Modified Literature Circles: Improving ESP Students' English-speaking Skills Through Movie Circles

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Abstract

For Thai students, English-speaking skills have been among the most problematic. This study aims to compare the English-speaking skills of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students before and after employing movie circles, and to investigate their attitudes toward employing movie circles. The participants consisted of 30 ESP students studying a dual program in social development and education at a public university in Thailand. They were also classified as pre-service social studies teachers. A mixed-methods study was performed utilizing the one-group pre-test-post-test design. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. The instruments were movie circle lesson plans, pre- and post-English-speaking tests, an attitude questionnaire, and semi-structured interview questions. The results revealed significant improvement in the ESP students' English-speaking skills, as well as positive attitudes toward using movie circles to improve English-speaking skills. The findings suggest that movie circles, or peer-led discussion activities, can be integrated into ESP classrooms with the specific goal of improving English-speaking skills.

Keywords: movie, movie circles, literature circles, English for Specific Purposes, speaking skills

1. Introduction

English is now, unquestionably, a global language. Effective communication in English is crucial for both Thai workers employed overseas, and international workers employed in Thailand. As of March 2023, there were 130,931 Thai workers employed abroad (Trirathpaladol et al., 2023), and, in 2021, over one million work permits were issued to foreign individuals working in Thailand (Department of Employment Ministry of Labour, 2022). English serves as the medium of communication among these laborers, whether for international workers abroad, or for native Thais communicating with foreign workers in Thailand. Regarding the importance of English, both employers and employees in Thailand's private and public sectors continue to be actively encouraged to acquire proficiency in the language. Thailand's National Strategy for the years 2018 to 2037 includes the National Strategy on Developing and Strengthening Human Capital, which emphasizes the need to enhance Thai citizens' English communication abilities for high-skilled employment (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2021). As a result, English is a necessary tool of communication for Thai laborers, and aspiring students are able to enhance their language skills to prepare themselves before entering the labor market.

University students must prepare for success in a global workforce (Lapele, 2019). Therefore, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms have had a tremendous impact on improving the English skills and knowledge of ESP students, including social development and education majors. Since ESP focuses on teaching English to learners according to their specific needs and interests (Ghafar, 2022; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), it is therefore practically useful for professional training (Soranastaporn, 2018). Properly designed ESP courses can help learners reach the English language proficiency levels required by prospective employers (Thanakong, 2022).

Focusing on the English language, speaking skills are crucial for the modern workforce as skilled workers have more job opportunities when they are able to speak English well. Moreover, speaking skills are essential for success in a wide range of environments, such as workplaces and professional scenarios (Domysheva & Kopylova, 2021). As such, speaking for specific purposes is crucial for university students in the specific fields of their major (Lapele, 2019), and ESP courses can be designed for performing communicative activities required by their academic or professional settings (Dzięcioł-Pędich & Dudzik, 2021).

However, previous studies have shown that English students encounter various problems speaking English. These problems include, for example, lack of vocabulary (Chema, Syahrul, Reflinda, & Syafitri, 2023; Jaya, Petrus, & Pitaloka, 2022; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020; Yuh & Kaewurai, 2021), fear of making mistakes (Jaya et al., 2022), poor pronunciation (Chema et al., 2023; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020; Yuh & Kaewurai, 2021), lack of confidence (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020), and insufficient speaking practices (Jaya et al., 2022; Tantri, Romadlon, & Nurcahyo, 2023). Furthermore, the problem of low English proficiency is especially evident among non-English majors, who face greater challenges in achieving proficiency compared to English majors because they have less exposure to the language (Khammee, Liang-itsara, Nomnian, & Rhee, 2024).

Movie circles are among the classroom activities that can enhance students' speaking skills. Movie circles, also called film circles, were

adapted from literature circles (Stephens et al., 2012) which are peer-led discussion groups wherein members choose one piece of literature to discuss in a given session (Daniels, 2002). Movie circles are similar insofar as students watch one movie and then participate in a movie group discussion. However, they have received relatively little research, and therefore their impact on improving speaking skills among pre-service social studies teachers is less documented. In the current study, the participants agreed to improve their English-speaking skills by engaging in discussions on environmental developments in both community and school settings. Therefore, this research explores the effectiveness of movie circles in an ESP classroom, aiming to compare ESP students' English-speaking skills before and after using movie circles, and investigate ESP students' attitudes toward employing movie circles to enhance their English-speaking skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English-Speaking Skills

Speaking is defined as a productive skill that involves communicating with others using speech to convey meaning (Sasabone, Jubhari, Sukmawati, & Sujarwo, 2021). Speaking is employed to effectively communicate intended meanings through structured verbal expressions (Dinsa, Seyoum, & Dinsa, 2022). That is, speaking entails the dual objectives of the speaker being understood and the receiver processing the statements to understand the speaker's intentions (Sasabone et al., 2021). However, speaking is considered one of the most challenging English skills for students who are not enrolled in English department programs (Tantri et al., 2023). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that Thai citizens still have difficulties in speaking the English language because they encounter problems related to vocabulary and grammar (Namtapi, 2022; Nusen, 2022). Additionally, students' inadequate English-speaking proficiency can be attributed to a lack of effective teaching methods, insufficient activities, and a lack of instructional materials (Alghaberi, 2019). With these problems being evident, it is crucial to improve Thai students' English-speaking skills, and teachers should continuously search for innovative and engaging media to enhance their instruction of English-speaking skills (Kaban, 2023).

2.2 Movie Circles and Literature Circles

Movie circles, or film circles, are peer-led group discussions about movies which a group has decided to watch and discuss together. These activities have been modified from literature circles (Stephens et al., 2012). Given that movie circles were adapted from literature circles, a brief review of the activities can be presented. Literature circles are student-centered discussion activities using different roles to make reading meaningful, comprehensible, and enjoyable (Chen, 2020; Novitasari, Rahayu, & Suryanto, 2021). In literature circle activities, students are able to control and participate in their learning process (Gailea, Evenddy, & Haeroni, 2022) by working in an interactive and collaborative learning environment (Chiang, 2018; Hamdany & Picard, 2022).

A study by Stephens et al. (2012) revealed that, using movie circles, students were able to connect with incredibly inspiring classroom activities that enabled them to reach a new level of English communication. The activities also facilitated students' development of critical thinking skills, ability to express their ideas, and enabled them to become more independent learners. The researchers reported that students found enjoyment in both individual and group tasks which not only aided them in acquiring new vocabulary but also in utilizing it accurately within a context. Similar to movie circles, in an ELF classroom, Brazenas (2019) utilized television series and titled the activities "media circles" with Chinese students in an ELF classroom. Positive results were observed, with students mentioning enhanced oral communication abilities, greater cultural awareness, and better learning autonomy. Since movie circles allow students to discuss movies with their peers, these activities can enhance students' speaking skills. However, there is a limited number of studies focusing on using movie circles to improve such skills of pre-service social studies teachers who are non-English major students. This study, therefore, introduces movie circles to improve students' English-speaking skills in an ESP classroom.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods study consisting of the one-group pre-test-post-test design was employed to compare ESP students' English-speaking skills before and after the use of movie circles and to investigate their attitudes toward the activities. The study utilized both qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect data for comprehensive analysis.

3.2 Participants

This study involved 30 second-year students, obtained by purposive sampling, majoring in a dual-degree program in education and social development. They were also considered to be pre-service social studies teachers. All were enrolled in a mandatory ESP course in the second semester of the academic year 2023 in the School of Political and Social Sciences and the School of Education at a medium-sized university in Thailand.

3.3 Research Instruments

3.3.1 English-speaking Tests

Speaking tests were implemented to compare ESP students' English-speaking skills before and after employing movie circles in the ESP classroom. Both pre- and post-tests included the identical question: "Can you explain an environmental problem in your community and explain in detail its impact on people's lives?" Each student was given 10 minutes to consider their answer and respond. The question was approved by three experts (English language teachers for more than 10 years) to ensure that it was relevant to the students' interests and

disciplines of study. The content validity of the question using the Items Objective of Congruence (IOC) technique was validated at a score of 0.67.

3.3.2 Speaking Assessment Rubric

The rubric for evaluating students' speaking abilities was adapted from the qualitative features of spoken language by the Council of Europe (2020) and the B1 preliminary speaking assessment scales by Cambridge Assessment English (2021). This rubric consists of six main areas: (1) range of language, (2) accuracy, (3) fluency, (4) interaction, (5) coherence, and (6) phonology. Item 1, range of language, focuses on employing appropriate vocabulary and terms related to environmental issues. Item 2, accuracy, concerns the ways that students utilize simple grammatical forms in their speech. Item 3, fluency, focuses on students' smoothness and continuity of speaking. Item 4, interaction, centers on how students initiate, maintain, and conclude uncomplicated conversations on familiar topics. Item 5, coherence, concerns the ways that students connect different ideas and points of discussion into a cohesive sequence by using various cohesive devices. The last item, phonology, assesses students' clarity and intelligibility of pronunciation. The total score of the speaking rubric is 30, and it was designed based on the B1 EFR level. Since the university involved in this study required the students to achieve at least the B1 level, and the majority of students had already completed the university A2 course (except for two students who were concurrently enrolled in the course), the B1 level rubric could be used. The assessment of the rubric's appropriateness was examined by the three experts. The pre-and post- speaking tests and the rubric were used by one of the researchers and an English teacher, a native English speaker of American nationality, to examine the English-speaking skills of the ESP students before and after using movie circles in the ESP classroom.

3.3.3 Movie Circle Lesson Plans

Following development of the rubric, eight lesson plans employing movie circles to promote students' English-speaking skills were constructed. The students selected four movies, namely, The Day After Tomorrow (2004), 2012 (I) (2009), WALL E (2008), and The Lorax (2012). Each movie was divided into two lesson plans with three hours for each lesson. The lesson plans focused on environmental issues in the movies, as well as discussions on environmental protection in school and community settings. In each movie circle lesson plan, the students were asked to rotate their roles. The appropriateness of the lesson plans was approved by the same three experts who approved the question for the speaking test described above in 3.3.1.

In this study, movie circles included pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing steps. As movie circles were adapted from literature circles, the lesson plans were designed based on the stages of development in reader-response theory proposed by Kaowiwattanakul (2019). Each step is described in detail below.

During the pre-viewing stage, a brief discussion of the movie, along with presentation of relevant vocabulary and environmental issues, was conducted to enhance the students' schema knowledge. The technical terms were selected based on the Dictionary of Environment and Ecology by Collin (2014).

The viewing step involved engaging with the narrator, settings, situations, characters, and actions in the selected movie. During this stage, students were divided into groups of five, and were given role sheets adapted from Daniels (2002). Each student was required to perform one of the following movie circle roles: a questioner, an illustrator, a word wizard, a movie master, a connector, and a summarizer. They were instructed to rotate these roles for each lesson plan. While watching the movie, the students were responsible for completing their role sheets in order to prepare for the discussion in the post-viewing step.

The post-viewing step involved reflecting on emotions, exploring particular issues in the movie, developing interpretations, and evaluating ideas and ideologies. The students discussed the movie with their peers.

3.3.4 Attitude Questionnaire toward the Use of Movie Circles to Enhance Students' English-speaking Skills

A questionnaire was employed to examine ESP students' attitudes toward utilizing movie circles to enhance their English-speaking skills in the ESP classroom. The questionnaire utilized a five-point rating scale, and consisted of 43 items divided into three sections: attitudes toward movies, roles in movie circles, and benefits of using movie circles. The scale ranged from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The second section and the first three items of the third section were adapted from Kaowiwattanakul (2020). The content validity of the item was verified by the same three IOC committees responsible for approving the English-speaking tests. The overall IOC was 0.95.

3.3.5 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into students' attitudes regarding the use of movie circles for enhancing their English-speaking skills in the ESP classroom. The individual interview technique was employed and consisted of one main question: "Do you think that employing movie circles can improve your English-speaking skills? If yes, how? If not, why not?" Each interview was expected to last 5–10 minutes and was conducted in Thai language for clarity and comprehensiveness of the participant responses. Additionally, the content validity of the questionnaire item was assessed by the same three IOC committees. The IOC was 0.67.

3.4 Data Collection

This study was conducted from January to March 2024, beginning with a literature review to design research instruments. Following this, lesson plans were developed by the researcher, incorporating movies and topics suitable for discussions in movie circles. These movies

were selected by the students themselves. The subsequent stage involved the pre-test to assess students' English-speaking skills.

Over an eight-week period, eight lesson plans were implemented, each lasting three hours per week, totaling 24 hours. These lessons included presentations on environmental knowledge and vocabulary, followed by movie viewing focusing on environmental issues, and group discussions led by the students in their assigned roles. The post-test to evaluate English-speaking skills was administered after completing all eight lessons.

In addition to the speaking post-test, an attitude questionnaire was distributed to the students, followed by semi-structured interviews conducted in Thai language to further explore students' attitudes. Finally, both the qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed.

The ethical approval was obtained from the human ethic committees of the university where the study took place.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data from the English-speaking tests was analyzed using SPSS, and initial normality tests revealed significant results, indicating that the data did not conform to a normal distribution. As a result, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which is a non-parametric statistical method, was employed to assess whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of ESP students' speaking skills.

Regarding the attitude questionnaires, the mean, standard deviation, and content analysis were used. The interpretation was analyzed as follows: 4.20–5.00 = strongly agree, 3.40–4.19 = agree, 2.60-3.39 = neutral, 1.80–2.59 = disagree, and 1.00–1.79 = strongly disagree.

Content analysis of the semi-structured interview responses was conducted.

4. Results

4.1 Comparison of ESP Students' Pre- and Post-English-Speaking Tests

To answer the first research objective, pre- and post-speaking tests were used to compare the English-speaking skills of the ESP students before and after using movie circles. The normal distribution was analyzed to select the statistics, and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, a non-parametric test, was utilized.

Table 1. Comparison of ESP students' pre- and post-English-speaking tests (N=30)

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	Sig.
Pre-test – Post-test	Negative Ranks	29	15.88	460.50	-4.696*	.000
	Positive Ranks	1	4.50	4.50		
	Ties	0				
	Total	30				

*Based on positive ranks.

Table 1 summarizes the pre-test and post-test scores of the English-speaking skills of the ESP students. The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed a significant difference between the mean scores (Z = -4.696, p <0.05), suggesting that there was a notable improvement in students' English-speaking skills as a result of using movie circles.

4.2 ESP Students' Attitudes Toward Employing Movie Circles in Enhancing English-speaking Skills in the ESP Classroom

The attitude questionnaire was used to examine the ESP students' attitudes toward employing movie circles to enhance their English-speaking skills. The following tables 2-4 illustrate the results of the three sections of the questionnaire, and excerpts of responses from the semi-structured interviews have been included to further illustrate the attitudes of students.

4.2.1 Students' Attitudes Toward the Movies Used in the Classroom to Enhance English-speaking Skills

Table 2. Students' attitudes toward the movies used in the classroom to enhance English-speaking skills (N=30)

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Movie 1: The Lorax			
1. I think the characters of The Lorax were interesting.	4.53	0.57	Strongly agree
2. I think the setting (time and place) of The Lorax was interesting.	4.67	0.55	Strongly agree
3. I think the plot of The Lorax was interesting.	4.57	0.57	Strongly agree
4. I think the theme of The Lorax was interesting.	4.53	0.63	Strongly agree
5. I think the genres (animation, adventure, and comedy) of The Lorax were interesting.	4.63	0.56	Strongly agree
6. I think The Lorax was appropriate to my English language proficiency level.	4.53	0.78	Strongly agree
7. I think The Lorax helped me improve my speaking skills.	4.37	0.72	Strongly agree
Movie 2: WALL-E			
8. I think the characters of WALL-E were interesting.	4.37	0.72	Strongly agree
9. I think the setting (time and place) of WALL-E was interesting.	4.33	0.61	Strongly agree
10. I think the plot of WALL-E was interesting.	4.43	0.63	Strongly agree
11. I think the theme of WALL-E was interesting.	4.40	0.62	Strongly agree
12. I think the genres (animation, adventure, and family) of WALL-E were interesting.	4.33	0.71	Strongly agree

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
13. I think WALL-E was appropriate to my English language proficiency level.	4.27	0.74	Strongly agree
14. I think WALL-E helped me improve my speaking skills.	4.23	0.68	Strongly agree
Movie 3: The Day After Tomorrow			
15. I think the characters of The Day After Tomorrow were interesting.	4.40	0.67	Strongly agree
16. I think the setting (time and place) of The Day After Tomorrow was interesting.	4.43	0.68	Strongly agree
17. I think the plot of The Day After Tomorrow was interesting.	4.33	0.71	Strongly agree
18. I think the theme of The Day After Tomorrow was interesting.	4.53	0.73	Strongly agree
19. I think the genres (action, adventure, and sci-fi) of The Day After Tomorrow were interesting.	4.50	0.68	Strongly agree
20. I think The Day After Tomorrow was appropriate to my English language proficiency level.	4.30	0.70	Strongly agree
21. I think The Day After Tomorrow helped me improve my speaking skills.	4.20	0.85	Strongly agree
Movie 4: 2012			
22. I think the characters of 2012 were interesting.	4.63	0.56	Strongly agree
23. I think the setting (time and place) of 2012 was interesting.	4.43	0.68	Strongly agree
24. I think the plot of 2012 was interesting.	4.47	0.57	Strongly agree
25. I think the theme of 2012 was interesting.	4.53	0.63	Strongly agree
26. I think the genres (action, adventure, and sci-fi) of 2012 were interesting.	4.47	0.63	Strongly agree
27. I think 2012 was appropriate to my English language proficiency level.	4.33	0.71	Strongly agree
28. I think 2012 helped me improve my speaking skills.	4.37	0.61	Strongly agree
Total	**4.43**	**0.45**	**Strongly agree**

Table 2 reveals the results of the first section of the attitude questionnaire, indicating that the students had positive attitudes toward the movies used in the classroom (M = 4.43, SD = 0.45).

Firstly, the results implied that the students' attitudes toward the movie The Lorax were positive among the 30 questionnaire respondents, who ranked all items "strongly agree". The results reveal that the majority of the respondents thought the setting and genres of The Lorax were interesting (M = 4.67, S SD = 0.55 and M = 4.63, SD = 0.56, respectively). Although the last item received the lowest mean score, the students nonetheless expressed positive attitudes about The Lorax helping them improve their English-speaking skills (M = 4.37, SD = 0.72).

Next, for the second movie, the results showed that the students' attitudes toward WALL-E were positive overall. The students rated both the plot and the theme as interesting (M = 4.43, SD = 0.63 and M = 4.40, SD = 0.62, respectively). Despite rating the last item with the lowest mean score, the students overall strongly agreed that WALL-E helped them improve their speaking skills (M = 4.23, SD = 0.68).

Third, the findings suggested that the students also had positive attitudes toward The Day After Tomorrow. The students responded that both the theme and genres of The Day After Tomorrow were interesting (M = 4.53, SD = 0.73 and M = 4.50, SD = 0.68, respectively). Similar to the previous two movies, the item indicating that the movie helped students improve their speaking skills received the lowest mean score (M = 4.20, SD = 0.85).

Finally, the results revealed that students' attitudes toward the movie 2012 were also positive overall, as the students strongly agreed with every item. The students revealed that both the characters and the theme were interesting (M = 4.63, SD = 0.56 and M = 4.53, SD = 0.63, respectively). As with the previous three movies, the item indicating that the movie was appropriate to students' English language proficiency level received the lowest mean score (M = 4.31, SD = 0.71).

4.2.2 Students' Attitudes Toward the Assigned Movie Circle Roles in the Classroom

Table 3. Students' attitudes toward the assigned movie circle roles in the classroom (N=30)

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I think that being a questioner helped me improve my English-speaking skills.	4.37	0.56	Strongly agree
2. I think that being a summarizer helped me improve my English-speaking skills.	4.60	0.62	Strongly agree
3. I think that being a word wizard helped me improve my English-speaking skills.	4.50	0.57	Strongly agree
4. I think that being a connector helped me improve my English-speaking skills.	4.53	0.63	Strongly agree
5. I think that being a movie master (who brought interesting parts or quotations from the story to discuss with peers) helped me improve my English-speaking skills.	4.57	0.63	Strongly agree
6. I think that being an illustrator helped me improve my English-speaking skills.	4.23	0.82	Strongly agree
Total	**4.47**	**0.47**	**Strongly agree**

Table 3 presents the results of the second section of the attitude questionnaire, indicating the students' overall positive attitudes toward the assigned movie circle roles in the classroom (M = 4.47, SD = 0.47). The majority of the students believed that they could improve their English-speaking skills by being a summarizer (M = 4.60, SD = 0.62), a movie master who brought interesting parts or quotes from the story to discuss with peers (M = 4.57, SD = 0.63), and a connector (M = 4.53, SD = 0.63). The role of illustrator received the lowest mean score (M = 4.23, SD = 0.82).

4.2.3 Students' Attitudes Toward the Benefits of Using Movie Circles in the Classroom

Table 4. Students' attitudes toward the benefits of using movie circles in the classroom (N=30)

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I think movie circles allowed me to practice speaking English in a real situation.	4.57	0.68	Strongly agree
2. I think movie circles helped me practice English-speaking skills in a relaxing environment.	4.57	0.57	Strongly agree
3. I think movie circles helped me gain more confidence in speaking English.	4.50	0.73	Strongly agree
4. I think movie circles helped me practice using a variety of English vocabulary.	4.50	0.63	Strongly agree
5. I think movie circles helped me practice my grammar usage.	4.23	0.73	Strongly agree
6. I think movie circles helped me practice my pronunciation.	4.60	0.56	Strongly agree
7. I think movie circles helped me practice my speaking fluency.	4.40	0.67	Strongly agree
8. I think movie circles helped me practice coherence in communication.	4.47	0.68	Strongly agree
9. I think movie circles were easy to follow.	4.57	0.63	Strongly agree
Total	**4.49**	**0.53**	**Strongly agree**

Table 4 displays the findings from students' answers to the last section of the attitude questionnaire and shows that the students had favorable attitudes toward utilizing movie circles in the classroom (M = 4.49, SD = 0.53). The students rated Item 6 the highest at a mean score of 4.60 (SD = 0.56), indicating that their greatest benefit from movie circles was practicing pronunciation. They also responded that the activities helped them practice speaking English in a real situation (M = 4.57, SD = 0.68), and in a relaxing environment (M = 4.57, SD = 0.57). In addition, they indicated that the activities were easy to follow (M = 4.57, SD = 0.63). Item 5, about practicing grammar usage, received the lowest mean score of 4.23 (SD = 0.73).

4.3 Semi-structured Interview Responses

According to the students' responses to the semi-structured interview question, "Do you think that employing movie circles can improve your English-speaking skills? If yes, how? If not, why not?", the results indicate that the students believed they could benefit from movie circles. In this section, based on performance on the pretest of speaking skills, nine students were selected for interviews. These students belonged to three separate groups: novice (N), intermediate (I), and expert (E). Excerpts of these students' responses are presented below.

> "I used to be someone who didn't speak much English and lacked confidence in speaking. However, during the activities, I found that I was able to talk and communicate more effectively with the group members. Now, I think I'm more confident in speaking English than before." [N1]

> "Yes. I think I can use the vocabulary from the movie in real life. There are some words I come across every day, but I just don't know how to use them. Also, I think if we watch a movie, it helps us remember a lot because there are images to look at, making it easier to remember the story." [I1]

> "Yes. I borrowed vocabulary from the movies to use in different roles within the group." [E2]

The students' responses indicate that they believed they were able to improve their English-speaking skills through movie circles. The students learned vocabulary and sentences from watching movies and with the assistance of their friends. The visual format of the movies enabled the students to recall the plot of the movie easily. More importantly, speaking in English seemed to give the interviewees more confidence. Thus, incorporating movies and discussions into the classroom activities seemed to be effective in improving students' speaking skills.

5. Discussion

Using an English-speaking test evaluated by two assessors, the findings revealed that, although the mean score of the students did not exceed half of the total score, movie circles significantly impacted the ESP students' English-speaking skills. This discussion here explores three main dimensions of responses to the attitude questionnaire (the benefits of movie circles, the movie circle roles, and the movies utilized) in order to support how the students believed the movie circle activities helped them in their speaking practices.

First and foremost, the findings of this study are similar to the study done by Stephens et al. (2012), in which the movie circle project successfully achieved its goal by motivating students to engage in meaningful interactions in English. As such, the present study can be seen to have had a comparable significant impact on the ESP students' English-speaking skills.

As noted above, the participants were pre-service social studies teachers who remarked that movie circles allowed them to practice speaking English in real-life situations and in a relaxing environment, and as such, the movie circles were easy to follow. The easy-to-follow stages of movie circles in this study were designed based on the proposed reader-response theory of teaching put forth by Kaowiwattanakul (2019), and significantly contributed to students' learning. The stages provided background knowledge and vocabulary during the pre-viewing stage, facilitating the observation of content-related details in the movies during the viewing stage, and encouraging the use of content-related knowledge and vocabulary in subsequent discussions. To illustrate, the pre-viewing stage introduced the terms "disaster," "flood," and "global warming," which the students later encountered in the movie and then proceeded to employ during their discussions.

Given that movie circles originated from literature circles, this study designed its three movie circle stages to align with the stages of development in reader-response theory. Matmool and Kaowiwattanakul (2023) have stated that utilizing literature circles based on reader-response theory is an effective means for students to improve their English-speaking abilities. Despite the emphasis of

reader-response criticism on the importance of readers' active involvement in constructing meaning from a text (Inan & Boldan, 2018; Pasaribu, 2020; Spirovska, 2019; Tyson, 2006), this study focuses on the construction of meaning in a movie rather than in a written text. The students could relate their discussions to their prior knowledge and experience of protecting the environment in school and community settings. Thus, the findings suggest that movie circles align with reader-response theory, prompting students to analyze and interpret movies based on their individual perspectives and experiences, similar to the process of interpreting books in literature circles.

Moreover, the students believed that movie circles helped them practice their pronunciation. Brazenas (2019) conducted a study with what he termed "media circles" utilizing TV series as tools for activities and found that students' pronunciation did not significantly improve. He surmised that input alone is not adequate for most students. This implies that active practice is the more effective method of improving pronunciation. In contrast to Brazenas's study, the present study incorporated pronunciation practice and vocabulary presentation during the pre-viewing stage, with the goal of helping students use correct pronunciation in their discussions.

Secondly, apart from the overall benefits of movie circles for improving students' English, this study shed light on the use of role sheets. According to the study, movie circle roles not only foster engagement, but also enhance students' speaking abilities by ensuring they are well-prepared through use of their role sheets. Employing movie circle roles can ensure that every student actively participates in the discussion and receives an opportunity to practice their speaking skills (Stephens et al., 2012). The assigned speaking roles (a questioner, an illustrator, a movie master, a connector, and a word wizard) also emerged as helpful tools for the students' English language advancement. The movie circle roles provided a structured and engaging guideline for the students to express their ideas, especially during the discussion stage. Rotating the movie circle roles involved all the students more fully, with a particular focus on improving communication skills. By employing these roles, participants related the movies to real-world experiences during peer-led discussions, drawing from their backgrounds as pre-service teachers and students in social development. For example, the participants discussed environmental school projects and PM2.5 pollution situations in their communities, leading to meaningful discussion in English about topics they understood very well. These types of exchanges led to greater understanding for both expert and novice students.

It has been acknowledged by many researchers that implementing role sheets is a successful strategy in both literature circles (Abdullah, Choo, & Samat, 2021; Chen, 2020; Dogan & Kaya-Tosun, 2020; Dogan, Yildirim, Cermik, & Ates, 2020; Novitasari et al., 2021) and audiovisual-related circles such as media circles and movie circles or film circles (Brazenas, 2020; Brazenas, 2019; Stephens et al., 2012). However, Daniels (2001) has suggested that role sheets should be carefully utilized. These roles should serve as recommended models rather than strict templates for literature circles (Monyanont, 2019). Therefore, students should be advised not to rely solely on their role sheets, as doing so may restrict their ideas in discussions.

Finally, the subtitled movies selected for the movie circles were perceived as interesting and enjoyable by the students, which aided in building their speaking skills. The ESP students' enjoyment of the characters, settings, plots, themes, and genres of the movies, as revealed by the questionnaire results, suggests their high level of interest in the movie contents, which provided a foundation for deeper group discussions. Moreover, the findings indicated that movies could provide ESP students with relevant content on environmental protection in school and community settings, and thereby also contribute to meaningful discussions. These findings align with previous studies showing that movies can help improve not only students' listening skills (Alqahtani & Alhamami, 2024; Chairuddin, Batubara, & Wulansari, 2023) but also their speaking skills (Parmawati & Inayah, 2019; Riswanto, Serasi, Salandega, & Kasmaini, 2022) because movies serve as authentic language input that can improve English language proficiency (Murshidi, 2020). Moreover, movies can aid in students' vocabulary acquisition (Hestiana & Anita, 2022), potentially leading to improved speaking skills as students learn to utilize appropriate words to effectively convey their ideas. Brazenas (2020) mentions that the primary goal of discussions is not to arrive at predetermined conclusions but rather to facilitate students' sharing their reactions and the information they have prepared based on their assigned roles. Thus, movie selection should be considered with the goal of meeting the needs and interests of ESP students in order to result in more meaningful discussions and language practice.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Improving ESP students' English-speaking skills before they enter the labor market is vital for professional, educational, and social development settings. With the aim of achieving this important goal, this study has employed movie circles, a modification of literature circles. The findings of this study indicate that implementing movie circles significantly enhances ESP students' English-speaking skills. The students reported that the easy-to-follow stages of movie circles contributed significantly to their learning experiences as pre-service teachers and social development students. The use of roles in movie circles evidently enhanced student engagement and speaking skills by giving every group member the opportunity to express their ideas. Furthermore, the students perceived the subtitled movies as enjoyable, which contributed to their interest in discussing movie content with their peers. From these outcomes, this study suggests the use of movies and movie discussion activities such as movie circles in ESP courses as a means to enhance students' speaking skills. Since movies help students with pronunciation and vocabulary, which they can then use during discussions, studies addressing these issues in particular would be especially useful. Additionally, since movies are a type of audiovisual material, they could aid in improving students' listening skills. Therefore, further studies could focus on using media circles to improve students' listening skills. Since this study covered only an 8-week period, it would be preferable to extend the duration to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' linguistic progress and potentially assess additional skills, such as critical thinking. Other themes in movies as well as global issues such as poverty and human rights could also be discussed. Moreover, considering the time-consuming nature of movie circles during the viewing stage, even with the division of each movie into two lesson plans, it would be more effective to employ short media pieces such as small parts of

movies and TV series with engaging themes. This would provide students with ample time to prepare their role sheets and engage in the discussion stage.

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Authors' contributions

Kriangsak Thanakong was responsible for the research design, data collection, discussion, and manuscript writing. Assistant Professor Dr. Sukanya Kaowiwattanakul contributed by adding important discussion points, co-authoring the manuscript, and serving as the corresponding author.

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