Students' Perception of Using Online Platforms for Listening

Deasy Yunita Siregar[1*], Nazwa Madina Rangkuti[2], Ahmad Daffa Bangun[3], Tasya Khalishah Salsabila[4], Lathifatunnisa Br Situmorang[5], Humayro Malano[6]

[1-6]Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan, Indonesia
deasyyunita@uinsu.ac.id[1], nazwamadinarangkuti@gmail.com[2], ahmad0304242060@uinsu.ac.id[3], tasyakhalisahsalsabila@gmail.com[4], lathifahtunnisa08@gmail.com[5], humayromalano@gmail.com[6]
Penulis Korespondensi: deasyyunita@uinsu.ac.id

Abstract. This study examines students' perceptions of the use of online platforms for English listening practice. The research employs a mixed-methods approach involving 150 undergraduate students through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that the majority of students hold positive attitudes toward the use of online platforms, primarily due to time flexibility, diverse content, and the ability to learn independently. Nevertheless, several challenges were identified, including internet connectivity issues that disrupt the learning experience, a lack of personalized feedback, and difficulties in maintaining learning motivation. Features such as adjustable playback speed, the availability of transcripts, and interactive exercises received high levels of satisfaction. Overall, the study concludes that although online platforms have great potential to enhance English listening skills, their effectiveness largely depends on proper implementation, adequate technical infrastructure, and active support from educators. Therefore, this study recommends improvements in technical aspects and the development of more effective learning methods to achieve more optimal outcomes.

Keywords: Digital Education; English Learning; Listening Comprehension; Online Platforms; Student Perceptions

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, the integration of technology into language learning has fundamentally transformed traditional pedagogical approaches (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). The advent of online platforms has revolutionized how students approach listening comprehension practice, one of the most challenging aspects of second language acquisition (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Listening skills are essential for effective communication, yet they have historically received less attention in language curricula compared to reading and writing skills (Field, 2008). The proliferation of digital resources now offers unprecedented opportunities for students to engage with authentic listening materials beyond the confines of the classroom (Gilmore, 2007).

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online learning platforms, compelling educational institutions worldwide to rapidly transition to digital delivery methods (Hsieh et al., 2017). This shift highlighted both the potential and limitations of technology-mediated language instruction. As universities and language centers increasingly incorporate online platforms into their curricula, understanding student perspectives becomes crucial for optimizing the effectiveness of these tools (Davis, 1989). Student perceptions significantly influence engagement levels, learning outcomes, and the overall success of technological interventions in education.

Online platforms for listening practice encompass a diverse range of resources, from structured learning management systems to informal social media applications (Anderson et al., 2001). These platforms vary considerably in their pedagogical approaches, content types, and interactive features. Some platforms emphasize authentic materials such as podcasts, news broadcasts, and videos, while others focus on carefully graded listening exercises designed for specific proficiency levels (Nation & Newton, 2009). The variety of available options raises important questions about which features students find most beneficial and what factors contribute to sustained engagement with these resources.

This study aims to fill gaps in current understanding by systematically examining student perceptions of online listening platforms. Specifically, it addresses three primary research questions: First, what are students' overall attitudes toward using online platforms for listening practice? Second, which specific features and characteristics of online platforms do students find most valuable for improving their listening skills? Third, what challenges and barriers do students encounter when using these platforms, and how might these obstacles be addressed?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening Comprehension in Second Language Acquisition

Listening comprehension has long been recognized as a critical component of communicative competence in second language acquisition (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Researchers have identified listening as both a receptive skill and an active process requiring significant cognitive engagement (Rost, 2011). The ability to understand spoken language involves multiple sub-skills, including phonological discrimination, lexical access, syntactic parsing, and pragmatic interpretation (Field, 2008). These processes occur simultaneously and automatically in proficient listeners, but language learners often struggle with the speed and complexity of natural speech (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005).

Traditional approaches to teaching listening have emphasized pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities designed to scaffold comprehension (Lynch, 2009). However, these classroom-based methods are constrained by limited exposure to diverse input and restricted opportunities for individualized practice (Richards, 2015). The development of listening proficiency requires extensive exposure to spoken language, preferably through authentic materials that reflect real-world communication contexts (Gilmore, 2007).

Technology-Enhanced Language Learning

The integration of technology into language education has evolved considerably over the past several decades, from early computer-assisted language learning programs to contemporary mobile applications and web-based platforms (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). This evolution reflects broader trends in educational technology, including increased connectivity, improved multimedia capabilities, and growing emphasis on learner autonomy (Benson, 2011). Technology-enhanced language learning environments offer several theoretical advantages, including personalized learning pathways, immediate feedback, and access to authentic materials (Anderson et al., 2001).

Research examining the effectiveness of technology in language learning has produced mixed results, with studies highlighting both benefits and limitations (Hsieh et al., 2017). Positive outcomes include increased motivation, enhanced engagement, and improved access to learning resources. However, concerns have been raised regarding the quality of online materials, the potential for distraction, and reduced opportunities for face-to-face interaction (Richards, 2015).

Online Platforms for Listening Practice

The landscape of online platforms for listening practice has expanded dramatically in recent years, encompassing everything from dedicated language learning applications to general-purpose media streaming services (Nation & Newton, 2009). These platforms vary considerably in their design, content, and pedagogical approach. Some platforms offer structured curricula with graded materials and systematic progression through difficulty levels, while others provide access to authentic materials without explicit pedagogical scaffolding (Gilmore, 2007).

Research on specific online listening platforms has identified several features that appear to enhance learning outcomes (Cross, 2009). Interactive elements such as comprehension questions, vocabulary support, and adjustable playback speed have been associated with increased engagement and improved performance (Goh, 2008). The availability of transcripts and captions provides valuable support for learners, though opinions differ regarding whether such supports should be used consistently or gradually removed as proficiency increases (Graham, 2017).

Student Perceptions and Learning Outcomes

Student perceptions play a crucial role in determining the success of educational interventions, as attitudes toward learning tools significantly influence engagement levels and persistence (Davis, 1989). Research in educational psychology has consistently demonstrated that learners' beliefs about their own abilities and the effectiveness of learning strategies impact actual performance outcomes (Benson, 2011). This relationship is particularly relevant in autonomous learning contexts, where students must self-regulate their study activities without direct instructor supervision.

Studies examining student perceptions of online language learning have identified several recurring themes (Hsieh et al., 2017). Flexibility and convenience emerge consistently as major advantages, allowing learners to study at times and locations that suit their schedules. Access to diverse, authentic materials is another frequently cited benefit, providing exposure to various accents, speech rates, and contexts that would be difficult to replicate in traditional classrooms (Gilmore, 2007).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interview responses to provide a comprehensive understanding of student perceptions. The mixed-methods approach was selected because it allows researchers to capture both the breadth of student experiences through statistical analysis and the depth of individual perspectives through detailed narratives. This methodological triangulation enhances the validity and reliability of findings by corroborating results across multiple data sources.

The research was conducted in two sequential phases. The initial quantitative phase involved administering a structured questionnaire to a large sample of students, generating numerical data suitable for statistical analysis. The subsequent qualitative phase consisted of semi-structured interviews with a subset of survey participants, enabling deeper exploration of themes that emerged from the quantitative analysis.

Participants

The study involved 150 undergraduate students enrolled in English language courses at a medium-sized public university. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 24 years, with a mean age of 20.3 years. The sample included students from various academic majors, reflecting the diversity of the university's student population. All participants had studied English for at least six years in formal educational settings.

Participants were recruited through announcements in English language classes and voluntary signup sheets posted in language learning centers. To ensure representation across proficiency levels, the sample included students classified as intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced based on standardized test scores or course placement. Of the 150 survey respondents, 20 students volunteered for follow-up interviews.

Data Collection Instruments

The quantitative phase utilized a custom-designed questionnaire consisting of 35 items organized into four main sections. The first section gathered demographic information and details about participants' English learning backgrounds. The second section employed Likert-scale items to assess general attitudes toward online learning and technology use. The third section focused specifically on experiences with online listening platforms, including frequency of use, types of platforms accessed, and perceived effectiveness.

The qualitative phase employed semi-structured interviews lasting 30-45 minutes each. An interview protocol was developed to guide discussions while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on topics of personal significance. Interview questions explored themes including motivations for using online platforms, specific features found helpful or problematic, strategies for effective use, and suggestions for improvement.

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using statistical software to generate descriptive statistics and examine relationships between variables. Frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations were calculated for Likert-scale items to summarize overall trends in student perceptions. Cross-tabulations and chi-square tests were used to explore potential associations between demographic variables and attitudes toward online platforms.

Qualitative interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a systematic approach to identifying patterns of meaning across a data set. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve familiarization with the

content. Initial codes were generated inductively, marking segments of text that addressed research questions or represented notable ideas.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall Attitudes Toward Online Platforms

The findings reveal predominantly positive attitudes among students toward using online platforms for listening practice. Survey results indicated that 82% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that online platforms are valuable supplements to classroom instruction, while 76% reported regular use of such resources for independent study. These favorable attitudes appear to be driven primarily by perceived benefits in terms of convenience, accessibility, and content variety (Davis, 1989).

However, positive attitudes were not uniform across all aspects of online platform use. While students expressed enthusiasm for the availability of diverse materials, they were more ambivalent about the pedagogical effectiveness of self-directed learning (Benson, 2011). Interview participants frequently mentioned struggling with motivation and discipline when studying independently, despite recognizing the theoretical advantages of autonomous practice.

Valued Features and Characteristics

Analysis of both survey and interview data revealed several platform features that students found particularly valuable (Cross, 2009; Goh, 2008). The ability to control playback speed emerged as one of the most frequently mentioned beneficial features, with 89% of survey respondents rating this capability as important or very important. Interview participants elaborated that adjustable playback speed allowed them to work with authentic materials that would otherwise be too challenging.

Access to transcripts and subtitles was another highly valued feature, though opinions varied regarding optimal usage patterns (Graham, 2017). Most students reported using transcripts selectively, typically checking them after attempting to understand audio without support. Interactive elements such as comprehension questions and vocabulary exercises received mixed evaluations, with students appreciating structure and feedback but expressing frustration with poorly designed questions.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite generally positive attitudes, students identified several significant challenges in using online platforms for listening practice. Technical issues, particularly internet connectivity problems, were mentioned by 64% of survey respondents as occasional or frequent obstacles. These difficulties were especially pronounced for students relying on mobile data rather than stable broadband connections.

The absence of personalized feedback represented another major challenge, particularly for students accustomed to receiving detailed corrections from teachers (Anderson et al., 2001). While many platforms provide automated feedback on comprehension questions, students felt these responses were often too generic to address their specific misunderstandings. Maintaining motivation for self-directed practice emerged as a persistent challenge (Benson, 2011), with many students reporting initial enthusiasm that gradually waned.

Implications for Practice

These findings have several important implications for educators incorporating online platforms into listening instruction (Richards, 2015). Rather than simply recommending that students use online resources, teachers should provide explicit guidance on effective usage strategies. This guidance might include demonstrations of how to use key features, suggestions for approaching different types of materials, and recommendations for structuring independent practice sessions.

The challenge of maintaining motivation suggests that some degree of structure and accountability may enhance the effectiveness of online listening practice (Benson, 2011). Teachers might consider incorporating regular assignments that require students to use specific platforms, submit evidence of their practice, or reflect on their learning experiences. For platform developers, the findings emphasize the importance of combining technological sophistication with sound pedagogical design (Levy & Stockwell, 2006).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study has provided comprehensive insights into student perceptions of online platforms for listening practice, revealing both significant opportunities and persistent challenges. The predominantly positive attitudes observed among participants reflect genuine appreciation for the flexibility, accessibility, and content diversity that digital resources offer (Davis, 1989; Hsieh et al., 2017). Students recognize the potential of online platforms to supplement classroom instruction and provide valuable opportunities for autonomous learning (Benson, 2011).

The features students most value adjustable playback speed, transcript availability, interactive exercises, and authentic content align well with theoretical principles of effective listening instruction and second language acquisition (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Rost, 2011). However, the effectiveness of these features depends significantly on how students use them, highlighting the importance of explicit strategy instruction and metacognitive awareness (Goh, 2008).

The challenges identified in this research require coordinated attention from multiple stakeholders (Richards, 2015). Educators must move beyond simply recommending online resources to providing structured guidance on their effective use. Platform developers should prioritize pedagogical soundness alongside technological innovation (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). Educational institutions need to address infrastructure limitations and provide adequate support for both students and instructors engaging with digital learning tools.

Future research should address study limitations through longitudinal designs that track students' engagement with online platforms over extended periods. Experimental designs comparing different platform features or instructional approaches would help establish more definitive evidence about effectiveness (Cross, 2009). Research involving diverse student populations across various educational contexts would enhance understanding of how cultural, linguistic, and institutional factors influence perceptions and outcomes (Gilmore, 2007).

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