in the Figure 1:

**Figure 1**

*Mean and Standard Deviation of the Cultural Variable in both the Pre-test and Post-test Conditions for the Experimental and Control Groups*

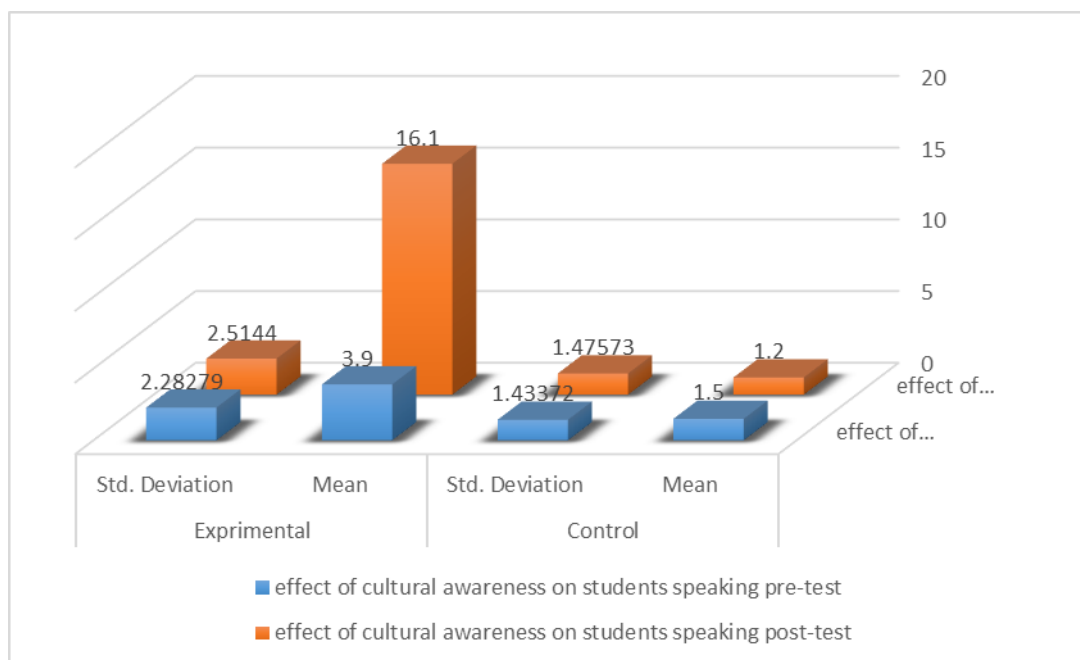


Figure 1 provides a visual comparison of the mean and standard deviation of the cultural variable in both the pre-test and post-test conditions for the experimental and control groups.

### Inferential Statistics for the Speaking Variable

In order to test whether the differences observed in the speaking scores between the experimental and control groups were statistically significant, inferential statistical tests were conducted. The data were first assessed for normality using skewness and kurtosis statistics. The results indicated that the speaking scores for both groups were approximately normally distributed, which validated the use of the independent samples t-test for further analysis.

An independent samples t-test was performed to compare the mean speaking scores between the experimental and control groups. The test results revealed a highly significant difference between the two groups, with a p-value of 0.000. (table 3). This p-value is well below the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, indicating that the improvement in speaking skill observed in the experimental group is statistically significant and not likely to have occurred by chance. Besides, considering the effect size, Hedges' *g*, because of the small number of the participants, was calculated and 1.30 was obtained. It indicates a large effect size that confirms a practical difference. The t-test results strongly support the rejection of the null hypothesis, which posited that watching English movies would have positive impact on the participants' speaking abilities.

**Table 3**

*Results of the Independent Samples T-Test for the Speaking Variable*

|          |                                      | Levene's Test<br>for Equality<br>of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |       |                        |                    |                          |   |          |
|----------|--------------------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---|----------|
|          |                                      | F   | Sig. | t                            | df    | Sig.<br>(2-<br>tailed) | Mean<br>Difference | Std. Error<br>Difference | 95% Confidence<br>Interval of the<br>Difference |          |
|          |                                      |   |      |                              |       |                        |                    |                          | Lower   | Upper    |
| Speaking | Equal<br>variances<br>assumed        | 3.367   | .083 | -                            | 18    | .000                   | -4.50000           | .77244                   | -   | -2.87716 |
|          | Equal<br>variances<br>not<br>assumed |   |      | 5.826                        | 9.731 | .000                   | -4.50000           | .77244                   | 6.12284   | -2.77243 |

These findings confirm that the intervention had a clear and measurable impact on the experimental group's speaking proficiency. The significant improvement in the experimental group's speaking skill can be attributed to the inclusion of cultural elements in their lessons, which provided them with authentic language input and real-life conversational contexts.

### Inferential Statistics for the Cultural Awareness Variable

To analyze the cultural awareness data, a non-parametric test was employed due to the failure of the cultural awareness scores to meet the assumptions of normality. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the rankings of the experimental and control groups. This test is appropriate when the data are not normally distributed, as it compares the ranks rather than the raw scores. The Mann-Whitney U test revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of cultural awareness (table 4). The mean rank for the experimental group was 15.50, while the control group's mean rank was just 5.50. The p-value for the test was 0.000, indicating a highly significant difference between the two groups. This result strongly suggests that the intervention, which incorporated English movies into the curriculum, had a substantial and positive effect on the experimental group's cultural awareness (table 5).

Table 4

*Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test*

|                        |         |
|------------------------|---------|
|                        | Culture |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .000    |

Table 5

*Mean Rank of the Cultural Variable in the Control and Experimental Groups*

| Variable | Group        | N  | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks |
|----------|--------------|----|-----------|--------------|
| culture  | Control      | 10 | 5.50      | 55.00        |
|          | Experimental | 10 | 15.50     | 155.00       |
|          | Total        | 20 |           |              |

Table 5 shows the mean rank of the cultural variable is higher in the experimental group than in the control group. The significant difference in the cultural awareness scores between the experimental and control groups further supports the effectiveness of the intervention. While the experimental group demonstrated a considerable increase in their cultural knowledge, the control group's scores remained largely unchanged, indicating that traditional teaching methods did not have the same impact on cultural awareness.

### Qualitative Findings from the Interviews

In addition to the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants to gain further insights into their experiences with the intervention. The qualitative analysis of the interview responses revealed several key themes, which provide a deeper understanding of how watching English movies influenced the participants' cultural awareness and speaking skill.

- 1. Increased Motivation and Engagement:** Many participants reported feeling more motivated and engaged in the learning process as a result of the intervention. One participant stated, "Watching the movies made learning more interesting because I could see how language is used in real-life situations." The incorporation of cultural content helped students connect more meaningfully with the material, which enhanced their overall learning experience.
- 2. Improved Fluency and Pronunciation:** A number of participants noted that watching English movies helped them improve their fluency and pronunciation. One student commented, "I started speaking more smoothly, and I even noticed that my pronunciation got better by mimicking the characters in the movies." This suggests that the naturalistic language exposure provided by the movies helped students improve their spoken English in a more authentic and contextually relevant manner.
- 3. Broader Cultural Understanding:** The majority of participants expressed that they gained a broader understanding of cultural norms and values from watching the movies. A participant shared, "Before this, I didn't know that in English-speaking cultures, people use humor in conversations all the time. Now, I understand it better and can use humor in my speaking." This highlights the significant role that movies play in exposing learners to cultural nuances that are often absent from traditional language teaching methods.
- 4. Increased Confidence in Speaking:** Several students reported feeling more confident in their ability to speak English after watching the movies. One participant explained, "I felt more comfortable speaking in English because I learned new phrases and expressions from the movies that I could use in conversations." This suggests that the intervention helped to reduce students' anxiety about speaking, fostering greater self-assurance in their language use.

5. **Contextual Learning:** Many learners emphasized the value of learning language within a cultural context. One participant said, "It was easier to remember words and expressions when I saw them used in a movie, in a real-life situation." This reflects the advantage of learning vocabulary and expressions within authentic, meaningful contexts, as opposed to learning them in isolation.

These themes illustrate how the intervention not only impacted the students' speaking proficiency but also enhanced their understanding of cultural practices and expressions. The combination of linguistic and cultural learning appears to have created a more enriching and effective language learning experience for the participants.

### Discussion

The current study sought to explore the dual role of watching English movies in enhancing both cultural awareness and speaking skill among Iranian English language learners. The research aimed to address a gap in existing literature by investigating how movie-based tasks could improve learners' communicative competence, particularly through their cultural understanding and the development of their speaking skill. The results, drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data, strongly indicate that movie-based instruction significantly enhanced both cultural awareness and speaking skill among learners.

#### Quantitative Findings

The quantitative analysis, which included pre- and post-test results, revealed substantial differences between the experimental group, exposed to movie-based tasks, and the control group, which did not receive this exposure. Statistical analyses, such as the independent samples t-test and Mann-Whitney U test, demonstrated that the experimental group showed significantly greater improvements in both speaking skill and cultural awareness. The independent samples t-test results for speaking skill indicated a significant difference ( $p = 0.00$ ), confirming that the experimental group outperformed the control group in speaking tasks. This suggests that the integration of English movies into the curriculum has a marked positive impact on students' fluency, allowing them to produce more natural and contextually relevant speech.

Additionally, the Mann-Whitney U test showed a significant difference in cultural awareness, with the experimental group demonstrating higher mean ranks (mean rank = 15.5) compared to the control group (mean rank = 5.5). This supports the conclusion that exposure to movies in the classroom fosters a deeper understanding of cultural contexts, which is essential for achieving communicative competence in a second language. These findings underscore the significant role of authentic materials, like movies, in bridging the gap between language knowledge and cultural competence.

#### Qualitative Insights

In addition to the quantitative data, the qualitative analysis from the semi-structured interviews provided rich, in-depth insights into the participants' experiences. Interviewees reported that their engagement in conversations had increased, and they showed a greater sensitivity to cultural nuances. Participants noted that they felt more confident and effective in communicating, both in formal and informal settings, after being exposed to English movies. Many participants mentioned that they had developed a better understanding of idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and the appropriate use of body language in conversations. For example, learners reflected on how watching movies allowed them to better understand the subtleties of social interactions, such as the importance of making eye contact during conversations or understanding the cultural significance of certain gestures and expressions. This kind of cultural insight is often difficult to impart through traditional classroom materials but can be richly captured through the visual and auditory elements in films.

Additionally, learners' speaking fluency also improved significantly, as they were able to incorporate expressions and language structures observed in movies into their own speech. The natural

flow of dialogues in films provided students with a model for how to approach real-life conversations, making them more aware of the rhythm, tone, and pacing typical of native English speakers. This, in turn, led to greater fluency and more authentic language production, particularly in informal speech contexts, where the use of idiomatic expressions and cultural references is crucial. These findings highlight the value of authentic materials in language learning, especially when it comes to improving communicative competence. By presenting learners with natural language use in varied cultural contexts, movies provide opportunities to engage with both the language and the culture simultaneously, enhancing learners' overall proficiency.

### **Addressing the Research Questions**

The results of the study offer strong answers to the research questions. The first research question addressed whether watching English movies could develop Iranian English learners' cultural awareness. The data strongly suggest that incorporating movies into the language learning curriculum leads to significant improvements in cultural awareness. As mentioned, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the experimental group demonstrated a significantly higher level of cultural awareness than the control group. Participants in the experimental group reported better understanding of cultural practices, social norms, and behavioral expectations in English-speaking countries. These insights allowed them to navigate conversations with greater ease and appropriateness, thus enhancing their cultural competence.

The second research question focused on the impact of watching English movies on Iranian English learners' speaking skill. The results for speaking proficiency also support a positive impact. The independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in speaking skill between the two groups, with the experimental group outperforming the control group. This indicates that the exposure to English movies improved the learners' ability to produce fluent, culturally informed speech. Participants in the experimental group not only demonstrated improved vocabulary usage and grammar but also showed a more natural command of spoken English, evidenced by their increased use of idiomatic expressions, slang, and culturally relevant references.

### **Implications**

These results are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the benefits of integrating authentic materials into language learning. For example, Yukselturk et al. (2018) and Berna et al. (2020) have shown that exposure to real-life dialogues, as seen in films, enhances both language proficiency and cultural competence. The current study reinforces these findings by demonstrating that English movies, as authentic materials, can significantly enhance both cultural awareness and speaking skill among language learners.

In terms of cultural awareness, this study aligns with the work of Istanto (2009), who suggests that movies provide a rich cultural context that enhances learners' understanding of language use in various social and cultural settings. By observing characters in diverse social situations, learners gain insights into how culture shapes language, communication styles, and behavior. The results from this study confirm that movie-based learning can be a highly effective means of improving cultural understanding, as students in the experimental group showed greater awareness of cultural nuances, such as social etiquette, non-verbal communication, and cultural references. Similarly, the findings related to speaking skill corroborate previous studies, such as Wang (2020), which highlight the role of contextualized language input in improving fluency. Movies provide learners with authentic conversational models that expose them to natural speech patterns, colloquial language, and informal communication. The experimental group's improved speaking scores suggest that such exposure is crucial for developing fluent and confident speakers. The results also reflect the importance of incorporating visual and auditory input, as movies offer both linguistic and contextual cues that facilitate learning. By observing how native speakers use language in real-life situations, learners can internalize the rhythms, tones, and conversational strategies necessary for effective communication.

### Contributions to the Field

This study makes significant contributions to the field of language education by addressing critical gaps in research related to the integration of cultural awareness and speaking skill. Previous studies have often focused on either cultural awareness or speaking proficiency in isolation, but this research highlights their interconnectedness. By demonstrating how understanding cultural norms and practices can directly enhance speaking ability, this study offers new insights into the benefits of integrated language learning.

Furthermore, the study's focus on learners from a monocultural context—those at Velayat University—provides valuable insights into how exposure to foreign cultures through movies can shape learners' perspectives and attitudes toward language use. In a monocultural setting, students may have limited opportunities to engage with diverse cultural practices, which can hinder their ability to communicate effectively in English. By incorporating movies that depict English-speaking cultures, the study shows how learners can gain a more comprehensive understanding of cultural norms, behaviors, and communication strategies. This cultural exposure, in turn, enhances their ability to engage in meaningful conversations and navigate different social contexts. The study also highlights the importance of developing students' attitudes toward language learning and cultural exchange. As learners gain greater cultural awareness, they may become more open to engaging with speakers from different backgrounds and more motivated to improve their language skill. This has important implications for the design of language curricula, as it suggests that integrating cultural elements into language instruction can help learners develop a more holistic and motivated approach to language learning.

### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While the findings of this study are promising, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study focused on a relatively small sample of participants from a single university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could examine the impact of movie-based learning on a larger, more diverse group of learners from different educational contexts. Additionally, the study relied on a limited range of movie genres, and future research could explore whether different types of films (e.g., drama, comedy, documentary) have varying effects on cultural awareness and speaking skill.

Future research could also explore how different forms of movie-based instruction, such as subtitled versus non-subtitled films, impact learners' comprehension and language development. Furthermore, the long-term effects of movie-based learning on language proficiency and cultural awareness could be examined to determine whether these improvements are sustained over time.

### Conclusion and Implications

This study explored the impact of watching English movies on the enhancement of both cultural awareness and speaking skill among Iranian English language learners. The results revealed that integrating English movies into language learning curricula led to significant improvements in both of these areas. The experimental group, which was exposed to movies, demonstrated enhanced cultural awareness and better speaking skill compared to the control group. These findings align with the notion that language learning is inherently tied to cultural understanding, and authentic materials like movies provide valuable insights into real-life communication. The results not only highlight the benefits of using movies to improve speaking fluency but also emphasize the importance of cultural competence in fostering effective communication. By providing learners with exposure to cultural contexts and conversational models, movies serve as an invaluable tool in helping students engage in authentic, contextually appropriate communication. This research supports the growing body of literature advocating for the integration of cultural elements into language instruction, further demonstrating the interconnectedness of linguistic and cultural competence.

In light of these findings, several implications can be drawn for language educators and curriculum designers. First, incorporating movies into language courses can offer an innovative and engaging method for improving both cultural awareness and speaking skill. Educators should consider selecting films that not only align with the linguistic level of students but also reflect diverse cultural contexts, enabling learners to understand various social norms, practices, and communication styles. Furthermore, movie-based tasks and activities can be tailored to focus on specific language skill such as idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and conversation strategies, all of which contribute to more natural and effective communication.

Additionally, this study's results suggest that language educators should reconsider traditional, isolated approaches to language teaching that focus purely on grammar and vocabulary. Instead, integrating cultural context into lesson plans can make the language learning experience more holistic and authentic, better preparing students for real-world communication. The ability to engage with the nuances of culture not only improves language proficiency but also deepens students' understanding of the sociocultural dynamics at play in any given language. However, while the results are promising, the study's limitations, such as the small sample size and the short duration of exposure to movies, must be acknowledged. Future research should explore the long-term effects of movie-based learning and involve larger, more diverse student populations to generalize the findings. Additionally, further investigation into the specific types of movies or genres that most effectively enhance language learning would provide deeper insights into how different cinematic forms contribute to language development.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing field of language education by demonstrating that movies are a powerful tool for enhancing both cultural awareness and speaking skill. By embracing this innovative approach, educators can offer learners a more dynamic and context-rich language learning experience, equipping them with the skill and knowledge needed to navigate real-world communicative settings. Ultimately, this approach fosters not only better language proficiency but also a deeper, more empathetic understanding of the cultures associated with the language being learned.

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## Appendix I

### IELTS Speaking Test:

#### Part 1 (Interview)

- What is your full name?
- May I see your ID?
- Where are you from?
- Do you work or study?
- What apps do you often use?
- Which ones are popular in your country?
- Do you think apps have made life easy for people? How?
- Do you want to make your own application in the future?
- What applications do you expect in the future?

#### Part 1 (Interview)

- Do you have a lot of friends?
- How easy is it to read books in English?
- Would you like to go back there again?
- What do you do together with your family?
- Why is family important to you?
- Are you learning a musical instrument at the moment?
- What do you do in your free time?

- Has your life changed much in the last year?
- Do you have a job right now?
- What book would you take on a long journey?

Part 1 (Interview)

- Where are you from
- How often do you go to the cinema?
- What kind of person is it easy to make friends with?
- Who are more important to you, friends or family?
- How important is your hometown to you?
- Is there anything you dislike about learning English?
- How many people are there in your immediate family?

Part 2 (Cue Card)

Talk about a family that you like (not your own family).

Please tell me

- Where the family lives?
- Who the members of the family are?
- How you know them?
- Explain why you like this family.

Part 2 (Cue Card)

Describe an event that changed your life (or, changed you) in a good way. You should say:

- when it happened
- where it happened
- what the change was
- and explain how you benefited from this change.

Part 2 (Cue Card)

Describe a garden or park you enjoyed visiting. You should say:

- where it was
- what it looked like
- what you did (or, were doing) there
- and explain why you liked it.

Part 2 (Cue Card)

Describe a (very) intelligent person you know. You should say:

- who this person is
- when and where you (first) met them (him or her)

- what this person does in life (e.g., work/ study)
- and explain why you think this person is intelligent.

### IELTS Culture-Themed Speaking Question Bank:

#### Interview 1

- Can you describe a cultural event or tradition in your country?
- What do you know about festivals or celebrations in English-speaking countries?
- Have you watched any English movies? If yes, which one did you like?
- Can you summarize the story of an English movie you have seen?
- What cultural differences did you notice in the movie?

#### Interview 2

- How does culture influence the way people communicate in your country?
- Can you talk about a famous cultural landmark in your country?
- How do movies or TV shows from other cultures help people learn about those cultures?
- What role does language play in preserving culture?
- Have you learned anything surprising about another culture through movies, books, or travel?

#### Interview 3

- What is your favorite English-speaking country, and why?
- Can you describe a famous holiday or tradition in English-speaking countries?
- Do you think English movies or media accurately represent the cultures of English-speaking countries?
- What do you think is the biggest cultural difference between your country and English-speaking countries?
- How do you think learning English can help someone understand other cultures better?

#### Interview 4

- How do movies reflect the traditions and values of a culture?
- Can you name a movie that helped you understand a different culture? What did you learn?
- Do you think watching movies is an effective way to learn a foreign language? Why or why not?
- What cultural values or behaviors stood out to you in an English movie you've watched?
- How do movies help bridge cultural gaps between different countries?

**Appendix II**

The tests used in the study were scored according to a set of rubrics that assessed various aspects of communication, such as fluency, choice of words, and cultural awareness.

| <b>Criteria</b>                         | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Scale (0-20)</b>  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Fluency</b>                          | The ability to speak smoothly with minimal hesitation. Measures how well the participant maintains the flow of conversation.   | 0 (Very low) to 20 (Very high)   |
| <b>Lexical and Grammatical Accuracy</b> | The accuracy and appropriateness of culturally relevant vocabulary and grammar used in speech. This includes the correct use of cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and context-specific language. | 0 (Frequent errors in cultural references, limited or incorrect vocabulary) to 20 (Accurate use of culturally relevant vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, grammatically correct). |
| <b>Interaction and Engagement</b>       | The ability to interact appropriately in conversations, including taking turns, asking questions, and maintaining the flow of dialogue.  | 0 (Passive, unengaged) to 20 (Actively participates, responds appropriately)   |
| <b>Communication Effectiveness</b>      | The ability to express ideas clearly and effectively while engaging with the listener. Focuses on how well the participant conveys their message.  | 0 (Difficult to follow, disorganized) to 20 (Clear, logical, and engaging communication)   |
| <b>Cultural Awareness</b>               | The understanding and application of cultural elements in speech, such as cultural references, idiomatic expressions, or culturally appropriate behaviors.   | 0 (No cultural references or misunderstandings) to 20 (Consistently integrates and accurately applies cultural elements)   |
| <b>Cultural Sensitivity</b>             | Awareness of cultural differences and the respectful use of culturally relevant material during the conversation.  | 0 (Insensitive or inappropriate) to 20 (Highly respectful and culturally sensitive)  |