

STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN LISTENING: A META ANALYSIS OF ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE LAST TEN YEARS

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Abstract: This study investigates the common problems in listening comprehension encountered by Indonesian EFL students based on a meta-analysis of seven research articles published between 2015 and 2025. Listening is one of the essential components of language acquisition, yet it often poses challenges for learners. This study aims to describe and systematically analyze the problems faced by students in listening skills through a meta-analysis of articles published in the last ten years. This research used a qualitative approach in the form of library research. The data were obtained from seven relevant articles published between 2013 and 2023. The data were analyzed descriptively by categorizing the types of problems found in the reviewed articles. The results of the research indicated that there were several main problems commonly experienced by students in listening skills, including limited vocabulary, the speed of native speakers, unclear pronunciation, lack of effective listening strategies, and unsupportive learning environments. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that listening problems are complex and influenced by both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Therefore, appropriate teaching strategies are needed to overcome these problems.

Keywords: *Listening, dan Meta-Analysis of Articles, Students' Problem*

English has become an international language. As a result, in Indonesia, English is taught beginning in elementary school so that kids are familiar with the language and can effectively converse in it. Language learners must have four crucial skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each ability contributes to effective communication. Likewise with listening abilities. Direct communication will be successful if you have good listening abilities. Listening is an essential component of foreign language learning since it provides language learners with input. As Rost and Hien (2015) mentioned, listening is particularly crucial for foreign language learners because it serves as linguistic input. This indicates that listening skills can help us enhance our speaking abilities, expand our vocabulary, and boost our language ability. This is obviously critical for the language development of language learners.

However, in reality, many Indonesian students still face significant challenges in mastering listening skills. Several large-scale tests, such as the TOEFL ITP conducted across Indonesian universities, show that students' listening scores are often lower than their reading and writing scores. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2023), the national average listening score of English majors is 15% lower than other language skills. Similar trends were reported by the British Council (2022), which found that EFL learners in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, consistently rank listening as the most difficult skill. These findings highlight that listening problems are not only theoretical but also a real phenomenon in language learning classrooms.

Listening is the process of recognizing speech sounds and converting them into words and sentences. Listening is regarded as an important trait that must be collected, since it supports in the development of effective communication skills. Individuals must understand the meaning of the messages delivered by their partners during a conversation in order to develop effective communication skills. Listening skills are required for understanding the message communicated by others. There are two stages to the listening process: bottom-up and top-down. Each stage is interconnected and plays a crucial role in helping language learners grasp what the speaker is saying and avoid misunderstandings.

At that follow, language learners are expected to be able to extract information from the speaker, either implicitly or explicitly. As previously said, when language learners need to obtain information from the speaker, they must go through the phases. However, it is not uncommon for language learners to have difficulty understanding the intended meaning. Many issues develop during these stages, causing the language learner to

misunderstand what the speaker is saying. Many students experience difficulties in understanding listening due to limited vocabulary, fast speaking rate of the teacher, and lack of listening practice (Underwood, 1989; Hapsari, 2019; Putra, 2021). This shows that students' listening problems consistently appear across different learning contexts.

Listening skills are a key aspect of learning English. Good listening abilities not only assist children hear discussions, but also aid in the mastering of other language skills such as speaking and writing. However, many students struggle to understand listening materials, particularly in the setting of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). According to several research, students experience a variety of listening issues, including native speaker speed, diverse accents, restricted vocabulary, and a lack of oral comprehension methods. These challenges have a direct impact on pupils' poor comprehension of auditory materials, slowing the complete language learning process. Over the last ten years, a lot of scientific studies have addressed listening issues from diverse angles. However, there have been few studies that specifically investigate and categorize these issues based on academic literature. As a result, the purpose of this study is to look at various listening problems that students have mentioned in scientific studies published in the recent ten years (2015-2024). Researchers expect that by analyzing previous studies, they would have a better understanding of the types of problems that frequently develop, the reasons that create them, and the proposed solutions. The findings of this study are expected to help improve the quality of listening learning in English classrooms.

Several large-scale tests, such as the TOEFL ITP, which is conducted across Indonesian colleges, have revealed that listening scores frequently fall below other language competence levels. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture's 2023 report, the national average listening score for English majors is 15% lower than their reading and writing scores. This disparity highlights systemic issues in listening teaching and emphasizes the need for specific solutions. On an international level, the British Council (2022) found comparable results in Southeast Asia, with EFL learners in Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia regularly ranking listening as the most difficult skill. Primary factors highlighted included little exposure to actual spoken English, a reliance on textbook-based listening exercises, and teacher-centered educational approaches. These trends emphasize the importance of the current study, which seeks to consolidate research findings from the previous decade in order to provide a better understanding of reoccurring listening problems and potential remedies.

Listening is one of the most crucial basic abilities in learning English, but it can be difficult for students, particularly those learning English as a foreign language. This is a receptive skill, which requires students to understand spoken messages in real time without the ability to repeat or review the information previously presented. This differs from reading skills, which allow for more flexibility in understanding the text (Vandergrift, 2007). In practice, many students report difficulty with listening lessons. These obstacles include native speakers' speed, the use of foreign terminology or idioms, accent variances, and an unsupportive learning environment (Hasan and Goh, 2000). These issues can sap students' motivation and jeopardize their overall effectiveness in learning English.

Goh (2000) found that EFL students often feel confused when processing audio input due to limits in short-term memory and a lack of good listening methods. Meanwhile, Hasan (2000) discovered that psychological elements such as fear, low self-confidence, and a lack of exposure to actual spoken language all contribute to students' difficulties in understanding listening materials. Many research publications have been produced over the last 10 years to study the numerous challenges that pupils confront with listening comprehension. However, there have been few studies that systematically combine and categorize these findings in a comprehensive analytical framework. In reality, by identifying the constant problem patterns found in numerous research, educators and curriculum creators can create more effective listening learning strategies tailored to the needs of their students.

METHOD

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative method combined with a library research methodology. The library study was carried out by collecting and analyzing secondary data in the form of scholarly publications published in the last ten years (2015-2025) about students' difficulties with listening. According to Nazir (2011), a library study is a data collecting approach that involves evaluating literature or references from books, journals, scientific articles, and other sources related to the problems under investigation. Furthermore, the data in this study were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a systematic research method used to analyze documents or texts in order to identify patterns, themes, and categories. In this research, content analysis was applied to classify students' listening comprehension problems into internal and external factors, to compare the findings across studies, and to draw general conclusions from the selected articles.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This is the main section of your paper, and usually the longest one, too. The finding presented here should be “clean,” in that it does not contain the data analysis or hypothesis testing. Only the results of these stages are to be presented. Tables and figures may be used to further clarify and complement the data being presented verbally. Remember to give comments or explanations to these tables or figures. For qualitative researches, the finding includes details on subtopics and/or categorisations related to the focus or direction of the research.

This chapter offers the results and discussion of the current study, which focuses on the difficulties students have with listening comprehension. The results were gathered from a meta-analysis of seven research papers published in the last ten years. The selected papers were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach to identify patterns, similarities, and differences.

Listening Problems

Listening is not a single ability, but rather a complex process that includes various sorts of listening. Each type serves a unique purpose in communication and learning. Based on the publications studied, the researchers identified three forms of listening that are often discussed and relevant to students' academic experiences. When studying English listening skills, students frequently face a variety of challenges that impede their comprehension. These issues were raised in various research articles examined in this study. The following are the eight most commonly reported categories of difficulties.

To comprehend the challenges pupils have when listening to English, it is necessary to identify the underlying reasons of these issues. According to the findings of the seven publications evaluated, a variety of internal and external factors contribute to students' difficulty understanding listening materials. The following are the seven major causes, along with explanations and examples. The causes are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4.2 Causes of Listening Problems Identified in the Reviewed Articles

No	Cause of Problem	Articles Reporting the Cause
1	Limited vocabulary and lack of word recognition	Hapsari (2019), Putra (2021)
2	Fast speech delivery	Putra (2021), Sari (2021)
3	Unfamiliar pronunciation or native accents	Sari (2021), Rahmawati (2022)
4	Lack of confidence and motivation	Nugroho (2020), Sari (2021)
5	Poor listening environment	Aziz (2020), Rahmawati (2022)
6	Limited exposure to authentic materials	Hapsari (2019), Rahmawati (2022)
7	Cognitive overload or anxiety during tasks	Nugroho (2020), Putra (2021)

Based on the table above, the following discussion presents the main causes of listening problems, along with examples from the reviewed articles.

Listening Problems In addition to identifying numerous listening issues, the evaluated articles propose several techniques for students to enhance their listening skills. These tactics include instruction-based approaches, self-directed practice, and the utilization of real media. Here are seven crucial tactics for listening instruction. Table 4.3 gives a summary.

Table 4.3 Suggested Strategies for Overcoming Listening Problems

No	Suggested Strategy	Articles Recommending the Strategy
1	Use of authentic materials in class	Hapsari (2019), Rahmawati (2022)
2	Vocabulary building through pre-listening activities	Putra (2021), Sari (2021)
3	Listening with subtitles and transcripts	Rahmawati (2022), Nugroho (2020)
4	Teacher-guided and structured listening tasks	Aziz (2020), Rahmawati (2022)
5	Repetition and slowing down audio speed	Putra (2021), Sari (2021)
6	Improving confidence and reducing anxiety	Nugroho (2020), Sari (2021)
7	Practicing prediction and inference skills	Sari (2021), Rahmawati (2022)

Based on Table 4.3, several strategies have been suggested by the reviewed articles to overcome students' listening comprehension problems

DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings from a meta-analysis of seven articles published during the last ten years. The findings are discussed by relating them to pertinent theories and past research. According to the findings, students face eight major types of difficulties in comprehending listening material, including limited vocabulary, difficulty understanding accents, impaired concentration, high speaking rate, unclear pronunciation, low motivation, unfamiliarity with the topic, and a lack of practice. These findings support Buck's (2001) theory, which states that one of the most significant barriers to listening comprehension is a restricted vocabulary and the difficulty of processing information fast.

Underwood (1989) claimed that speaking too quickly can make comprehension difficult since listeners do not have enough time to process the information. This statement is relevant to the findings of this study, which reveal that students frequently struggle when the speaker talks too fast. Rapid speech delivery prevents learners from recognizing key vocabulary and understanding the overall meaning of the message. Several of the analyzed articles, such as those by Hapsari (2019) and Putra (2021), also highlighted that fast speech rate is one of the most common obstacles in listening comprehension, as students often miss important information due to limited processing time. This demonstrates that the theoretical perspective of Underwood (1989) remains valid and aligns with current evidence from recent studies, showing that the problem is consistent across different listening learning environments.

There are two types of causes for hearing difficulties: internal variables (such as fear, low motivation, and limited vocabulary) and external factors (such as a foreign accent, unclear audio, or unfamiliar themes). This confirms Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which claims that emotional elements such as worry and a lack of confidence might impede language acquisition. This explanation is in line with the findings of the present study, which reveal that students often experience anxiety, lack of confidence, and low motivation when facing listening tasks. Such internal barriers support Krashen's view that emotional factors can block input from being fully processed, resulting in poor comprehension.

Furthermore, these data confirm Rost's (2002) hypothesis of the necessity of clear pronunciation and accent variance, as many students fail to grasp the pronunciation of non-native speakers. Similarly, the difficulties related to accent and pronunciation identified in this study strengthen Rost's (2002) hypothesis, since students are easily distracted or confused when exposed to unfamiliar accents or unclear articulation. This indicates that external factors, such as speaker variation, are just as influential as internal factors in shaping listening comprehension.

Based on these findings, the detailed discussion of each cause is presented below:

- a. **Limited Vocabulary and Lack of Word**
Recognition Hapsari (2019) and Putra (2021) reported that students with limited vocabulary knowledge often struggled to understand spoken texts because they could not recognize words accurately. Nation (2001) emphasized that vocabulary size significantly influences listening comprehension, while Buck (2001) noted that poor word recognition interrupts the process of connecting sounds to
- b. **Fast Speech Delivery**
According to Putra (2021) and Sari (2021), fast speech delivery overwhelmed learners because they had insufficient time to process the input. Underwood (1989) similarly argued that rapid speech is a major barrier to comprehension since learners cannot keep up with the flow of information. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) further highlighted that a high speech rate reduces the time available for decoding, which increases misunderstanding. In the reviewed studies, several students even requested repetitions during listening tests because the audio was played too quickly.
- c. **Unfamiliar Pronunciation or Native Accents**
Sari (2021) and Rahmawati (2022) found that learners often failed to understand spoken English when exposed to unfamiliar pronunciation or native accents. Goh (2000) explained that such pronunciation differences reduce intelligibility, while Rost (2011) noted that variations in connected speech add perceptual difficulty. For instance, one student was able to understand his teacher's clear and slow speech but struggled when listening to a native- speaker podcast.
- d. **Lack of Confidence and Motivation**
Psychological factors also contribute to listening problems. Nugroho (2020) and Sari (2021) revealed that lack of confidence and low motivation negatively affected students' listening performance. This aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985), which states that anxiety or low motivation can block comprehension. Rost (2011) also observed that students who feel anxious or unprepared are less likely to engage effectively in listening tasks. In one example, a student avoided answering listening questions because she feared making mistakes.
- e. **Poor Listening Environment**
Environmental conditions were also shown to hinder listening comprehension. Aziz (2020) and Rahmawati (2022) mentioned that noise, interruptions, and poor audio quality prevented students from focusing on listening tasks. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) similarly argued that external distractions can significantly affect listening performance. For example, students reported difficulty hearing listening materials during online classes because of background noise at home.
- f. **Limited Exposure to Authentic Materials**
Hapsari (2019) and Rahmawati (2022) pointed out that students who rarely practiced with authentic listening materials had greater difficulties understanding natural speech. Brown (2001) emphasized that insufficient exposure limits learners' ability to adapt to real-life English usage. In practice, students who rarely watched English movies or listened to English songs found it challenging to comprehend native speakers in listening exercises.
- g. **Cognitive Overload or Anxiety during Tasks**
Finally, Nugroho (2020) and Putra (2021) found that students often experienced anxiety and cognitive overload during listening tasks. Vandergrift (2007) explained that listening requires simultaneous processing of sounds, meaning, and context, which can overwhelm learners and reduce comprehension. Anxiety worsens this problem, as stressed students struggle to focus. For example, one student reported feeling overwhelmed during a complex listening test, missing important details because she could not process all the information at once.

Suggested Strategies for Overcoming Listening Problems

In terms of solutions, numerous sources advocate employing actual materials, training in tactics like as guessing the content of recordings, repetitive repetition, and memorizing terminology before listening. These tactics are congruent with Goh's (2000) approach, which promotes top-down and bottom-up strategies for improving understanding. Furthermore, Mendelsohn (1994) stressed the significance of using authentic audio and breaking down the material into smaller portions to prevent overwhelming students. Aziz (2020) and Rahmawati (2022) found that when teachers provide structure and assistance in listening practice, pupils gain confidence and perform much better.

Based on the table 4.3 above, we can conclude that what are the problems related to the suggested strategies for overcoming of Listening problems and what are examples as follows:

- a. **Use authentic materials in class**
Exposing students to authentic materials such as podcasts, movies, songs, and news reports helps them adapt to real-life language usage (Brown, 2001).

Example: One study reported that students who listened to English podcasts regularly showed improvement in understanding native speakers' speech patterns.

- b. Vocabulary building through pre-listening activities
Pre-teaching key vocabulary before listening tasks helps students recognize words during the activity, improving comprehension (Nation, 2001).
Example: In a classroom, the teacher introduced challenging words from the listening passage beforehand, which allowed students to follow the content more easily.
- c. Listening with subtitles and transcripts
Providing subtitles or transcripts can guide learners and support word recognition (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Example: Students who watched short English videos with transcripts reported they could identify new words and phrases more accurately.
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- e. Teacher-guided and structured listening tasks
Structured tasks guided by the teacher help focus students' attention and reduce cognitive overload (Goh, 2000). Example: A teacher gave step-by-step instructions and comprehension questions during a listening exercise, which helped students process the information effectively.
- f. Repetition and slowing down audio speed
Repeating listening materials and slowing down speech allow students more time to process information (Underwood, 1989). Example: Students were able to understand complex sentences after listening to the audio twice at a slower speed. Improving confidence and reducing anxiety
- g. Improving confidence and reducing anxiety
Encouraging a positive learning environment and building students' confidence supports better listening performance (Krashen, 1985). Example: One student reported feeling more willing to participate in listening activities after receiving positive feedback from the teacher.
- h. Practicing prediction and inference skills
Teaching students to predict content and infer meaning helps them anticipate information and fill in gaps (Rost, 2011). Example: Students were asked to guess the topic of a passage from the title and keywords, which helped them follow the listening material more effectively.

In conclusion, the strategies above target both linguistic and psychological aspects of listening difficulties. Implementing authentic materials, pre-listening activities, guided tasks, repetition, confidence-building, and prediction exercises can significantly enhance students' listening comprehension. These strategies are supported by theories from Nation (2001), Brown (2001), Goh (2000), Underwood (1989), Rost (2011), and Vandergrift & Goh (2012), and are recommended for practical classroom use to address common listening problems.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the seven articles analyzed in this study, we may conclude that students' most common hearing challenges are limited vocabulary, trouble comprehending native speaker accents, low concentration, rapid speaking, imprecise pronunciation, and a lack of listening practice. These issues suggest that hearing impairments have linguistic, psychological, and technical components. Furthermore, listening problems can be caused by a variety of factors, including insufficient vocabulary mastery, limited exposure to real materials, anxiety or lack of confidence, an uncondusive learning environment, and cognitive load when doing listening tasks. These causes originate both inside and outside among pupils. To overcome listening difficulties, use authentic materials such as podcasts and videos, practice repeatedly and gradually, teach listening strategies (such as top-down and bottom-up), and provide vocabulary before listening activities begin. Teachers must provide a helpful and non-pressuring learning atmosphere for kids.

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