

English as a Foreign Language Students' Perception of the Emergence of Digital Platforms for Developing Listening Skills

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Abstract

The emergence of digital platforms has transformed the way English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students develop their listening skills. These platforms provide authentic listening materials, flexible access, and interactive features that support autonomous learning. This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method to explore students' perceptions of using digital platforms for developing listening skills. The participants were 10 seventh-semester students of the English Education Study Program at the State Islamic University of Mataram. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that students perceive listening as a fundamental skill that supports other language skills, including speaking and vocabulary acquisition. Students reported using digital platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, Duolingo, TikTok, and English-language movies to improve their listening skills. These platforms were perceived as effective. However, students also encountered challenges, including rapid speech delivery, unfamiliar accents, limited vocabulary, unstable internet connections, and distractions. To overcome these challenges, students employed strategies such as slowing the audio and using subtitles. Overall, digital platforms play a significant role in supporting EFL students' listening development when integrated effectively into instruction.

Keywords: EFL Students' Perception; Digital Platforms; Listening Skills.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital platforms have revolutionised how quickly students acquire English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly in interpreting what they hear. Cedillo Llivisaca and Guamán Luna (2025) found that technology enhances listening through interactive exercises, self-paced learning, and real-world input. YouTube, Spotify, Duolingo, TikTok, and English-language movies are all great ways to study since they let you listen to real-world audio, use them from anywhere, and have fun while you learn. Sutrisna (2025) found that YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Duolingo significantly contributed to vocabulary and listening skills among university students. On these sites, students can utilise language in ways that go beyond the classroom. They do this by having students consistently listen to native speakers' pronunciation, intonation, and speech patterns.

For EFL learners, listening is a vital language skill because it supports their development of other language skills, including speaking, vocabulary, pronunciation, and overall comprehension. Wiwoho (2022) found that listening is a prerequisite to speaking, reading, and writing, with listening comprehension setting the foundation for speaking development. Listening remains one of the most complex skills for EFL students to learn, as they must contend with rapid speech, varied accents, limited vocabulary, and real-time comprehension. Digital platforms may assist by providing a variety of listening resources that users can frequently utilise, adjust the tempo of, and access transcripts or subtitles. Selviani and Ardiana (2025) specifically validate the research question's proposed solutions, finding that students successfully used adjustable playback speed and subtitles to overcome comprehension obstacles.

Previous studies have investigated the capacity of digital platforms to improve auditory perception. Fitria (2021) argues that digital platforms help students listen more effectively by providing easy access to authentic listening tools. Khan and Khan (2024) found that students learn to listen more effectively in online or hybrid learning environments than in traditional classrooms. Tuong and Dan (2024) also showed that language learning apps for phones and tablets, such as Duolingo, help students better understand what they hear. These studies examine how students use digital platforms, primarily by assessing students' grades and learning outcomes rather than their attitudes toward these platforms.

There is an increasing body of research on digital listening tools; nevertheless, there has been insufficient investigation into EFL students' perceptions of utilising digital platforms, particularly in higher education. Learning motivation, platform preference, perceived benefits, experienced hurdles, and adopted coping methods among students remain under-researched. Additionally, instructor perspectives are included, but student-centered coping strategies warrant deeper exploration (Wardat & Akour, 2024). It's essential to understand how students feel about digital platforms, as their perceptions of these tools determine how effectively they can be used for learning.

This study aims to determine EFL students' perspectives concerning the advent of digital platforms designed to improve their listening skills. It examines students' perceptions of the significance of listening skills, the digital platforms they utilise, their educational experiences, the motivational aspects of these platforms, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ to overcome them. EFL students generally have positive attitudes towards using online platforms for listening practice due to flexibility and diverse content, but face challenges like internet connectivity issues and lack of personalized feedback (Siregar et al., 2025).

Previous studies have demonstrated that digital platforms play a significant role in supporting listening instruction in EFL contexts by enhancing students' listening comprehension, motivation, engagement, and learning autonomy through tools such as YouTube, podcasts, learning management systems, and language learning applications. While these studies have contributed valuable insights into the effectiveness of digital platforms and their impact on learning outcomes, they have largely focused on measuring students' achievement rather than examining students' perceptions and experiences in using these platforms for listening instruction. This indicates a research gap, particularly in Indonesian higher education, where few studies have explored how EFL students perceive the benefits, challenges, and effectiveness of digital platforms for developing their listening skills. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on investigating EFL students' perceptions of digital platforms for listening instruction within an Indonesian university setting, providing a deeper understanding of students' experiences beyond learning achievement. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing literature on technology-assisted language learning and offer practical recommendations for English lecturers and educational institutions in selecting and implementing appropriate digital platforms to improve listening instruction.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to examine EFL students' perceptions regarding the development of digital platforms designed to improve listening skills. EFL students showed progressive improvement in listening skills using digital platforms (Leguizamon Del Portillo & Bernal-Ballen, 2022). A qualitative approach was selected as it facilitates an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, attitudes, and

perspectives in their authentic learning context without altering variables. Moleong (2018) asserts that qualitative research uses descriptive data obtained from natural settings to elucidate social phenomena related to attitudes, perceptions, motivations, and behaviours. Similarly, Hendryadi et al. (2019) state that the principal aim of qualitative research is to understand the meanings and processes that transpire in reality.

The study was conducted within the English Education Study Program at the State Islamic University of Mataram. The participants were 10 seventh-semester students who had finished listening courses and were using digital platforms to improve their listening skills. Qualitative research posits that a small sample of participants is sufficient to achieve data saturation and yield thorough, nuanced insights into the research topic. Kruasom et al. (2025) argue that saturation should be treated as a multi-layered framework incorporating data richness, perspective diversity, and theoretical fit.

The researcher served as the primary instrument in this qualitative investigation. The researcher actively participated in data collection and analysis through observations, interviews, and documents. Regarding the three specific methods mentioned, Chand (2025) comprehensively examines interviews, observations, and document analysis as core qualitative data collection methods. The researcher maintained objectivity and mitigated bias by employing reflective procedures and adhering to ethical standards, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring participant anonymity.

We used three primary methods to obtain data: semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Offline semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions examined students' perceptions of their listening abilities, the digital platforms they used, the benefits they derived, the obstacles they faced, and the techniques they employed to overcome listening challenges. This interview style allows students to discuss the topics they wish to address while ensuring that critical issues relevant to the study's goals are also addressed.

Researchers examined how students used platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, and Duolingo to listen to music and other audio. The primary factors examined were how students used platforms, how they learnt, how focused they were, and how much they used digital listening tools. To ensure the data were accurate and complete, audio recordings and interview transcripts were used to corroborate the observational and interview data.

The analysis of the data employed the interactive model delineated by Miles et al. (2013), which encompasses data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was the process of identifying, organising, and synthesising the most essential information from interviews, observations, and documents. To facilitate interpretation, the data were presented in themed narratives. Finally, patterns, correlations, and meanings regarding students' opinions on how digital platforms enhance listening skills were identified to inform the findings.

We used data triangulation to ensure that the findings from observations, interviews, and documents were accurate. Saka and Zengin (2020) suggested using triangulation to verify information from several sources to make the data more reliable and trustworthy. Member verification was conducted by providing participants with interview summaries to ensure the accuracy of their answers and interpretations. This method ensured that the results accurately reflected the participants' actual experiences, hence enhancing the credibility of the findings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Students' Perceptions of the Importance of Listening Skills

The interview results indicate that students consider listening an important part of learning English. Most participants reported that listening helps them learn to speak, acquire new words, and pronounce them more accurately.

One participant stated:

R1: Listening is very important because when I listen to English audio or videos, I can learn how to pronounce words correctly and understand how native speakers speak.

Another student explained:

R4: *Listening helps me understand English better before I speak. If I listen more often, I feel more confident when speaking English.*

These findings support the assertion of Ambubuyog et al. (2023) that listening is an essential element of language acquisition. Kumar and Shankar (2021) also discuss how vital it is to understand spoken language. The students' replies suggest that they do not view listening as a passive activity but rather as a critical skill.

3.2. Types of Digital Platforms Used for Listening Practice

The data show that students use various digital platforms to listen to music (e.g., Duolingo, TikTok, Spotify, YouTube) and to watch movies in English. YouTube and Spotify were the most popular platforms because they were easy to use and offered a wide range of content.

One participant stated:

R2: *I usually use YouTube to watch English videos and movies, and I also use Spotify to listen to English songs and podcasts.*

Another participant mentioned:

R7: *Duolingo helps me practice listening step by step, whereas TikTok provides short, easy-to-understand English videos.*

These findings align with Fitria (2021), who indicated that students are motivated to engage in more frequent listening practice due to the realistic resources and flexible access provided by digital platforms. This increased exposure not only enhances their listening comprehension but also helps them develop greater confidence in understanding spoken English in various contexts (Mukhtorova & Ilxomov, 2024).

3.3. Students' Experiences in Using Digital Platforms

Students indicated a preference for using digital media to practice listening. They said that being able to change the playback speed, replay settings, subtitles, and sound quality was all good.

One student explained:

R3: *If I don't understand the audio, I can replay it many times and turn on the subtitles. It really helps me understand the meaning.*

Another participant added:

R6: *At first, it was difficult to understand native speakers, but after practicing regularly using YouTube and movies, my listening skills improved.*

This finding supports Tuong and Dan (2024), who argue that repeated exposure to digital listening materials improves comprehension and reduces listening anxiety. Furthermore, consistent interaction with such materials enables students to become more familiar with different accents, speech rates, and contexts, which contributes to a more effective and confident listening experience (Kochkorova, 2025).

3.4. The Influence of Digital Platforms on Learning Motivation

The study also found that pupils are more likely to practice listening when they use digital platforms. This finding is consistent with Waloyo (2024), who reported that students demonstrate positive attitudes towards digital listening platforms due to their flexibility and diverse content. Students said that learning on digital platforms is more fun and less stressful than doing listening exercises in class.

One participant stated:

R5: *I feel more motivated to learn listening using digital platforms because it is more fun and not boring.*

Another student commented:

R8: *I like listening to English songs and watching movies because I can learn while enjoying the content.*

This finding aligns with Fitria (2021), who asserted that offering enjoyable and engaging learning experiences on digital platforms enhances motivation to learn. As a result, students are more likely to participate actively and sustain their learning efforts over time, leading to improved language acquisition outcomes (Thurairasu, 2022).

3.5. Obstacles in Using Digital Platforms for Listening

Although digital platforms offered certain advantages, students were very concerned about them. Students sometimes had difficulty with rapid speech, unfamiliar accents, hard-to-understand language, poor internet connection, and adverts or notifications that got in the way.

One participant stated:

R9: *Sometimes the speakers talk too fast, and I don't understand the accent.*

Another student added:

R10: *The internet connection is sometimes unstable, and ads can distract my concentration.*

These findings support Khan and Khan (2024), who noted that technical issues and linguistic complexity can reduce the effectiveness of online listening activities. Consequently, such challenges may hinder students' comprehension and decrease their motivation to engage consistently with digital listening materials (Ma'fiah et al., 2023).

3.6. Strategies to Overcome Listening Obstacles

Students employed several strategies to overcome these problems, including slowing the audio, using subtitles, downloading resources, and listening attentively.

One participant explained:

R2: *I usually slow down the video speed and use subtitles to help me understand the audio.*

Another student stated:

R6: *If the internet is bad, I download the audio first so I can listen offline.*

These strategies demonstrate that students take responsibility for their own learning during digital listening exercises, indicating that they actively monitor their learning. Students use digital tools to control and direct their own learning, taking responsibility for their educational process (Azirah Ismayatim et al., 2023). However, Drumm (2025) noted important limitations: while success in digital learning "is highly dependent on how much students were able to activate their self-regulating learning skills," weaker-performing students struggled with excessive openness, suggesting responsibility and proactive oversight are not uniformly demonstrated across all learners.

The results suggest that EFL students may learn to listen more effectively if they use digital platforms with appropriate strategies and guidance from their teacher. Students perceive digital platforms as beneficial, engaging, and adaptable means of practising listening, even when they encounter challenges with language or technology. Digital listening activities are more effective when teachers provide platform recommendations, assign listening tasks, and provide feedback.

The integration of digital platforms into EFL listening instruction signifies a shift toward learner-centered education, offering substantial opportunities to improve listening skills in higher education contexts. The findings of this study support previous research on the use of digital platforms in EFL listening instruction. Consistent with Fitria (2021), students perceived digital platforms as useful sources of authentic listening materials that provide flexible learning opportunities. The findings also corroborate Tuong and Dan (2024), who found that digital learning applications can improve listening comprehension through repeated practice and interactive features. Furthermore, the positive impact of digital platforms on students' motivation observed in this study aligns with the findings of

Thurairasu (2022), who reported that technology-enhanced learning environments increase students' engagement and motivation to learn. However, similar to Khan and Khan (2024), participants in the present study also reported challenges related to listening difficulty and technical issues. Therefore, the current study not only supports previous findings but also provides additional evidence from the Indonesian higher education context regarding students' perceptions, benefits, and challenges of using digital platforms for developing listening skills.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that students perceive listening as a fundamental skill that supports communication, vocabulary development, and pronunciation. Digital platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, Duolingo, TikTok, and English-language movies were widely used due to their accessibility, diverse content, and interactive features. These platforms increased students' motivation and supported independent learning. However, students also encountered challenges, including rapid speech, unfamiliar accents, limited vocabulary, unstable internet connections, and distractions. To address these issues, students applied strategies such as slowing the audio speed, using subtitles, and accessing materials offline.

Future researchers are encouraged to explore the use of digital platforms in broader educational contexts and with larger participant groups to enhance generalizability. Further studies may also examine the effectiveness of specific platforms or investigate the impact of digital listening practices on students' overall language proficiency.

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