

Exploring EFL Students' Perceptions of Strategic and Technology-Assisted Listening Practices: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

This study explores EFL students' perceptions of strategic and technology-assisted listening practices in English listening activities. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the study involved five students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang who had experienced listening tasks in classroom contexts. Data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and were analyzed thematically to identify students' habits, experiences, challenges, emotional responses, and focus strategies. The findings indicate that students showed varied levels of metacognitive awareness before listening. Some were prepared by reading or finding materials, while others did not apply specific preparation strategies. Technology-assisted listening was generally perceived positively, particularly through videos, music, podcasts, and digital platforms such as Gemini, which helped students access varied and engaging input. However, students also reported difficulties with fast speech, unfamiliar accents, limited vocabulary, and discomfort with fully English-language materials. Emotional responses were mostly positive, although some students experienced boredom, sleepiness, or difficulty understanding the content. To maintain focus, students used personal strategies such as choosing quiet places, selecting interesting themes, preparing vocabulary, and creating comfortable learning conditions. These findings suggest that EFL listening instruction should combine metacognitive strategy training with appropriately scaffolded digital tools to support learner autonomy, engagement, and comprehension.

Keywords: EFL Listening, metacognitive strategies, technology-assisted learning, student perceptions, qualitative descriptive study

INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is one of the most essential yet challenging skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. In real communication, learners are required to understand spoken input immediately, interpret meaning, identify pronunciation, recognize vocabulary, follow accents, and respond to messages in a limited time. Unlike reading, which allows learners to reread a text, listening requires real-time processing and continuous attention (Ismailovich & Rakhmatullaycvna, 2023; Rost, 2025). This condition often makes listening difficult for EFL learners, especially when they are exposed to fast speech, unfamiliar words, different accents, and authentic multimedia materials (Chen & Ren, 2021; Dueraseh et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023). Therefore, listening should not be viewed as a passive activity in which students only hear audio and answer questions. It needs to be understood as an active cognitive process that requires strategic awareness, emotional readiness, and appropriate learning support.

In many EFL classrooms, listening activities are still commonly conducted through conventional practices. Students are often asked to listen to audio recordings, complete exercises, and check their answers afterward. Although this practice can measure students' comprehension, it does not always help them understand how to listen more effectively (A'R et al., 2025; Rosyada et al., 2024). Learners may know whether their answers are correct or incorrect, but they may not know which strategies to use before, during, and after listening. As a result, listening becomes more test-oriented than process-oriented. This condition may increase learners' anxiety and reduce their confidence, particularly when listening materials are too fast, unfamiliar, or lack clear guidance. Recent studies have emphasized that EFL listening instruction should provide learners with explicit strategy support to help them become more reflective and self-regulated listeners (Asrimawati & Margana, 2020; Masykuri, 2022).

One important pedagogical approach in listening instruction is the use of metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies refer to learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning process. In listening activities, planning may include preparing vocabulary, reading related materials, predicting the topic, or setting a goal before listening. Monitoring involves checking understanding during the listening process, identifying confusing parts, and maintaining attention. Evaluation takes place after listening when learners reflect on their comprehension, difficulties, and strategies for improvement. These stages are important because they help students

become more aware of their listening habits and problems. Metacognitive instruction has been reported to support listening comprehension, improve learners' awareness, and encourage greater autonomy in language learning (Awinindia, 2023; Liando et al., 2025; Rosyada et al., 2024)

Along with strategic instruction, technology has become an important element in contemporary EFL listening practice. Digital tools such as videos, podcasts, music, mobile applications, online platforms, and artificial intelligence-based tools provide learners with flexible access to varied English input. Technology-enhanced listening enables students to engage with authentic materials, repeat audio recordings as needed, integrate visual and auditory information, and practice outside the classroom. Recent research also shows that technology can support foreign language learning across different skills, including listening, by increasing interaction, engagement, and learning flexibility (Al-Jarf, 2021; Azzahro et al., 2025; Bui & Vu, 2022; Sadeghi & Bakhshi, 2025). In addition, online computerized listening assessment and multimedia-based learning environments have been found to create more interactive and responsive listening experiences for EFL learners (Arifiyanto & Ali, 2019; Fujita, 2025; Manan et al., 2020).

However, the use of technology in listening instruction does not automatically lead to effective learning. Digital resources may support comprehension and motivation, but they can also create difficulties when the materials are too advanced, too fast, or not scaffolded. Learners may enjoy videos, podcasts, or AI-based platforms, but they can still struggle to understand meaning if they lack vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation awareness, or confidence. Recent studies on AI-supported and chatbot-assisted language learning indicate that emerging technologies may enhance listening skills and learner autonomy, but their effectiveness depends on how teachers integrate them pedagogically and how learners use them meaningfully (Khan & Khan, 2024; Mustofa & Sari, 2020; Putri et al., 2018). Therefore, technology should be combined with strategic guidance rather than used as a standalone solution.

The integration of metacognitive strategies and technology-assisted listening is particularly relevant in EFL contexts where learners have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Strategic instruction can help students understand how to approach listening tasks, while technology can provide diverse and engaging input for practice. When both elements are combined, students may develop not only listening comprehension but also learner autonomy, digital literacy, emotional engagement, and confidence. Nevertheless,

students may respond to these practices differently (Liando et al., 2025; Rost, 2025; Sari & Fithriyana, 2019; Silviyanti et al., 2020). Some learners may prepare themselves before listening by reading materials or finding related content, while others may not apply any preparation strategy. Some may enjoy using videos, music, podcasts, or AI tools, while others may feel uncomfortable with English-only materials. These differences show the importance of exploring students' perceptions and experiences in actual learning contexts.

Previous studies have widely discussed metacognitive strategies and technology-enhanced language learning, but more attention is still needed to understand how EFL students personally experience strategic and technology-assisted listening practices in classroom-related activities. Students' voices are important because they can reveal practical realities that may not be fully captured through test scores alone. Their perceptions can reveal how they prepare before listening, which digital tools they use, what difficulties they face, how they feel during multimedia listening, and what strategies they use to maintain focus (Movafagh Ardestani et al., 2025; Slimani & Moubtassim, 2025). Such information can help teachers design listening instruction that is not only theoretically grounded but also responsive to learners' actual needs.

Based on this background, the present study aims to explore EFL students' perceptions of strategic and technology-assisted listening practices. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study involved five EFL students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang who completed an open-ended questionnaire through Google Forms. The study focuses on students' pre-listening habits, technology use, listening challenges, emotional responses, and focus strategies. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for designing more reflective, engaging, and supportive EFL listening instruction that combines metacognitive strategy training with appropriate digital tools.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore EFL students' perceptions of strategic and technology-assisted listening practices. This design was chosen because the study did not aim to measure the statistical effectiveness of listening strategies or digital tools, but to describe students' real experiences, perceptions, challenges, and responses in English listening activities. A qualitative descriptive approach allows researchers to present participants' views in a clear and direct manner while maintaining the natural context of their experiences (Cohen et al., 2007; Cresswell & Plano,

2018). In this study, the focus was on how students prepared before listening, how they used technology during listening practice, what difficulties they encountered, how they responded emotionally to multimedia listening materials, and what strategies they used to maintain focus. This approach was therefore suitable for obtaining a contextual understanding of students' engagement with metacognitive strategies and digital tools in EFL listening learning.

The participants of this study were five EFL students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang. These students were selected because they had previously engaged in English listening activities in classroom settings and were familiar with various listening materials, including audio recordings, videos, music, podcasts, and digital platforms. The small number of participants was appropriate for the qualitative descriptive nature of the study, as the main purpose was to obtain detailed and meaningful responses rather than generalize the findings to a larger population (Cohen et al., 2007). Each participant contributed personal reflections based on their own listening habits and learning experiences. The participants voluntarily joined the study and completed the questionnaire anonymously, allowing them to express their opinions honestly without pressure.

The main instrument used in this study was an open-ended questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. The questionnaire comprised questions on students' strategic and technological experiences in listening practice. The questions were designed to investigate five main areas: students' pre-listening habits, their use of technology in listening activities, their listening challenges and coping strategies, their emotional responses to multimedia listening, and their strategies for maintaining focus (Mulyadi, 2018; Sadeghi & Bakhshi, 2025). Open-ended questions were used because they allowed students to answer freely in their own words and provide richer explanations than closed-ended items. The questionnaire was written in simple English to make it accessible to students with different levels of English proficiency. Some Indonesian expressions were also included to help students understand the questions more clearly and express their reflections more comfortably.

Data were collected over a three-day period using Google Forms. The online format was chosen because it allowed students to complete the questionnaire flexibly and anonymously. Before answering the questionnaire, students were informed that their responses would be used for research purposes and that there were no right or wrong answers. They were encouraged to provide honest and detailed responses based on their actual listening experiences. After the data were collected, all responses were automatically compiled via Google

Forms and then exported for analysis. The researchers read the responses carefully to understand the overall meaning of the data before identifying specific patterns.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used because it enables researchers to identify, organize, and interpret patterns or themes within qualitative data (Chong & Reinders, 2020). The analysis was carried out in several stages. First, all responses from the five participants were read repeatedly to gain familiarity with the data. Second, important words, phrases, and sentences were highlighted and coded according to their relevance to the research focus. Third, similar codes were grouped into broader categories. Fourth, these categories were reviewed and refined into major themes. Finally, representative student responses were selected to support each theme.

Through this analytical process, five major themes were identified: students' pre-listening habits, use of technology in listening practice, listening challenges and coping strategies, emotional responses to multimedia listening, and focus strategies during listening. These themes represented the key aspects of students' perceptions of strategic and technology-assisted listening practices. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the analysis, the themes were checked against the original responses to ensure that the interpretation remained consistent with the participants' actual statements. Direct student responses were also included in the findings to provide evidence and maintain the authenticity of the participants' voices.

Overall, this method allowed the study to describe how five EFL students perceived and experienced strategic and technology-assisted listening practices in their learning process. By using an open-ended questionnaire and thematic analysis, the study captured students' varied perspectives on preparation, technology use, listening difficulties, emotional engagement, and focus strategies in EFL listening activities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that EFL students perceive listening as a learning activity that requires preparation, support, emotional readiness, and appropriate learning tools. Based on the students' responses, five main themes were identified: students' pre-listening habits, use of technology in listening practice, listening challenges and coping strategies, emotional responses to multimedia listening, and focus strategies during listening. These themes indicate that listening is not only a matter of hearing spoken English but also a process influenced by

learners' strategies, confidence, vocabulary knowledge, access to technology, and learning environment.

The first finding concerns students' pre-listening habits. The responses showed that students had different ways of preparing themselves before listening. Some students mentioned simple preparation, such as praying before studying, reading the material, finding the material, or listening to English materials before the activity. These responses indicate that several students had already developed a form of readiness before listening. Although praying is not a direct language-learning strategy, it may help students feel calmer and more mentally prepared. Meanwhile, reading or finding materials before listening reflects the planning stage of metacognitive strategy use. Awinindia (2023) explains that metacognitive strategies help learners manage listening activities through planning, monitoring, and evaluating. In this study, students who read or searched for materials before listening showed an awareness that understanding spoken English can be improved through preparation. However, one student answered "Doing nothing," which shows that not all learners are familiar with pre-listening strategies. This finding suggests that teachers need to explicitly guide students to predict topics, review vocabulary, and set listening goals before the task begins.

The second finding shows that technology played an important role in students' listening practice. Students mentioned videos, music, podcasts, mobile applications, and Gemini as tools that helped them engage with English listening materials. Most students responded positively to technology-assisted listening because it made listening more interesting and flexible. This supports Al-Jarf (2021), who found that mobile audiobooks can enhance EFL students' listening comprehension by providing greater exposure to spoken English. Similarly, Azzahro et al. (2025) reported that students' experiences with TikTok showed the potential of digital platforms to develop English listening skills through short, engaging, and familiar content. In the present study, students enjoyed videos and music because these media felt more closely aligned with their daily lives. One student also explained that videos were fun and podcasts were informative, but they still preferred Gemini because it felt more comfortable. This response shows that technology use depends not only on availability but also on students' confidence and familiarity with the platform.

However, the findings also show that technology does not automatically make listening easy. One student stated that they were not comfortable with most English materials and felt successful only when they understood the meaning. This indicates that digital tools need to be supported by appropriate scaffolding. Chong & Reinders (2020) emphasize that technology-mediated language learning should be

connected to meaningful tasks and clear pedagogical purposes. Therefore, teachers should not simply ask students to use videos, podcasts, or applications, but should also help them select suitable materials, use subtitles wisely, repeat important parts, and reflect on their listening process. Online learning tools such as Zoom and Padlet have also been shown to support listening activities when they are used with clear instructional design (Bui & Vu, 2022).

The third finding relates to listening challenges and coping strategies. Students reported difficulties with fast pronunciation, unfamiliar accents, and vocabulary. One student stated that the pronunciation was too fast and difficult to understand, while another mentioned that the speaker was too fast and that repeated practice was needed. These findings are consistent with Sari and Fithriyana (2019), who found that EFL students often experience problems with listening comprehension due to pronunciation, speed, vocabulary, and lack of concentration. A'R et al. (2025) also highlight that EFL learners commonly face listening difficulties but can overcome them through repeated listening, vocabulary improvement, and exposure to various materials. In this study, repeated practice appeared as one of the students' coping strategies. This suggests that students were not passive; they tried to overcome listening problems by listening again and becoming more familiar with spoken English patterns.

Accent was also identified as a challenge. One student explained that accents were difficult and that the solution was to frequently listen to stories or audio with difficult accents. This response shows that the student understood the importance of exposure. Since English is spoken with many accents, learners need gradual exposure to different pronunciation patterns. Fujita (2025) also notes that listening comprehension can be affected by external sound conditions, including noise types and degree, which means that students need clear, varied, and well-managed listening input. In addition, students reported difficulty with vocabulary, especially unfamiliar words and pronunciation. This shows that listening should be integrated with vocabulary and pronunciation practice. Students may know a word in written form, but fail to recognize it when it is spoken naturally.

The fourth finding concerns emotional responses to multimedia listening. Most students expressed positive emotions such as happiness and enjoyment. They felt that videos, podcasts, or other multimedia resources helped them improve their language skills. These responses suggest that multimedia listening can increase motivation by making English learning more dynamic and less monotonous. Mustofa & Sari (2020) found that video subtitles can support listening instruction by providing both auditory and visual input. Similarly, argue that reading while listening can help EFL learners process meaning more effectively.

However, students also showed mixed feelings. One student said that listening was enjoyable but sometimes boring and made them sleepy, while another felt happy using videos or podcasts but still found them difficult to understand. This shows that enjoyment does not always mean comprehension. Chen & Ren (2021) and Li et al. (2023) also emphasize that anxiety and self-perceived listening performance can influence students' listening experiences. Therefore, teachers need to balance enjoyment, difficulty level, and comprehension support.

The fifth finding relates to focus strategies. Students mentioned that they could focus better by eating snacks, drinking something, studying in a quiet place, mastering vocabulary, and choosing interesting themes. These responses show that focus is affected by both internal and external conditions. A quiet place helps reduce distractions, while vocabulary mastery helps students follow the message more smoothly. Interesting themes also make students more willing to continue listening. This finding is relevant to Mulyadi (2018), who explains that learners' awareness of listening strategies can vary with their learning styles. It also connects with Ardestani et al. (2025), who found that self-efficacy and self-regulation are related to listening anxiety. Students who know how to manage their learning conditions may feel more confident and focused during listening.

Overall, the findings show that strategic and technology-assisted listening practices can support EFL students when they are used thoughtfully. Students need preparation before listening, suitable digital tools, repeated exposure, vocabulary support, emotional encouragement, and a comfortable learning environment. Technology can make listening more engaging, but it must be combined with metacognitive strategies and teacher guidance. As Khan & Khan (2024) suggest, blended and online learning environments can influence EFL listening skills when they are designed to support meaningful learning. In this study, students' responses show that listening instruction should be more human-centered, flexible, and responsive to learners' actual needs.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion section contains a summary of the research findings, which correlate with the research objectives written in the introduction. Then state the main points of the discussion. A conclusion generally concludes with a statement about how the research work contributes to the field of study as a whole (shows how progress from the latest knowledge). A common mistake in this section is to repeat the results of an experiment, abstract, or be presented with a very list. The concluding section must provide clear scientific truths. In addition, the conclusions can also provide suggestions for future experiments.

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